

The Genocide and Ethnic Cleansing of the Amhara Ethnic Group from 1991 – 2020

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Abstract: *I was born almost a decade after the dawn of the new Ethiopian era of mengestu hailemariam, The preservation of Sovereignty and freedom of the people of Ethiopia was paid for by the great sacrifices of numerous Ethiopian patriotic warriors and their support of numerous people of Ethiopia. However, it seems I am coming to the closing chapter of my life among terroristic and myopic leaders and their followers of minions in comparison with the earlier generative society of great men and women among whom that I breathed my first gulp of air of a free country.*

Keywords: Genocide, Cleansing, Ethnic

Introduction

Before I sink further into squabbles, I would like to state few sentences of testimonial in admiration of Ethiopian Women. As a teacher in one of the most diverse colleges in the world, I had the enviable opportunity to interact with numerous students from all over the World for almost twenty years period. I was absolutely surprised in how human beings from such diverse background share similar sense of honor and self-worth, sense of freedom, sense of humor, and joy of life. Here is where I bring the issue of Ethiopian women: they are absolutely wonderful islands of stability and hope for the whole of Ethiopia not to mention their incredible physical beauty. In articles and video presentations, Ethiopian women activists are measured in their opinions and tonal in most of their suggestions of solutions to our current crises. In other words, their opinions are always nurturing and caring. They always remind me of my own mother who had to endure so much misery in order to nurture her children. In fact, if truth be told, my initial support of Abiy Ahmed was not based on the political solutions he expounded, but due to his truly loving tribute to his Mother in his first formal state-speech.

I start this article in full acknowledgment of the highly responsible commentaries by the truly great scholar Taye Bogale author of “መራራ እውነት” and also in full appreciation of the indomitable Temesgen Desalegn “ድንቁም መፈንቅለ መንግሥት”. At this time of great tribulation and unrest in Ethiopia, my conditional support for PM Abiy Ahmed has almost evaporated completely because of his lack of strong leadership and lack of clear goals for a united Sovereign State of Ethiopia, for he seems ever sinking into the quagmire of political intrigue of secessionists and destructive agents of Ethiopia’s historic enemies. He has subordinated our national security concerns to his personal playing footsy with known leaders of terroristic organizations and individual advocates of ethnic cleansing. He has turned a blind eye, and allowed Dawood Ibsa of OLF and Jawar Mohammad of OMN, agents of destruction, to roam around freely providing them with expensive governmental security details and all the avenue for them to spew their anti-Ethiopia propaganda inciting violence in several areas in Oromia Kilil and around Addis Ababa. Abiy Ahmed is now engaged in rounding up Amharas in the guise of controlling a fake *coupe d’état* participants. The Amhara Kilil Special Forces were rightly organized recently to defend against the continued persecution and political devastation of Amharas in Oromia Kilil primarily, and in Amhara Kilil Oromo zone and elsewhere in Western part of Ethiopia occasionally.

Now that the octogenarian Herman Cohn is back in public forums with his idiotic and corrosive assertions about Amhara political dominance prior to the coming into power of TPLF led EPRDF, I see the need to straighten such corrupted views that has fueled the last three decades of upheaval in Ethiopia. The last Amhara Emperor was Emperor some three hundred years ago. Cohn is the least credible individual with substandard almost Neanderthal intellectual capacity lacking in intelligent political views on Ethiopia and its history. Remember how he messed up the 1990-91 crises. Even his language in his several written opinions is extremely poor that one doubts if such pieces were written by a native English/American speaker. In the larger political scene concerning Ethiopia and the United States, I see age-old disconcerting relationship that is completely strange, bizarre, and incomprehensible. In fact, I find most past and present American politicians as anti-Ethiopia and some with truly despicable political views about Ethiopia and its future. Of course, there are a handful of Americans who have the depth of mind and intellect, such as President Franklin D Roosevelt, the late Prof Donald Levine, Ambassador Aurelia Erskine Brazeal et cetera, in understanding and appreciating of the Great Ethiopian Saga and history unmatched by any.

I must state clearly that what I appreciate here in the United States is the non-violent political evolutionary culture, period. On the other hand, I find the American population in general reflective of the arrogance and racist views of the current President, Donald Trump. For now, I leave most Americans in the racist gutter category of brutal and barbaric people who torture helpless migrant children with unmatched cruelty in the world: consider the inhuman treatment of helpless migrant children purposefully separated from their mothers and detained in Texas border facilities of windowless iron cages under horrendous conditions. One would expect a tsunamic response from the general American public against such brutality by the United States Government but not even a token number of Americans made even a ripple of protest on behalf the brutally abused and mistreated innocent children in custody at the Borders.

Amharas as Pillar of Ethiopia (analogue of the Horyu-Ji Temple Pagoda Pillar)

The first question is who are the Amharas? The existence of Amharas as a genetically determined specific homogenous ethnic group has been challenged by distinguished scholars and some political leaders. I believe Amharas do have some genetic markers in common and also cohesive cultural identity, such as the Amharic language, distinct Christian ritual, sophisticated cuisine et cetera. I suppose there are no pure “Amhara” people or individuals: Gondere (admixture of Agew, Gimira, Hebrew, Portuguese), Lasta (admixture of Agew, Beja), Wollo (admixture of Agew, Oromo, Arab), Shewa (admixture of Afar, Agew, Somali, Oromo). A terse and cynical poet [ታዛቢው March 3, 2018] discounting the diverse claims of individuals of Amhara descent from a particular northern ethnic background wrote the following:

የጎጠኞች ስርዓት ፣ ጥላቻ የሚዘራ

እንዳሻው መንዛሪ ፣ ለነሱ እስከሰራ

በረከት ህላዊ ፣ የሚባል አማራ

ምድቡ የነበር ፣ ከነትክላይ ጋራ

ፓርላማ ሰግሰገው ፣ ባመቻቸት ሴራ

ዛሬ ባማራው ስም ፣ አይሰሩ ተሰራ

ሃንስ ብሎ አማራ ፣ ድጋሚ ኪሳራ

አዋጅ አፀደቀ ፣ ለሞቱ ሳይራራ ።

I often search for a good metaphor or analogy in order to understand and/or explain complex phenomenon to myself and others. Thus, I found my metaphor for the Amhara people in architectural structure to portray accurately what makes Amharas as the pillar that held together Ethiopia from disintegration when almost all of its contemporaries are all gone. The Horyu-ij is over 1,500 years old Pagoda Temple found in Japan and has stood erect throughout the numerous Earthquakes that had leveled numerous structures all around it. The secret for its astounding structural integrity defying logic and our limited understanding of the laws of physics is the fact that its single central pillar is the only vertical pillar that is properly secured deep in the foundation. All other pillars are not anchored in the foundational floor but floating with horizontal beams anchoring to the central pillar a multilevel structure of six stories including the elaborate roof structure. Here is where I draw this eerie conclusion from the single pillar structural form as a metaphor to our longevity as a nation.

Ethiopia succeeded to survive this long because it was able to maintain a single power structure composed of the Orthodox Church and a myth of divinely chosen aristocratic succession of kings and emperors. The core of such longevity is the Amhara population. If the Horyu-ji Pagoda had other anchored pillars the integrity of the building would have been compromised in case of Earthquakes because of the counter forces that may not be in synchronized movement with the central pillar and all anchored

pillars pulling apart against each other thereby disintegrating due to the counter buildup of energy/inertia of the pulling and pushing by all anchored pillars. Thus, the idea of floating and supporting pillars to the single central pillar worked perfectly for over 1,500 years. What am I suggesting here is not a return of the Monarchy, but an appreciation of the danger of having many political parties anchored or imbedded in ethnic foundations that will destroy the whole political structure as would such anchored pillars to a Pagoda due to active and counterforces. Thus, we must outlaw all ethnic based political parties and ethnic Kilil government structures and draft a new Constitution.

The people in Amhara Kilil have been victimized by TPLF, ANDM, now with vengeful hatred by OLF and OPD. I supported Abiy Ahmed changing my long-standing position in opposing him because I saw him as the lesser evil of all the monsters now in power. I am very certain that the Amhara people are the pillar of Ethiopian State/Nation whose singular interest is to preserve the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ethiopia. They are the only ethnic group that had never expressed formally or informally to secede from Ethiopia. They are the most patriotic ethnic group, where the meaning of ethnicity blends perfectly with *Ethiopiawinet* and Christian Orthodoxy. "Orthodoxy" is a misleading word to use here for Amharas are the most tolerant and accepting group of people in Ethiopia. But they are dismally disorganized and do not have a power structure leading them to defend their own lives and the lives of all Ethiopians.

The real problem in Amhara Kilil is the acute absence of leadership and continuing failure to develop a farsighted and bold leadership. The previous leader Gedu Andargachew and the current Chairman and Deputy Prime Minister Demeke Mekonnen, along with their operatives, made serious errors whereby they ended up, at certain points in the early challenges of the EPRDF, hunting-down unarmed civilian Tigrins who have lived in the current Amhara Kilil, in some instances long before the fall of the Derg regime, rather than focusing on empowering the Amhara people. Because of such short sightedness due to hate and narrow ethnicism, they did not prepare the local population against the most dangerous terrorist groups such as the OLF. They created unnecessary antagonistic situation against the people of Tigray instead of identifying the TPLF Leaders as the enemies of not only Amharas but against all Ethiopians. They deployed special forces and forcefully evicted tens of thousands of Tigrins and others, and also murdered unarmed Tigrins living in communities in Amhara Kilil. They used the same technique used now by OLF subversive thugs forcing tens of thousands of Amharas, Somalis, Southern People, and Tigrins who were living in settled communities in the Oromo Kilil.

I suggest that the first act is to organize an Amhara monolithic power structure, not necessarily with territorial correspondence, based on the old Teklai Gizat system in the region now designated as Amhara Kilil. There need be a simple power structure by constituting elected leaders from each designated Gizat representatives forming the Kilil Leadership. Each Gizat will recruit and arm properly its defense forces and structure a military command unitary system. The power structure will be based on the following Gizates: 1. Gondar/Begemder, 2. Gojjam, 3. Shewa, 4. Wollo.

Arming the Population

It is reported by responsible local leaders and local victims that OLF is responsible for the atrocities committed in Oromia Kilil and adjustment Kilil regions. For example, the social media is full of such explicit reports: "Heavily armed men kill at least 27 people over the weekend in Ataye, Majete and Kemise areas of North Shewa in Amhara region. They also burned churches & damaged properties. Local officials in the region blame Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) for being behind the attack" This recent lawlessness must be the last time OLF criminal thugs would commit such Crimes and the last time Jawar Mohammed spews his genocidal rhetoric through his OMN. I wonder often why Abiy Ahmed did not even mention by name those terrorist criminals when he gives his bland condemnation of such atrocities. Instead of defanging such political vipers, he is busy threatening the peaceful human rights advocate Eskinder Nega and the equally non-violent Baldras members with violence. Recently Abiy Ahmed's security forces/police have detained very many Members by claiming some connections with the murders of Amhara Kilil leaders by Asaminew Tsige.

In addition to the formation of Kilil police forces and special Kilil defence volunteer forces, it is also absolutely mandatory and necessary to arm the population with defensive weapon at government cost wherever possible. I fully support the Amhara population to defend itself and to capture the political power that is being misused and is corrupted by subversive organizations

like the OLF and its Leaders. The fact is that weakness and not being armed invite attacks by subversive political groups and common criminals. It should be a priority to all Kilil Governments to allow their citizens arm themselves and provide training and organizational structures.

A special military force for the Amhara Kilil is a must right now at this crucial time of great upsurge of ethnic cleansing being carried out in Oromia Kilil. The OLF subsumed in the current Federal Army is attacking and ethnically cleansing tens of thousands of Ethiopians from their homes and farmland. But retired TPLF military commanders such as Tsadikan Gebretensie openly stated recently in an interview for mass media that he is opposed to such defense force for Amhara Kilil and in other Kilils while he full had helped and currently supports the militarization of Tygreans.

Br Gen. Asaminow Tsige: የጅብ ችግሩ ቀንድ ይከላል።

There are very limited number of people in Ethiopian past and recent history that are worthy of admiration. What happened in Baher Dar is a classic example how a stupid single leader can cause such disruptive activity aborting what could have been a winning process to check both secessionist groups of OLF and TPLF. The Government claims that Asaminew murdered Dr Ambachew, the President of Amhara Kilil, and several Officials and security personnel. I trust the Government is stating factual events. Based on such pronouncements, I believe Asaminew was a truly small minded hateful individual and did not see beyond his hate of Tigreans not just TPLF. And now, hard to believe, the Lalibela People gave that *balege* murderer a huge public burial. I do not mind treating even dead criminals with dignity, but to bury a murderer with such pomp is disrespectful of the great leaders he murdered. I am more ashamed of the people of Lalibela and Lasta than I am of OLF thugs and Jawar and his *Qeerroo* Bilisummaa.

I still believe in the long run the Amhara people with the right leader are the people who will preserve Ethiopia if they get the wisdom to work with the Tigray people and the possible new leaders of TPLF rather than fight over some local territories of Wolkiet and Raya. I am not against restructuring administrative territories on non-ethnic or language basis as long as it is done to promote unity and efficiency, and manageability. I am totally against the Kilil system left for us to fight over by that traitor monster Meles Zenawi. I am for throwing out the Kilil administrative structure and replace it either with the old *Teklai Gizate* system or adopt locally structured Woreda system with no ethnic base for political or economic power. You have no idea how much I despise that vicious little man whose ideas are destroying us now beyond his grave. He should have been buried in the volcanic lava lake in Afar, Dalol, rather than among the tombs of Ethiopian great patriots.

The enemy of the future survival of Ethiopia are OLF and Dowood Ibsa, Jawar Mohammed and his Qeerros, Bekele Gerba and his primitive eugenics idea, and most challenging are the non-Shewa Muslim Oromos. The OLF has comfortably settled in Addis Ababa due to the inept and myopic Prime Minister who is manipulated and twisted into a political pretzel by invisible advisors we do not see. Even as recently as few days back, the OLF's official statement issued after their official conference of 30 June 2019 completely avoided from naming "Ethiopia" in their document as a political entity. They stated "በዝግ አገር" in reference to Ethiopia, totally discounting the very factual existence of Ethiopia. And yet, such terrorists continue living right at the heart of our National Capital City of Addis Ababa maintaining their hostility to Ethiopia.

Sadly, I observed in the last couple of weeks since the time of the crises that Abiy Ahmed is just like water who could be made to take the color and shape of the containers that manage to contain him with the seduction of offering him power to stay as Prime Minister. He has no integrity, no sophisticated mind, no wisdom, no firm moral principles. His attraction is his good looks, great ability to use appealing language, and his harmless ambition to be in the spotlight. As I said, he could be useful to be in place getting for us to get ready, except for the stupid Asaminew's cowardice murder of unarmed Amhara Kilil Leaders that have set the *Ethiopiawinet* popular movement a step or two back.

I have real respect for General Saare Mekonnen, he was very modest but very courageous military man. I have even greater respect for his young son who delivered the best and most hopeful statement in the week-long mourning period. I have always been in great pain to think of him and other patriotic TPLF military men serving under the traitor leader Meles Zenawi. I have not lost hope

that there is good to come for Ethiopia from the younger generation of the Oromos of Ethiopia, TPLF warriors and Tigrians in general.

The Responsibility of the Army

I believe that the correct reading of the 1995 Ethiopian Constitution might have a self-executing provision in Article 87 for defensive actions by the Ethiopian Defence Forces. The Army has a Constitutional duty to protect the Ethiopian population if under terroristic attacks by any armed group or individuals in the immediate vicinity of the army. It does not require higher-up authorization to do so. It is possible to read into the 1995 Constitution of Ethiopia in Article 87 (3)-(5) that the Military is duty bound to protect the civilian population in danger without formal prior authorization from the Defense Minister or the Commander-in-chief.

“Article 87 Principles for National Defence ... 3. The armed forces shall protect the sovereignty of the country and carry out any responsibilities as may be assigned to them under any state of emergency declared in accordance with the Constitution. 4. The armed forces shall at all times obey and respect the Constitution. 5. The armed forces shall carry out their functions free of any partisanship to any political organization(s).” [emphasis added]

General Se'are Mekonnen had been careful in his military commands, and yet he may be held responsible for such violations of the human rights of Ethiopian victims of ethnic cleansing and ethnic violence during his tenor. This is not meant to disrespect a murdered hero at all, but to point out the duty of the military to protect citizens from brutality and violent evictions. It is ascertainable that the Ethiopian Defence Forces failed in protecting the civilian population in several areas where ethnic cleansing had taken place even though the Federal Government military forces were stationed in nearby garrisons. The protection of “sovereignty” includes protection of the Ethiopian population against all violent attacks whether by internally or externally based forces.

The Oromo and the Geda – Conclusion

The Problem of non-Shewa Oromos in general is their lack of exposure to multi-ethnic social structure and living in harmony with individuals from different ethnic background. All the Studies I have read on traditional Oromo social structure points to a rigid system of a militaristic almost Spartan structure. Despite the claim of a “democratic” system and tolerance the Oromos claim, the non-Shewa Oromo society is a dense and a closed primitive system. It has a rigid and inelastic social lairing difficult to penetrate even by generations of individuals from non-Oromo groups living in close proximity. The Geda is a militaristic with only-men membership structure, and as a system at times, it is overrated. Because of its exclusivity and direct open public participatory necessity, it is not inductive or appropriate to modern state political structure.

Within the Oromo society, the Geda is the most democratic system of social structure. I emphasize the word “within”, for in that tightly closed exclusive preexisting family lineage based structure, it is deliberative, provides for decisions of elected elders with term limits, no favoritism, structuralist et cetera. The social dealings in respect of women and their needs is handled by a different system not in the Geda system itself. However, it has one serious problem, for it only functions within and violently excludes non-Oromos from any participation. Thus, all accolades by several foreign writers of the system is based on limited insight. Even worse modern 20th Century writers such as Asmerom Legesse did major disservice to the academic study of the Oromo people by writing a dissertation full of holes and doubtful research method that preempted further studies. For example, his lack of Oromo language ability and use of translators with no control mechanism in place, advisers who have no knowledge of the Oromo language or culture et cetera is questionable. I read his Dissertation that was kept at Harvard's Widener Library, in 1994 even though I had read the book based on that Dissertation the year it was published almost four decades earlier in 1973. [Asmarom Legesse, *GADA: THREE APPROACHES TO THE STUDY OF AFRICAN SOCIETY*, The Free Press, 1973; even more egregious book by Asmerom Legesse is titled *OROMO DEMOCRACY: AN INDIGENOUS AFRICAN POLITICAL SYSTEM*, Red Sea Press, 2001]

In all of Asmerom's Papers and in his two books dealing with Oromos and Ethiopia, the major flaw of his theses is that he did not consider important issues of comparison with the far open and inclusive Ethiopia's Imperial culture when writing about or dealing with the exclusiveness and closedness of the Geda System even to its own female members of the Oromo society. The whole

project was aimed at discounting the Ethiopian Empire and its superior long-lasting traditions. It is important to note that it is only in the Ethiopian Imperial tradition that individuals from different ethnic background (Oromo, Wolaita, Afar, Gimira, Somali, et cetera) are raised to great political and cleric positions as Commanders of armies, Governors, religious leaders et cetera. Nothing of the sort of inclusion and openness to different ethnic groups as in the Amhara Imperial tradition could be possible in a Geda system. The *Waayyuu* or *Safuu* moral code and the limited *Siqqe/Ulee* system exclusively for Oromo women issues will not remedy the exclusivity problem of the Geda system in political and military matters reserved to men-only. He never asked the issue of whether there had been an anthropological structural system for the emergence of Leaders in the Geda system from outside of the Oromo family lineage system. His study of the Geda system is cursory and populist without taking into account how exclusive and a bigoted a system it is. At any rate, Africa is full of such inward looking tribalistic exclusive structures with attractive but degenerative inner structures that had kept its social and political life at a standstill until the period of colonialism broke such stratified inner structures and opened them up for new ideas and processes in most of the African countries.

Ethiopia, a nation that is a successor state to the Axumite civilization, and that predates all European modernist civilizations and political state structures and that had maintained its sovereign power and independence during the scramble of Africa's colonial period, had a different political evolution where integration and social mobility of Oromos and other tribes and ethnic groups took place within the dominant culture and political structure that created the current political conditions in Ethiopia. It would benefit us to read Prof Tekeste Negash's far superior analysis in this regard than to give much credence to an anthropologist's distorted view of history. It never was a colonial system, but of conquest followed by opening up of closed systems to the larger Empire and population—a process of "civilizing" and educating people who were stagnating in exclusive local cultures.

The Amhara culture introduced into the Oromo and other ethnic cultures the following very important items of culture: the horse and the bit with the saddle, the art of cotton threading and waving of clothing, the oxen drawn plough, farming, yeast, Teff injera, baking of all kinds of bread, the cuisine of several delectable dishes et cetera thereby totally transformed Oromo and other ethnic societies to where we are now to a more open and cohesive Ethiopian society. In their own rights Oromos and other ethnic groups have also contributed in building the present Ethiopia with their wealth of cultural items and also enriching the Ethiopian genetic pool, in all probability, the best in all of human history. However, to think of "Oromos" as a monolithic single structure is a total mistake, for there are variations of several and different Oromo clusters that may not be as rigid as it seems in books and studies by social scientists.

Of all the great civilizations in world history, the Amharas resemble the Romans (inclusive political culture) more than the Greeks (racist/exclusive), or the Chinese (exclusive), or the Indian great civilizations (rigidity of cast). Amharas are the most inclusive ethnic group in Ethiopian history to date. Even now where they have been attacked, vilified, abused for almost thirty years, they still try to maintain a higher order of statehood than follow narrow parochialism like the OLF Oromos, or TPLF Tigrins. But strangely, an otherwise exclusive Somalis in general in the Horn are the defenders of Ethiopian unity, the same is true with Afars, Hadyas, Gambela et cetera. It seems to me there is an almost divine process that has kept Ethiopia intact and free for these past thousands of years and still seems to be working pulling us all together at this crucial moment in the life of this wonderful country and People.