Social Change: A Pedagogic Inquiry of Ethiopian Ethnicity/Tribe/Gossa

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SOCIAL CHANGE:
A PEDAGOGIC INQUIRY OF ETHIOPIAN ETHNICITY/TRIBE/GOSSA

A DISSERTATION
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION
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By
Alemayehu Habte

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Social Change: A Pedagogic Inquiry of Ethnicity/Tribe/Gossa

We certify that we have read this dissertation and approved it as adequate in scope and quality. We have found that it is complete and satisfactory in all respects, and that any and all revisions required by the final examining committee have been made.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A reflection on this dissertation puts me in a position where I realize that social change is and an unending task. The experience of writing this dissertation and carrying out of informal and philosophical dialogues on Ethiopian Gossa with various individuals gave me a sense of certainty that social change, after all, is indisputably possible.

I would like to thank my dissertation committee, all of whom broadened the scope of my inquiry into the notion of Gossa/tribe. More particularly, I thank Dr. Roulis for helping me focus on one research method, the historical research method, and asking me a critical question, “How did Ethiopia get in such a mess?” This established the initial organization of the dissertation. I also want to thank Dr. Margo Lloyd, Dr. Jeannette Johnson, and Dr. Emma Duren for being members of my dissertation committee. I should, furthermore, thank all the members of Cohort-3 for their interest in critical pedagogy as a discipline that upholds social change. I must single out, however, and thank Jeanette Johnson for her keen interest in the multicultural aspect of critical pedagogy.

Finally, I want to thank my son Natnael A. Habte and his mother Mavis Habte for their steadfast interest in my successful completion of this doctoral program.
The basic context for this work is my lived experience and the lived experience of the two other people who were a part of the platonic dialogue that is the heart of this dissertation. Our lived experiences, informal education and formal education, both in our homeland and since coming to the United States were blended in the dialogue.

The influences of being born and raised in Ethiopia are evident in this dissertation even though it was edited to formalize the writing for the purpose of the dissertation. Among the elements that are evident is the repetition of stories and historical information in chapters two and four. A great influence is the oral tradition of repetition to commit things to memory. The repetition has been left to reflect my voice and my authorship of this dissertation.

Chapter four, A Platonic Dialogue was edited for spelling errors only, the remainder is the voice of three Ethiopians in a dialogue about the meaning of nation, nationalities, Gossa/tribes and how these have contributed to the mess in our home country of Ethiopia.

My greatest hope is that those who read this will understand that we who come from the Horn of Africa do not have violence and inhumanity in our nature, and that the current unrest, violence and political upheaval in that part of the world have more to do with colonialism and conquest of our country by foreign interests.
ABSTRACT

The ultimate purpose of this dissertation is to explore social change, as characterized by critical pedagogy, within Ethiopian Gossa (in English tribes). Critical pedagogy, as a discipline, is vociferous against oppression of any form. The mechanism it uses to accomplish social change is adult education. Adult education within the framework of critical pedagogy is dialogical in nature and grounded in the daily lives of human beings. The fact of its nature being dialogical is, empowering and brings critical consciousness into being.

Critical pedagogy is said to be empowering in the sense that it affirms, confirms, and upholds the truth and validity of one’s experience as a springboard into the dialogue. This is where individuals take charge of their own experience and assert them. This dissertation is about the dialogue of Ethiopians who are asserting their experiences and the lives they have lived, or are living. Their views on ethnicity/tribe/Gossa are reflective of their experiences and social knowledge.

The dialogical aspect of critical pedagogy is where critical consciousness is brought into being. In this dialogical aspect, there is the give and take of ideas, concepts, beliefs, arguments and counterarguments. Consequently, this is where people change their minds about their views or just maintain the status quo.

In this researcher’s view, Vladimir Lenin’s doctrine of self-determination was the foundation for the current problems of ethnic strife within Ethiopia. A study of Russian history, revolving around this doctrine, is made to demonstrate its inapplicability to effective government in Ethiopia. Furthermore, a rigorous philosophical examination of the notion of ethnicity or Gossa is made to pave the way for social change.
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

The socio-political atmosphere in Ethiopia today is filled with tension at people-to-
people, and political levels. People are not friendly towards each other, and they do not trust each
other. This distrust came into existence during the period of the socialist government which
governed from 1974-1991. The early months, of the socialist government were characterized by
a great deal of bloodshed. Although the Leninist language of nations and nationalities was used
in the 1960s by the leadership of the student movement, the social government put it into official
use, resulting in the tribes being recognized as nations. Here, the critical point to note is that no
explanation or justification was given as to why the tribes were being viewed as nations. The
concept of nations and nationalities became prominent within the Marxist-Leninist framework,
which characterized the revolutionary aspect of the socialist government. People were shot on
the spot, if, for some reason, they were deemed to be counter-revolutionaries. Personal grudges
became an excuse for killing anybody with whom the person doing the killing had a political or
personal disagreement or falling out.

The socialist government, with the help of United States, was replaced by the current
tribe-based government. The tribe-based government took the concept of nations and
nationalities and made it part of the Ethiopian constitution, which will be further discussed in the
dissertation. Once again, no justification was given for the use of the Leninist language of
nations and nationalities, but Prime Minister of Ethiopia, Meles Zenawi, was a part of the student
movement in the 1960’s, which made broad use of this language.

The political atmosphere became tense and hostile after the assumption of power by the
current tribe-based government. There are three actions that this government took that
demonstrated its hostility for the people of Ethiopia. I should point out parenthetically here that the tribe-based government is a government crafted by a few members of the Tigre tribe, rather than one decided by representatives of a majority of the tribes. The three actions were:

1. The government fostered and realized the secession of Eritrea.

2. The government made sure that the two Red Sea ports of Massawa and Assab were ceded to Eritrea, thereby making Ethiopia landlocked.

3. The internal provincial territories were restructured into tribal enclaves called Kilil.

What is important to know at this point is that the people of Ethiopia had absolutely no say when all these things were done. They were not included in the decision-making process. In other words, the will of the people was totally disregarded. Absolute dictatorship reigned and still reigns today in Ethiopia.

Statement of Problem

There are many Ethiopians in Diasporas, but their voices have not been heard in any collective regard with respect to the current government and political conditions in Ethiopia. A full understanding of the current governmental and political conditions in Ethiopia and the tensions among various groups/tribes/Gossa requires some basic historical knowledge of colonial and Soviet influences. This study is intended to be a contribution to making those voices heard and understood through a general depiction of Ethiopians living in the Diasporas.

The most important and common characteristic that these Ethiopians display, in the United States and Europe, is their opposition to the current tribe-based government in Ethiopia. The current tribe-based government has succeeded in dividing the people into their tribal and linguistic groupings, thereby cultivating exclusive loyalty to their tribes and languages which undermines loyalty to the entire nation. This sort of loyalty seems to be evident in the behavior
of those who claim to be Oromos. In fact most, but not all dispersed Oromos reject the fact that they are Ethiopians and claim that they are from Oromia and not from Ethiopia.

Foundational to this view is the fact that the current tribe-based government restructured the earlier internal provincial territories into tribal enclaves in 1991 (Vestal, 1999) at which time Oromia was created for the first time. These tribal enclaves are called Kilil, thus Oromia is a Kilil. Each tribe is supposed to use the language of the tribe in educational settings. However they do not have their own alphabets, there is only the Amharic alphabet indigenous to Ethiopia; an alphabet that was widely used by everybody until the tribe-based government came along. Additionally, the Amharic language was, and still is, widely spoken. The Oromos insistence on using the so called Latin letters, (i.e. a-z), is a source of much of the opposition to their views. Furthermore, they also insist on the right to secede the way Eritrea did, and yet with respect to government jobs, such jobs are given to members of the Tigre tribe. As a result, there is so much tension amongst dispersed Ethiopians with the main tensions occurring between Tigres and other Ethiopians, and Oromos and other Ethiopians. The Tigres made a mess out of Ethiopia as pointed out earlier and the Oromos are secessionist in their outlook. The diasporic Ethiopians, therefore, reflect the Ethiopians at home.
Significance of the Study

The significance of the study is that it shows a way of thinking and reasoning (in dialogical form) as a means, path, or strategy for solving social problems. The significance springs out of the need for social change in Ethiopia, and the need for social change arises out of social conditions that create general or widespread social mal-contentment. In the case of Ethiopia, the doctrine of self-determination, the concepts of nations and nationalities, and the notion of tribe itself are the causes of the problems. These issues have created a tremendous mal-contentment in Ethiopia. As a result, solving these problems/issues is tantamount to bringing about social change. Social change, therefore, is the transformation of mal-contentment to contentment. In a pedagogical framework, there are two fundamental steps to lay the foundation for social change. First, specific issues that have causal connections to the mal-contentment (such as mentioned above) must first be identified. Secondly, a philosophical approach is used towards the solution; this is approach is applied to the dialogue presented in this dissertation. The philosophical approach is characterized by two elements (a) investigation of the language surrounding the problems, and (b) explicating the findings of the investigation.

The stance social mal-contents is rooted in history, therefore a study of history sheds light on current social problems and provides context for dialogue. In other words, a study of history lends clarity to the social problems in question. For instance, the study of Russian history as it relates to the doctrine of self-determination and the question of nations and nationalities shows that the conditions that gave rise to these concepts in Russia are completely asymmetrical to the conditions in Ethiopia, supporting a conclusion that concepts are inapplicable in Ethiopia., However both of these concepts were taken from the ideologies of Lenin and Stalin by the
Ethiopian student movement of the 1960s. That is why including some Russian history is important to this study.

**Design of the Study**

The most appropriate method for this study was the qualitative research method, more specifically the historical research method. The reason is that recorded history clearly shows and presents the historicity and evolution of current institutions in Ethiopia. A good example to cite is recognizing how the tribes of Ethiopia became nations. This fact came into being over 35 years ago in the 1960s. The generation born after this fact simply does not know the origin of the language of nations and nationalities that catapulted tribes to the level of nationhood. As a matter of fact, most of the people who were there during the factualization (the act of making a fact out of something that is not a fact) of the notion tribes being nations and nationalities, do not know the origin of the concept of nations and nationalities or of the structures, institutions, loyalties and ideologies that most of the world thinks of when speaking of nations or nationalities.

Looking at the partial history of the Soviet Union demonstrates the asymmetry between the conditions that gave rise to the language of nations and nationalities in what became the Soviet Union and the conditions in Ethiopia prior to the imposition of these titles. The source of the language used in Ethiopia to impose an organizational structure which led to strife, lies in the history of the Soviet Union. More specifically, when Lenin was faced with problems at the turn of the 20th century, he concocted the concept of nations and nationalities to solve the problems created by the different nationalities, some examples of which are- Ukrainians, Armenians, Georgians, and others that Tsarist Russia colonized and which became key blocks for building the Soviet Union. Reviewing a partial history of the Soviet Union helps determine whether or not there are in fact nations and nationalities in Ethiopia as is commonly defined. That is: A people
who inhabit a specific territory who share common customs, origins and history. It will also help determine what sort of meaning the phrase nations and nationalities acquired in the way Lenin concocted it, which will in turn determine if it carries the same meaning in Ethiopia.

Furthermore, a portion of the history of Ethiopia was studied in order to determine the source of the problem pertaining to Eritrea, which culminated in its secession from Ethiopia through the employment of the doctrine of nations and nationalities. Furthermore with respect to Eritrea being a colony of Italy, Emperor Minilik is accused by Tigres and Eritreans of selling it to Italy. Does history support this accusation or, did Emperor Yohannis, because of his miscalculations, hand it over to the Italians? Or better yet, answering the question- when and how did Italy acquire the geographical land mass of what today is called Eritrea helps us answer the previous questions. Since all these questions are at the root of current problems, recorded history would help us understand the current socio-political turmoil in Ethiopia.

Through this understanding and knowledge, the possibility of social change is improved. As stated in the discussion so far, the fundamental cause of the turmoil (the Gossa problem) in Ethiopia is the concept of nations and nationalities. That is why a determination will be made, in this dissertation, with respect to the reality or unreality of Gossa.

**Limitations of the Study**

Pertaining to possible biases, I have absolutely no sense of identity with any of the Ethiopian tribes, however in my frame of reference the notion of tribe is a primitive social concept almost suggestive of a pre-logical way of life and a social concept which undermines uniting as one country. I was careful throughout to ensure that this attitude did not interfere with the study in this dissertation. My lack of tribal sense of identity reflects the way I was brought up. My father never identified himself with any tribe other than the entire people of Ethiopia. I
look at Ethiopians as Ethiopians regardless of their region in Ethiopia or what tribe they are from.

Therefore, this is the bias I do bring to the study is a strong belief in a country, a nation with all the people of Ethiopia sharing their common origins, customs and cultures selecting a government which is for all the people. Although I brought this bias to the platonic dialogue, I did not bring it to detailing and discussing the platonic dialogue that is the heart of this dissertation.

**Definition of Terms**

Abune- an Amharic term which means bishop

Amhara or Amara- one of the tribes in Ethiopia

Amharic- the language spoken by the Amhara tribe and the official language of Ethiopia

Atse- an Amharic word which means Emperor

Dejazmach- title of the leader of warriors

ESUNA- Ethiopian Students Union in North America

Fitawrari- title given to a man leading a siege during war time

Gojam- a western province

Gossa- this is an Amharic word which means tribe

Gurage- one of the tribes in Ethiopia

Kilil- Amharic word which means a tribal enclave

Kotu/Qotu- an Oromo in the province of Harargie all of whom are Moslems

For political reasons the Kotu/Qotu are now called Oromos

Lij- A term of respect for a young boy/man, it literally means boy

Mahdists- Islamic insurgents and warriors in Sudan
Oromia- this is a tribal enclave designated for the Oromo tribe by the Tigre tribe.

Oromo- one of the tribes in Ethiopia

Shewa/Shoa- A province in central Ethiopia and the seat of power and capital of Ethiopia; Addis Ababa, the capital city, is located in the province of Shewa.

Tigrai- Northern Province of Ethiopia (province of the Tigre tribe)

Tigre- one of the tribes in Ethiopia

Welamo- one of the tribes in Ethiopia

Weyane- a political party exclusively for the Tigre tribe

Wichale- The town in which the treaty of Wichle was signed by Emperor Minilik and Italy

Zemene Mesafint- The era in which different regions had their own leaders and no central government

Zer- This word is an Amharic word which means biological relations like father, son, daughter, uncle, aunt, etc. (pedigree)

**Organization of the Study**

This dissertation is organized into five chapters. Chapter one is an overview and introduction. Chapter two the literature review, looks at the partial histories of Russia and Ethiopia looks at the extent of causal connection to the current turmoil in Ethiopia warrant. In chapter three, the research method used is discussed along with an explanation of why this particular method was used. Chapter four contains the dialogue that is foundational to critical pedagogy as a framework for social change. The rigorous dialogue goes on among three Ethiopians one woman, and two men. A broad range of social issues were discussed with the purpose of determining the reality or un-reality of Gossa. The dialogue was rigorously philosophical with continual investigation and explication. Concepts, ideas, and beliefs, as they
are depicted using human language, were rigorously probed to reach the interstitial particles that impart murkiness to the Ethiopian social issues. In short, nothing was taken for granted. Chapter five is a discussion of my journey in andragogy. It focuses on my journey in adult education and the informal education I gained from face-to-face engagement which, I believe, taught me tactfulness and patience. My inquiry into Gossa was difficult to handle with diehard tribalists, some of whom threatened physical fights. They had never been asked to state clearly what Oromo is. They never questioned whether or not there is such a thing as a distinct Oromo culture. As baffling situations arose, people tended to lose their temper. It was an amazing experience in which I learned that social change can mean a high cost for those promoting that change.
CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

Vladimir I. Lenin’s doctrine of the right of nations to self-determination has been more destructive than helpful to the Ethiopian society. This doctrine was a direct outgrowth of the political conditions Lenin and Stalin were faced with as a result of the colonization of neighboring nations (i.e. Ukraine, Georgia, Armenia, etc.) by the Russian empire of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Lenin (1947) states the meaning of his doctrine this way:

. . ., the tendency of every national movement is towards the formation of national states, under which these requirements of modern capitalism are best satisfied. The profoundest economic factors drive towards this goal, and therefore, for the whole of Western Europe, nay, for the entire civilized world, the typical, normal state for the capitalist period is the national state.

Consequently, if we want to learn the meaning of self-determination of nations not by juggling with legal definitions, or “inventing” abstract definitions, but by examining the historical and economic conditions of the national movements we shall inevitably reach the conclusion that self-determination of nations means the political separation of these nations from alien national bodies, the formation of an independent national state (p. 11).

Lenin (1947) tells us the meaning of the right of nations to self-determination this way:

The right of nations to self-determination means only the right to independence in a political sense, the right to free, political secession from the oppressing nation.

Concretely, this political democratic demand implies complete freedom to carry on
agitation in favor of secession, and freedom to settle the question of secession by means of a referendum of the nation that desires to secede (p. 76).

With the preceding doctrine in mind, we look to a portion of Russian history to see what conditions helped give rise to the doctrine.

A Partial History of the Russian Empire

Pipes’ book (1964), *The Formation of the Soviet Union*, is most primarily concerned with how the Soviet Union was formed and built. Succinctly, it was built through military conquest, by Russia, of the neighboring countries such as Latvia, Lithuanian, The Ukraine, Belorussia, Muslim Borderlands, Pipes (1964, p. 30) tells us that there were two principal socialist parties- the Socialist Revolutionary Party and the Social Democratic Party. These two parties had different visions of the relationship between Russia and the colonized nations. There was a great deal of debate revolving around this relationship. Pipes also tells us that the debate dealt with the concept of federalism (equal distribution of power between Russia and the ethnics, as they were called), and concepts like regional and cultural autonomy. Dr. Pipes (p. 30) tells us, too, that in the population of Russia was almost greater in number than the total number of all the ethnics put together. Let me parenthetically add here that Ukrainians and Russian Jews were considered minorities (Pipes, p. 36). This huge population difference made it difficult for Lenin to accept the notion of federalism. This social fact soon gave rise to the problem of nations comprising the Soviet Union, i.e. Russia, Ukraine, Belorussia, Armenia, Georgia, and others. Consequent on that, politicians like Lenin and Stalin, but mainly Lenin, were confronted with the so called National Problem, which Pipes (1964) discusses extensively. The question is: What is it that gave rise to the so called national problem? Here is how Pipes (1964) answers it:
The outbreak of the Russian Revolution had, as its initial consequence, the abolition of the tsarist regime and, as its ultimate result, the complete breakdown of all forms of organized life throughout Russia. One of the aspects of this breakdown was the disintegration of the Empire and the worsening of relations between its various ethnic groups. In less than a year after the Tsar had abdicated, the national question had become an outstanding issue in Russian politics (p., 50). Although Lenin became aware of “The national question” belatedly, he gave it the form it has today. What was/is this form? It is “national self-determination” (Pipes, p. 43). This was the clause around which Lenin and others of his type vehemently debated. But, what did self-determination mean to Lenin? Pipes (1964) tells us the following:

Lenin . . . reinterpreted it in a way best suited to his purposes. In the summer of 1913, he thus defined what he understood by the right to self-determination:

The paragraph of our program [dealing with national self-determination] cannot be interpreted in any other way, but in the sense of political self-determination, that is, as the right to self-determination and creation of an independent government.” Every nation living in the state had as a nation, one right and one right only: to separate from Russia and to create an independent state. A people who did not desire to take advantage of this right could not ask from the state for any preferential treatment, such as the establishment of federal relations, or the granting of extraterritorial cultural autonomy. It had to be satisfied with the general freedoms of the state, including a certain amount of regional autonomy inherent in ‘democratic centralism’ (p. 43).
Lenin knew that his position would appeal to the nationalistic impulses of Russian nationalities, which would garner the support of these minorities when he needed them. Lenin, as a social democrat, believed that the right of nations to self-determination “if properly interpreted, was in no way contradictory to the general principles of Marxism” (Pipes 1964, p. 35).

Given the preceding excerpt, Lenin was not without his critics. There were at least two criticisms leveled against his doctrine of national self-determination. The first one was that the notion of self-determination would inevitably lead each ethnic group to breakup and go its own separate way. Lenin had an argument that counters the notion of separation- “... the economic forces- the ultimate determinant in history- worked against the breakup” (Pipes, p.44). In other words, the economic needs of the ethnics will force them to stay with Russia. The second criticism pertains to the notion of nationalism. To counter that, Lenin argued that “... nationalism in all its aspects was essentially a phenomenon proper to the capitalist era and destined to vanish with the demise of capitalism itself” (Pipes, p. 41).

An important fact that Dr. Pipes (1964) did not lose sight of is the fact that Lenin was a politician who wanted to win. Here is what Pipes says to support that:

Though Lenin was perhaps the most doctrinaire of all prominent Russian Marxists in his fundamental assumptions, he was also the most flexible in his choice of means. Once he realized the value of the national movement as a weapon for fighting the established order, he stopped at nothing to employ it for his own ends (p., 35).

The preceding discussion on Lenin establishes that:

1. Russia colonized the nations around it to build up the Soviet Union.
2. Lenin and other Marxists referred to the colonized nations as ethnics or minorities.
3. A major problem, Lenin and his Marxist colleagues called it the national problem, arose.

4. A principle was formulated by Lenin and other Marxists as a solution to the national problem. The principle was “The right of nations to self-determination.”

5. Lenin exploited the national problem for his political advantage.

**Leninist Influence on Ethiopian Students**

The current problems in Ethiopia are rooted in the Marxist-Leninist student movement of the 1960s. Randi Balsivik (1985) tells us the following:

“Before 1974 Ethiopian university and secondary school students emerged as the most outspoken and visibly the only consolidated opposition group to Haile Selassie’s government” (p. xiii). In the 1960s and the early part of the 1970s, the Marxist-Leninist student movement had highly reticulated cells in Ethiopia, Europe, and United States in which informal Marxist-Leninist-Maoist education (a form of education almost as organized as formal education) was going on. It was during the Marxist-Leninist student movement that the notion of Ethiopia’s colonization of its own northernmost province of Eritrea, planted by Eritrean students, came into being, which was created for reasons of propaganda in Ethiopia, Europe, and America. Regarding the notion of Ethiopian colonialism, Dr. Daniel Kendie (2005) states the following:

> Whether inspired by unbridled opportunism or forced by the Eritreans to toe the line, the TPLF (Tigrayan Peoples’ Liberation Front) echoed the EPLF (Eritrean Peoples’ Liberation Front) position and began to present the Eritrean conflict as a colonial question. Like its EPLF mentor, the TPLF also presented its own cause as a struggle against what it called Ethiopian colonialism. But strangely enough, even if the Amhara (a tribe in Ethiopia) were identified with the so called “Ethiopian colonialism,” very few Amhara lived in Tigray [a northern province of Ethiopia].
TPLF people]. Those who ran the provincial machinery, the judiciary, the civil service and the police force were Tigrayans. . .Tigrayans ran the provincial administration from top to bottom. No Amhara community had any economic or social dominance in Tigrai . . . (p. 166).

More of the false claim of colonialism will be discussed in the main body of the dissertation, but it is important to note that Eritrean students fully supported the leaders of the student movement in their false claim. The reason for this support was that the activists in the student movement could be taken advantage of as a vehicle in the realization of the ultimate goal Eritrean students had in minds—the secession of Eritrea from Ethiopia. Here, what must be noted is that the colonial incursion of Italy into Ethiopia in the 1890s triggered the creation of Eritrea, which simply fell into the hands of colonial Italy due to its leader, Atse Yohannis’s lack of political acumen. The history surrounding the emergence of Eritrea (a name given to it by colonialist Italy) is explored more fully in the main body of the dissertation. A fundamental problem that still threatens the very existence of Ethiopia is the Leninist/Stalinist doctrine of the right of nations to self-determination up to and including secession. Needless to say that the students simply did not understand what Lenin and Stalin meant by it, this statement is still carried around Europe and America by the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF, Oromo is one of the tribes in Ethiopia). The terms nations and nationalities found their way into the language of the leaders of the student movement and one of them, Walleligne Makonnen, wrote an article entitled “On the Question of Nationalities in Ethiopia” (Balsivik, p. 227) that reinforced the use of this language. At this point, it is important to point out that the issue of nationalities did not abruptly appear on the Ethiopian social scene. In fact, Balsivik (1985) tells us the following:
The national question also had been discussed for a couple of years within the Ethiopian student organizations in Europe and North America, and the 17th Annual Congress of ESUNA (Ethiopian Student Union in North America) in September 1969 had concentrated its deliberations on the problem of regionalism in Ethiopia. . . . They consistently, for example, referred to ethnic diversity as “regionalism,” whereas Walleligne used the more controversial “nationalities” (p. 278).

In other words, the term nationalities, according to the preceding excerpt, was not fully accepted by everybody involved in the student movement of the 1960s. What I personally find very perplexing is that no one seems to notice the contradictions in Walleligne’s views. A good example might be that he looked at the tribes as nations while pointing out that Ethiopia was not yet a nation. Here is what Balsivik (1985) says:

The article “On the Question of Nationalities in Ethiopia,” by Walleligne Makonnen, argued that Ethiopia was not yet a nation but an Amhara-ruled collection of a dozen nationalities “with their own languages, ways of dressing, history, social organizations and territorial entity” (p. 277).

Nevertheless, this was the period in which the activists began to see Ethiopian tribes as nations, which presented itself to non-Marxists as a new social construct. It is clear, however, from the discussion on Lenin that this social construct actually was not new; it was, in fact, a concept adapted from Stalin’s 1913 publication entitled “Marxism and the National Question”.

The students failed to understand that both Stalin and Lenin were confronted with their own sociopolitical problems and that whatever they wrote had nothing to do with the people of Ethiopia. When they used the terms nations, nationalities, and minorities, they did not, in the
least, have the people of Ethiopia in mind. Be that as it may, the student leadership was not organic to the Ethiopian social conditions; to wit, the leadership did not, by necessity, evolve out of the social conditions indigenous to Ethiopia. The question at this point is—could the Marxist-Leninist philosophy have solved the sociopolitical and economic problems in Ethiopia? This question and others will be looked at in the main body of the dissertation.

Before I continue this literature review, it is important to bring forth the two maps of Ethiopia that show the provincial and the Kilil demarcations. The provincial map depicts the boarders and boundaries within Ethiopia that was for centuries. The Kilil map, or tribal enclaves, is the restructured internal subdivisions of Ethiopia made by the current tribe-based government.
Figure 1. Provincial Map of Ethiopia
Figure 2. Kilil Map of Ethiopia

The scheme in the provincial map is similar to the concept of the provinces in Canada or Australia; while the Kilil map shows the internal subdivisions along tribal lines. The term Kilil is an Amharic term, which means a line of demarcation or territory. Its precise meaning can be inferred from the way it is used. If you look at the Kilil map, you can see the names Oromia,
Amhara, etc. Those are the territories designated to the Oromo and Amhara tribes respectively. So, when the officials of the current government translate the word Kilil into English, they translate it as state similar to what is conceptualized in the name United States. This translation is wrong. Kilil implies a tribal designation of an internal piece of land, while the term state has no implication of any kind in Ethiopia other than what it means in the English language. This deceptive use of language is designed for Western consumption. Dr. Mohammed Hassen (1994) in the article titled Why Did Oromo Nationalism Develop only in the 1960s? wrote:

In different parts of colonial Africa, nationalism developed between the 1920s and the 1950s. In Oromia, which is still the last colony in Africa, nationalism developed only during and after the 1960s. Why did it take so long for Oromo nationalism to develop? There are four valid explanations for this. First and foremost, Oromo nationalism, like other nationalisms in Africa, developed in response to colonial oppression. It is still developing and changing. It took its shape against economic exploitation, military subjugation ‘political and cultural domination.’ Oromo colonial experience makes it different from other nationalisms in Africa. It has been said that ‘Oromo nationalism differs from other nationalisms in so far as the experience of Ethiopian rule differed from that of being ruled by a western colonial power. Ethiopian colonial power was centered in the country itself and not in some distant metropolis. The rulers were also ‘natives’, and did not have immense technological superiority over the ruled nor enjoy vastly superior standard of living (Jalata, p.186).

The above excerpt can trigger so many questions in the mind of anybody who might have some familiarity with Ethiopian history. The falsifications of history that Dr.
Mohammed seems to inject in his depictions of Ethiopia are difficult to accept. For instance, he depicts Ethiopia and the Oromo tribe as a colonizer-colonized dichotomy, reminiscent of the Eritrean lies. Isn’t one implicitly acknowledging the notion of two socio-politically distinct and sovereign nations in that kind of depiction? If that in fact is true, why is he then using the term *natives* in reference to the colonizers? Are the colonizers natives to what the Oromo tribe is native to? Furthermore, he uses the phrase *Oromo nationalism*. What exactly does that mean? When one uses the term nationalism, isn’t the concept of a nation, with its own sovereign territory, implied by virtue of the fact that there has to be a nation about and towards which one is nationalistic? If that is true, then what nation does he have in mind? Another thing that must be noticed is that the name *Oromia* is used in the excerpt. If you look at the two maps provided in Figures 1 and 2, the name *Oromia* can be found only on the Kilil map constructed by the current tribe-based government. Why isn’t it recorded on the provincial map? Was Oromia in existence in the 1960s, as the excerpt above suggests? Needless to say that Dr. Mohammed has not outgrown his tribal sense of identity, these questions and others will be fully clarified in the main body of the dissertation. Finally, look at the parts of the two maps that look like horns; the provincial map has the name Harargie, while the Kilil map of the same area has the name Somali. Figure 3 is the contemporary map of Ethiopia as published by the Ethiopian United States embassy on its homepage.
History of Ethiopia

The reign of Emperor Tewodros II (1855-68)

The coming to prominence of Tewodros was a turning point in the history of Ethiopia. Before Tewodros became an emperor, his name was Kassa. Kassa rose to the rank of Dejazmach in the Gonderian court in his youth. Kassa was, for his time, well educated and highly versed in ecclesiastical literature of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. Some historians believe that he had a working knowledge of Arabic due to the fact that he was born and raised in the town of Quarra. This town was located at the
border of Sudan and where Kassa became governor later in time. Kassa was a well recognized person for his leadership qualities. Consequent on that, Menen, the queen of Gonder, made him the governor of Quarra and married him to Tewabech, the daughter of Ali (Menen’s son and the de facto king of kings in Begemidir and Amhara). Kassa thus became loyal to the queen and Ali. Kassa, all this while had a vision of a united Ethiopia. He displayed unusual qualities which earned him admiration on the part of people like the British Consul named Plowden. Teferra Haile-Selassie (1997) tells us that “Kassa defeated the powerful regional chiefs one after the other including Ras Ali, the regent of the king of Gonder, in two years (1852-54)” (p. 16). Kassa was a fierce warrior who subdued his enemies. These enemies were the regional rulers around Ethiopia. This period in which Ethiopia was ruled by disparate regional rulers is called Zemene Mesafint. In other words, there was no central or federal government in the Zemene Mesafint period.

With the regional rulers subdued, Kassa focused on the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. Kassa wanted to be the legitimate leader of Ethiopia, and this legitimization could be acquired through the agency of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. The method he used to do that, according to Haile-Selassie (1997), was the following: “He [Kassa] ... secured the full co-operation of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church by issuing an edict on doctrinal controversies that upheld the official position of Abune Selama, [an Egyptian prelate] the bishop of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church.” Haile-Selassie (1997, p.17) states that this edict yielded dividends to both Kassa and the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. Furthermore, the symbolic effect of the edict was that it legitimated Kassa’s plan to ascend to the throne. Now the question is- how did Kassa’s edict settle doctrinal controversies? Here is how Haile-Selassie (1997) answered it:

The doctrinal controversies in the church were brought to an end by Kassa’s edict that proclaimed Tewahido (the two births of Christ) as the sole doctrinal basis of the
Ethiopian Orthodox Church. The Ecegie, the Ethiopian religious head second to the Egyptian prelate, was forced to abandon his Sost Lidet doctrine (the three births of Christ) in favor of Tewahido. The humiliation caused to the Ecegie by his submission to Tewahido was an outright victory to the Metropolitan Prelate, Abune Selama (p. 17).

With the Ethiopian Orthodox Church on his side, Kassa continued his battle against regional warlords. The last challenger was Dejazmach Wube in the province of Tigre. Wube rebelled against Kassa which triggered the battle of Dresgie on Feb. 9-1852. Wube was defeated and his defeat cleared up the last challenger in northern Ethiopia. Kassa, as a result of his victories over regional warlords, was anointed and crowned king of kings by Abune Selama (the Egyptian prelate/bishop). He was anointed King of Kings Tewodros II on Feb. 11-1855. After being anointed king of kings, Tewodros (no longer Kassa) marched to Shewa (central Ethiopia). Haile-Selassie (1997) states the result of Tewodros’ march to Shewa in the following way: “In the spring of 1855, Haile Melekot, king of Shewa, died of natural causes just before the opening of the battle. His army, after putting up some resistance, was defeated and Shewa was incorporated into the empire of Tewodros” (p. 18).

The elimination of warlords meant the elimination of the fragmentation of the state. This in turn meant that he had to reconstruct and restore a unified state. In order to accomplish that, he instituted reform measures. He divided the empire into smaller administrative units; he structured a system of salary for state employees like judges, governors and others. He reformed the tax system. His tax reform waived the exemption privilege of the church. He also undertook other church reforms like every church was to be served by two priests and three deacons. It turns out that the church opposed the reforms he introduced. Consequently, that was a breach to Abune Selama. The church’s opposition created a rift between Tewodros and the church leaders. There was an undeclared understanding between Aba Selama...
and Tewodros that each one of them was supposed to stick to his own domain. In other words, Tewodros was not supposed to interfere with the affairs of the church, and Aba Selama was not supposed to interfere with the affairs of the state. Tewodros’ interference in the affairs of the church was taken as a breach of the tacit understanding between him and Abune Selama. The result of this breach, Haile-Selassie (1997) tells us that “The church retaliated by inciting its followers against Tewodros. The clergy resorted to rumor-mongering. False accusations of apostasy were spread against the emperor.” (p. 18) The situation between the emperor and Aba Selama deteriorated. Due to the rumor-mongering and the accusation of apostasy, Haile-Selassie (1997) tells us what ensued in the following excerpt:

Tewodros suspected Abune Selama of serving the interest of Egypt. His suspicion was confirmed when the Abune and the Patriarch of Alexandria, who was on a visit to Ethiopia in 1856, submitted a letter jointly drafted to Tewodros. The letter was a request to Said Pasha of Egypt to provide an Egyptian garrison for the Abune. To make matters worse the Patriarch signified his keen interest to review Tewodros’ army. The Patriarch’s interest in military affairs enraged Tewodros. He put both the Patriarch and the Abune under house arrest which led to further deterioration of the relations between the Church and monarchy. Abune Selama retaliated by excommunicating Tewodros in 1857 (p. 19).

With respect to the excommunication, Tewodros made sure that the Patriarch of Alexandria, Kerilos, lifted the excommunication before he was allowed to leave Ethiopia. This action by the Patriarch did not smooth the situation out. It still got worse when Tewodros ordered the arrest and detention of Abune Selama. Worse yet, Tewodros ended up razing “forty churches in Gonder” (Haile-Selassie (1997), page 19). The ultimate effect of this destructive behavior by the Emperor is expressed this way by Haile-Selassie(1997): “Tewodros’ use of excessive force in
settling his differences with Abune Selama and the uncompromising disposition of the Abune
were major factors that frustrated the realization of his vision of a united Ethiopia” (p.19).

Tewodros was considered progressive with respect to his foreign policies. He was very
interested in introducing Western technology in Ethiopia. He was also interested in the support
of European powers to help him out in the restoration of the lost territories of Ethiopia. He had
close relationships with European diplomats like Consul Plowden of Britain, missionaries,
explorers, and traders. These relationships gave him a positive outlook toward Europeans.
Regardless of his disposition towards Europeans, he was unable to obtain Western technology.
He was also unable to get the necessary recognition as a head of state. The beginning of the end
of Tewodros’ emperorship was marked by the letter he wrote to Queen Victoria. Haile-Selassie
(1997) explains the situation this way:

The oversight of the British Foreign Office to act on his letter to Queen Victoria, in
which he expressed his desire to send an embassy that would purchase arms and recruit
skilled workers had wounded his pride. Regrettably the oversight of the Foreign Office
resulted in the detention of the British consul, Cameron, and a few European
missionaries and traders. The detention of the British consul in turn wounded the pride
of Great Britain. A plea by Great Britain for the release of its Consul and other
European prisoners failed to be entertained by Tewodros. Britain’s effort to resolve the
differences between the two countries proved abortive. Then Great Britain, as a matter
of national pride and honour, resorted to military initiative to free the prisoners. The
Abyssinian Expedition under the command of General Napier was launched and
succeeded in freeing the prisoners. The expedition ended the reign of Tewodros when
the mountain fortress of Maqdella was stormed on 10 April 1868. Tewodros, who for
the first time in his career faced defeat, chose to end his own life rather than tasting the humiliating experience of surrender. Tewodros’ foreign policy collapsed as abruptly as his domestic policies did (p. 20).

Although Tewodros ended his own life rather than surrendering to General Napier, the progressive leadership he provided for his time is very important. Haile-Selassie (1997) ends his exposition on Tewodros this way:

Despite his shortcomings he had succeeded in sowing the idea of a united Ethiopia; the need for administrative reform, creating a standing army, developing infrastructure and a host of other progressive ideas. His ideas and vision constituted the very building blocks of the policies of his successors (p. 21).

The reign of Emperor Yohannis IV (1872-89)

The death of Tewodros at the battle of Maqdella plunged the country into a power struggle. There were three protagonists in this struggle: Wag Shume Gobeze of Lasta, Dejazmach Kassa Mircha of Tigray, and King Menilek of Shewa. Immediately after the withdrawal of the British expeditionary force and the death of Tewodros “Gobeze crowned himself Tekle Giorgis, King of Kings of Ethiopia in 1868” (Haile-Selassie, 1997, p. 21). Ras Adale Tessema of Gojjam, who was a brother-in-law of Tekle Giorgis, immediately recognized the overlordship of the emperor. Kassa Mircha of Tigray, who was also the brother-in-law of the emperor, had his eye on the throne. Kassa, nonetheless, did not allow this political marriage to frustrate his ambition to be the emperor of Ethiopia. Menilek of Shewa had already expressed his interest for the emperorship by declaring himself Neguse Negest or King of Kings. Regardless of that, it did not take him too long to submit himself to the suzerainty of Tekle Giorgis. Emperor Tekle Giorgis clung to the throne for about three years without any meaningful power. It turned out that his own brother-in-law, Kassa Mircha of Tigray, overthrew him in July 1871 at the battle.
of Assam. Soon after the defeat of Tekle Giorgis, Kassa consolidated his power in Northern Ethiopia. More importantly though, six months after his victory, “he was crowned by the bishop of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, as King of Kings, in the throne name of Yohannis IV in Aksum in 1872” (Haile-Selassie, 1997, p. 22).

Yohannis’s accession to the throne had its own challenges: the European scramble for Africa, the rise of Mohammed Ahmed, and the Mahdi of the Sudan. Yohannis’ reign was marked by efforts to protect the territorial integrity of Ethiopia against colonial powers, especially that of Italy. But, Egypt also had an expansionist policy towards Ethiopia. Concern about Egypt ended up being replaced in the 1880s, by concern of a more fanatic religious movement called Mahdism. It must be noted that the Mahdists of Sudan were the ones who cut short the reign of Yohannis IV when a Mahdist stray bullet brought him to his demise in the Metema battle. Yohannis was mistakenly underestimated by people. With respect to this underestimation, Haile-Selassie (1997) tells us the following:

He was underestimated as lacking drive for reform and political sensitivity but proved otherwise in defending the interest of his empire with puritanical zeal. He had even succeeded in restoring the bogus region in the present Eritrea from Egypt in exchange for rescuing an Egyptian garrison from the Sudan where it had been put under siege by the Mahdists (p. 22).

With respect to domestic policies, Yohannis, his predecessor devolved power to local administrators. This policy won him the loyalty of the local warlords who helped him fight back intruders like Egyptians, Italians, and Mahdists. Furthermore, Yohannis continued Tewodros’ vision of a united Ethiopia. An area where he differed from his predecessor was the fact that he was more sensitive to the needs of the nobility and the Church. This particular policy helped him win their critical support in his endeavors. What needs to be restated here is the positive effect that the power devolution had on the local warlords or kings like
Menilek of Shewa. Menilek had the disposition to rebel against Yohannis and it was Yohannis’s policy of power devolution that quelled that disposition. However, the power devolution policy did not smooth things out completely between King Menilek and Yohannis in that Menilek kept calling himself Neguse Negest, a title apropos to an emperor. Yohannis promoted several people to higher positions, one of whom was Ras Adale of Gojjam. Adale was promoted from a Ras to kingship. That obviously angered Menilek. However, Yohannis, because of his preoccupation with Egyptian forces, did not pay too much attention to Menilek. Nonetheless, the successive victories Yohannis enjoyed against Egyptian forces gave him some breathing space at which time he turned to Menilek. In 1878 Yohannis marched to Shewa for a fight against Menilek. Menilek, too, mobilized his army for a showdown. The seriousness of the situation forced the Ethiopian Orthodox Church to intervene thereby averting bloodshed. Yohannis and Menilek signed the Liche Agreement when Menilek accepted the suzerainty of Yohannis, meaning that Menilek was no longer considered Neguse Negest, or King of Kings.

Something ironic sprang out of this compact; Yohannis’s son, Ras Araya, and Menilek’s daughter, Weizero Zewditu, were married to each other (Zewditu became empress of Ethiopia in 1916). This political marriage was seen as a symbol of the sincerity of the signatories to the Liche Agreement. There was an apparent peace in the country as a result of the Liche Treaty, giving Yohannis a chance to defend his empire against foreign intruders, while at the same time Menilek expanded his kingdom to the south, east, and west of Shewa.

The same doctrinal controversy that was settled by decree by Emperor Tewodros became a controversy again for Emperor Yohannis. Yohannis readily recognized that this controversy was a threat to his power and the unity of his empire. Haile-Selassie (1997) tells us how Yohannis resolved this controversy in the following excerpt:
He, [Yohannis] unlike his predecessor, resolved the controversy by convening an ecclesiastical council at Boru-meda. Under his chairmanship the Ethiopian Orthodox Church debated the controversies and reached a decision by consensus that upheld Tewahido (the Two Births of Christ) as the official interpretation of the nature of Christ in the Ethiopian Orthodox Church (p. 23-24).

Yohannis constantly worried about Ethiopia’s hostile neighbor, Egypt. When the Ottoman Empire vacated the Red Sea coast, Egypt filled the void. Although Yohannis defeated Egypt in two successive battles in the 1870s, this defeat did not have a restraining effect upon Egypt. Massawa, Ethiopia’s port town on the Red Sea remained occupied by Egypt. Egyptian forces penetrated deep into Ethiopia and captured Harare, a town on the east coast. Yohannis’ plea for restraint was completely ignored. In 1882, Egypt was occupied by the British and Egypt compelled to vacate the Red Sea littoral and the town of Harare on the eastern part of Ethiopia. The British occupation of Egypt, furthermore, forced the Sudanese Mahdists influence to disappear along with the Egyptians. Ironically, the Egyptian garrison in Sudan came under siege by Mahdists. This situation forced Egypt to seek help from Ethiopia. Britain was represented by Rear-Admiral Sir William Hewett. Hewett intervened between Ethiopia and Egypt on behalf of Her Majesty Queen Victoria to hammer out a treaty. The purpose of the treaty was to “establish an everlasting peace between them” (Haile-Selassie, 1997, p. 24). Ethiopia fulfilled her obligation to rescue the Egyptian garrison from the siege of the Mahdists and pave a safe passage out of Sudan. Britain, on the other hand, failed to exit the port of Massawa. What she did instead was to allow Massawa to be occupied by Italy. Egypt, however, stopped being a hostile neighbor to Ethiopia after the safe passage of its garrison out of Sudan. Egypt’s exit out of Ethiopia naturally created a vacuum; and this vacuum was filled by the Mahdists who were more hostile towards Ethiopians than Egyptians, presumably because Egyptians were, and still are, Moslems. The Mahdists jihad penetrated into Gonder, a town adjacent to Sudan, and
destroyed it in 1888. After the destruction of Gonder, Yohannis was given an ultimatum by the Mahdists. The ultimatum was that Yohannis must become a Moslem and that his subjects must convert to Islam in exchange for peace.

Another problem Yohannis had in his hands was also the colonial ambitions of France towards the Red Sea coast. Seeing France’s ambition, Britain decided to frustrate that ambition by expelling Egypt from the Red Sea coast and allowing Italy to take her place. Soon after Italy replaced Egypt, she expanded her occupation of northern Ethiopia. She occupied Zulla located to the south of the port of Massawa, Sahati and Wai. Ras Alula confronted the Italians in 1887, 20 kilometers from Massawa. At Dogali, Ras Alula annihilated 500 Italian soldiers and only 12 of the Italian soldiers escaped Ras Alula’s punitive fury.

Following this victory, Emperor Yohannis of Tigray made one of the most serious mistakes in Ethiopian history. Here is how Haile-Selassie (1997) explains the mistake:

The Italians, humiliated at the battle of Dogali, abandoned Sahati and Wai, and retreated to Massawa. The victory of the Ethiopians restrained the expansion of Italy into the interior of Ethiopia until Yohannis foolishly removed Ras Alula and replaced him by Fitawrari Dahab who had a record of defecting to the Egyptians, Mahdists, and the Italians. Yohannis marched to settle scores with the Mahdists without making adequate arrangements for the defense of his maritime province. Moreover the local tribal chiefs alliance with Italy was also a contributory factor for the unchallenged incursion of Italy into the Eritrean plateau.

Yohannis, with his maritime province undefended marched to the Sudan border and his army clashed with the Mahdists’ force at Metema. It was a fierce battle where the Ethiopians had dominated the scene and the Mahdists were retreating when a stray bullet fatally wounded Yohannis and claimed his life. When the news of Yohannis’s
death reached the Mahdists’ camp, they regrouped their forces and charged against the Ethiopian forces that were shocked by the death of their emperor. The Ethiopians began to retreat and finally fled in the face of the Mahdists’ counter-offensive. The Mahdists succeeded in capturing the corpse of the emperor from the Ethiopians and severed the head from the body and presented their trophy to the Mahdi in Khartoum (p. 26-27).

Emperors Tewodros and Yohannis died while fighting their enemies. But, Haile-Selassie (1997), states that Yohannis expanded on what Tewodros started and left a better Ethiopia for his successor, Emperor Menilek II. The following excerpt explains it:

Yohannis inherited a divided and a weak Ethiopia, but at his tragic death he left to his successor Emperor Menilek II, a united and much larger and prosperous empire. He should, more than anything else, be remembered for sacrificing his life in the defense of his country (p. 27).

The reign of Emperor Menilek II (1889-1913)

The death of Emperor Yohannis opened the way for competition for the throne. Before the competition started, Ras Araya Selassie, only son of Yohannis and son-in-law of Menilek, inherited the throne from his father, but passed away soon after his father’s death, in 1887 without leaving an heir to the throne. The competition started in earnest between King Menilek of Shewa, and Ras Mengesha of Tigray. Haile-Selassie (1997) tells us:

Yohannis, among the siblings of his three brothers at his death bed, chose Ras Mengesha to succeed him. The other two nephews of Yohannis, Dejazmach Meshesha Maru, and Dejazmach Bogale Ali contested Yohannis’s choice. The struggle for succession among the three cousins made conditions favourable [sic] for Menilek to seize the throne and crown himself as Niguse Negest [King of Kings] of Ethiopia. The
Tigrayn army which was battered and dispersed at the battle of Metema did not pose any threat to Menilek.

Ras Mengesha, one of the contenders for the throne, who had felt that the throne had been usurped from him, declared his non-allegiance to Menilek and formed an alliance with the Italian governor of the colony of Eritrea, General Antonio Baldissera. The Italians who had been labouring [sic] to incite local chiefs against Menilek seized the opportunity and used it to their advantage. The friendship struck between Mengesha and the governor of the Italian colony of Eritrea reached its climax when they signed a convention on 6 December 1891. The vow of solidarity consisted of three articles whereby the contracting parties affirmed their friendship to stand against a common enemy. The Italians recognized Mengesha as the legitimate heir to the throne and he reciprocated by acknowledging Italy’s sovereignty in the occupied territory. Both parties entered into obligation not to do anything that might adversely affect the interests of the other. The final provisions of the pact affirmed the friendship between the Tigrayans and the Italians. The coded message of the vow of solidarity was that the Italians would support Mengesha should he choose to reclaim the throne from Menilek. In case of any aggression by Menilek the Italians would stand by Mengesha and vice versa. The Italians had also extracted from Mengesha his recognition of their sovereignty. The sovereignty provision of the covenant was shrouded in vagueness to conceal Italy’s ambition to occupy the whole of Ethiopia (p. 27-28).

This alliance between Mengesha and the Italians did not last that long. Mengesha knew that he compromised the interests of his country by allowing the Italians to extend their grip on Ethiopia all the way to River Mereb which eventually became the line of demarcation between Ethiopia and Eritrea.
Menilek at around 12 years old was taken prisoner by Emperor Tewodros, where he had an opportunity to watch and observe Tewodros while growing up. He saw that Tewodros used excessive force in his governance. He also saw that Tewodros was deeply involved in the affairs of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church even to the extent of issuing a decree to solve doctrinal controversies. In short before his escape to Shewa, Menilek had learned a great deal from Tewodros. His experience with Tewodros helped him develop his own convictions with respect to how a state should be governed. When he came to the throne in 1889, Mengesha rebelled against Menilek for a short while, but eventually submitted to the emperorship of Menilek. King Tekle Haimanot of Gojjam and King Michael of Wello did not challenge Menilek at all.

Here the anticipation of future by Menilek should be noted. Menilek expanded his kingdom to the east, west, and south of Shewa, his power base while Yohannis was still the Emperor of Ethiopia. After Menilek incorporated these regions into his kingdom, he used this incorporation as groundwork for his final conquest of Harargie. Harargie was given to an Amir (by the Egyptians) when the Egyptian garrison left in 1885 because of the British siege on Egypt. Furthermore, Menilek was up to restoring the medieval empire of Ethiopia. As a result, he pressed for the re-conquest of the Ogaden in 1891. The fact here is that Menilek had accomplished most of what he wanted while he was still the King of Shewa, before he became emperor of Ethiopia]. Here is what Haile-Selassie (1997) tells us about Menilek:

When Menilek became Emperor of Ethiopia he had completed a good portion of the restoration of the medieval territories and the unification of Ethiopia. The vision of Tewodros was realized by Menilek who excelled both of his predecessors in statecraft and diplomacy (p. 30).

Menilek’s leadership capability went beyond what he did in Ethiopia. He had to have Ethiopia recognized as an independent and sovereign state internationally but more importantly by the colonial
powers that had their eyes on Ethiopia. Menilek accomplished that using diplomacy and resistance to colonial expansion. As stated previously, Menilek beat Italy in 1896 at the battle of Adwa. That alone forced Italy to recognize Ethiopia as an independent and sovereign state. Italy obviously was humiliated in the battle of Adwa. This humiliation was shared and felt by other European colonial powers. Consequently, the colonial powers in Europe followed Italy’s lead and recognized Ethiopia as an independent and sovereign state. Haile-Selassie (1997) tells us that: “The invincibility of the colonial powers was shattered and Ethiopia won international recognition as a sovereign state with definite borders” (p. 31).

Menilek’s success was the result of his great skill in diplomacy. He was very interested in diverse diplomatic contacts and this interest resulted in diplomatic contact with France, Russia, Italy, Great Britain, Egypt, and others, but he struck a close friendship with Italy and France. The Italians were aware of Menilek’s ambition to get to the throne. Hence, they openly showed their friendship to him which created hostility between Menilek and Emperor Yohannis. Menilek continued his friendship with Italy after he became Emperor of Ethiopia and beat them at the battle of Adwa after he became an Emperor. The battle of Adwa brought about the Treaty of Wichale in which Ethiopia, if she wanted, could use the assistance of Italy in order to conduct business with European kings. In other words, it was optional for Ethiopia to ask for Italy’s assistance. However, the Italian version of the treaty was obligatory rather than optional. The Ethiopian government took this contradiction to be an intentional fraudulence on the part of Italy. As a result, the Ethiopian government unilaterally annulled the treaty. This annulment then triggered the battle of Adwa in 1896 in which Italy, a European colonial power, was defeated. A new treaty was hammered out on 26 October 1896. The new treaty contained, along with other provisions, Italy’s recognition of Ethiopia as a sovereign and independent state. The
preceding discussion outlines Menilek’s courage, strength, diplomacy, and capability to survive in the midst of European scramble for Africa. How about his domestic policies and performance?

Menilek was a monarch and he arranged a hierarchical system of leadership in his government. His government officials were faithful and devoted to him, and ordinary citizens cooperated with him in whatever he did; the reason was that they [the ordinary citizens] benefited from his government. However, as noted earlier, during this period Ethiopia had several different local chiefs or kings. One way for one king to rebel against another king was to refuse to pay tribute or taxes to the one deemed to be more powerful. A good example of this situation is what happened between Menilek and King Tona of Wolayyta. Haile-Selassie (1997) tells us the following after Tona was defeated by Menilek in a battle-

“Tona... after his defeat was pardoned and reinstated to his previous position (kingship). Such gestures of magnanimity characterized Menilek’s style of government.” (p. 24) This kind of behavior earned Menilek love, respect, loyalty, on the part of his subjects. Haile-Selassie concludes Emperor Menilek’s reign this way:

Menilek, during his long years of reign, restored and unified most of the medieval territories of Ethiopia and introduced administrative and social reforms of far-reaching implications. He injected into the nation the idea of modernity; above all enhanced the prestige of Ethiopia as an independent and sovereign state in the midst of European ‘scramble for Africa.’ His reign was marked with peace, stability and prosperity (p. 36).

The reign of Emperor Haile Selassie I (1941-74)

Lij Iyasu, the grandson of Menilek, was the choice of the Emperor to succeed him. Lij Iyasu was only sixteen years old at that time. The Emperor made his choice on his death bed in 1909 when his incapacitation forced him to make his successor known. While he was incapacitated, it was actually his wife, Queen Taytu who was in charge of running the government. She took this opportunity to appoint...
people to high offices which drew the wrath of the Shewan nobility. Consequently, she was exiled to an area known as Entoto far into the outskirts of Addis Ababa. She was effectively kept in exile until she passed away. Lij Iyasu then became the Emperor of Ethiopia in 1911. He, too, drew the wrath of the Shewan nobility as a result of his close association with Moslems. In fact Lij Iyasu converted to Islam which triggered, with the concurrence of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, his deposition from power. Lij Iyasu was then replaced by Weizero Zewditu, the daughter of Menilek. Ras Teferri Mekonnen, later known as Emperor Haile-Selassie I, was designated to be her regent and crown prince. Empress Zewditu did not have the required talent for state craft. Neither was she as keen as her step mother, Queen Taytu. Queen Taytu was the driving force behind critical decisions Emperor Menilek made. She was the one who instigated the abrogation of the Treaty of Wichale that Menilek signed with colonialist Italy. Zewditu had a modest educational background characterized with conservatism. Hence, she was viewed as a temporary replacement of Iyasu. Ras Teferri Mekonnen, in contrast to Zewditu, was viewed as progressive. The appointment of Zewditu to the throne and Ras Teffri as her regent and crown prince was actually taken to be a compromise between the traditional and the progressive. At this time in history, the progressives were led by Teferri, the future Emperor Haile-Selassie. The supporters of Empress Zewditu had dwindled due to attrition and repression by progressive forces. Now, the progressives demanded that Ras Teferri be crowned as king. Ras Teferri, then, became king in 1928. In other words, Teferri was not yet an Emperor. However, being a king would pave the way to the emperorship as he was the heir to the throne due to the fact that he was the crown prince. It turned out that two years later Teferri became king. Empress Zewditu, co-incidentally, passed away due to natural causes thus making the succession of Teferri to the throne possible.

Teferri was crowned as Haile-Selassie I Emperor of Ethiopia, Elect of God and Conquering Lion of the Tribe of Judas, on 30 October 1930. Now that Teferri was Emperor Haile-Selassie I, he continued to
govern the country in comportment with what Menilek started. Haile-Selassie introduced modest reforms in education and abolished slavery. His historic landmark was the introduction of a constitution which was an imitation of the Japanese constitution of 1889. This constitution was the first of its kind. It dealt for the most part with the powers and prerogatives of the emperor, and the succession to the throne. Haile-Selassie attempted to introduce a bicameral parliament in which members of the Senate would be chosen by the emperor and members of the Chamber of Deputies would be elected by indirect means by those who owned immovable property. Haile-Selassie (1997) tells us that what Emperor Haile-Selassie did was “an important departure towards a constitutional rule in a society where the rights and duties of the people were determined by whims of an emperor” (p. 37).

Haile-Selassie had a good deal of inspiration from his tour in Europe while he was still Empress Zewditu’s regent and crown prince. In his tour, he visited Great Britain, France, Italy, Sweden, and other European countries in 1924. Haile-Selassies’ European visit broke Ethiopia’s isolation from the international community of nations. This exposure to European nations impressed him enough that he came back to Ethiopia intent on introducing some aspects of Western civilization. This favorable attitude towards European nations contributed to his determination to associate Ethiopia with prestigious institutions like the League of Nations and the International Labor Organization in 1919 and 1923 respectively.

At this point in history, Nazi Germany was quite aggressive in its policy towards other European nations. As a result, Great Britain and France adopted a policy of appeasement towards Italy in order to keep her away from Germany. This represented, to Italy, the sense of apprehension Great Britain and France have towards Nazi Germany and Italy decided to take advantage of this apprehension by pressing both Britain and France to disregard the tripartite treaty they signed in 1906. This tripartite treaty recognized the independence and territorial integrity of Ethiopia. Italy, nonetheless, got a tacit
agreement of Britain and France and began to prepare to occupy Ethiopia while increasing its diplomatic offensive against Ethiopia. Britain concerned about Nazi Germany, came up with a proposal that suggested that Ethiopia would retain sovereignty of the port of Zeila on the Red Sea provided that Ethiopia the Ogaden region to Italy. Anthony Eden took the proposal to Rome and Mussolini rejected it on 24 June 1935. The aggression of Nazi Germany became more and more intensified. Consequently, France and Britain became desperate and their need to befriend Italy grew stronger more so than before. The result of this intense situation, Haile-Selassie (1997) tells us that “. . . they worked out a plan that ceded more than half of Ethiopia to Italy and the remaining part to be Italy’s protectorate with an access to the port of Aseb” (p. 39).

This plan was put together secretly and, obviously enough, when it was presented to Ethiopia, she rejected it. This plan that Britain and France constructed was a violation of the tripartite treaty the intention of which was to uphold the independence and territorial integrity of Ethiopia. The plan was a violation of the treaty, because it gave the green light to Italy to attack Ethiopia. Central to the violation of the treaty, of course, was that France and Britain wanted to befriend Italy. Eventually, though, the plan failed. Regardless, Italy had already gotten the assurances of its colonial allies to proceed and attack Ethiopia. And, Italy did just that on 3 October 1935. To avoid another humiliation in battle with Ethiopia Italy decided to use modern weaponry including mustard gas which was a violation of the gas Protocol of 1925. There was now a full blown war between two nations, Italy and Ethiopia. Italy had modern weaponry, aerial capability and mustard gas, while Ethiopia had horse mounted soldiers with spears. Ethiopia lost the war and Emperor Haile-Selassie fled to Jerusalem and then to Great Britain where he remained in exile until 1940. A few days after Haile-Selassie’s flight to Jerusalem, the Italians reached the capital city, Addis Ababa bringing a sad end to the independence of Ethiopia —one of the oldest
nations. Addis Ababa’s occupation paved the way for Italy to reshape east Africa by merging Ethiopia with its colonies, Eritrea and Somaliland.

This newly created territory was given the name *Italian East Africa*. This huge colony was governed by a viceroy accountable to the Ministry for Africa in Rome. The internal Ethiopian territories were reorganized along ethnic lines. The Ogaden area was merged with Somaliland and Tigray and Danakel areas were incorporated with Eritrea. The other parts of Ethiopia were divided into four regions reflecting ethnic divisions. These divisions were: Amhara, Harare, Oromo-Sidama and Shewa. Each region, with an Italian governor, was autonomous but under the supervision of the viceroy. General Pietro Badoligio was the first fascistic Italian army leader to enter Addis Ababa from the colony of, Eritrea. He was replaced, due to poor health, by General Graziani who was known for his terror and extreme cruelty. As a result, an attempt was made to kill him in February 1937. This attempt on his life resulted into a massacre of unarmed civilians in Addis Ababa and monks, nuns, and clergies in the monastery of Debre Libanos. Graziani was replaced by the Duke of Aosta, who introduced major racist legislation. This was shift in approach from terror and extreme cruelty to a system of racism.

Regardless of the atrocities Ethiopia went through, the Italian occupation of Ethiopia for five years had a transformative effect upon the Ethiopian society. Here is how Haile-Selassie (1997) puts it:

The Italian occupation, despite the atrocities, had some significant inputs in changing the attitudes of the Ethiopian society towards the adoption of Western civilization. The introduction of Western values shook the fabric of the Ethiopian society which created a more conducive climate for any attempt to modernize the country. The introduction of the idea of entrepreneurship in commerce and industry, modern system of transportation, and even the top-heavy colonial administration had invaluable impact on the conservative mode of life that was prevalent in Ethiopia before the Italian
occupation. Furthermore, influences of traditional institutions in particular of the
nobility and chieftaincy were undermined by Italy’s colonial policy. By 1941 a good
number of the nobles who were threats to Haile-Selassie’s power had disappeared from
politics by natural attrition and Italy’s scorched-earth policy which virtually destroyed
the nobility as well as its power-base. After the restoration of independence, those
nobles and chiefs who collaborated with Italy were disgraced and lost their social
position of influence and were not of any consequence to pose serious challenges to the
emperor. The concurrence of events made conditions favourable for the emperor to
resume his modernization that was interrupted for five years by the Italian occupation
(p. 41).

While Britain played a significant role towards Italy’s occupation of Ethiopia it flipped around and
joined hands with Ethiopian patriots and expelled Italy from Ethiopia in 1941. The British and Emperor
Haile-Selassie, then, began to think about who should be in charge of the administration in the country.
The British wanted to be in charge of Ethiopia until a peace treaty was signed between Ethiopia and
Italy. Haile-Selassie rejected the British view on the grounds that he had never renounced his
sovereignty and, hence, he should continue his leadership that was disrupted by Italy’s occupation of
Ethiopia. In addition to the disagreement between Haile-Selassie and the British, there were some
British officials who felt that Ethiopia should be under British protectorate, at least for a short period.
This view compelled Haile-Selassie to take some symbolic steps which serve as acts of defiance and an
assertion of his power. His first act of defiance was appointing seven ministers without consulting with
the British. In order to minimize his vulnerability to the British Haile-Selassie proceeded but told the
British that the ministers were appointed in order to assist the British military force in running the
administration of Ethiopia. The British reluctantly accepted the emperor’s explanation of why he
appointed the ministers. He then insisted that Britain should guarantee Ethiopian independence. Haile-Selassie proposed that Ethiopia’s independence be guaranteed through the agency of an Anglo-Ethiopian Agreement. This Agreement was concluded and signed in 1942. Some of the elements of this Agreement were provisions of financial assistance, recruiting expatriate advisors, assisting in establishing an army, a police force, and courts. The agreement was in compliance with issues that were important to the British government. In other words, the British were in control of the coercive branches of the Ethiopian government, the army, the police force, the court system and the high court. The agreement, furthermore, put the Ogaden region, the city of Dire Dawa, and the Franco-Ethiopian Railway Line under the British rule. In return for all this control, Haile-Selassie tells us that:

  Britain . . . entered into an obligation to advance a four year subvention of £3, 250, 000 [British pounds] and train a standing army and a police force at her own expense and in return retain the post of the commander of police force” (p. 43).

The Anglo-Ethiopian Agreement was eventually annulled by Ethiopia in compliance with one of the provisions in the Agreement. Other Agreements were hammered out in which Ethiopia regained the control of the Franco-Ethiopian Railway Line, Dire Dawa, etc. from Britain. Although the colonialist impulse of Britain was palpable, it must be admitted that Britain played a significant role in restoring and reconstructing Ethiopia. The fact that Britain trained a standing army, a police force, and introduced modern education attests to Britain’s importance to Ethiopia. Diverse international relations were one of the strong features of Emperor Haile-Selassie’s government. An act reflective of that was that the Ethiopian government invited the United States government to participate in development programs. United States accepted the invitation on the grounds of the strategic location of Ethiopia, and as a result of the invitation assisted Ethiopia in establishing a civil airline in 1946. Furthermore, a treaty known as Ethio-United States of America treaty of Amity and Economic Assistance was signed in 1953. After
signing this treaty the influence of the British faded until America completely replaced the British. Haile-Selassie (1997) tells us that: “Ethiopia remained a faithful partner of the United States until Emperor Haile-Selassie was overthrown by a military junta in 1974” (p. 44).

Before the overthrow of Emperor Haile-Selassie, there was a great deal of upheaval and military action which resulted into a new government called Dergue. Dergue is, according to Haile-Selassie (1997), a body which “the army formally constituted” (p. 121). In other words, Haile-Selassie (1997) says that Dergue means “committee or council” (p. 121). The purpose and reason for the military set up the Dergue was to spark a political upheaval so that there would be a complete military take over of Ethiopia. In order to accomplish that, the so called Coordinating Committee started vilifying Emperor Haile-Selassie. Since the military support was the foundation of Emperor Haile-Selassie’s power, the vilification of the emperor by the military succeeded in bring down the emperor.

The Dergue became more and more important in the eyes of the public and Emperor Haile-Selassie became an object of public condemnation. All this while, Ethiopia Tikdem was the motto of the Dergue; a philosophy ubiquitously promulgated in Ethiopia. According to Haile-Selassie (1997), the Coordinating Committee expressed its policy statement this way:

Let us . . . work together in a new spirit for the everlastiing unity, peace, and prosperity of our people. Let us not allow time to overtake us, nor let the opportunity of the challenge slip from our hands. Let us not allow personal conveniences to weaken our resolve. Let the vision of our ultimate objective guide our actions. May the Almighty be always with us (p. 118).

Interpreting this policy statement through the lens of history, the Dergue were saying: (a) We will maintain unity of the people of Ethiopia, (b) prosperity of the people of Ethiopia would flow because of the Dergue and, (c) the principle of the end justifies the means would govern.
their actions. What was the ultimate objective? It was the overthrow of Emperor Haile-Selassie and the complete military take over of Ethiopia. This was accomplished through a horrific period of bloodshed amongst Ethiopians belonging to different political parties. What emerged at the end of the bloodshed was the Dergue with Mengistu Haile Mariam as its leader and the bloodshed continued. An excerpt from the Argentine Forensic Anthropology Team (Equipo Argentino de Antropología Forense, EAAF) Report (2002):

Between 1974 and 1991, under the leadership of Colonel Mengistu Hailemariam, Ethiopian state security forces tortured and executed thousands of persons suspected of belonging to urban opposition movements. During these same years, the military killed tens of thousands during indiscriminate campaigns against “dissident” ethnic groups in rural areas. The Dergue also bore large responsibility for exacerbating and perpetuating the famine that killed an estimated one million persons during the mid-1980s.

According to Amnesty International, the Dergue compiled one of the worst records of human rights abuses in recent history during its seventeen years in power. (p. 1)

The Dergue acted as the head of state until the monarchy was formally abolished by Proclamation No. 27, March 17, 1975. Although the monarchy was abolished in 1975, “the Dergue actually took over government in early 1974” (Haile-Selassie (1997, p. 133).

The Dergue was viewed and declared itself a socialist government. This would eventually prove to be a cause of the Dergue’s demise. U.S Assistant Secretary of State for Africa, Herman Jay Cohen brokered the end of the Eritrean-Ethiopian War and pushed for the Dergue to leave power. However it was perceived, the Dergue government actually reflected both socialistic and democratic characteristics. It was socialistic in the sense that it nationalized private properties and big companies; and, it was democratic in the sense that it had the principle of *Ethiopia Tikden* central to its structure and
functionality. Literally translated, the Amharic phrase *Ethiopia Tikdem* means let Ethiopia come first. In other words, there is nothing more important than Ethiopia. As a principle of the Dergue’s philosophy, there are several interpretations given to it, one of which is the following: “When we say *Ethiopia Tikdem* we mean a government of the people, by the people, for the people” (Haile-Selassie (1997), p. 135). Despite the bloodshed, the Dergue upheld the rights of all Ethiopians, men and women. It made sure that the reforms enunciated by the philosophy of *Ethiopia Tikdem* were implemented. The reforms were carried out by teams of people called *Yelewit Hawariat* [apostles of change]. Haile-Selassie (1997) tells us the following about *Yelewit Hawariat*: “*Yelewit Hawariat* were cadres upon whom the Dergue relied for the implementation of the political, economic and social changes that were in the making” (p. 149).

Although the Dergue was both democratic and socialistic, a socialistic term included in the philosophy of *Ethiopia Tikdem* was *Hibretesebawinet*. This term, in the Dergue government, meant Ethiopian Socialism. With respect to *Hibretesebawinet* here is what Haile-Selassie (1997) says: “Ethiopia Tikdem means *Hibretesebawinet* and *Hibretesebawinet* means equality, self-reliance; the dignity of labour; the supremacy of the common good; and the inviolability of Ethiopian unity” (p. 153).

This concept of Ethiopian unity is one concept that sets Dergue apart from the current tribe-based government. In other words, they are at odds in their interpretation of the doctrine of self-determination. Within the framework of *Hibretesebawinet* Haile-Selassie (1997) states the following as it relates to the doctrine of self-determination: “The right to self-determination within a unified Ethiopia will be realized” (p. 154). In other words, Dergue did not believe in the secession of Eritrea.

As evidenced in the preceding Dergue had its good side; and, it also had its cruel side. One instance, of that cruelty was in 1977 when the Dergue issued an order for the public to surrender their fire-arms to a search team. Haile-Selassie (1997) states that:
The search team conducted a house-to-house search for fire-arms and anti-revolutionaries from 24-29 March 1997. In the capital (Addis Ababa) a search was declared and all citizens were instructed to stay at home, a dawn to dusk curfew was imposed and vehicles were prohibited from circulation. The search was conducted in a very tense atmosphere. Fire-arms were collected and alleged anti-revolutionaries, including the leader of EPRP, Tsegaye Debesay, were summarily executed by a search team. The search for arms and anti-revolutionary hunt was a prelude to the Red Terror (p. 179).

The influence of the Soviet Union was obvious in the Red Terror. The mass killings of prisoners and those deemed to be anti-revolution were rampant and carried out in the silence of the night, as happened when the Bolsheviks came to power. As stated by the, the Soviet Ambassador to Ethiopia, Anatoly Rattanov, who was invited to a cocktail reception and in his conversation with an African diplomat, Rattanov reportedly said: “African socialism has its peculiarities and this (meaning the violence) is the feature of the Ethiopian revolution” (p. 119). Tola (1989) points out the Soviet connection with the Red Terror in the following statement: “he Anatoly played a major role both in the February palace coup against Emperor Haile-Selassie of Mengistu and in the terror against EPRP” (p. 119).

Dergue was socialistic in its behavior and dealings with other parties. Haile-Selassie (1997) gives us a view of the harshest side of the Dergue government.

The MEISON leaders or ‘right roaders’, as they were referred to by the government media, including the highly regarded ideologist of the MEISON and the chairman of the POMOA, Comrade Haile Fida, languished in prison and died a slow death in unknown circumstances. The entire leadership of the MEISON was liquidated. It died a premature
death because of the leaders’ excessive ambition for power and their decision to abandon the revolution to which it gave a sense of direction . . . (p. 209).

The brutality of the Dergue is clear. The question is- was there any group or party that was not as brutal as the Dergue? The answer is no. My conversation with those Ethiopians who were in the thick of it revealed that Ethiopian People’s Revolutionary Party (EPRP), All-Ethiopia Socialist Movement (MEISON), Tigrayan people’s Liberation Front (TPLF), Eritrean People’s Liberation Front (EPLF), Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), and others were murderers for the causes they stood for. In fact, they credit the Dergue government for keeping the country together in view of the fact that it was simultaneously being attacked from three directions; Somalis on the east, being subverted within the country by its own security forces who passed critical information to the rebels (TPLF and EPLF) in the north, and by Dergue security personnel who northern rebels bribed for information that allowed the rebels to annihilate the Dergue military force. A critical question now is- where did the TPLF, EPLF get their fighting power from? Here is how Haile-Selassie (1997) answers the question:

Some Arab countries showed their disapproval of the new political orientation of the country by stepping up their assistance to the Eritrean secessionists in the northern part of the country. The scale of their interference was worrisome to the regime. Moreover the Arab interference was exploited by the regime to rally the Ethiopian people behind it under the pretext that the territorial integrity of the country was threatened by the collusion of external forces with secessionists. The Eritrean problem had always been a cause for straining relations between Ethiopia and some Arab nations even under the monarchy. During that time the radical Arab states of Syria, Iraq, and Libya and from the moderates Egypt and the Sudan were assisting and harbouring [sic] secessionist elements (p. 170).
At this point, it must be pointed out that without the unceasing support of Arab countries Eritrea wouldn’t have been able to secede and the TPLF rebels would not have been able to take over Ethiopia. In addition to the role the Arabs played, the role that the United States played was the more decisive in the entire theater whose theme was to bring down the Dergue socialist government and possibly to put Ethiopia into the political and religious orbit of the Arabs. The question is- how did the United States play a more decisive role?

It is important to remember the London Peace Talks of May 28-1991. Several delegations were sent to this peace talk, chaired by Herman J. Cohen, U.S Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs. One of the delegations was the Dergue representatives. With respect to the Dergue [Ethiopian government] delegation, here is what Haile-Selassie (1997), who was at that time Ethiopian Ambassador in London tells us:

Representatives of the Ethiopian government abandoned the talks at an early stage because they felt that the crucial decision to let EPRDF take the military and political control in Addis Ababa has been decided unilaterally by the US without the consultation and consent of the Ethiopian government (p. 326).

Haile-Selassie (1997) states the following regarding the reaction of the European Parliament with respect to the way the United States of America handled the London Conference: “. . . the European Parliament which passed a resolution expressing its displeasure with the US Government’s handling of the conference and its concern about developments in Ethiopia after the EPRDF takeover” (p. 327). The political developments got worse and worse for the Dergue. Haile-Selassie (1997) sums up the end of the Dergue and the rise of the tribe-based government:

. . . , the London Peace Talks became irrelevant on account of the disintegration of the government’s armed forces caused by the flight (of Mengistu to Harare,
Zimbabwe) of the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, the appalling ineptitude of the government in Addis Ababa to provide a leadership that was required in a crisis, the absence of neutral international observers and impartial mediators (p. 328).

**Oromo/Galla Migration into Ethiopia**

It is my belief that historical authenticity overrides politics, hence I use the term *Galla* rather than Oromo throughout this section.

This is a short and general outline of Galla migration into Ethiopia as published by the honorable Yilma Deresa (1959) who was the Finance Minister of Ethiopia during Emperor Haile-Selassie’s reign. Yilma Deresa (1959) tells us that some of the Galla history that he recorded was passed down to his generation through oral history. For instance, around the 10\textsuperscript{th} century A.D., because of Somali and Somali-Bantu attack, the Gallas migrated in the south-eastern direction from the Hargeisa (British Somaliland) area. This migration ended up in the settlement of the Gallas somewhere between the Wabeshebele and Juba rivers in the Benadire area (p. 213-214). In this area, the Gallas led a nomadic life for about 100 years. All this while, unlike the Somalis, the Gallas did not inter-marry or do business with Arabs. It is important to note that Somalis becoming Moslem and inter-married Arabs coincided with the Somalis receiving firearms from the Arabs which they to war against the Gallas. In the Benadire area the Gallas were attacked by the Somalis in the north, and by the Somali-Bantus in the south. This situation triggered another migration of the Gallas into southern Ethiopia. Deresa (1959) tells us that the fertility of this area was like the biblical land of milk and honey. As the Gallas were nomadic people, southern Ethiopia was great for cattle grazing. Most importantly, the warring Somalis and Somali-Bantus were now out of their way, and no one else was hostile towards the
Gallas. Here, the Gallas led a peaceful, prosperous, and semi-settled life, which, according to the author, was confirmed by the oral history transmitted down through generations. Since life was stable at this juncture, the Gallas’ population increased and spread to the east, west, and northern parts of Ethiopia. The peaceful surrounding and the absence of hostility made it possible for their families to flourish and for them to develop a sociopolitical system known as Gada, the definition and some characteristics of which will follow just below. The peaceful and settled life continued all the way to the 16th century. A special note must be made here pertaining to Gada. As indicated below, Gada is both defensive and expansionist in purpose. The Gallas did not use it in Somalia either for expansionistic or defensive purposes. They used it after they settled in southern Ethiopia; hence logic suggests that they must have constructed it after their arrival in Ethiopia.

**The Gada system**

The book *Gada* (1973) was the result of Dr. Asmarom Legesse’s dissertation. Dr. Asmarom is a native of the former northernmost province of Ethiopia called Eritrea. Since it seceded from Ethiopia on May 24, 1993 (Vestal, p. 9), it is considered a sovereign nation state. Nonetheless, Dr. Asmarom Legesse (1973) defines the Gada system, along with some of its characteristics, in the following way:

The Gada system is a system of classes (*luba*) that succeeded each other every eight years in assuming military, economic, political, and ritual responsibilities. Each Gada class remains in power during a specific term (*Gada*) which begins and ends with a formal power transfer ceremony. Before assuming a position of leadership, the Gada class is required to wage war against a community that none of their ancestors had raided. This particular war is known as *butta* and is waged...
on schedule every eight years. It is this event that most directly connected with the pulsating frontier of their dominions in the sixteenth century leading toward the conquest of nearly half of Ethiopia’s land surface (Legesse, p. 8).

As the above definition indicates the Gada system has a characteristic of raiding community properties (land) and incorporating them through conquest into the land or territory the Gallas already owned. To somebody familiar with Ethiopian culture way of life, Gada also reflects some animistic characteristics. For instance, if there is a discussion going on that has the intention of instituting social rules and regulations or laws, and assuming that somebody wants the discussion to be postponed till the next day, then all this person has to say is “I am holding butter” (literal translation) (Deresa, p,221). In the same paragraph, Deresa (1959) points out that if everybody, on the same day and in the same discussion, accepts the rules/laws to be instituted: Then the leader of the discussion kills beef the following day. Then a stick-like item called bokoo is dipped, by the discussion leader, in the blood of the beef and then thrown into the ground and the law is declared permanently instituted (Deresa, p. 221). Please, note that the Gada system is a great deal more complicated than what is outlined here. I just made sure that a translation of what is necessary for purposes of this dissertation is recorded. To conclude the presentation on the concept of Gada, four of its characteristics should be restated:

1. The Gada class leadership is elected every eight years.

2. The act of holding/clasping butter indicates the suspension of public discussion till the following day.

3. The ceremonial act of dipping the bokoo in the blood of a slain beef and driving it into the ground permanently institutes a law, and
4. The incoming Gada leadership goes out and kills non-Galla communities in order to take their land and incorporate it into what they have already gained through conquest.

The Creation of Eritrea

If a person went to Ethiopia in 1888 they would not have found Eritrea at all. Eritrea is a creation of Italian colonialist attack against Ethiopia in the late 19th century. Dr. Kendie (2005) tells us that “Eritrea appeared on the world map in 1890, when the Italians established it as their first colony in Africa, and christened it with the old Greco/Roman name for the Red Sea—Eruthraeum Mare” (p. 42). However, Negash (1997) answers the same question in the following way:

The death of Emperor Yohannis (1889) and the shift of the center of power from Tigrai to Shewa created favorable conditions for Italian colonial expansion. As early as 1887, Minilik, the king of Shoa [a province in central Ethiopia], had expressed readiness to negotiate with Italians for the supply of arms in exchange for a cession of territory, if this would ensure his speedy accession to power . . . . Minilik seized the opportunity provided by the political vacuum created by the death of Yohannis and sealed an Italo-Ethiopian pact, i.e. the treaty of Wichale, in May 1889. A small area of northern Tigrai was thus ceded to Italy. In return the Italians agreed to supply him with arms to support his bid for the emperorship. However, since the treaty of Wichale had to be ratified by the Italian government, the Italians in Eritrea used the period between the signing of the treaty and its formal ratification, which took place in October, to expand their possessions well beyond the areas designated in the document of May 1889. On January 1, 1890, these disparate possessions were consolidated into a single political entity
henceforth to be known as Eritrea. For the first ten years of its life, the colony was administered by the Ministry of War from the port town of Massawa (p. 13-14).

I think that what makes the picture of Italian aggression against Ethiopia more meaningful is to answer the question- how did Italy manage to get a foothold in Ethiopia in the first place? Pankhurst (2001) explains it this way:

The opening of the Suez Canal, in November 1869, made the Red Sea, for the first time since the era of the Pharaohs, an annex of the Mediterranean. This greatly increased interest in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden area on the part of the Europeans, and in particular of the Italians. The latter that were to achieve their national unity in the following year, were beginning to look outwards beyond their own peninsula. Symptomatic of Italy’s new interest in the Red Sea area was the purchase on 15 November 1869 of the port of Assab. It was bought by an Italian Lazarist priest, Giuseppe Sapeto, on behalf of an Italian firm, the Rubattino Shipping Company, from a local sultan for 6,000 Maria Theresa dollars. This was a remarkable, but not entirely unique, case of a European missionary serving the interest of nineteen-century European colonialism. The port was subsequently declared an Italian colony, in 1882- an indication of rapidly escalating Italian government interest in the region (p. 169).

It is important to notice the historical account of the creation of Eritrea by colonialist Italy. What Pankhurst (2001) described above is true; suffice it to state that it can be subject of much misinterpretation. For instance, the Lazarist priest may have paid the money for the land he purchased out of his pocket. But, according to what Gnogno (1984) wrote, the Lazarist actually hammered out an agreement with two local Moslem chiefs, Sultan Abrahim and Sultan Hasan.
Mohamed. The sultans responded to the Lazarist priest saying that he could buy as much land as he wanted. Then and only then did Sapeto go back to Italy and inform the shipping company. Then the shipping company gave Sapeto the amount of money he needed to buy the port. The day after he bought it, an Italian flag flew over it. The shipping company tried to use it for 12 years and finally realized that it did not really have any use for it. After this realization, the company ended up selling it to the Italian government for 417,000 Lira, in 1874 during the reign of Emperor Yohannis. In the same year on June 19, the Italian government declared the port of Assab its colony. At this time, farther north, the port of Massawa was occupied by Egypt. Nonetheless, some of the major players in the sphere of colonialism were the English, the French, and the Italians. The French has already colonized North African nations like Tunisia, Morocco, and Algeria. The English had colonized Sudan, but were having problems with Sudanese opposition forces.

It was at this point that the English and the Italians hammered out an agreement so that the English would drive the Egyptians out of the Ethiopian port of Massawa and let the Italians take over (Massawa), while the Italians sent some military force to Sudan and helped England fight against the insurgents. Italy, in the mean time, secretly brought about 800 soldiers into Massawa on January 28, 1877. With Massawa in Italian hands, Italy made sure that both the ports of Massawa and Assab were blocked so that no arms intended for Ethiopia could get through. While this was going on, there was a rush of inquiry made by Minilik, King of Shewa, as to how Italy got into the port of Massawa. And, an admiral of the Italian government gave an answer to the inquiry made by King Minilik. His answer was that Italy was permitted by Emperor Yohannis to send soldiers into Massawa, which was of course a lie. Minilik transmitted that response to his superior, Emperor Yohannis. Emperor Yohannis told Minilik to tell the Italian
government to send an emissary that would explain the actions of the Italian government. The emissary arrived in Ethiopia with an explanation- the explanation was that the Italian government was trying to protect Ethiopia from the siege and assault of the Sudanese Mahdists, which was another lie. Despite this lie, it turned out, coincidentally, that the Mahdists were poised to attack Ethiopia (Gnogno 1984, p. 132-134).

Pankhurst (2001), who is an Englishman, presents the same portion of Ethiopian history, as it pertains to the creation of Eritrea, this way:

. . . , the Italians seized Massawa. This action was taken with the support of the British Government, which favoured Italian expansion on the Red Sea coast as a way of curbing that of France, its principal rival in the European Scramble for Africa. The Italian naval officer responsible for the occupation, Rear-Admiral Pietro Caini, issued a proclamation to the port’s inhabitants announcing that his action had been taken in agreement with the British and Egyptian Governments, and promised, ‘No obstacle shall be put by me on your trade.’ Such friendly protestations were, however, before long abandoned, for as soon as they were in position to do so the Italians, like the Egyptians in the previous decade, seized the coast adjacent to Massawa, and instituted a blockade to stop the supply of arms to Yohannis. Italian troops then advanced inland as far as Sa’ati and Wi’a, both around 30 kilometers [18.6 mi.] from the sea.

Ras Alula [Ras is a title for a leader of warriors- it means head] protested against this unwarranted Italian penetration, but the invaders replied by strengthening their fortifications in the areas they had occupied. He thereupon rode down from the highlands, and attacked the Italian garrison at Sa’ati, on 25
January 1887, but was repulsed, with heavy casualties. The interlopers then sent in more troops, which Alula intercepted and virtually annihilated at Dogali on the following day. Italian troops then evacuated Sa’ati and Wi’a, and declared an intensified blockade on all ships bringing supplies for Ethiopia. The engagement at Dogali had a remarkably mixed impact in Italy. Many Euro-centric Italians bitterly condemned it as a ‘massacre’, while their anti-colonialist compatriots lauded Emperor Yohannis and Ras Alula as patriots in the tradition of such Italian heroes as Mazzini and Garibaldi (p. 171-172).

An interesting and equally perplexing act was displayed by Emperor Yohannis. Short of the details that Paulos Gnogno (1984) has delineated, Emperor Yohannis was made aware of the fact that there were 17,700 Italian soldiers in Massawa and the surrounding areas. The Emperor put together 159,000 soldiers and marched against the Italians in Massawa. He and his army reached an area known as Sebergoma near Sa’ati, where the Italians were fortified. There, the Emperor and his soldiers waited for the Italians to come out of their fortification. The waiting went on for two months at which time Yohannis got word of King Teklehaimanot of Gojam having lost a battle to the Mahdists and decided to drop his intention to fight the Italians and, instead, headed out to confront the Islamic (Mahdists) aggression from Sudan on March 22, 1880. Emperor Yohannis continued his journey towards the Mahdists on April 15 from Asmara after having dislodged Ras Alula from his governorship thus leaving the Italians to strengthen their hold on the Red Sea area. The Emperor confronted the Mahdists at the town of Metema, where he was killed by a stray bullet. Emperor Yohannis created two conditions which were favorable to Italian expansion: He ousted Ras Alula from his gubernatorial position in the region covering
today’s Eritrea and failed to replace him created a power vacuum, and left the Sebergoma and Sa’ati area, where the Italians were fortified without firing a shot.

These two conditions provided the Italians with a commanding military grip over the Red Sea area, and simultaneous with that the Emperor’s death in the hands of the Mahdists in 1882 gave a free reign for them to tag the Red Sea area, under their control, with the name Eritrea. Gnogno (1984) makes an extremely detailed presentation of the fall of a portion of Ethiopian territory into the hands of colonialist Italy. All this happened, according to the preceding historical accounts, during the reign of Emperor Yohannis. An important fact to know is that Emperor Yohannis, before confronting the Mahdists and after having beaten King Teklehaimanot of Gojam, headed directly to beat King Minilik of Shewa. The Emperor, on his way to Shewa, discovered that King Minilik was waiting for him right by river Abay, the source of the Blue Nile. This awareness confirmed the hostility between Emperor Yohannis and King Minilik. Keeping in mind the norms of the politics of the time, the question that must be answered now is- why did Emperor Yohannis interrupt his plan to fight against the Italians at Sebergoma and come to Metema, without firing a shot, to confront the Mahdists? Gnogno (1984) explains it this way:

King Minilik went to help King Teklehaimanot of Gojam. The reason for this help is that the Mahdists beat Teklehaimanot in a battle. This situation, the Emperor thought, would create the possibility of a kind of rapprochement between Minilik and Teklehaimanot. It was the possibility of this rapprochement that compelled Emperor Yohannis to quit his plan to fight the Italians and march to confront the Mahdists. Although that was the initial thrust of the Emperor’s move, he nonetheless failed to confront the Mahdists as planned. Instead, he went to the province of Gojam, past
Metema, to beat on Teklehaimanot’s army that was already beaten and weakened, not too long ago, by the Mahdists. In simple terms, the reason for Yohannis to pick on a weak king like Teklehaimanot was to stop the possible rapprochement he could have had with Minilik. This rapprochement probably could have meant the beginning of Yohannis’s loss of the emperorship to Minilik. With the flow of events the way they were, Minilik decided to befriend the Italians secretly in order to give himself a sense of security vis-à-vis Yohannis’s emperorship. Yohannis eventually came face to face, in war, with the Mahdists on March 1, 1881. A war in which Emperor Yohannis was hit by a stray bullet that brought him to his death. But before he passed away, he made it known to the nobilities around him and the public that the emperorship should be passed on to Ras Mengesha. Ras Mengesha now is the heir to the throne. Emperor Yohannis passed away the day after he bequeathed the emperorship to Ras Mengesha. The Ethiopian army was weakened when they found out that the Emperor was hit with a stray bullet. Now, the army started retreating with the Emperor’s dead body in a wax-sealed casket. While retreating, the army took some time to rest at which time a tent was set up for the Emperor’s casket. There were honor guards all around the tent. As it turned out, the Mahdists snuck up on the army and another battle ensued. It was in this battle that the Mahdists killed almost all the guards and those who were not killed surrendered. What followed this attack was that the Mahdists cut the heads of the dead army leadership and sent them to Caliph Abdulahi, their leader in Sudan. They did not stop there; they proceeded to break into the tent thinking that there was money to be looted. Unexpectedly, they found Yohannis’s casket and broke it open. And, the head of the Emperor’s dead body was cut off and sent to their leader, Caliph Abdulahi. The
Sudanese [in Sudan] then put the Emperor’s head on a stick and rode around town on a camel’s back to show it off for public consumption and pleasure. (Gnogno, p.133-139)

With Emperor Yohannis dead and gone, who might be the next Emperor of Ethiopia, Minilik or Ras Mengesha, the chosen heir to the throne? Before we get to the answer, it must be stated that both Yohannis and Minilik were/are known to be fierce warriors. Minilik, furthermore, is said to have been a great diplomat in public relations. That was widely known by the nobilities important enough to assume high positions in the country. With the preceding political context in mind, it turned out that those who could vie for power against Minilik came and submitted themselves to him and explicitly stated that they accept his aspiration to the emperorship. Ras Mengesha, being an unknown quantity, did not have people submitting themselves to his emperorship. But curiously enough, the nobilities in the province of Tigre (Yohannis’s province) rejected Minilik’s accession to the emperorship in favor of Mengesha. This historical fact, the imperial crown moving from the province of Tigre to the province of Shewa, is a widely known Tigre resentment against Shewa that still plays a significant role in Ethiopia. Minilik heard about Ras Mengesha’s refusal to accept his emperorship. Consequently, Minilik conferred with his team of leadership and decided to inaugurate himself to the emperorship; and Minilik became the Emperor of Ethiopia on Oct.25,1882. Despite the spat between Ras Mengesha and Emperor Minilik, a little while later Ras Mengesha submitted himself to the emperorship of Minilik and started a rapprochement that lasted just for a short while.

The recounting of these portions of Ethiopian history helps us understand the sort of political problems that suffuse the Ethiopian society to this day. In fact, one should be in a position to explicate, from the glimpse of the history above, why the current tribe-based sociopolitical system has taken place. The current tribe-based system was crafted and is maintained by Tigres
which corresponds to the sort of divide-and-rule scheme colonialist Italy used in order to pit one tribe against another in a way that would keep intact its colonialist schemes. What the Tigres are doing today is not just splitting the people along tribal lines but go so far as reorganizing the internal provincial territories into tribal enclaves, such as Oromia Kilil, and Amhara Kilil.
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

The research method employed in this dissertation is the historical research method. Gall and Gall, (1996) define the historical research method as “a process of systematically searching for data to answer questions about a past phenomenon for the purpose of gaining a better understanding of present institutions, practices, trends, and issues in education” (p. 644).

The historical research method can be used as a spring board towards social change. History can be studied to build up a picture of past social conditions which one can link to current institutions and design social change as needs dictate. Consequently, this dissertation looks at some past historical events of Ethiopia and the Russian empire to the extent necessary for critical understanding of current institutions and social conditions in Ethiopia. This research method helps our grasp of the historical vectors that gave rise to current institutions and problems, better positioning us to solve the problems we are confronted with. Both primary and secondary sources were used in the production of this dissertation.

The secondary sources are the books used while doing the research on the history of the Russian empire around the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th centuries, when the development of the Soviet Union was happening in earnest, through military conquest of neighboring nations, by Lenin and Stalin (Richard Pipes, 1964). Another set of secondary sources are the books that relate to the history of Ethiopia, as it relates to how Eritrea was created at the end of the 19th century. The research on the historical accounts of the creation of Eritrea is intended to clarify some questions about the Ethiopian student movement of the 1960s and currently the Oromo Liberation front is charging Ethiopia with colonizing Oromia. A study of some portion of Ethiopian history is, therefore, indispensable in order to answer these and other perplexities.
The part that is a primary source for my research is my observations of the dialogue. The participants were presented with some questions and the dialogue starts between two or more Ethiopians. The point here is that the views exchanged between these Ethiopians are directly given to me as a listener. The discussions were not simple and ordinary discussions, although they were all about real Ethiopian lives. To wit, they were about issues that currently affect Ethiopian lives. The reason they were not simple and ordinary is because such questions as brought up in the discussions do not appear in casual conversations. They are philosophical, investigative, and explicative. They are the inner reflections of Ethiopian lives and identities today as a result of historical changes.

Some sample questions help demonstrate the philosophical aspect of the discussions.

What is Gossa/tribe?

On what grounds does one believe in the existence of Gossa?

Is a social construct (language and culture) existentially equivalent to some concrete thing like a chair or a human being?

How does one justify one’s answer?

In what way does this kind of dialogue contribute to the dissertation? This dialogue informs me and others about the nature of the views Ethiopians have about ethnic federalism. Ethnic federalism is a sociopolitical system in which each tribe has its own enclave within Ethiopia. The reason for these tribal enclaves within Ethiopia is that tribal autonomy is expressed in terms of cultural, linguistic, educational, and other forms of autonomies. The logic of such scheme is the final disintegration of Ethiopia. This ethnic federalism is one of the concepts that drew, and still draws, the strongest possible opposition on the part of Ethiopians. Ethiopians have lived together and built families together for centuries regardless of tribal origin. With that in mind, it is not
It is surprising that ethnic federalism turns out to be alien to our history and psychological make up. It is a system superimposed upon the people of Ethiopia. With the tribal enclaves in mind, it is clear that the formula used to rule the people of Ethiopia is the divide-and-conquer scheme. This did not happen; the Tigres completely failed to recognize this invisible social force that ties the people of Ethiopia together. Ethiopians are people who move freely from place to place. One area is not different enough from another area, hence, lessening the need for adjustment. Their failure became much more pronounced when they assumed that the people of Ethiopia support their concept of ethnic federalism.

Although the historical research method plays the major role in this dissertation, there is, to some degree, hermeneutics playing the role of making sense out of actual historical events. For instance, looking at the creation of Eritrea and observing the chronological order of events one cannot help but make a judgment as to who handed Eritrea over to the Italians (Yohannis or Minilik). In addition to that, the flow of history with respect to the Galla migration into southern Ethiopia forces one to make a judgment as to when the Gada system was constructed. Given the primary characteristics of the Gada system (defensive and imperialistic), the notion that it was constructed after they (the Gallas) migrated into southern Ethiopia makes sense. This interpretation sounds plausible, if one tries to ponder over why the Gallas were unable to defend themselves against the Somalis and Somali-Bantus.

**Research Questions**

1. How do various doctrines such as Lenin’s— the right of nations and nationalities to self-determination, and other factors influence social change in Ethiopia?

2. What are the identities of Ethiopians living in the United States today?
CHAPTER FOUR: PLATONIC DIALOGUE

Prologue to Platonic Dialogue

In the context of the historical accounts presented above and noting that social change is the purpose of this dissertation, it is important to explain what this broad concept of social change has to do with notion of Gossa/tribe. This was one of the primary tasks of the dialogue between by Almaz (An Ethiopian woman), Ketema (an Ethiopian man), and Habte (researcher and Ethiopian man). All these three Ethiopians are graduate students in the United States and the dialogue took place on a Saturday midmorning breakfast time in Almaz’s porch.
The Participants

Almaz
Almaz is a brilliant Ethiopian woman who was born and raised in Addis Ababa, the capital city of Ethiopia. She went to Haile Selassie 1st University in the mid 1960s. She studies sociology and history. She worked as an educator in Ethiopia.

Ketema
Ketema is an Ethiopian who also went to Haile Selassie 1st University and studies political science and geography in the 1960s. After graduation, he worked for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Habte
Habte, too, is an Ethiopian born and raised in Dire Dawa, eastern part of Ethiopia. He went to Haile Selassie 1st University in the 1960s. He was an educator under the Ministry of Education. This dissertation is a part of Habte’s work to earn a doctorate in critical pedagogy.

Platonic Dialogue
Habte: Let me take up the notion of social change and make a statement about it. Social change may be a broad concept but, we know what it means. However, what does it have to do with Gossa? Let us look at the notion of change. We’ve all used the term change in the past. For example, let us look at the statement- I have changed my mind. What does that mean? Well, it means that one had accepted a certain belief or view in the past and a little while later one may change one’s mind. In other words, what I accepted no longer holds. I may have put on hold what I accepted, or canceled it altogether. Fundamentally, change is what is/was no longer is. Change can be partial or complete
transformation. Change is revolutionary, if its impact affects an entire society for the better; it is not revolutionary if its impact is regressive. To wit, change is revolutionary, if it affects society in a significant and progressive manner conducive to its well being. Change is not revolutionary, if it involves bloodshed. The reason is that any change brought about through bloodshed indisputably shows the presence of dictatorship or the impulse towards dictatorship. So, pertaining to Ethiopia, Gossa/tribe [social force in Ethiopia] is looked at in order to bring about social change. Implied in the preceding statements is a complete rejection of a Marxian illusion of proletarian revolution stated in the last paragraph of *The Communist Manifesto* (1948). The need for social change becomes clear if one understands that Gossa/tribalism is the source of the current problems in Ethiopia.

Ketema: Habte, how does Gossa relate to social change?

Habte: Ketema, would you agree that there is tribal hostility in today’s Ethiopia?

Ketema: Yes.

Habte: Would you, Ketema, agree, too, that there are tribal killings in Ethiopia today?

Ketema: Yes.

Habte: Does that not, therefore, suggest that we, as Ethiopians, should look into what precisely Gossa is in order to change these conditions? In other words, should we not make a philosophical examination of Gossa so that people can understand the reality/unreality of Gossa and be able to quell tribal hostilities and killings?

Almaz: Yes, I do agree with what you are saying, Habte. But, what seems to be implicit to your language, for me, is that Gossa, or the notion of tribe, is something simple to change. There is nothing concrete about it that is external to the mind and simple enough to
Habte: Almaz, you are absolutely right! That is what must be clear to people. Thank you for pointing out that Gossa is conceptual; and, that there is nothing representative of it outside the mind.

Ketema: I agree. Habte, continue please.

Habte: What seems to be evident to me is that people do not differentiate between the concept of Gossa, this is a mental entity, and the human being per se. That is to say that the concept and the concrete human being are united or merged together in people’s minds. This is the Aristotelian instance of hylomorphism, which is actually misconstrued. To Aristotle, matter and form cannot be perceived independently of each other. It is actually the union of the two that makes both of them apparent to our perception. Form confers dimensions upon matter. No material object can be said to be rectangular, triangular, trapezoidal, or any other shape without form conferring its shape upon it. Simply put, Aristotle does not believe that matter and form can exist independently of each other. It is the hylomorphic union of the two that makes everything perceptible to us.

Almaz: Isn’t there a contradiction in what you are saying, Habte? Firstly, the notion that matter cannot be perceived goes against human experience. That, right there, is the first contradiction. Secondly, there is a denial in the first contradiction that a human being is not an instance of matter. Human experience confirms the notion that we are surrounded by material things. Could you respond to these contradictions, please?

Habte: Yes, I will. I want to point out that the contradictions you pointed out actually make my
point. If I ask Aristotle whether or not it is possible to [hylomorphically] unite Gossa (the concept or form) with a human being [an instance of matter]? His answer would be no, they cannot be united. His reason would be that matter, as a potential (Aristotle’s view), is not perceptible, while form is that by virtue of which matter becomes perceptible. Here, by potential, Aristotle meant to suggest the inherent capacity of something that is not realized yet. Consequently, he considers potentiality as being imperceptible. Needless to point out that Plato and Aristotle do not agree on this score, I am inclined to fall in Aristotle’s column. Aristotle would interpret the fact of being a human being as a realized potential, in the sense that matter and the human form have hylomorphically united, thus making the human material/body apparent. Coming back to your question, Almaz, Aristotle would reject the notion of unity between Gossa and the human being. So, Gossa, as a concept, remains precisely as a concept. Hence, it is imperceptible. The Human being, in contrast, is perceptible. The very perceptibility of the human being (the human body) sets it apart from Gossa (the concept). Aristotle, therefore, does not accept Gossa as a form. Gossa is just an understanding of something external to the mind. In other words, it is not a creation of the mind. To wit, Gossa traces its origin to something outside the mind. The question that must be answered in this dialogue is- what is this “something” that Gossa traces its origin to? It is social knowledge which is part of one’s social environment which includes culture and language. Take note that social knowledge, social environment, culture, and language are all social constructs. To wit, they have no ontological/existential presence of their own apart from human beings. How about the notion of Gada that is claimed to be a system of
democracy by those who claim to be members of the Oromo tribe. The question, therefore, is- is Gada a system of democracy?

Ketema:  Good question! Let us dialogue on that.

Almaz: I completely support that. That is one of the false claims we are faced with in Ethiopia. To wit, the claim that Gada is a system of democracy.

Habte: I am curious about why you use the phrase “false claim” in your language. Can you, please, explain why, Almaz?

Almaz: Well, we all know that Ethiopia has always been a system of dictatorships through out its history. This assertion is true before and after the arrival of the Gallas, or in current parlance Oromos, in southern Ethiopia. The Gallas/Oromos were nomadic people in Somale. The question now is- did these nomadic people have the Gada system in their nomadic life? The answer is no. Is it possible for a system of democracy to exist in the midst of dictatorship? The answer, once again, is no. Why do today’s Oromos consider Gada as a democratic system? The answer, most simply, is that there is an election every eight years, the intention of which is to change the leadership in place.

If we look at Emperor Haile Selassie’s government, there was an empire-wide election for the parliament. As magnanimous as His Majesty Haile Selassie was, he was viewed as an absolute dictator. That suggests that the presence of election does not guaranty the presence of democracy. Differently put, election does not necessarily entail democracy; while, the presence of democracy necessarily entails some form of election. The asymmetry between dictatorship and democracy makes it impossible to accept the assertion that Gada is a system of democracy. Habte, that is what I meant by “false claim.”
Habte: Very good, Almaz. Thank you for your compelling view.

Ketema: Can we embark on the determination of whether or not Gada is a system of democracy? Suffice it to say that Almaz’s logical view is impossible to reject, I am interested to see if we can come to the same conclusion from the standpoint of history.

Habte: Ketema, thank you for your exhortation. That is one of the central issues in this dissertation. Today, a lot of Oromo claimants, including OLF [Oromo Liberation Front], present the concept of Gada as an Oromo democracy. They blame the Amhara tribe for demolishing it, which is absolutely false. So, the question is- is Gada, according to the definition Dr. Asmerom Legesse provided, a system of democracy? Almaz, could you respond to that?

Almaz: Thank you, Habte. It is widely known, around the civilized world, that the ancient Greeks invented democracy. It was very much practiced by ancient Athenians. tells us that freedom and equality are viewed as abiding principles of democratic constitutions. Now, let us look at what Pausewang, Tronvoll, and Aalen (2002) tell us about how democracy is viewed by OLF, at least, during the 1991 London conference when opposition forces against the Derg [socialist] government convened under the leadership of Herman Cohen of the United States African Affairs.

In 1991, leaders were confronted with democratic traditions of more powerful contemporary relevance. The Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), for example, one of the ethnic resistance movements which participated in the 1991 peace conference in London and later in the governing coalition, and was actively involved in forming the Transitional Charter of 1991, had its own visions of
democracy. It maintained that the *Gada* system of the Oromo was a genuinely
democratic tradition with the potential to be revived, in modernized forms, for a
new indigenous democratic state order. *Gada* is essentially a social order of age
cycles. Every male Oromo goes through age cycles, usually of eight years,
which assign his status and his role in the division of labour in the
predominantly pastoral Oromo society . . . . Women are excluded, as are slaves
and minorities;

. . . . The *Gada* system is far from an ideal democracy, but Oromo leaders
considered it a base on which to build a modern political order which people
would understand and cherish as their own. In June 1992 Aba Chala Lata, the
governor in Dembi Dollo the zone in Wollega . . . that was then administered by
the OLF, concluded: ‘Why talk about democracy, a foreign concept which people
don’t understand? We should call it *Gada* instead At this point and given the
above excerpt, the Gada system is absolutely not a system of democracy. As a
matter of fact, we saw that women and minorities are excluded from full
participation in the Gada system. In the ancient Athenian democracy, all the
citizens participated except women and slaves, who, by the way, were Greeks. If we ask
the question- are freedom and equality the identifying characteristics of Gada? The
answer would be no they are not. Furthermore, as Dr. Asmarom Legesse pointed out in
his definition, the Gada system is more imperialistic than anything else. The new Gada
leadership, before it assumes power, must go out and kill nearby communities and take
their land and incorporate it into what they already own. That is an act of taking
somebody’s land through conquest. The Gada system is animistic, and hence primitive.
And, that is the system OLF wants in Ethiopia, in the 21st century. Would you agree, Ketema?

Ketema: I completely agree, Almaz. Dr. Asmarom Legesse, the author you just mentioned, furthermore, tells us the destruction it (Gada System) perpetrated once the Gallas/Oromos migrated into southern Ethiopia. He tells us the following:

When the exodus was at its peak in the sixteenth century, there were several kingdoms in central and southern Ethiopia that fell under Galla domination. These were the kingdoms of Bale, Fattagar, Hadia, and Dawaro. Today there is little evidence that these societies ever existed. All of them were apparently absorbed by the Galla. We should, of course, assume that in the course of being absorbed they in turn had an influence on Galla culture, because encounters of this magnitude are almost always dual in character.

Let me point out, too, that Dr. Asmarom, in his ethnographic study of the Borana Galla, reinforces what is already stated by the honorable Yilma Deresa in his description of Galla migration into southern Ethiopia. Dr. Asmarom states what he calls the cradle of the Oromos. Here is what he says:

It is significant that the area usually recognized as the cradle land of Oromo culture by most of the Gallinna speaking Ethiopians is in the general area of present-day Guji and northern Boranaland. The Borana themselves point to an area north-east of their present territory as the place where they originated. Both the oral traditions and historical documents indicate that the Guji-Borana region was roughly the area from which the Oromo
launched their massive invasion [of Ethiopia] in the sixteenth century

(Legesse 2000, p. 9).

Habte: I completely agree, too. With that clear position on Gada, it seems to me that we should proceed to determine what Gossa is. I mean to suggest that what something is what its constitutive elements are. Differently expressed, when we think of Gossa or hear it used in a sentence, there is something that comes to mind. What is it that comes to mind? Can we claim that we have an understanding of Gossa without something representative of it coming to mind? As you all know, we have to determine whether or not Gossa exists in real terms. This determination is central to our session/dialogue now.

Ketema: In other words, we need to define Gossa.

Almaz: Right! That is what I had in mind.

Habte: Well, we have to be careful here. When we think of the definition of Gossa, it cannot be some kind of definition that some western anthropologist or sociologist constructed. Let me explain further. I don’t believe that a western academic can define the concept of Gossa better than we can. In fact and since the definition should reflect the way we Ethiopians understand it, I do believe that we are in a better position to define it. Our definition of it, after all, only pertains to our society.

Almaz: Thank you, Habte. I understand the approach better now. Here is what I understand: We know what we mean by the term Gossa. We can imagine one of the Gossas in Ethiopia and try to state or construct a definition with its constitutive elements in mind. You are, therefore, saying that it is from that stand point that we need to construct the definition of Gossa.

Ketema: Here is a problem; I find the term definition too formal and restrictive. What is wrong
with just enumerating the constitutive elements of Gossa?

Habte: I mean to suggest that what something is what its constitutive elements are.

At the risk of being repetitive, when we think of Gossa or hear it used in a sentence, there is something that comes to mind. What is it that comes to mind? Can we claim that we have an understanding of Gossa without something representative of it coming to mind? As you all know, we need to determine whether or not Gossa actually exists in real terms. This determination is central to our session/dialogue now.

Ketema: In other words, Habte, if we identify the constitutive elements of Gossa, we have thereby identified the elements confirmatory of the existence of Gossa. Is that right?

Habte: Ketema, we have to be careful about what we mean by constitutive elements. When I use that phrase, I mean to suggest elements particular to a specific Gossa. Since the ultimate purpose of this discourse is social change, we need to set up some sort of criteria by virtue of which the existence of something, whatever it is, is indisputable. For our purposes here, let us agree that in order for us to assert that something exists we must first establish its tactility and perceptibility. In other words, its existence can be confirmed due to the fact that we can see it and also be able to touch it. After all, we rely on these two qualities in our everyday lives. What might serve as a simple example of our reliance on the two qualities is our daily trip to work. We cannot get to work, if we cannot see and be able to touch. We need to see our direction; if we are driving to work, we need to be able to steer our car in the direction of where we’re working. The act of driving a vehicle simultaneously involves both qualities, tactility and perceptibility. Hence, does it not make sense for us to accept the existence of something if it possesses these two qualities, i.e., tactility and perceptibility?
Ketema: I believe that if something possesses the two qualities, tactility and perceptibility, then
the fact that it exists is indisputable. I wonder if Almaz would agree with that.

Almaz: Yes! I do. But, it might sound a bit digressive to relate those two criterions to the
notion of God who, because He lacks the two qualities, might be deemed nonexistent.

Habte: With due respect to you Almaz, I don’t see how the notion of God is related to the
sort of social change we are concerned about here. God is not the problem, people
are.

Almaz: Excuse me, Habte. I was thinking in terms of the applicability of the two qualities. I
did not mean to get involved in a theological debate. Since we are concerned about
social change, God actually is irrelevant. May be a better example might be, let’s say,
this chair you are sitting on. If we apply the two qualities to this chair to determine
whether or not it exists, it definitely exists because it possesses the two qualities. That
is to say that it is both tactile and perceptible.

Habte: Almaz, you have a clear understanding of what I am saying. So, we all agree that if
our inquiry into the existence of Gossa dissatisfies the two criterions, then we can,
with certainty, assert the nonexistence of Gossa. Would you both agree with what I
am saying? You’re both nodding; I take that to mean yes. Now, let us come back to
the constitutive elements of Gossa. What do you think these elements are?

Ketema: Alright when I think of Gossa, what comes to my mind is a group of people claiming
to share the same tribal identity.

Almaz: Ketema is right. When we think of Gossa, a group of people comes to mind. But,
Gossa implies a bit more than that. In other words, there are two more elements
concomitantly present with the group of people, viz., culture and language.
Ketema: I agree.

Habte: I agree too. It seems to me, therefore, that Gossa has three constitutive elements to it: a group of people, language, and culture.

Ketema: The way to verify the validity of our conclusion about the constitutive elements of Gossa is to look at one of the Gossas (tribes) in Ethiopia, ex. Amhara or Oromo. If we look at the Oromo tribe, for instance, we find out that there are people who claim that they belong to the Oromo tribe, which confirms one of the constitutive elements, i.e. people. This group of people claims that they have their own culture, which, once again, is confirmatory of the second constitutive element, i.e. culture. Lastly, the same group of people claims to have its own language, which confirms the third element.

Almaz: Hence, your assertion is that people, culture, and language are the constitutive elements of Gossa. I accept Ketema’s understanding of Gossa.

Habte: I do too. Given our understanding of Gossa, What is it that sets apart one Gossa from another? Take one of the tribes, either Oromo or Amhara.

Almaz: Prima facie, culture and language set the tribes apart. Those who claim to be the leaders [those who spearhead the Oromo movement] of the Oromo tribe are quite vocal about Oromo culture and history. I guess what I should ask is- is there such a thing as Oromo history and culture? Ketema, could you try to answer that question, please?

Ketema: Thank you, Almaz. If you allow me to reformulate your question, what you are saying is- is there a culture known as Oromo culture such that this culture, by virtue of its identifiable characteristics, sets itself apart from, presumably, other cultures? That is
the first question that your question suggests to me. The second question is actually triggered by the phrase “Oromo culture.” This phrase suggests that Oromo culture is monolithic in constitution. To wit, all Oromo claimants, all over Ethiopia, have one and the same culture, regardless of their region in Ethiopia. Is Oromo culture monolithic? Almaz, what do you think?

Almaz: Yes, that was the perplexity I have been experiencing all along. I mean I was born and raised in Ethiopia and I don’t believe for a single second that Oromo claimants all over Ethiopia can claim to have one and the same culture. Can an Oromo claimant in Addis Ababa claim to have the same culture as the one who was previously known as Kotu/Qotu in Hararge? Or, in fact we can consider the Oromo claimants in Wellega or Keffa vis-à-vis the one in Addis. The thing that amazes me is that those Oromo claimants who somehow get their books published on Oromo culture and history talk as though there is some nation (or country) some place in the world called Oromo. Somewhere along the line, could we bring ourselves to discuss whether or not there is such a nation as that, i.e. Oromo nation. To answer your question most directly, Ketema, there is no such thing as Oromo culture. Oromos and other Ethiopians share the same cultural-pool with regional differences being apparent. With respect to the cultural and linguistic diversity among the Gallas/Oromos, here is what Professor Donald Levine (1974) says:

The Galla are the most widely dispersed of all the peoples of Greater Ethiopia. They comprise about a dozen tribal clusters distributed over ten provinces. Nearly all of them still speak mutually intelligible dialects of a single East Cushitic language, Gallignya. The traditional self-name of the Galla is Oromo, but this is
not known or accepted by all the Galla peoples today. The Galla tribes now differ considerably in religion, style of life, and local political organization, though all of them retain some features of their traditional patrilineal descent system (p. 38).

Ketema, I hope that answers your question about Oromo culture being monolithic. In fact, furthermore, Dr. Levine points out the regional differences in the language [the dialects] that the Oromo claimants speak, although this language diversity is something that Oromo claimants hide from people in the west, viz., people in the United States. In order to find sympathy among people of the west, they single themselves out and claim oppression by the Ethiopian government. The Ethiopian government oppresses everybody, except people in the Tigre tribe as they are members of the current tribe in leadership positions. People in the west are naïve about Ethiopia. Consequently and not surprisingly, they [people in the west] fail to ask if they are the only ones being oppressed. In other words, they are not oppressed any more than other Ethiopians. Actually, the reason behind their complaint is to go the way of secession as Eritrea did. The Oromo Liberation Front is currently making an appeal for help from westerners using the doctrine of self-determination as a vehicle, which has the façade of democracy. The proper question for the Oromo claimants to answer is- why do they feel that they are entitled to secession in view of the pogrom they perpetrated against the people of Ethiopia from the 16th through the end of the 19th century? Why is it that it is only Oromos, with the exception of Tigres, who use their tribe for organizational purposes, with the exclusion of others? Go ahead, Ketema.

Ketema: Alright Almaz, there is really no such thing as Oromo culture and neither is there a nation called Oromo nation. But for now, let me respond to the claim of Oromo culture.
Some people define the concept of culture, as you know, as a way of life. Nonetheless with Ethiopia in mind, I define culture as a psycho-social reality [shared by a people], the dimensions of which inform the behavior, economy, social organizations, political activities, and perception and interpretation of social realities. It is the congregation of all these and others, probably not mentioned here, that gives rise to the very being of a person in a society. Consequently, is it not plausible to acknowledge the notion that a multiplicity of people born and raised in the same social and national environment share cultural values? I see that you both agree; you just nodded your heads.

Habte: Let me reinforce Ketema’s view by citing my own experience when I first became a teacher. I was sent, by the Ministry of Education, to teach in the province of Wellega, which is now part of Oromia as a result of the internal restructuring of provincial territories into tribal enclaves by the current tribe-based government. Wellega, at that time was almost exclusively populated by those who claimed to be Oromo. I genuinely expected it to be shockingly different from my own background. I was completely surprised to find out how similar the people were to the people in my own province, Hararge. Granted that there were some regional differences, the fact that they were/are Ethiopians was indisputable. Therefore, I do understand and believe Ketema’s assertion that there is no such thing as Oromo culture. How about Oromo history?

Almaz: Absolutely! Let me add a little bit more to what has been said so far. When the Oromo claimants or tribalists use the phrases Oromo culture and Oromo history, they are denying the presence of other Ethiopians in the way they see and interpret what they think are history and culture. They are involved in an existential struggle with their own
sense of social reality. They seem like they are stuck in what they think is their own sense of tribal identity, which is primitive and obscurantist. There has never been, in the history of Ethiopia, a nation state or a sovereign state called Oromia. Hence, there is no such thing as Oromo history; neither has ever been such a thing as Oromo culture. The fact that they merged into the Ethiopian society [after their migration] precludes the claim of Oromo history and culture. Ethiopian history and culture are as much theirs as anybody else’s. Let us not forget that the tribal enclave called “Oromia Kilil” was constructed 16 or 17 years ago by the exclusive Tigray tribal leadership.

Habte: Almaz, you used a good phrase that is aptly expressive of what is going on with the Oromo tribalists. The phrase you used was “existential struggle.” The question is how did this existential struggle come about? In other words, what is it that gave rise to it? There was, as a matter of historical fact, nothing that singled out the Oromo tribalists for oppression vis-à-vis others in Ethiopia. Everybody was and still is oppressed. I know I was oppressed all through my life. It is not just the political leadership that is oppressive; our parents, teachers, and in fact all Ethiopians are oppressors, as a result of the way we are brought up. What does that mean? It means that Oromo claimants themselves are oppressors too!! The first province I was assigned to go and teach was Wellega, as I pointed out. A province almost completely populated by people who claim to be Oromos. One of the first stories told to me by my students was that of the Jote lordship. Jote, I was told, owned slaves. And if any one of the slaves misbehaved, he would be tied to a huge rock at the precipice of a huge ditch and then pushed down into the ditch to die. The question is- who is Jote in terms of tribal identity? He is an Oromo! How about the slaves? They are Oromos too! This is an instance of an Oromo
oppressing Oromo people. The critical question is— is this kind of oppression limited to the Oromo people? The obvious answer is— no!! it is not. Other tribes are oppressive too. As a matter of fact, those Oromo claimants, who are obsessed with Oromo history and culture, are oppressors themselves. This obsession is an expression of their hunger for power. Granted that there is not the slightest suggestion of democracy in the Ethiopian society, those Oromo claimants who are secessionist in their views look at Amhara and Oromo tribes as though they are two distinct and separate people. Dr. Jalata (1998), who claims to be an Oromo, stated the following:

Oromos and Ethiopians fought one another between the 16th and the end of 19th centuries without one imposing colonial establishment over the other (Jalata, 1993: 36-37). That is why Levine (1974: 128) considers these two peoples as “great historical antagonists.” The Oromo resisted colonial expansion and domination both militarily and culturally in localized and scattered ways during the second half of the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century (Jalata, 1993, pp.2-3)

What is important to notice in the preceding quotation is that Dr. Jalata quotes an excerpt from Professor Levine’s book in order to lend legitimacy to his purpose driven misinterpretation of not only Ethiopian history but also Professor Levine’s language. Actually, Jalata used Professor Levine’s language as a lever to lie. The question now is—how did Dr. Jalata misinterpret the Professor’s language? Dr. Jalata confuses or completely fails to discern the difference between hostility and social dialectics. Social dialectics pertains to the Hegelian notion of dialectics, or forces contradictory to one
another, which get resolved into a synthesis. It is this dialectics that Dr. Jalata purposely
mistakes for hostility in order to lend support for his primitive and third world tribal
sentiment. I compared Dr. Jalata’s quotation against Professor Levine’s writing and the
following is the way Professor Levine (1974) stated it:

The Oromo are in many ways the antithesis of the Amhara. Not only did the
two people confront one another for centuries as great antagonists, but the
traditions they brought to the encounter contrast radically. Where the
Amhara system is hierarchical, the Oromo is egalitarian. Where the Amhara
is individualistic, the Oromo is solidaristic. Where religious and political
functions are segregated in Amhara institutions, for the Oromo they are
fused. Where the Amhara historical project is to build an empire, that of the
Oromo is to maintain a parochial tradition. The historical consequence of
these and related contrasts will be assessed after we have examined the
Oromo system itself (p. 128).

Looking at the above excerpt, it is now necessary to render an interpretation of it and
also answer the following questions: is there hostility implied in Professor Levine’s
excerpt as Dr. Jalata seems to claim? Does the history of Galla migration into southern
Ethiopia help explain the predisposition to war of the Galla migrants? In other words,
could the hostile Galla relationship with Somalis and Somale-Bantus have shaped their
predisposition to war? How can one see, in Professor Levine’s (1974) excerpt, the
Hegelian thesis-antithesis picture rather than Dr. Jalata’s misinterpretation of it as a
colonial tension between the Gallas, whom Dr. Jalata mistakenly calls Oromos, and
Ethiopians?
Responding to Dr. Jalata’s notion of hostility attributed to Professor Levine’s language, all one has to do is to see the content section of the book that pertains to Professor Levine’s language and conclude that Dr. Jalata’s understanding of it is wrong. The reason for this conclusion is that Professor Levine explicitly uses the words thesis and antithesis in reference to the part of the book that contains the excerpt. My own suspicion is that Dr. Jalata mistook the term antagonists to mean hostility. For purposes of clarity and certainty, I decided to look up the Hegelian version of dialectics within the thesis-antithesis framework in a dictionary of philosophy published by Angeles (1981). Here is how Professor Angeles defines it:

The process of necessary change involving a triad (three elements) consisting of

(a) an existing thing or thought (thesis), (b) its opposite or contradictory (antithesis) and (c) the unity (synthesis) resulting from their interaction and

which then becomes the basis (thesis) of another dialectical movement (p. 61).

Professor Levine undoubtedly knows that the thesis-antithesis process goes on ad infinitum. It does not start from the 16th century and finish up at the end of the 19th century, as Dr. Jalata conclusively stated. In other words, dialectics, in the Hegelian sense, is an on-going process. Let me at this time point out that the term Oromo did not exist at all when the Gallas migrated into Ethiopia. Hence, the term Oromo in reference to the Gallas previous to [may be] the 1950s would be historically inauthentic. The term Galla incidentally was not a term created by Amhara, whom the Oromo claimants blame for calling them Gallas. Rather, I shall now, arguably, assert the notion that they, the Gallas, came with it into Ethiopia. Why do I say that? When the Somalis just arrived in the United States, I made an effort to converse with them. My conversation with them was triggered by my own curiosity about
how Somale language sounded very similar to Oromo language. One of my conversations with a Somale fellow yielded a shocking hint that I never expected. The shock was that he told me that the Oromo people went into Ethiopia from an area, in Somale, called Galcaio, which spawned the term Galla. Without making a big deal about it, I went home and looked at the map of Somale in the Internet. Sure enough, there is Galcaio east of the horn of Africa that subtends the Ethiopian territory. In my next conversation with the same Somale, I discovered that the name Gaallcacyo has several meanings to it. One of the meanings told to me was this- infidels or unbelievers get up and go away. This translation was sensible in view of what I read in history books. The use of the word “infidel” suggested something Islamic. So, I went into the internet and looked at en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mogadishu to find out when Islam came to Somale. I found out that people from the Arabian Peninsula came in contact with the people in the coastal regions of the Indian Ocean where Mogadishu, the capital city of Somale, is located. This happened sometime between 800-900 A.D. These Moslems from the Arabian Peninsula settled around the Mogadishu area and intermarried with the local Somalis. Hence, the introduction of the Islamic faith in that region is obvious. Consequent on that, it seems plausible to infer the notion that the Gallas were not Moslems at that time [otherwise they wouldn’t have been called infidels]. As pointed out in their history of migration into Ethiopia, the Gallas were chased out of Somale as infidels or unbelievers; and that precisely is what the term Galla means in Ethiopia. What does that mean? It means that the so called Amhara did not give them the name Galla. It was given to them by the Somalis, who derived it from the name of the town they chased them out of, viz., Gaallcacyo. Nowadays, they repudiate the name Galla. The reason is political; and it is the result of the few Oromo elites who are hungry for power and presume to represent all
Oromos without being elected. Such presumptuous Oromos are Drs. Asafa Jalata, Mohamed Hassen, and others, who appear to be unaware of the history of the Galla migration into Ethiopia.

The social history of the Gallas before they came into Ethiopia was characterized by a chronic attack against them by the Somalis and Somale-Bantus, which no doubt informed their relationship with non-Galla people they found in Ethiopia. That is to say that the Gallas constructed a defense mechanism as a nomadic society. This defense mechanism is called Gada, the definition of which was already given on page 54. The point here is that this defense and imperialistic mechanism did not exist when the Gallas led a nomadic life in Somali. That was why they were being incessantly attacked and driven out by the Somalis and Somali-Bantus. The institutionalization of the Gada defense and imperialistic mechanism, constructed after the Gallas came into southern Ethiopia, now puts them in a position to attack others in their new surrounding. Logic suggests that that was why after the eight-year leadership cycle, the incoming leadership, as stated in the definition of Gada by Dr. Asmarom Legesse, was required to go and conquer new territories and annex them to what they have already occupied. The Gallas are no longer defenseless and their imperialistic foray against Ethiopia was simply incomprehensible. The honorable Yilma Deresa (1959), a former Finance Minister and an Oromo, tells us that in the 16th century, after they migrated into Ethiopia, the Gallas had a long enough time to organize themselves and militarily advance in all directions (East, West, North, and South) in Ethiopia. According to Yilma Deresa (1959), they were subdivided into four tribes called Kereyu, Tulema, Mecha, and Wello for the purpose of further attack and territorial expansion. The Kereyu tribe was assigned to go into the southeast area and conquer (including Bale);
Tulema was assigned to go north and conquer the Shewa area (central Ethiopia); the Mecha tribe was assigned to conquer western and southern Ethiopia; and the Wello tribe was assigned to conquer the district of Angot stretching from the province of Wello (name given by the tribe) to the province of Tigre (page, 225-226). The imperialistic expansion of the Gallas became incomprehensible after a Moslem zealot, commonly called Gragne Mohamed, with the help of Somalis and some Gallas rampaged all over Ethiopia chopping off the heads of Christian Ethiopians, if they refused to covert to the Moslem religion. This Islamic war on Christian Ethiopia weakened the leadership of the time; and this was the moment the Gallas were waiting for to continue attacking and expanding their hold on Ethiopia. This historical event took place between 1520 and 1532 (Deresa, p. 226). What went on in the 16th century seems to escape Dr. Asafa Jalata and his ilk. Here is what Professor Mordechai Abir (1968) states pertaining to the Galla invasion against Ethiopia:

As the Galla who invaded Ethiopia in the sixteenth century were deeply disunited, had no ‘ideology’ and were only seeking a better land to settle in, the Ethiopian rulers considered the Galla invasion far less serious than the Muslim threat [i.e. Gragne Mohamed mentioned earlier]. However, the fact was that the Galla migration had far-reaching consequences for the future of Ethiopia. From the sixteenth century until the nineteenth the Galla advancing from the south along the rift valley lakes occupied part of Harare plateau, subjugated most of Showa, advanced as far as Lasta and penetrated the Sidama countries. They methodically displaced or absorbed the Amhara Sidama and Agaw peoples in the provinces they conquered and by the second half of the eighteenth century they had begun to invade the heart of the Christian Amhara-Tigrayan provinces in the
north. While this was happening the Solomonic dynasty had deprived itself of some of its most important assets. Since the beginning of the seventeenth century it had completely given up its mobility and settled for the comforts of court life in Gondar, and after the expulsion of the Portuguese, it had cut itself off from the material resources of the Christian world. In the eighteenth century the emperors began to rely more and more upon Galla troops and had slowly allowed the Galla chiefs to replace the Amhara and Tigrayan nobility in their courts. Once the court of the Solomonic rulers in Gondar became dominated by Galla elements whose daughters the emperors married, it no longer represented the Christian Semitized Ethiopia and was no longer able to provide the link which held the country together. Thus, since about the middle of the eighteenth century the disuniting factor in the country completely triumphed, and had it not been for the fact that the Galla themselves lacked a unifying ‘ideology’, the country could have passed altogether into the hands of the Galla immigrants (p. xxii-xxiii).

The preceding quotation cited from Mordechai Abir’s (1968) book proves the fact that Dr. Asafa Jalata (1998), in so far as the quotation from his book demonstrates, either was ignorant of Ethiopian history or blatantly lying. Logic, it seems to me, reveals that one cannot read or learn about the so called Oromo history without being aware of what went on within the framework of the history of Ethiopia. Dr. Asafa Jalata has left a hint in his language suggestive of his knowledge of what went on in Ethiopia with respect to what he calls Oromo history. What is the hint? Well, the hint is the war that took place between the 16th and the end of the 19th century, which, as Mordechi Abir (1968) stated, the Oromos simply killed the communities
in their way and took the land of those communities. Hence, it must be the case that he
[Asefa Jalata] must be purposely lying. I know I have gone through a lengthy presentation
of history pertinent to the dialogue. Should I stop here and see if you have any question, or
give you the time to state whatever you might have on your mind?

Ketema: I am fascinated, please continue.

Almaz: I agree.

Habte: Thank you. What has to be clear from the historical accounts is that the Oromo
claimants today must understand that the Gallas, their ancestors, attacked and killed
Ethiopians to the extent that it was easy for them to go as far north as the province
of Tigre and as far north-west as Gondar and penetrated into the emperor’s court.
Furthermore, intermarriage between Ethiopians and Gallas took place as the historical
accounts clearly state.

Almaz: Habte all the while you are presenting what transpired in Ethiopian history, there were
several questions that perplexed me. Here are some of them; why do today’s Oromo
claimants act and talk as though they are oppressed more so than other tribes in the
country? Should have I used the word “nation” in place of the term “tribe”, as they do
today? You keep using the term “tribe” rather than “nation”, could you clarify that?

Habte: I will answer your questions gladly. In the Amharic language [the official language of
Ethiopia] we use the word Gossa in reference to a tribe. You know that the word
Gossa in English means “tribe”. So straightforwardly, Oromos and other tribes as such
do not constitute a nation, for example, in the sense that the peoples of the United
States, United Kingdom, Germany, France, and other nations do. So, why do Oromo
claimants use the phrase “Oromo nation” to refer to their tribe as Drs. Asafa Jalata and
Hassan do? Here, I want you to recall that we have discussed a bit of the history of the Soviet Union as it pertained to the way it [the Soviet Union] was built up. Recall, too, that it was at that time [end of 19th century and beginning of 20th century] that the doctrine of “the right of nations to self-determination up to and including secession” was formulated by Lenin and Stalin. The word “nations” was correctly used in the language of the doctrine because the Soviet Union was built by colonizing nations like Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, and others. Now, the Ethiopian university students of the 1960s, who were Marxist-Leninists, stole it and started applying it in reference to the tribes without any awareness of what they were doing. That is the source of the word “nations,” which the Oromos are using wrongly. But, the tribe-based government uses it in the text books published for 9th grade students thereby introducing false information to young Ethiopians. It [the government] also constructs its policies using the word nation, rather than tribe which is what they are historically. Here is an example of their 1994 educational policy pertaining to languages and education [note their use of the terms nations and nationalities]:

Cognizant of the pedagogical advantages of the child in learning in another tongue and the rights of nationalities to promote the use of their languages, primary education will be given in nationality languages.

Making the necessary preparation, nations and nationalities can either learn in their own language or can choose from among those selected on the basis of national and countrywide distribution.
The language of teacher training for kindergarten and primary education will be the nationality language used in the area.

Amharic [the official language of Ethiopia] shall be taught as a language of countrywide communication.

In the preceding policy statements, we see the words “nations” and “nationalities.” It is clear that these words were plagiarized from the language of the principle of self-determination constructed by Lenin and Stalin as pointed out in the literature review section. We recall that Russia colonized the surrounding nations to build up the Soviet Union, as Dr. Pipes (1964) had explained. In the context of the problems Lenin and Stalin encountered, the term “nation” refers to the colonized nations and the term “nationalities” refers to the condition or state of belonging to some specific nation. For example, the entire people of Ukraine constitute a nation. Hence, if I pose the question to one of the people of Ukraine saying “what is your nationality?”; he or she will say Ukrainian. Why? The reason is that that individual has a sense of belonging to the Ukrainian nation. In contrast, no tribe in Ethiopia ever constituted a colonized nation. Because of this asymmetry, the tribes do not constitute a nation; hence, they have no nationality of any kind based on tribal grounds. Before the power hungry tribalists came along, they were all Ethiopians. The tribal sense of identity was hard to notice, as far as my own experience is concerned.

Almaz: Habte, given the Russian historical context, what do you think is the reason for their use of the terms “nations” and “nationalities?”

Habte: Thank you for your question, Almaz. I was just going to come to that. If you look around to see who started using these terms [nations and nationalities], you will find
out that it was the Marxist-Leninist students of the 1960s. Then, the tribalists, like Oromos, Eritreans, and Tigres who were hungry for power, usurped them and started using them in an attempt to round up [mobilize] people on the basis of tribal identity. The first reason for using those terms is to establish a tribal sense of identity as the principle around which they can organize people for political purposes. This is the primary reason for using those terms. Note that the people who are hungry for power are not concerned about solving social problems like poverty, lack of human and civil rights, lack of freedom and equality for all Ethiopians, and other undemocratic elements. Beyond this, what I like to remind you is that, as already pointed out in the excerpt on the educational policy of the government in Ethiopia, education is politics. This notion had been stated in *A Pedagogy for Liberation* (1987) in which Paulo Freire clearly states that “. . . , education is politics” (p. 46). What that suggests is that we need to question and break down the status quo in order to liberate ourselves. In other words, we need to desocialize the status quo, as Ira Shor (1992) would say in *Empowering Education* (p. 114). The second reason is what is widely known among Ethiopians. That is the tribal Tigre leadership, taking the Tigre Kilil with it, plans to secede and declare itself an independent nation like Eritrea after having inculcated the ideology of nationhood through the cultivation of a tribal sense of identity thereby showing the way for the other tribes, like the Oromo tribe, to follow suit. The third reason for the use of the terms “nations” and “nationalities” is that the individuals in the Tigre tribe leadership were part of the student movement of the 1960s; most particularly the Prime Minister of Ethiopia and the President of Eritrea. These two fellows picked up the terms [nations and
nationalities] from the leaders of the student movement possibly without understanding precisely what they meant and as well as being ignorant of their historical origin. Most critically, the political conditions that gave rise to the currency of “nations” and “nationalities” at the turn of the 20th century remained unknown to the student movement. The students in the 1960s fell under the sway of Marxism and Leninism, which were accepted with complete lack of critical thinking on the part of the students.

Ketema: Habte, what is the purpose of all this discussion in view of the fact of your denial of the reality of Gossa/tribe? In other words, there is no such thing as Gossa/tribe in real terms.

Habte: Yes, that is what I am saying.

Ketema: Very good, demonstrate that!

Almaz: I am already convinced of what Habte is saying, but go ahead, Habte.

Habte: Remember that the overarching purpose of this dialogue is social change. With that in mind and given the current tribe-based turmoil in Ethiopia, it is indisputably certain that social change is needed. So, the question is how should we respond to the divide-and-rule scheme implemented in Ethiopia today? Here, we must acknowledge that tribalism is the tool employed to divide the people along tribal lines in order to rule them. The natural propensity, therefore, is to un-divide the people. It is this propensity that forces us to doubt and, if reason dictates, reject the reality or existence of tribes in Ethiopia. Let me go through some questions with you, Ketema. Here is a chair that I can point to and say- this is a chair. Ketema, my question to you is- is there anything palpable, as in the case of the chair, that I can point to and say- this is a tribe?
Ketema: No.

Habte: Here is a mental experiment. Let us say, furthermore, that you are born of an Oromo family. Let us say, too, that two or three days after you were born, we take you to a Tigre family so they can raise you in their environment and just the way they raise their own children. Now, imagine that we are coming back to see you twenty or twenty five years later. At this time, you are about twenty or twenty five years old. Based on this scenario, let us pose the following questions to you- what language do you speak?

Ketema: Tigrigna. [language spoken by the Tigre tribe.]

Habte: What tribe do you identify yourself with?

Ketema: Tigre.

Habte: What culture do you identify yourself with?

Ketema: The Tigre culture.

Habte: As you know Ketema, lots of Ethiopians speak several Ethiopian languages depending on the social environment they are from i.e., an Ethiopian may speak multiple local languages. That said, do you think that all the answers you gave to my questions actually point to the social environment you were raised in or the tribe of your parentage? In other words, were your answers contextual?

Ketema: Yes, I do believe that my answers point to the social environment I was raised in. As you said, Habte, they are all contextual. Because, the language I speak, the culture I identify with, and probably other social characteristics belong to that specific social context or environment I was raised in. So, I completely agree with you. Basically, the notion of Gossa/tribe/ethnicity seems to be conceptual rather than real; contextual
rather than genetic. The notion of ethnicity/tribe/Gossa is a mental phenomenon.

Habte: So, all your claims are context-dependent rather than existence-dependent, right?

Ketema: Yes, they are contextual rather than existential. Let me elaborate a little bit. The term contextual suggests to me a reflection of the characteristics of the social environment that one comes out of; while the term existential suggests the existence of something regardless of the context it comes out of. A rock, for example, is a rock regardless of where it is, i.e., the context. To wit, that by virtue of which something exists remains unaffected by any social environment, such as one’s humanity. Would you agree, Habte?

Habte: Yes, I do agree. Ketema, social environments are socially constructed. Culture and language are social constructs too. Social constructs, as already pointed out, have no ontology of their own. That means that they have no existential presence in the same way that a chair does. If you take away human beings, there will be no language and culture. But, tribe is uniquely characterized by language and culture. Hence, if language and culture are social constructs, then tribe/Gossa must be a social construct too. The reason is that language and culture are the primary features of a tribe/Gossa. What does that mean? It means that tribe/Gossa/ethnicity has no ontology of its own; it has no existential presence at all. The conclusion, therefore, of the preceding discussion is that tribe/Gossa/ethnicity does not exist at all. Let me ask you this question, Ketema- if something has no existential presence, can we claim that it exists?

Ketema: No, we cannot. There is a contradiction in that view. It sounds like we are saying that something exists and does not exist at the same time. That is to say that something
reflects existential characteristics, like tactility and perceptibility, and at the same time we are saying that it does not reflect those existential characteristics. That is an obvious contradiction. Simply put if people reflect characteristics of a social environment, can we not deduce that there has to be something existential about that social environment?

Habte: You are right, Ketema. Remember that the social environment is what some people call social milieu. This social milieu constitutes the totality of human experience in a particular milieu or environment. The environment includes human behavior, human interaction with each other and their natural surroundings, their family lives, and other things that constitute their experience in that particular milieu. So when we talk about the characteristics of a social environment, we are talking about the characteristics of the entire social milieu. That is beyond the experience of an individual. Now changing the perspective and looking at the concept of tribe/Gossa from the stand point of a group, we find that tribe/Gossa does not exist. Here the notion of a group is implicit to the notion of tribe/Gossa. What, in other words, is clear is that tribe is not made up of just one person. It consists of a multiplicity of people, i.e. a group of people. Let us assume that you have a group of four people in front of you, Ketema. Look at the people in front of you and tell me what you see.

Ketema: I see a group of people.

Habte: Do you see a group of people or the individuals that comprise it?

Ketema: Actually, I see both the individuals and the group.

Habte: Let me state to you, Ketema, that you don’t really see the group. You only see the Individuals that comprise it. Let me take a moment and explain the reason. Think of which one has an existential presence, the group or the individuals?
Ketema: I see your point. Existential presence can only be attributed to the individuals and not to the group. The reason, from what we talked about previously, is that the group is a mentally organized totality; i.e. the mind organized the individuals into a group. The individuals, in and of themselves, have totalities of their own. I am curious, Habte. Is that not too metaphysical for ordinary, down to earth, everyday people?

Habte: Ketema, you need to be careful. The way you use the word metaphysical makes it sound like metaphysics is outside human experience. That is not true. Metaphysics is human experience itself. Note that metaphysics, among other definitions, is the study of reality. If you look at what we’ve been discussing so far, they all strictly relate to human affairs, issues or experience. Am I clear, Ketema?

Ketema: Yes, you are clear, Habte. I am glad to know the definition of metaphysics too, at least in this case. With that out of the way, you are saying that existence, as a property, cannot be attributed to the group; but, it can be attributed to the individuals that comprise the group. That is why tribe/Gossa does not exist. Do I understand you correctly, Habte?

Habte: Yes you do, Ketema. What I want to know now is- are you convinced of what my argument asserts?

Ketema: Yes, I am. Now the question is- what does the existence or nonexistence of tribe/Gossa have to do with social change?

Habte: Ketema, in order to bring about social change certain conditions must give way to the sort of social change we want. One of the conditions is to raise the consciousness of people pertaining to the need for social change through dialogue. It is in this type of dialogue that critical consciousness comes into being. It is in this type of dialogue, too,
that we will come to understand that we cannot cling to primitive notions of tribe and still aspire to social change. I took a keen look at European societies and tried to learn something from them pertaining to how they were able to transform their societies. For instance, I am sure at one point in their history they must have had tribes in their societies. Sure enough, Germany had tribes as Holborn (1982) states it; here is what he says:

Charlemagne’s subjugation and Christianization of the Saxons in the late eighth and early ninth centuries were the central event in bringing the Teutonic tribes under a common government. . . . Germany consisted in 911 of the five tribal, or, as Germans call them, “stem” (Stamm), duchies of Saxony, Franconia, Bavaria, Swabia, and Lorraine. . . (p.4).

The preceding excerpt shows that, indeed, there were tribes in Germany centuries ago. Given the influence and contribution of Germany to the intellectual history of the west, it is not a surprise that it (Germany) was able to transcend their primitive stage of tribalism. In contrast to Germany, the Ethiopian tribe-based leadership fosters tribalism. There is no open dialogue on the issue of tribalism; there is no open dialogue with respect to the fact that the prime minister of Ethiopia is mentally locked into the primitive framework of tribalism; there is no dialogue of any kind; so, the question then is- how does one try to bring about social change in view of the fact that any form of dialogue, free press, free speech, and other democratic elements, are stifled? Looking at the Oromo Liberation Front and since they are aspiring to secede as Eritrea did, I cannot help but conclude the fact that there is a great deficiency in
the awareness of one’s own history. A dialogue would clear up this deficiency. A
dialogue pertaining to the 16th century migration into southern Ethiopia of the
Gallas/Oromos, then the attacks, the killings, and the conquest of communities in
order to take their land would make their complaint of oppression unnecessary in
view of what they themselves [the Gallas] did to Ethiopians. This is not to say that
oppression is acceptable. But to single out oneself and disregarding others, as the
Oromos are doing, is to commit an act of injustice against humanity. The historical
accounts attest to the fact that the ancestors of the Oromo claimants attacked and
killed to the extent that it was easy enough for them to go as far north as the
province of Tigre and as far northwest as Gonder and penetrated into the
emperor’s court [in Gondar]. Furthermore, intermarriage between Ethiopians and
Gallas had taken place, as the historical accounts clearly suggest, to the extent that
to claim that one is an Oromo, Amhara, or anything else is sheer nonsense.

Almaz: Habte, all the while you are presenting what transpired in Ethiopian history, there were
several questions that perplexed me. Here are two of them; why do the Oromo
claimants act as though they are oppressed any more than other tribes in the country?
Should have I used the term “nation” instead of the term “tribe”? Nowadays, people
use phrases like “Oromo nation” and “Amhara nation.” In other words, the tribes are
referred to as nations and not as tribes. You keep using the word tribe yourself rather
than nation. Could you take some time to clarify that? Sorry, I am repetitive here.

Habte: We have already discussed this question. Nonetheless, it is an extremely important
question that must be answered. Let me try to answer it. In the language of Amharic,
we use the word Gossa. You know that the word Gossa in English means tribe. Oromo
is a Gossa, and Amhara is a Gossa. So, both are really tribes. The confusion between
the terms tribe and nation was started by the Ethiopian Marxist-Leninist university
students in the 1960s. These students were not that well versed in the English
language as they were all undergraduate students, mostly political science majors.
They were reading Marxist and Leninist literature. It looks like one of them, I
assume Birihanemeskel Reda, came across a Leninist/Stalinist literature entitled
*Marxism and the National Question*. Looking at the title, one can easily see that the
title is specific to a nation. What nation is it specific to? Obviously, the Russian
nation! The title did not point to any other nation. Then, one can also take a look at
the phrase National Question. It was made clear in the review of Russian history
that the phrase National Question referred to the questions and perplexities that the
Russians and the so called ethnics had about the sociopolitical problems resulting
from the fall of the tsarist empire. There was, in fact, no national question in
Ethiopia in 1913. It was during the 1960s that the few Ethiopian elites, hungry for
power, who started using the word nation in reference to the tribes. Be that as it
may, the term nation was used historically by the Russians like Lenin and Stalin
in reference to the surrounding nations that were made part of the Soviet Union
through military conquest. This military conquest, as a matter of fact, is
reminiscent of the Gada driven conquest the Galla migrants perpetrated against
Ethiopia in the 16th century. What is mostly set aside by Dr. Asafa Jalata and his
likes is that the nations that Lenin and Stalin had in mind, when they used the
term nations, were Armenia, Georgia, Ukraine, Belorussia, The Moslem Border
Lands, Azerbaijan, etc. These nations were sovereign nations with their own
sociopolitical systems, their own economic systems, their own well defined geographical territories, their own culture, and other entitlements as free nations. Now the question is- did the Oromos have all the characteristics of a nation just mentioned above? The answer is- no they did not. In fact, they were nomadic. In fact, they were nomadic before they came into Ethiopia; and after they migrated into Ethiopia, they became part of an established nation with an ancient civilization of its own. Pointing to this ancient civilization, Professor Donald Levine (1974, p.92) tells us that Ethiopia had its own script in the first millennium; a script in which Oromos have as much alacrity as any Ethiopian. However, today the few Oromo elites, who have the aim of secession, like Eritrea, claim to have a Latin script that to me looks like the English alphabet. Coming back to your question, Almaz, the Oromos do not, in the least, constitute a nation. But, as you know, the purpose of this dissertation transcends tribal bickering. The purpose is social change. The reason we went into the history of Ethiopia and a philosophical inquiry into the notion of Gossa/tribe is to reflect on these issues and pave the way for social change. Social change goes against the status quo. The notion of tribes is part of the status quo. It is this status quo that this study is trying to breakdown. As you can see replacing the word tribe with the word nation has contributed a great deal towards the degradation of the Ethiopian society. We need to look at the advanced nations like United States, Great Britain, France, and others to see if we can learn something from them. I am most particularly fond of the American sociopolitical system in which the thesis versus antithesis
contradiction can openly be witnessed by anybody. Here, what I have in mind is the Civil Rights Movement, The Black Power Movement, and currently the American people rising up in opposition to former President George Bush’s war in Iraq. In our case, when the university students replaced the word tribe with the word nation no explanation was offered for that replacement. There was no thesis-antithesis dialogue going on. The following excerpt demonstrates the liberty the Ethiopian students in America enjoyed in the 1970s. The excerpt below was published in 1975 in a pamphlet called *Challenge* volume xiv [prepared by Ethiopian Students Union in North America]. Here is the excerpt:

“

The essential elements of a revolutionary national program for the Ethiopian Empire reduce themselves to the following propositions:

the recognition of the right of nationalities and peoples to self-determination up to and including secession” (page, 28-29). This doctrine served as the springboard for the secession of the province of Eritrea. The same doctrine still suffuses the Ethiopian sociopolitical system. The Oromo Liberation Front is currently utilizing the same doctrine to assert its right to secede; one can look into [www.oromoliberationfront.org](http://www.oromoliberationfront.org) and click on their mission in the menu. As it may have been evident by now, today one’s sense of tribal identity is emphasized to the highest possible degree. Why? Because, that is the only way the leadership can have one tribe pitted against another tribe by virtue of which the Tigre tribe ensures its grip on power. In other words, the political hegemony of the Tigre tribe remains intact with tribalism in place. How does this work? Well, let us assume that the
Amhara tribe opposes the tribal/ethnic policies of the Tigre tribe, which is currently in power. What the Tigres, then, do is that they feed false information to the Oromos about what the Amhara are doing and saying against them. The Oromos rise up in arms, mainly in rural Ethiopia, and start killing those deemed to be Amharas. This is a method the Tigres use to quell any opposition against them. This sort of political maneuver, costing economic and sociopolitical growth, demonstrates the tremendous need for adult education in Ethiopia. Critical to note here, as Paulo Freire (1985, 2002) and Ira Shor (1992, 1996, and 2000) recognized, is that education is politics. Politics, tribal or otherwise, influence the direction and nature of education. Consequently, it is one of the solemn responsibilities of critical pedagogy to raise the consciousness of the oppressed and the oppressors through adult education. What is most important to note, too, is the purpose driven infusion of the self-determination doctrine and the tribal sense of identity as a nation. And, this is where a dialogue, in the form of adult education, is indispensable. In this dialogue, the question whether or not the tribes are nations must be answered. Recently, I had an opportunity to talk to a college educated Ethiopian about how the tribes came to be viewed as nations. He did not know it, i.e. he did not know the origin of the word nations in the translated [into Amharic] version of the self-determination doctrine. Suffice it to say that I recommended Dr. Richard Pipes’ (1964) book, a critical endeavor should be made with respect to how the society can transcend this tribal strife and aim at democracy and economic growth. The need for straightforward transcendence can be better understood in terms of Professor Michael Apple’s (1990) theory of reproduction of social values through the employment of educational
institutions, which are used by oppressors to maintain the status quo. In other words, being aware of the value-recycling effect of traditional education, adult education should break down this value-recycling routine. The Ministry of Education, at the instigation of the tribal government, enforces as a matter of policy that each tribe be taught in their own tribal language. The intention of this policy is to subvert the use of the national language, which is Amharic. Now at this point, I should remind the reader that if he/she replaces the words tribe and tribal with the words nations and nationalities he/she would end up with the language of the 1913 Lenin-Stalin article entitled *Marxism and the National Question*. Here in this dissertation, the word tribe is used instead of nation to maintain the social and historical authenticity of the people of Ethiopia in correspondence to the doctrine of historical dialectics. In other words, the dialectics of the historical developments in the life of a people is the only one that assures the people’s nationhood rather than a forced or an imposed status of nationhood. At this point, what might serve as an example of imposed status of nationhood is to look at articles 5 and 39 in the Ethiopian Constitution from the internet ([www.africa.upenn.edu/Hornet/Ethiopian_Constitution](http://www.africa.upenn.edu/Hornet/Ethiopian_Constitution)). The following is what it states:

**Article 5 Language**

1. The official language of the Federal Government shall be Amharic.

2. All Ethiopian languages shall enjoy equal state recognition.

3. The member states of the federation shall determine their respective official language.

**Article 39 The Right of Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples**
1. Every nation, nationality or people in Ethiopia shall have the unrestricted right
to self determination up to secession.

2. Every nation, nationality and people shall have the right to speak, write and
develop its language and to promote its culture, help it grow and flourish, and
preserve its historical heritage.

4. The right to self determination up to secession of nation, nationality, and
peoples may be exercised.

Take note, please, of the fact that the Leninist-Stalinist language of nations,
nationalities, and the concept of self-determination have found their way into the
Ethiopian constitution. Look at the language of the third part of article 5. Take note of
the phrase “member states.”

How true are the phrases and clauses used in the constitution? Recall that these
phrases and clauses were injected by the Ethiopian student movement of the 1960s
into an uncritical and unquestioning political system which still, in the 21st century,
accepts it uncritically. And, it was the self-determination doctrine that was exploited
as a spring board to pave the way for Eritrean secession. Here one may wonder if the
secession of Eritrea was governed by the dialectics of historical development; the
answer to that query is- no! Why? Well, although the question is specifically about the
secession of Eritrea, it is nonetheless inclusive of the Oromo Liberation Front. The
reason is that the Oromo Liberation Front is currently appealing to the same Leninist-
Stalinist doctrine of self-determination that the Eritreans and the Tigres employed
deceptively to accomplish the secession of Eritrea, i.e. the dialectics of
historical development did not play a role. Lastly, a statement needs to be made on the phrase “member states.” It sounds western and very deceptive. The phrase actually stands for the tribal enclaves called Kilil [see map at the end]. The phrase is not, in the least, suggestive of the tribes, while for example, Oromia Kilil and Amhara Kilil are; Oromia Kilil is for the Oromo tribe and the Amhara Kilil is for the Amhara tribe. When one looks at the preceding views from the stand point of social utility versus disutility, it is clear that social disutility is preponderant.

Ketema: Habte, pardon my interruption. Could you elaborate on your concept of historical dialectics, please? And then, if you can, relate that to why you think that the secession of Eritrea is not the result of historical dialectics.

Habte: Thank you, Ketema. First off, historical dialectics is not the same as historical materialism that Marx and Engels set forth in The German Ideology written in 1845-1846 but published in 1932 (www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1845/german-ideology). What I call historical dialectics, which occurs due to historical necessity, is the dialectics that takes place within the framework of the history of a given nation. Here, when I use the word nation I mean the entire people of sovereign nations like Ethiopia, United States, and others. In other words, the term nation does not mean tribe. More precisely, the term dialectics is meant to suggest the Platonic conception of it as exemplified in his dialogues, ex., Theatetus. To wit, the thesis-antithesis contradiction constantly operating to produce the synthesis, which in turn becomes the thesis that will contradict its own antithesis [dialectics is a logical interplay between contradictory forces]. The constant interaction of the triadic logic [thesis-antithesis-
synthesis] then reaches a more complex stage than when started. Succinctly, therefore, the thesis-antithesis tension is inherent to Plato’s dialogues. It is in this sense that the term dialectics is used. Now to come back to the Eritrean issue, was there any kind of dialogue that had taken place among the people of Ethiopia with respect to the secession of Eritrea? The answer is- no! Was there any kind of dialogue between the tribal leadership (TPLF/EPRDF) and the people of Ethiopia? The answer to this question is also no! Then, how did the secession of Eritrea come to pass? In other words, what acts actually clinched the secession of Eritrea? Here is how Professor Vestal (1991) explains it:

In May 1991 the U.S. government responded to a call from Mengistu’s regime and the insurgent groups to hold a peace conference in London for all parties in the Ethiopian civil war.

While the U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Herman Cohen attempted to broker peace, the EPLF [Eritrean People’s Liberation Front] and EPRDF [Ethiopian People’s Revolutionary Democratic Front] broke the back of the remnant Derg military. The EPLF occupied all of Eritrea while the EPRDF breached the defenses of Addis Ababa. At that point, the U.S. government arranged for the departure of Mengistu [Ethiopia’s socialist leader 1974-1991] to exile in Zimbabwe. . . .

In London, the Marxist-Leninist skeletons in the closets of the EPLF
and EPRDF were kept firmly under lock, while their leaders, Issayas Afewerki and Meles Zenawi respectively, took on the rhetorical mantles of democrats to win support of Western powers.

Issayas and Meles played Cohen like a well tuned Masinko, the Ethiopian one stringed “violin.” In effect, the United States anointed the EPLF with de facto sovereignty over Eritrea, and EPRDF was given a green light to enter Addis Ababa to “restore public order and prevent further bloodshed” (p. 4-5).

Professor Vestal is in a reasonably good position to understand Ethiopian sociopolitical affairs. The reason is that he taught in Ethiopia as a Peace Corps Volunteer in the 1960s. Hence, as evidenced in the above excerpt, he can tell when deceptive activities take place in the Ethiopian political realm. Teferra Haile-Selassie (1997), the Ethiopian Ambassador in Great Britain, discusses the same event that Professor Vestal discussed in the excerpt above. Here is what he says:

   The London Peace Talks between the government and three insurgent organizations, EPLF, TPLF [Tigrayan People’s Liberation Front], and OLF [Oromo Liberation Front] were to be convened in London under the chairmanship of Mr. Herman Cohen, Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, in London in the Old Admiralty Building on 28 May 1991. . . . The insurgents [EPLF, TPLF, OLF, and EPRP] with the support of the mediator [Herman Cohen], determined the participants to the talks despite the government’s [Ethiopian gov.] insistence to involve all organized opposition forces, including the EPRP [Ethiopian
Representations were made to the Western allies by the Ethiopian embassies, including the London mission which explained the need to include all opposition groups in the talks, in the interest of a lasting and enduring peace. The view of the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office was to start the Peace Talks with the EPLF, EPRDF/TPLF and OLF, and to co-opt others as the talks progressed. . . . Mr. Cohen declared that the points raised by the Prime Minister were not different from his line of thinking. He, however, advised the Prime Minister that at the meeting the question of proportion of representation in a future transitional government should not be emphasized and a special package for Eritrea must be considered. He reassured the Prime Minister that any unilateral action by the EPLF to change the status of Eritrea prior to the adoption of a new constitution would be resisted by the US government and this had been made clear to the EPLF leadership (p. 312-314).

Mr. Cohen’s attempt to give a formal and official façade to the chicanery he was leading against the people of Ethiopia by excluding the government delegation from negotiation and secretly conferring with EPLF and EPRDF/TPLF is obvious from the preceding excerpt. Worse yet, the turning point that played a decisive role in clinching the secession of Eritrea is stated under the rubric of The Proposed Argument of the US Government. Teferra Haile-Selassie (1997) states it this way:

An Eritrean administration will be set up immediately in Asmara.

This administration will co-operate with the Provisional Government.
in Addis Ababa and members of it will sit on the Provisional Government. On June 1, 1993, a referendum will be held in Eritrea under appropriate international supervision to determine the political future of Eritrea (p. 315)

Most importantly, one could arguably look at the history of Ethiopia in the 19th century, during the reign of Emperor Yohannis, and squarely put the responsibility of Italian colonization of Eritrea right at the Emperor’s doorstep. How? Well, before his death, the Emperor, on his way to Metema, stopped at Asmara. In Asmara, he dismissed Ras Alula from his governorship over the entire area north of Mereb Melash river and proceeded to Metema, according to Paulos Gnogno (1984, p. 137), without filling the power vacuum the dismissal of Ras Alula created. And as noted earlier, the Emperor was hit with a stray bullet in the war at Metema against the Mahdists. The Italians received word of the Emperor’s death and the fact that Ras Alula was no longer in charge of the area north of the Mereb Melash river. These two conditions gave the Italians in Rome a chance to assign a new army General and ordered him to occupy the entire area north of Mereb Melash. The Italian General did exactly that. And, it was at that point that the name Eritrea was tagged to that part of Ethiopia by the Italians. History points out that Emperor Yohannis passed away March 1-1881 [E.C.]; and Minilik became Emperor on October 25-1882 [E.C], about seven months or so after the death of Yohannis. What does this historical fact mean? It means that it was actually Emperor Yohannis who unwittingly ceded [to Italians] the geographical land mass north of Mereb Melash river which was later named Eritrea by the Italians. Therefore, Minilik had nothing to do with
the Italian acquisition of Eritrea; and the Italians had all the conditions they needed to acquire the geographical land mass, which they later named Eritrea.

Almaz: Let me make a statement at this point, please.

Habte: Please, go ahead.

Almaz: I completely understand what you are saying. So far, what seem to be evident in your account of Ethiopian history are the following:

1. Emperor Minilik was not the one who handed Eritrea over to the Italians.

2. It was actually Emperor Yohannis who handed Eritrea [before it was called Eritrea] over to the Italians months before King Minilik became Emperor.

3. The second assertion is true for the following reasons:
   a. Emperor Yohannis marched to Sebergoma to fight against the Italians, and wasted two months waiting for them to come out of Sehati, where they were fortified. Yohannis finally left without firing a shot.
   b. He, Emperor Yohannis, created a power vacuum when he dismissed Ras Allula from his governorship over the entire region north of Mereb Melash river, which the Italians later named Eritrea.
   c. The Emperor, after dismissing Ras Allula, went to Metema to war against the Mahadists, where he met his demise.

4. The Italians, after getting word of all the conditions in #3, proceeded to colonize the entire region they later named Eritrea. This happened in 1881 [E.C] soon after the death of Emperor Yohannis but before Minilik became Emperor, according to Paulos Gnogno (1984 (E.C), p. 138).

5. The historical timeline, as stated above, is such that #3 and #4 happened before
Minilik became Emperor. Hence, what #2 asserts must be true.

That is my summary of the views you put forth, Habte. Would you agree?

Habte: Yes, absolutely. The reason it is important to know that historical fact is that in the 1960s Eritrean and Tigre university students in Ethiopia were charging that Emperor Minilik sold Eritrea to the Italians; he [Minilik] exchanged Eritrea for Italian arms; and Ethiopia colonized Eritrea. All these charges are not true so far as the history of Ethiopia is concerned; to wit, my reading of it and what has been recounted in this dissertation do not support any of the charges. A response, however, to the charge leveled against King Minilik [not yet Emperor] by Dr. Tekeste Negash (1997, p. 13) as one who ceded Eritrea for Italian arms must be made to collapse due to Dr. Tekeste’s failure, as a historian, to make his readers aware of the fact that Eritrea, for all practical purposes, was already colonized during Emperor Yohannis’ reign. It is true nonetheless that King Minilik of Shewa was competing for the emperorship against King Yohannis of Tigre [a province north of Shewa]. King Minilik finally decided to pay tribute to King Yohannis at which time King Yohannis became the recognized Emperor of Ethiopia. Now, when Dr. Tekeste (1997) pointed out that King Minilik ceded Eritrea for Italian arms, he failed to point out that appealing to European powers for arms by Ethiopian kings and emperors was a customary thing in order to fight and dominate another regional king or chief. This sort of thing was not unique to Minilik, suffice it to point out that he [Minilik] did it after the death of Yohannis to campaign for the emperorship. The Italians also approached King Minilik secretly while Yohannis was still the Emperor. Here is an instance pointed out by Professor Pankhurst (2001) in which Yohannis, Minilik’s predecessor, did exactly the same thing:
Yohannis, at the beginning of his reign, was under strong pressure from the Egyptians, whose Khedive Pasha, had officially received the port of Massawa from his nominal overlord, the Sultan of the Ottoman Empire on 20 May 1868. They shortly afterwards occupied the nearby mainland port of Zulla, and instituted a rigid blockade to prevent the import of arms by the Ethiopian ruler. Faced with Egyptian hostility Yohannis decided to appeal to European Christendom. In August 1872 he sent his English aide, Kirkham on a visit to Europe, with appeals to the governments of Austria, Russia, Germany, Britain, and France (p. 164).

The preceding excerpt demonstrates that Yohannis did exactly what Minilik did: appeal to European powers for arms. But the descendents of Yohannis [both Tigres and Eritreans] were and still are critical and hostile to Minilik based on their own falsified version of Ethiopian history. Dr. Daniel Kindie (2005) states that Minilik’s critics are silent, when their own people [Eritreans and Tigres] handed parts or all of Eritrea over to Italy unsolicited. Here is what he says:

. . . , Menelik accepted the request of the Italians for a cease-fire and peace negotiations.

Eritrean political activists have been very consistent in their criticism of Menelik for having “betrayed” their homeland. They have never raised a word about Eritrean warlords, who actively collaborated with foreign powers inviting them to come and occupy their homeland. Ras Wolde Mikael Solomon, who came from the hereditary rulers of
Hamassien- the Hazzega, is a good example. He was appointed Governor of Hamassien and Bogos by Yohannis in 1869. But soon he started to plot with the Egyptians and received a large batch of weapons in return. They appointed him a Ras because he allowed them to occupy Senhit. After the defeat of the Egyptians, he devastated Bogos and killed two Governors- Hailu and Bariau, who were appointed by the Emperor Yohannis. As if that was not enough, he had contacts with Napoleon 111. He also encouraged his son-in-law to join the Italians as a mercenary, and, who in turn encouraged them to move into the highlands. Similarly, Bahta Hagos was armed at first by the Egyptians and worked as a mercenary to undermine Ethiopia. Subsequently, he worked as an Italian agent. He fought for them in 1887 and 1888 against the Ethiopian army, converted to Catholicism, and appointed Governor of Akele Guzaie by the Italians. Debbebe Araya was a prominent ally of the Italians. He used to say “I wish to be the chief without having other chiefs.” Debbebe received money and war material from the Italians to put his mercenary service at the disposal of Rome and started to harass the Ethiopian army at Ghinda. He led his 2000 troops and occupied Segeneiti for the Italians. He then fought and killed in battle Dejach Kifle Eyesus marched into Keren with the Italians and helped them raise the Italian flag there. The same was true of the Ben Amir chiefs who collaborated with the Italian invaders and assisted them in the occupation of their homeland (p. 87).
The preceding excerpt demonstrates how Tigres (Eritreans) were helpful to the Italians and the Egyptians against the people of Ethiopia. The politics of the 19th century is clearly baffling. It seems to me, however, that trading land for arms was a common practice. It was the psychology of the time. Incidentally, why was it a common practice? Amazingly enough, just reading the history, the purpose was to dominate some other Ethiopian politician. It was not even to fight off foreign invaders: the Italians and the Egyptians.

Ketema: Excuse me, Habte. Could you elaborate on why one politician was interested in dominating another politician more so than fighting off the aggression of foreign invaders like Egyptians and Italians?

Habte: The first reason is power struggle, Ketema. In other words, one regional leader like Minilik, the King of Shewa province, wants other regional feudal lords or warlords to pay tribute to him which is interpreted to be a sign of submission [to the one who receives the tribute]. If any one of them would not pay tribute, the result might be war. And, it is the prospect of this war that gives rise to the regional feudal lords to negotiate, for arms, with foreigners like Egypt, Great Britain, Italy, and others. Logic suggests, therefore, that the foreigners with colonial intensions would drive the negotiation towards trading arms for land. The fact that this sort of situation was widespread points to a lack of central government. To wit, different regions were ruled by different kings-warlords which would give a chance for the colonialists to play one warlord against another. This period in Ethiopian history is called The Era of the Princes. Henze (2000) tells us that “The Era of the Princes began with the death of Iyasu II in 1755 and lasted until the crowning of Tewodros II in 1855” (p. 119).
Richard Pankhurst (2001) informs us that, just before The Era of the Princes, there were several assassinations. And, it was these assassinations that set The Era of the Princes in motion. In his characterization of the period, here is what he says:

In this period which followed [i.e. the assassinations], central government disintegrated. The provinces became to varying degrees independent, the emperors were reduced to the status of little more than puppets in the hands of one or other feudal lord, and there was frequent civil war. Ethiopian historians later spoke of this time as the era of the Masafent, i.e. judges, or princes, for it recalled the biblical time, referred to in the Book of Judges 21:25, when ‘there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes’ (p. 130).

Almaz: There is something that perplexes me about Ethiopia. The history of Ethiopia that we have seen so far suggests to me that Ethiopia should have disintegrated and disappeared centuries ago. Why is Ethiopia still here? Habte, could you make a statement on that?

Habte: Certainly, Almaz. You’re right, it is perplexing. There is something that holds the internal forces of the society together. If you look at the horn of Africa, there is a general socio-cultural similarity of the people in that area. For instance if you observe the way the Somales and the Ethiopians behave, you will see some similar elements in their behavior. That is why the Somales walk straight into Ethiopia and live there comfortably without second thought. In other words, they live there without going through any period of adjustment [culture shock], or without being hassled by the
government. In fact once they are in the country, they claim that they are citizens.

These Somales stick to the easternmost part of Ethiopia where the Ethiopian border is geographically congruent with the Somale border. That is why Professor Levine (1974) gave the title *Greater Ethiopia* to his book and used it to refer to the sort of people-to-people relationship that he was able to see while he was there in person.

From what he says, the word kindred seems to be expressive of his understanding.

Here is what he says:

. . . , the Ethiopian Empire of the twentieth century consists of a number of previously autonomous and distinct “African” tribes subordinated under an alien Semitic minority. This view is a natural consequence of beginning Ethiopian history, as scholarly convention has had it, with the supposed Semitic immigrations of the first millennium B.C. A different view is obtained, however, if one’s perspective begins not three but six thousand years ago, not in Arabia but in Africa; not in the Semitic importations but with Ethiopian peoples at home. Such a view may justify replacing, or at least correcting, the image of arbitrary empire composed of numerous isolated and vastly diverse subject peoples with the image of a vast ecological area and historical arena in which kindred peoples have shared many traditions and interacted with one another for millennia. I propose to refer this latter image as Greater Ethiopia. The present boundaries of the Ethiopian state roughly circumscribe the area in question, although some of the peoples in Greater Ethiopia now
straddle the borders of Sudan, Kenya, Somalia and French Territory of
the Afars and Issas; . . .(p. 26-27).

Ketema: Professor Levine has, more or less, a good picture of the people of Ethiopia. The term
kindred, in his depiction of the people of Ethiopia, makes a lot of sense. He mentions
the nations that share borders with Ethiopia. The French territory that he mentioned is
Djibouti located adjacent to the Indian Ocean and the southern tip of the Red Sea. It is
no longer a French territory. Would you agree with me, Habte?

Habte: Absolutely! As a matter of fact since my home town, Dire Dawa, is right next to
Djibouti, Professor Levine’s depiction of the people in that area is to the point. People
come to Dire Dawa from Djibouti for vacation; and there is an immediate psychological
convergence between the Djiboutians and the people in Dire Dawa. The reason is that
these Djiboutians are Somales who went to Djibouti from Ethiopia and Somale. There
is, therefore, no significant cultural aperture between these people. Furthermore back
when I was assigned to teach in the province of Wellega, I saw that some of the
Ethiopian women were married to Sudanese men. The Sudanese men were Moslems
and the women were Christians. Regardless of that divide, this union reflects the socio-
cultural similarity of the people in the horn of Africa, yet confirming Professor Levine’s
use of the term kindred in reference to the people of that area. By the way, is Gossa/tribe
biological? In other words, are people, who belong to the same tribe, biologically
related? The term “Zer” (in Amharic) is used to suggest that it is biological. A lot of
Ethiopians use that term. They say “Gossa is Zer.” How would you respond to that,
Almaz?

Almaz: Thank you, Habte. Implicit to the term Zer is biological relation. As you know,
biological relation means genetic relation. The interest here is not biology or genetics, suffice it to point out that the term Zer implies biological relation. What I want to point out at this point is that biological relationship is the result of sharing physical and other characteristics that are genetically transmitted. Do you agree with me so far?

Ketema: Yes.

Habte: I agree too.

Almaz: Very good! Now, let us all remember that when we just started to establish our understanding of the notion of Gossa/tribe, we agreed on the three constitutive elements of Gossa- namely, culture, language, and human beings. Consequent on that, asserting the notion that Gossa/tribe is biological is asserting the notion that Gossa/tribe is genetically transmissible. What that obviously means is that all the three constitutive elements of Gossa/tribe are genetically transmissible. That, of course, is absolutely absurd. Let me ask you this; are language and culture genetically transmissible?

Habte: No, they are not.

Ketema: I agree.

Almaz: Thank you, we all agree on this. Culture and language are learned from one’s own social environment. The characteristics of human beings, physical and otherwise, are Genetically transmitted. Hence, Gossa/tribe is not biological; it is not Zer. Would you agree with that conclusion?

Habte: Yes.

Ketema: Yes, I do agree. At this point, could you make a few statements on whether or not Ethiopia ever colonized Eritrea and Oromia? If so, when? Furthermore, could the Marxist-Leninist doctrine have solved the economic and sociopolitical problems,
Habte?

Habte: Thank you, Ketema. We have touched on all those questions earlier. Nonetheless and most directly, the answer to all those questions is- no! In order to be certain of this answer, we need to answer some critical questions. Let us go over them step by step.

Has there ever been a sovereign political territory/entity called Oromia before the arrival of the tribe-based government in Ethiopia? The answer is- no. That demonstrates that the claim that Ethiopia colonized Oromia is false; in fact, Oromia never existed before 1991. How about Eritrea? Was it ever colonized by Ethiopia? No, it was never colonized by Ethiopia. As a matter of fact, it was part of Ethiopia ever since Ethiopia came into being. How so? As history itself attests, Tigre, the northernmost province of Ethiopia, had the geographical land mass of Eritrea as its northernmost part. In other words, a portion of northern Tigre province was what was renamed as Eritrea by colonialist Italy. Eritrea, therefore, was part and parcel of the Tigre province, which in turn is part and parcel of Ethiopia. Hence, Ethiopia never colonized Eritrea or Oromia. I hope that answers your questions.

Now, it is an illusion to think that Marxist-Leninist philosophy (economic and sociopolitical) can solve Ethiopia’s problems. In principle, in order to solve a problem one has to understand the problem. What actually triggered the problem must be clear. In other words, the problem being the effect, the cause must be understood. For instance racism is a problem in the United States. The cause for this problem is the belief in the notion of race. Hence, in order to solve the problem of racism the notion of race must first be looked at. Solving social problems like racism and tribalism from the structural standpoint is impossible. In other words, the belief in the existence of...
black and white people is the first impediment that must be overcome. Similarly, the belief in the existence of tribes like the Amhara and Oromo tribe must be subjected to epistemic scrutiny. What that means is that the very texture, the very fiber, the essential constitution of the structures themselves must be rigorously interrogated. In fine, the structures are the problems. The structures are those without which the problems cannot exist. Take away the structures and there will be no tribalism or racism. What must be clear at this point is that rearranging or renaming the structures will not work; they just must, logically and through dialogue, be destroyed. The intention of the dialogue is to arouse critical consciousness. Dialogue is the propelling force of critical pedagogy. Did I answer your questions, Ketema?

Ketema: Yes, thank you.

Habte: How about you, Almaz? Are you happy with my response?

Almaz: Yes. Thank you, Habte.

Habte: Now, we can bring this arduous dialogue to a finish. And, if you permit me, I am going to present the conclusions of our dialogue, which is an informal adult education via the entire pedagogic inquiry into Gossa, the ultimate goal of which is social change. I am going to do that through my narrative, which in effect is my own story.

Answer to the Research Question

How do various doctrines such as Lenin’s the right of nations and nationalities to self-determination and other factors influence social change in Ethiopia?
The term nation may have different connotations depending on the country we are talking about. In the United States, the term nation can be used in reference to the Indian tribesmen. Ex., the Cherokee nation. For purposes of clarity, I looked up the term nation in the internet dictionary [dictionary.com]. Here is the first and one of the meanings it stated- “a large body of people associated with a particular territory, that is sufficiently conscious of its unity to seek or to possess a government peculiarly its own.” I do agree with this definition. So, when Lenin used the term nation, he did not mean to suggest Gossa/ethnicity. He meant to suggest the colonized nations [by the Russian empire] like Ukraine, Armenia, and others (Richard Pipes, (1964), Lenin (2004)). The case of Ethiopia does not involve colonization of Oromos or Eritreans. Italy tried to colonize Ethiopia and failed, as the research shows. What happened was that Italy occupied a portion of the Tigre province [northern Ethiopia] in the late 1880s. She managed to colonize a portion of the northern part of the Tigre province and called it Eritrea in 1890. Consequently, Eritrea was never colonized by Ethiopia. This has been demonstrated by the research.

Now, the case of Oromo claimants is different from that of Eritreans. The Oromos [used to be called Galla at that time] simply migrated into southern Ethiopia (Legesse (1973)) from Somali. Logic suggests that they constructed a defense system called Gada in southern Ethiopia. The primary responsibility of the Gada system was that the in-coming Gada leadership was expected to go out and conquer/colonize territories that were not theirs and incorporate them into what they already own. As the research demonstrated, it was through the employment of the principles of the Gada system that the Oromos conquered almost the whole of Ethiopia (Abir, (1968)) in the 16th century. That means that the Oromos were not colonized, as Oromo secessionists assert nowadays. Instead, one may reasonably argue that Ethiopia was colonized by the Oromos. Despite what happened in the 16th century, Oromos became part of the Ethiopian
society. Oromos are now seen as one of the tribes in Ethiopia. Oromos, therefore, do not constitute a nation.

How have the identities of Ethiopians living in the United States been affected by historical change?

Finally looking at the consequence of the implementation of Lenin’s doctrine, it is obvious that the degeneracy this doctrine inflicted on the Ethiopian people has been delineated in this dissertation. Social change by definition is some sort of betterment/improvement; betterment and degeneracy are antithetical to one another. Therefore, it must be concluded that Lenin’s doctrine of “the right of nations and nationalities to self-determination . . .” as implemented in Ethiopia, did not bring about any form of social change. The results of implementing this doctrine are economic oppression by the Tigre tribe, stifling of freedom of the press, hegemony of one tribe [the Tigre tribe] over other tribes, lack of human rights, Ethiopians running out of the country in droves, and several other oppressive policies. With results such as the ones mentioned, Lenin’s doctrine is a failure.

Gossa/ethnicity is the primary ingredient in the social chaos in Ethiopia today. Gossa is interpreted to mean nation. Amhara is a Gossa; Oromo is a Gossa; Tigre is a Gossa, and so on and so forth. Beginning with the student movement of the 1960s all the way to the present tribe-based government, the tribes in Ethiopia are viewed as nations by Marxists and Leninists- the so called revolutionaries. Setting Gossa to the concept of nation is the foundation upon which the administrative super-structure is built. What that means is that if there is something incongruent in the equation of Gossa equals nation [i.e. Gossa=nation], this incongruity is going to seep upward into the super-structure. In other words, what is incongruent or illogical will be reflected
in the operation of the super-structure. And in fact, that was what was taking place in Ethiopia.
The current chaos confirms that ethnic federalism, a policy currently implemented, has not worked in Ethiopia [Ethnic federalism means autonomy of tribal enclaves, equality of ethnics, the right to secede, and others]. Obviously enough, to declare a belief in the equality of the tribes/ethnics and yet implement the hegemony of the Tigre tribe over others is a contradiction. That is one of the reasons for the dysfunction of ethnic federalism, as conceived by the Tigres. Furthermore, if we recall, the notion of federalism [equality of ethnics] was not accepted by Lenin (Pipes, 1964)). In both Ethiopia and Russia ethnic federalism was not a functioning concept. Therefore, it only makes sense that the notion of Gossa/ethnicity should be put aside in Ethiopia. The logical way to do that is by starting a public dialogue [accessible to all]. This dissertation has demonstrated the non-existence of Gossa in the dialogue. That means that the path to social change is cleared up in order to focus on meaningful policy construction and implementation. An important fact to recognize, at this point, is that realizing the non-existence of Gossa/ethnicity in and of itself is a form of social change.

With respect to Eritrea and her secession from Ethiopia, it was made clear that the secession was the result of Lenin’s doctrine of self-determination. Consequently, Eritrea should be brought back to Ethiopia, the historical owner of the landmass [of Eritrea]. Once Eritrea is brought back to Ethiopia, the logical step to take is to merge it with the province of Tigre from which it was severed in the first place. This political and historical measure will make sure that that part [northern part] of Ethiopia will forever sever its colonial link to Italy.
CHAPTER FIVE: MY JOURNEY IN ANDRAGOGY

Andragogy is adult education. This is an educational dialogue I carried out Ethiopian adults, some of whom have families and some do not. These Ethiopians are people who already have an impressive wealth of knowledge about the Ethiopian society. Consequently, they have definite positions on a lot of social and historical issues. This educational dialogue is the single most important dialogue, for me, in my journey in adult education. The reason is that the dialogue brought me face to face, in an existential engagement, with people who might turn out to be social change agents themselves. There are some, amongst them, who claim to be Amhara; there are some who claim to be Oromo, some Gurage, some Welamo, and others who identify themselves with other tribes. All these people communicate with one another using the Ethiopian official language called Amharic. In other words, their tribal language is not in use. I found this to be a fascinating experience for me. Since I was part of the dialogue, I personally fluctuated between English and Amharic as some of them did. The use of the English language was important where Amharic was deficient in terms of certain technical concepts better expressed in English rather than in Amharic.

Was this dialogue transformative? My own experience suggests that it was transformative. In the course of the dialogue, what I found to be invariably true is that Ethiopians take it for granted that they know what Gossa is. I did the same thing myself until just before this dissertation I found myself stuck when trying to explain it to myself. So, we are all complacent with respect to articulating what Gossa is, because, we were born and raised in a culture where the term Gossa is such a part of the common parlance we do not feel the need to explain it. Be that as it may, I made sure that I posed my critical questions in comportment to the needs of this dissertation by first setting the way they should understand my questions. I set up an
epistemological framework within which they could understand and interpret my questions. Here is an example of a method I used: In my dialogue, I point to something concrete like a car. Then, I point to it with my finger and say, “This is a car.” I, then, follow that statement by going into the explanation of how I know that it is a car. To wit, I see it. Without seeing it, I could not even point to it.

My question, after framing the dialogue this way was: What is it that we are referring to when we use terms like Gossa, Oromo, Amhara, and other social phenomena? This question was followed, on the part of the dialogue participants, by a long silence and absolutely nonplused facial expressions. My duty at this point was to maintain my silence and watch everybody’s eyes and faces. This particular moment was a transformative moment. Before I elucidated the notion of Gossa, which they already know but could not articulate, I posed another question. If there isn’t anything I can point to and say, “this is Gossa,” is it reasonable for me to assert the notion that Gossa is only and only a concept? In other words, there is nothing outside the mind that comports with our concept of Gossa in the same way that car is a concept that exists concretely outside the mind. We agreed that Gossa is a mental entity. Establishing this fact is of critical importance to solving the problem in Ethiopia.

Dr. Merera Gudina (2003), in identifying the problem, states: “The root cause of the lasting crisis of the Ethiopian state and society centered around and resulting from ethnic nationalism is the creation of the modern empire-state in the last quarter of the 19th century and its subsequent evolution” (p. 2).

Gudina (2003) correctly identifies ethnic nationalism as the source or origin of Ethiopia’s problem. Sadly however, nowhere in his book does he explain what it is that he understands or means to suggest by the term ethnic. I think that the term ethnic may be more fashionable than
the term tribe in Europe where he wrote his dissertation. This suggests to me that in European circles, or maybe in western views, the two terms are interchangeable.

Nonetheless, the reason I am particular about these two terms is that clarity of ideas and concepts are critically important when solving social problems. Without looking into ethnicity per se, the failure to solve Ethiopia’s problems is guaranteed.

Approaching the problem through the prism of ethnicity is more structural than anything else. A structural approach to solving the problem of Gossa, or ethnic nationalism, as Dr. Merera calls it, leaves the problem intact. The solution does not lie in the structural relationships. Rather, it lies in the very fiber of the structures themselves. Hence, looking into Gossa from the standpoint of its constitutive elements is better suited to solve Ethiopia’s problems than the structural approach. Approaching it from the standpoint of the constitutive elements would put the so-called Ethiopian elites on the spot. These elites are the ones who used ethnic nationalism to catapult themselves to power. As a political scientist, Dr. Merera Gudina (2003) has pointed out this fact. Here is what he says:

. . . political mobilization is an essential part of the politics of ethnicity and nationalism. It is no exaggeration to say that as a rule the elites are more than a catalyst, usually they are the factual political engineers of ethnic nationalist movements (p. 34).

But, who are these Ethiopian elites? They are the so-called educated Ethiopians, including Dr. Merera Gudina (2003) himself. He represents an Oromo group and is a member of the Ethiopian parliament. The Ethiopian elites are, therefore, the ones who must be confronted with the philosophical difficulty inherent to the problem of Gossa. Nevertheless, Gudina (2003) points
out how the concept of nations and nationalities came into vogue and political scene in Ethiopia. Here is a summary of what he wrote on ethnicity and nationalism.

The “national question” (and associated terms such as ‘nation,’ ‘nationalities’) came into Ethiopian national politics in the high days of the Ethiopian Student Movement (ESM), which was captivated by Marxist-Leninist ideas in the 1960s and early 1970s. All the leftist political parties which were an offspring of the ESM carried them over into their political programs.

The principle of ‘the right to self-determination of nations and nationalities, up to and including secession,’ like the above-mentioned terms came into the Ethiopian political vocabulary with the Ethiopian Student Movement of the period and the political parties it gave birth to. With the rise of the military regime that began to use socialism as passport to power and the growth of ethnic-based liberation movements with the political objective of liberating their own ethnic constituency, this principle not only has come to dominate political discourse in Ethiopia but has also become the main basis of the Ethiopian constitution and the reordering of the state. In fact it has been the most used and misused principle in Ethiopia by both the various regimes and their opponents to a level of religious faith and/or hypocrisy (p. 38).

Gudina (2003) is absolutely right, most particularly, with respect to the principle of self-determination. The language reordering of the state, is vague in the sense that the phrase tribal enclave, as pointed out in this dissertation, is more precisely expressive of the political reality than Dr. Merera’s language. If one looks at the phrase tribal enclave, it would be clear at first glance that it is a tribal territory within a larger territory.
This journey is an actual dialogue I had with Ethiopians. This dialogue included reading historical materials; the materials were in book form and they were read in partial amounts, by individuals or an individual reading a few paragraphs to a group. It was a very satisfactory journey.

**Suggestions for Future Research**

From the research readings on the concept of race (as understood in the United States), I have concluded that race is no longer a scientific problem. It is, rather, a problem for the social sciences.

Both tribalism and racism are rooted in the purpose of dividing people into different groups. Race is normally the result of skin difference. That is, skin difference does not in the least suggest that one is white, black, or anything else. To label a skin as white or black is adding information that is not there. The skins just are. They are naturally constructed. That is to say that they are not social constructs. So the research question is—what epistemological grounds is there for the existence of race?

**Conclusions**

Social change starts out as a concept. The origin of this concept is empirical. The reason is that we see, observe, and experience something in a social setting that we simply cannot accept. Consequently, we feel that which we cannot accept needs to be changed due to its oppressive and inhumane impact on the lives of human beings. The hegemony of one tribe over other tribes in the Ethiopian society is one example that needs to be changed. In other words, the conditions that are oppressive and inhuman will have to be changed to non-oppressive and favorable conditions to human beings. This sort of transformation constitutes social change.
Here, one needs to remember what colonialist Italy did when she entered Addis Ababa. As already mentioned, Haile-Selassie (1997) tells us about the creation of Italian East Africa, a creation which consisted of Ethiopia, Eritrea, and Somali—the entire Horn of Africa. Ethiopia was further divided along tribal lines. Here are the tribal divisions according to Italy: Amhara, Harare, Oromo-Sidama and Shewa. This serves as a model for the Tigre tribe to follow. It serves them as a divide-and-rule scheme that t them in power so far.

The Tigre tribe is now in complete control of the Ethiopian treasury and with widespread unemployment among non-Tigre Ethiopians. non-Tigre and young Ethiopian girls are forced to seek employment in Arab countries like Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, and others. The inhumanity that happens to these girls is unspeakable. What is interesting to note is that none of these girls is a Tigre girl. This is not a coincidence. It is a logical outcome of the misguided policy of the tribe-based government in Ethiopia. It is the result of tribalism as implemented by the Tigre tribe. In short, there is an over-emphasis on tribalism. It is this over-emphasis on tribalism that set Lenin’s doctrine of self-determination in motion. Ethnic federalism, thus, became the overarching policy of the tribal government in Ethiopia. It is helpful to recall that federalism was rejected by Lenin, as pointed out in the Russian history delineated in this dissertation. But, Lenin’s doctrine of self-determination was invoked to realize the secession of Eritrea. I personally remember the university students asserting the notion that the question of Eritrea is a question of colonialism. The implication of this assertion being that Ethiopia colonized Eritrea, which is false. The fact that this assertion is false can be verified by looking at the map of Ethiopia during the period of ancient Axumite Empire. Another assertion that I recall is Menilek sold Eritrea to Italy. Once again, that is false. The research for this dissertation has demonstrated
that it was Emperor Yohannis who, because of his miscalculations, handed the entire land mass of Eritrea to Italy.

These assertions were two of the most prominent ones among others like land to the tiller. Who was behind the student movement of the 1960s? Most actively, it was the Eritrean university students who were the instigators of the non-Tigre students. These Eritrean students played the non-Tigre students to their advantage. They played them against Emperor Haile Selassie’s government and his ministers. They played the role of being revolutionaries, in support of the secession of Eritrea. Looking revolutionary with the little beard on the chin was in vogue. That was what the non-Tigre students saw. They did not see their deficiency in education. They did not know their own history. If they did, they would have easily discerned that Ethiopia never colonized Eritrea and neither did Emperor Menilek sell Eritrea to the Italians. The Ministry of Education is used as a conduit for indoctrination today. Students are not being taught the way I was during Emperor Haile Selassie’s time. The curriculums must be reconstructed focusing on education rather than on the virtues of the tribal government. Setting educational issues aside for now, it must be pointed out that the secession of Eritrea is a burning issue in the hearts of all non-Tigre Ethiopians. Today after seeing what happened Ethiopians believe that the support the student movement gave to the secession of Eritrea was a grave mistake. In fact, most all of them reject Marxism and Leninism today. What is important to note is that the secession of Eritrea was realized by the tribalist’s government in Ethiopia. Remember that Eritrea, before the arrival of colonialist Italy, was part of the northernmost province of Tigre. At that time there was no such thing as Eritrea.

After the secession of Eritrea, Ethiopia and Eritrea were involved in a war against one another over a tiny, dusty, and God-forsaken rural town of Badime where almost nobody lives.
Meles Zenawi, the tribal Prime Minister of Ethiopia, went to war and sacrificed 70,000 non-Tigre Ethiopians. One wonders why he went to war after ceding Eritrea and the two ports of Massawa and Asab to secessionists. In view of what he ceded to the secessionists, he should have given up Badime to Eritrea. That would have saved 70,000 Ethiopian lives. A replica of the Eritrean secessionist act is now being played by the Oromo Liberation Movement. In other words, Eritrea now is a model for secessionist Oromo Liberation Movement.

Since the restructuring of the internal provincial territories into tribal enclaves (or Kilil), the Oromo claimants have been fighting to exercise their right to what Lenin’s doctrine asserts the right of nations to self-determination up to and including secession. Now, I must point out that not all Oromos want to secede. If one looks at the Kilil map, one can see that there is a Kilil labeled Oromia and that Kilil is set aside for the Oromo tribe. It is with this Kilil that they want to secede. Fortunately, the Oromo movement is now on the wane as a result of their realization of who they are- Ethiopians. To finish up this part, the purpose of creating the tribal enclave of Oromia by the tribalist’s government was so that secession and the final disintegration of Ethiopia could be accomplished with ease.

Social change in this dissertation is an appeal to reason, through dialogue, for the purpose of doing away or solving social problems. In this case, social problem means the act of dividing people (Ethiopians) along tribal lines. Consequently, an inquiry is made into the reality or unreality of Gossa/ethnicity. In other words, the existence or non-existence of Gossa/ethnicity is determined by the three dialogists. Given the fact that Gossa/ethnicity is a social construct, the inquiry into Gossa/ethnicity led to the conclusion that, apart from human beings, Gossa/ethnicity does not exist. Gossa/ethnicity turned out to be a learned persona or façade. In other words Gossa/ethnicity is not intrinsic to the nature of human beings. Gossa/ethnicity, in other words, is
extrinsic to the humanity of human beings. That in turn means that nature did not encode Gossa into our nature. This sort of awareness would help recognize the problem of Gossa/ethnicity as a social impediment. This is where education can play a significant role in bringing the necessary awareness on Gossa/ethnicity. This awareness will eventually lead to the non-existence of Gossa. The non-existence of Gossa suggests that the way to social change is paved.

Finally as the election for the prime minister’s office is currently underway, it is evident in the debates that the secession of Eritrea is one of the burning issues. This issue has not disappeared at all. The fact that Ethiopia has lost her historical ports of Massawa and Asab to secessionist Eritrea is alive and burning in the minds and hearts of non-Tigre Ethiopians. These ports were occupied by Turkey and Egypt long before colonialists Italy, England, and France came on the scene. The situation created by the Tigres can only suggest war in the future as that can be evidenced by the degree of hostility towards them.

An important characteristic unique to the Tigre tribal government is that it fractured the country into tribal enclaves and gave away Ethiopia’s historical territory to secessionist Eritrea. In contrast, the governments that preceded this tribal government dedicated themselves to the unity of the people of Ethiopia and worked hard towards it.

Social change must consist of reversing all the policies that the tribal government instituted. Educational policies must aim at the entire Ethiopian nation rather than nations and nationalities, i.e. tribes. Freedom of movement, free economic system, free press, and free election to any public office, and other meaningful democratic features should be part of the new Ethiopia. This reversal should include the restoration of the provincial subdivisions of Ethiopia. Social change, as one of its ingredients, should aim reunification of Eritrea through negotiation and dialogue. Once Eritrea is back, it should be merged with the province of Tigre which is/was
the original home of Eritrea. This action would, once and for all, wipe out the footprints of colonialist Italy.
References


Bibliography


