

SOME ASPECTS OF OROMO HISTORIOGRAPHY AND THE ETHIOPIAN POLITICAL ORIENTATIONS (16th-21st CENTURIES)

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Abstract

This article investigates the Oromo historiography vis-a-vis the Ethiopian political orientations, 16th-21st centuries. Oral and written sources and the researchers' empirical knowledge have been analyzed qualitatively to produce this work. Ethiopian history has centered on the north, Semitic and elitist revolving around politics. For so long, Oromo historiography has been a neglected object though the Oromo are the largest ethnic group in the Horn of Africa. This study is thus undertaken to portray how far and in what way the Oromo have been studied historically. The study shows that social, economic, and cultural studies of the Ethiopian people have been neglected even after professional history was launched in Ethiopia in 1963. The Oromo historiography has not only been neglected but also distorted, prejudiced, and exposed to controversy. Recent studies however have been trying to redress these imbalances. This is however far from enough and popular history should be given more attention.

Keywords: *Oromo, Historiography, Ethiopian, Political, Orientations*

Öz

Oromo Tarih Yazımının Bazı Yönleri ve Etiyopya Siyasi Yönelimleri (16-21. Yüzyıllar)

Bu makale, 16. ve 21. yüzyıllardaki Etiyopya siyasi yönelimleri açısından Oromo tarihçiliğini incelemektedir. Sözlü ve yazılı kaynaklar ve araştırmacıların ampirik bilgileri, bu çalışmayı üretmek için niteliksel olarak analiz edilmiştir. Etiyopya tarihi, kuzeyde, Sami ve elitist siyaset etrafında dönen merkezdedir. Oromolar Afrika Boynuzu'ndaki en büyük etnik grup olmasına rağmen, Oromo tarihyazımını çok uzun süredir ihmal edilmiş bir nesne olmuştur. Dolayısıyla bu çalışma, Oromo'nun tarihsel olarak ne kadar uzağa ve ne şekilde incelendiğini tasvir etmek için yapılmıştır. Çalışma, Etiyopya halkının sosyal, ekonomik ve kültürel çalışmalarının, 1963'te Etiyopya'da mesleki tarih başlatıldıktan sonra bile ihmal edildiğini gösteriyor. Oromo tarihçiliği sadece ihmal edilmekle kalmadı, aynı zamanda çarpıtıldı, önyargılı ve tartışmalara maruz kaldı.

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(Makale Gönderim Tarihi: 19.12.2022 - Makale Kabul Tarihi: 01.06.2023)

Ancak son arařtırmalar bu dengesizlikleri gidermeye çalışıyor. Ancak bu yeterli olmaktan uzaktır ve popüler tarihe daha fazla önem verilmelidir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Oromo, Tarih Yazımı, Etiyopya, Siyasi, Yönelimler*

Introduction

Historiography is defined as the art of historical writing. In other words, it is a history of historical studies or writing. History is as old as humanity while historiography is related with the beginning of the art of writing. The origin of historical studies in the world in the form of writing was started at different places at different times. In the world, we know better, that of the ancient Greeks more than the rest of the world. This could be represented by the poems of a legendary Homer (said to have lived in Asiatic Greece in 8th century B.C.). As he was visually impaired, he delivered his stories by word of mouth. Later, his oral poems were recorded among others in *Iliad* and *Odyssey* after his death.¹ We know not much about the early development of historiography in ancient Mesopotamia, Egypt, India and China though it is apparent that they did write or studied history as they had all ancient forms of writing system.

After Homer, in Greece, historiography was developed by Herodotus (ca.484 - 425 BC), Thucydides (ca. 455 -400BC) and many other Greek writers. The Romans, the Arabs and others contributed towards advancement of historiography. Yet, in modern times it was Leopold von Ranke (1795-1886), a German scholar at the University of Berlin, who took credit for the establishment of history as a professional discipline. With this, the study of history was further moved forward by leaps and bounds, i.e. its study came to be professional task on its own. Consequently, Ranke for his vital contributions is epitomized as the Father of Modern Historiography.²

African historiography continued to be a European history in Africa during colonial times. Before that, it was not recorded as such since many African peoples did not possess script of their own. It was the period between 1945 and 1960 that is known as a transition period for African historiography from Euro-centric to Afro-centric. During this period, Europeans showed interest in African studies in general and African history in particular. A number of institutions were set up in Europe for this purpose. We can cite School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) at the University of London in 1948, *Institut Nationale des Langues et Civilisations Orientales* (INALCO) in Paris, France, to teach and study African history. This was pursued by the foundation of African Ethnographic Institute in St. Petersburg (then Leningrad) in Russia among others.

The 1960s is called a golden age in African historiography.³ After the 1960s, similar historiographical studies had been opened in Africa itself. The pioneers in this respect were: Ibadan University in West Africa, Nigeria and Dar-es-Salaam University in East Africa, Tanzania. Many others followed their examples afterwards.⁴ USA came late in the 1960s with the setting up of the African Studies Association (ASA) and the

¹ Tessema, 2010, pp. xii-xiii; Bahru 2008, pp. 15 -37.

² Tessema, 2010, pp. xii-xiii; Bahru 2008, pp. 15 -37.

³ Tessema, 2010 p. 11.

⁴ Tessema, 2010 pp. v-vi.

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University of Wisconsin–Madison. The American government and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) through these pioneering institutions and others sponsored and encouraged research on Africa and African studies.⁵ Thus, American contribution came late in full force since the 20th century.

In Ethiopia, it was lately in the 1960s, particularly in 1963, that History department and Institute of Ethiopian Studies (IES) were founded.⁶ The latter with the late Professor Richard Pankhurst as its first chairperson. Both these developments have pushed forward Ethiopian studies, particularly historical and other social sciences. But, Ethiopian history continued to be the history of the north, particularly Semitic during the imperial regime of Emperor Haile Selassie. Let me quote Bahru here to corroborate this statement: “*Ethiopian history could only be the story of the Semitic north, with the peoples of the south as objects rather than subjects of history... Solomonic legitimacy and Shewan hegemony...*”⁷

The *Derg* regime emphasized Marxism-Leninism and its policies and strategies came hard against the preceding imperial regime. This was a period when this researcher was at Addis Ababa University studying Undergraduate Studies Program at History Department of this prestigious and pioneering university in the country. I know that our instructors were invited to give interview to back political enthusiasm of the *Derg* including the head of the regime, Colonel Mengistu Haile Mariam and his cronies. Some of our instructors knew this very well and they sometimes declined to give interview, and this brought them consequences. They were expected to blame the Imperial regime and appreciate the socialist ideology. Later Emperor Tewodros, the Battles of Dogali, Metema, and that of Adwa came to the center of publications and interview sponsored by government. On the contrary, Emperor Haile Selassie and his regime were expected to be blamed and criticized either in interviews of scholars and publications. Those academicians who attempted to pursue truth and their historical sources and professional analyses against the interests of the regime and its leaders were penalized. This clearly reveals that politics has significant impact on the development of historiography. So, there has been a heavy load of politics on Ethiopian historiography for so long. Besides, it had been reconstructed from the center all along during the imperial and the *Derg* times (1974-1991).

Besides, Addis Ababa University for so long monopolized historiography during the imperial and the *Derg* regimes. In fact, this department has produced acclaimed professors who produced many young scholars for other universities opened after 1991. It has played a great role in researches and trainings. Its geographical location of being in the capital and its history attracted still many from Ethiopia and abroad. The department supervised BA theses (senior essays) till 1980. MA theses started to be produced since 1982 and PhD in the 1990s. Let alone MA theses BA Essays had been quality and well researched ones. But, there has been a monopoly of research and

⁵ Tessema 2010 p.vii.

⁶ Bahru, 2008, pp. 24-25.

⁷ Bahru 2008: 19.

control of its directions until other universities came to be established by Ethiopian Peoples' Revolutionary Front (EPRDF) government after it took power in 1991.

When we see the papers produced for decades by this University, they have been elitist and northern based. Themes were also dominated by politics and modern era took the lead. Social and economic history came later on. According to the theses' list of history department produced by AAU, from 1963-1995, 543 papers were written. Out of these 17 alone were MA theses and the rest 526 are BA theses. Out of these, 139 papers focus on political history; education and educational institutions took 105 papers. Urban history took 3rd position with 80 papers and the fourth position was taken by biographies. Of the 17 MA theses, only 6 were dedicated to the Oromo studies. Of the BA theses on the Oromo, more were written on Wollega, Arsi and other regions. Of the Oromo regions, Wollega was and is still better studied. Tesema was/is pioneering for Wollega while Abbas is/was pioneering for Arsi Oromo studies. Mohammed Hassen took the lead for the Oromo of Hararge, the Gibe region and the Oromo as a whole. These imminent Oromo scholars have played seminal role in Oromo studies all along being diaspora or remaining here even under pressure, especially during the *Derg* times (1974-1991).

True, Addis Ababa University played a leading role in professional historiography and it should be given credit for this. But this could not be a reason for criticizing expansion of universities. Bahru in relation with this depicted: "*while private colleges are mushrooming and regional 'universities' are being trumpeted*". The term universities put in quotation marks doubting their status as universities.⁸ The opening of new universities rather than dwarfing AAU would support it and will contribute to development of historiography or otherwise. We will come to this development later in the coming sections. Here under, we analyze the achievements secured before the 1960s in Ethiopian Historiography to explicate the inclusion and exclusion; objectivity or biases and distortions revealed in these historiographical studies.

As we will see later, Ethiopian history was better than the other parts of Africa since ancient times, may be except the Arab dominated North Africa. This was because Ethiopia has the culture of writing from early times on wards whether produced by locals or foreigners; in Ethiopia or being outside Ethiopia. We can mention inscriptions in different languages: Sabeen, Greek, Arabic and Gees. There were also expatriates, who produced documents like the *Periplus of the Eritrean Sea* (the Voyage around the Red Sea) and the *Christian Topography*. The former was produced in about AD 50 by anonymous sailor said to be Egyptian captain of a Greek origin and the latter again by a traveler, a Greek Cosmas Indicopleustus in the sixth century AD. Both were produced in Greek and explicate much about ancient Ethiopia and the Horn or North East Africa.⁹

Let us know turn to Ethiopian history, where we would touch upon Some Aspects of Oromo historiography in particular, the principal subject of this article vis a vis Ethiopian political orientation 16th – early 21st centuries. The first Ethiopian historical works that had been produced by contemporary Ethiopians came into

⁸ Bahru, 2008: 19 p.37.

⁹ Bahru, 2012: 6; See Bahrey 1954, p. vii.

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existence since the medieval times; from ca. 1270 -1855. Among the early Christian Ethiopian documents were manuscripts, chronicles (*zena-mewael*) and hagiographies (*gedle*). Like other historiographies, these works' subjects are churches, kings and saints at large. They also touched upon elites, kings' military achievements and otherwise. So, subject wise, religious, military and political affairs took the unbalanced attention in non-professional, partisan, distorted and prejudiced ways. For chronicles, there was no even pretense of objectivity. They were produced at large by clergymen who worked under the supervision of either kings or other officials called *Azajis*. Be that as it may, chronicles had played an important role in the development of Ethiopian historiography as primary sources with all their defects. The Muslim side also had developed its own written documents produced in Arabic including the Chronicle of Imam Ahmed ibn Ibrahim al Ghazi, titled *Futuh al-Habasha* ('the Conquest of Abyssinia') by a Yemeni, Shihab ad Din Ahmed b. Abdul Qader (Arab Faqeh by his profession).¹⁰ Chronicles can simply be called biographies of Ethiopian emperors than history of the country.

But Ethiopian historiography moved forward in the early twentieth century by traditional writers, who also started writing about history of the society; social and economic history unlike early tradition. It was during this time that a history of the Oromo also came to be written though not at large by Ethiopian writers.¹¹

As we stated above, the 1960s was a period when a Modern Historiography of Ethiopia was born, and History came into being as an academic discipline. But, it was long way off from the history of the peoples; that remained still peripheral. That is why it is commonly said, the history of Ethiopia is 'a history of wars', which historians describe as elitist or trumpet and drum. *Journal of Ethiopian Studies* started to be published from 1963 onwards.¹² All these marked the beginning of professional historiography. However, that could not resolve biases, distortions and lacunae of the Oromo historiography and other southern peoples. This could be largely attributed to political exclusion and state interference in a historical reconstruction.

Despite these limitations of historiographical development of the Ethiopian nations and nationalities, some historical works of the southern peoples in general and the Oromo people in particular have been continued to be produced. Yet, the extant pre-1974 literature could not even address most Ethiopian peoples by their own names, the Oromo included. They were rather given pejorative names carelessly coined or intentionally imposed. This seems to demoralize different nations and nationalities in Ethiopia not to claim their history and thereby their rights. Some resisted this move in different forms while others became loyal unquestionably feeling the inferiority complexes emanated from the negative connotations associated with these fabricated names, and the deep rooted *Gabbar-Naftagna* system that alienated the majority of the

¹⁰ See some of the chronicles like that of the first we know: *The Glorious Victories of Made Seyon King of Ethiopia*, Trans. and ed. GWB Huntingford. London, Oxford University Press, 1965; and last well known one *Tarika Za Dagmawi Menilek Negusa Negast Za Ethiopia* by Gebre Selassie Wolde Aregay, and many other chronicles, manuscripts, and hagiographies in between.

¹¹ Bahru, 2008, p.19.

¹² Bahru, 2008, pp. 1-14.

southern peoples not only economically but also discarded their traditions, cultures and way of life after the conquest of Menilek towards the end of the 19th century.

The Beginning of Oromo Historiography

As we have portrayed above, Ethiopian historiography has ancient roots and expanded through manuscripts, chronicles and hagiographies in the medieval times. It was however with the exclusion of history of societies, social, economic and environmental histories at large. It was rather dominated by military, political and elitist history right up to the end of the imperial rule. The ‘Solomonic’ origin of the Ethiopian monarchs with its legendary credence was given much ado. *Derg* period was filled with ideological historical analyses and heroic feats at Dogali, Metemma and Adwa and that of achievements of Emperor Tewodros in ‘unifying Ethiopia.’ It was later in its tenure that Institute of the Studies of Nations and Nationalities was formed to focus on Ethiopian nations and nationalities. But, it was much of lip service and political exercises than being a reality endeavors.

The Oromo belong to the Cushitic language family speakers of Ethiopia and the Horn. The Cushitic family language in its turn belong to the Afro-Asiatic super family language; one of the two in Ethiopia and the Horn; the other being Nilo-Saharan. They are among the natives to the present Ethiopian and the Horn region. They came to the attention of writers mainly because of their popular sixteenth century movement and their egalitarian *Gadaa* system (Oromo socio-political organization). In terms of number, they are the largest ethnic group in Ethiopia and the Horn of Africa in general. They inhabited suitable, the widest and the most fertile territory in Ethiopia. The Oromo speak Afaan Oromoo, mutually understandable language all over Oromo lands and elsewhere where the Oromo live.

However, in Ethiopian historiography, they have been given little attention for so long. When it was started to get some attention, the Oromo subjects are found to be treated in full portrayal of prejudices, biases, controversies and distortions. The subjects treated about the Oromo have been: “*their exotic origin, tidal movement, the large number of their tribes, their warlike behaviour...*”¹³ The Ethiopian government and officials in particular described the Oromo and other peoples of the south as ‘non-historical, non-cultural entities’ and discouraged writers from their studies the Oromo and other southern peoples.¹⁴ This has continued under different regimes of Ethiopia right from that of Menilek II (1889-1913) to the end of Imperial regime of Emperor Haile Selassie in 1974. The result has been that, not much has been studied about the Oromo and those involved in the studies unjustifiably distorted the Oromo history. The same thing happened to other social scientists in disciplines like Anthropology.

The Oromo themselves could not record their own history as they are non-literate and without script for centuries. Thus, the Oromo history has been shrouded into

¹³ Bahrey nd p. 44.

¹⁴ Personal communications with expatriate scholars of the twentieth century of the Oromo studies reveal this beyond any doubt.

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obscurity before the 16th century. Its reconstruction was started very late in the 16th century. After its inception itself, it faced serious problems from lack of attention, bias, distortion and prejudices and written sources. Despite these pitfalls, the Oromo have had rich oral traditions that passed from generation to generation by word of mouth to be tapped till nowadays. In Oromo tradition, it is said that, elders ‘are mobile libraries.’ Thus, in these days of new methodology and atmosphere of academic studies, much could be done towards development of Oromo historiography, which is still at its infancy like for other southern peoples. In spite of this, let us explore below some aspects of winding and difficult evolution of the Oromo historiography. Let us start with the contributions of the clergy, missionaries, travelers and envoys.

The Orthodox Clergy, Missionaries, Explorers and Envoys

To the knowledge of this researcher, no ‘historical’ piece of work could precede the work of the medieval times of the Orthodox monk, *Aleqa Bahrey* titled *Zenahu le [Oromo]*. It was originally produced in Ge’ez. Later, it was translated and first published by Hakluyt Society from the book *Some Records of Ethiopia 1593- 1646* in 1954. Abba Bahrey is believed to have inhabited one of the Rift valley lakes islands. Some say, he lived in Gamo-Gofa during the Oromo movement. It is said that, Bahrey’s house was destroyed by the Oromo. He subsequently in his accounts started with defensive statement as why he wrote the History of the Oromo.¹⁵ He among others eluded to the origin of the Oromo. He identified two major confederacies of the Oromo as Boran [a] and Barytuma, which also later literature and oral traditions could not refute. Some descendants of these two moieties have also been given at some length.¹⁶

He further passes to the popular *Gadaa* system in superficial way, especially taking up the *lubas* (*Gadaa* grades) that spearheaded the pastoralist Oromo expansion to different areas. He also wrote comparatively why his side, the Christians, were defeated and the Oromo won a decisive victory against them. He attributed this to the absence of classes and the determination within the Oromo while the Christians were divided; according to him into ten classes. He also cited *qeeroo* (the youth) and their roles in the *Gadaa* system.¹⁷ His main purpose of writing seems to show how the Christians were defeated by ‘pagans’. May be, to teach the Christians to repent for their sins as it has become the main reason for their defeat and win victory later. In conclusion, he states, ‘I shall write, if I live, if not others will write for me.’¹⁸

Later especially, during our era, many criticized him. But, it should be confessed that he provided us with original document on the Oromo expansion before all else. His manuscript has been later translated and became the most quoted in the Oromo studies. Today, we see a number of giant Oromo scholars writing cautiously and even positively on Bahrey’s work. His work is purely dedicated to the Oromo and somewhat informative and educative about the Oromo despite apparent biases, distortions and

¹⁵ Bahrey 1954, p.44.

¹⁶ Bahrey 1954, p.44, pp. 44-55.

¹⁷ Bahrey 1954, pp. 44-55.

¹⁸ Bahrey 1954, p.44 p.49.

hatred. As a clergy, who stood on the opposite side of the confrontations, nothing less is expected from him. It is the duty of historians to filter out prejudices and biases and use his other important points professionally. His work is primary source as Bahrey witnessed the Oromo movement of the 16th century in person.

The next document produced on the Oromo is the work of a Portuguese Jesuit missionary, who toured Ethiopia from 1624-1633. This was Manoel de Almeida who contributed a Chapter to the Oromo in *A History of High Ethiopia or Abasia*, a manuscript that was written between 1628 and 1646. It was published in the twentieth century. This material, states about the origin of the Oromo, their culture and way of life, how they conquered the largest and best part of the empire. His many points are akin to that of Bahrey except his detailed and different explanations for the Oromo's victory during their expansion. He for instance cited, their determination 'to conquer or die'.¹⁹

In the above work, there are also other works of W. G. B. Huntingford and Beckingham each dedicated a Chapter and sub-chapters to the Oromo. The first chapter titled "*The Ethnology and History of South-West Ethiopia*." It is by Huntingford. Its large part has been dedicated to the Oromo. Its other part has been given to southern peoples under the title of the "*Independent States of Sidama*" and "*The [Oromo] Invasion and Relations of the [Oromo] with Abyssinia*" are part of this first chapter as well. But as non-history piece of work, it uses pejorative term for the Oromo and full of distortions, biases and controversial ideas. The last chapter, Chapter IV, "*The Gada System of the [Oromo]*" is by Beckingham and Huntingford jointly.²⁰ This material's advantage is that, it goes up to the nineteenth century, especially on the Gibe states emerging since the beginning of the nineteenth century. But it is superficial work whose accounts are full of political issues later disproved by professional historians.

Among the missionaries, Ludwig Krapf described the Oromo in his works "Providence has placed this nation in this part of Africa for very important reasons. It is the Germany of Africa."²¹ He later came to blame the Oromo for not accepting Christianity. If so, he said they would rule and be dominant over their neighbors.²² True, the missionaries wrote from religious perspectives that is why Krapf attributed the Oromo's failure to their decline to embrace Christianity.²³ This is also the view of other missionaries like Cardinal Guglielmo Massaja (1809-1889), who wrote also about the Oromo. Cardinal Massaja spent thirty years in Ethiopia; some of these years he spent in the Gibe region. He recorded his encounters in Ethiopia in *i miei trentacinque anni di missione in Etiopia* ('My Thirty Five Years in Ethiopia'). He also interviewed Abba Bagibo, *mootii* (king) of Limmu-Ennariya and asked him for conversion to Catholicism. The latter replied to him and other Catholics that: 'had you come thirty years ago, not only I but also all my countrymen might have embraced your religion but now it was

¹⁹ Almeida, 1954, pp.133- 139.

²⁰ Beckingham and Huntingford, 1922.

²¹ Ludwig Krapf,

²² Ludwig Krapf,

²³ Baxter, 1983, p. 132.

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impossible.”²⁴ Massaja is said to be the “first’ bishop of the Oromo.” There were in fact other missionaries, who contributed a lot to the Oromo studies in their own way. The process is still underway.

In the early twentieth century, we have the work of another missionary from France. This was Martial de Salvaic’s: *Ancient People, Great African Nation: the Oromo*. It was published in 1901 in Paris. But it was written towards the end of the nineteenth century when the author, a Catholic missionary, worked as a missionary in the Oromo lands. The book was written in French and translated into English by Ayalew Kanno in 2005. The book won French Academy’s Award. As the author’s major duty was religion and religious propagation in different Oromo territories, he discussed also Oromo land’s Geography; fauna and flora, the system of their government, internal conflicts and the ongoing slave trade at the time. He also gave some space for Kafa. He related the Oromo as having the French origin; of “Gallic” descent. He started the book stating: “the Oromo people are one of the least known peoples of the earth. At the same time “the Oromo race, says Elisee Reclu, by the number of the population and the area of territory occupied, is one of the most considerable in Africa.”²⁵ Though a religious figure, who largely dedicated his work to religion, he wrote positively about the Oromo unlike many others. To illustrate this, it suffices to cite a statement he quoted from an explorer: “this great nation, led by an enterprising leader, could have become master of Africa.”²⁶

From among the Oromo themselves, the popular Protestant missionary, Abba Gamachis (Onesimos Nasib, his baptismal name), 1856-1931, is worth mentioning. His family given name was Hika, surprisingly prophetic noun of his later work. He translated the Bible into Afaan Oromoo. He translated the Old Testament in 1893 and the New Testament in 1899. He was supported by Aster Ganno, Limmu Oromo lady in Jimma in doing so, who is known to be very keen about the development of her native tongue, to be the language of scripture and of other fields as well. Abba Gamachis later gave a copy of Afaan Oromoo Bible to Emperor Menilek in 1903. In the development of Afaan Oromoo, his translated Afaan Oromoo Bible has played a significant role.²⁷ Beside his religious ambition, his contribution towards the development of the Oromo language is remarkable. This has been not only through the translation but also by preaching and teaching in the wake of translation and distribution. It is worthwhile reading his short life history produced by Tarfasa Diga (BA thesis).

The translation of the Qur’an into Afaan Oromo was done after a long period of time by Dr. Sheikh Muhammad Rashad Abdullahi Kabir Mummayyaa of Carcar in Saudi Arabia in 1991. It was long after the Bible translation; the span is about a century. There might have been early translations of different chapters. Nevertheless, the complete translation of this Sheikh came out in a printed and audio form in 1991. The contribution of these clerics (Abba Gamachis and Sheikh Muhammad) fall in the same

²⁴ Spencer 1994, pp. 84-87.

²⁵ Salvaic 1901, p. 3.

²⁶ Salvaic 1901, p.3.

²⁷ Bahru 2002, pp. 48-49.

category though they lived a century apart. The Amharic translation of the Quran itself published for the first time in 1961 E. C.(1968/69).

Atsme Giorgis Gebre Masih (1821-1914), a Catholic Ethiopian missionary, also wrote about the Oromo; may be for the first time in Amharic. His work was entitled *Ya [Oromo] Tarik*, ('a History of the Oromo'), its unpublished manuscript is available in Institute of Ethiopian Studies (IES) of Addis Ababa University. His work is also missionary oriented work relates about a book on the Oromo found at Zeway Lake (Hara –Dambal) given to Emperor Susenyos (1607-32). The book states prophecy about the Oromo; about the magicians, the origin of the Oromo and others. Bayru Tafla published Atsme Giorg's works under the title of *Atsme Giorgis and his Works*, which is worth reading on the Oromo.²⁸ Although full of biases and pejorative and unjustified statements, one can get a piece of information directly or indirectly from it.

Let us now turn to others like *Aleqa* Taye Gabra-Mariam's (1860-1924) *Ya Ethiopia Hizb Tarik*. He also wrote about the Oromo. *Aleqa* Kidena-Wold also wrote about the Oromo. These and many other works were produced by the Orthodox clergy and the foreign missionaries. But, their main objective was not to study the Oromo. They touched upon the Oromo when just need arose to fill the gap they encountered. Thus, these works need checking and counter-checking against other sources before being used for the Oromo's historical reconstruction.

Explorers D'Abbadie brothers also contributed their share: Arnauld and Antoine (1810-1897). They went to Guduru during their five years stay in Ethiopia in the nineteenth century as explorers. Antoine'd'Abbadie was scholarly in his approach and the finest thinker. He had been in the Gibe region between 1843 and 1846. He had published some works and had many unpublished manuscripts. He talked to the famous king of Lummu Enarya, Abba Bagibo (1825-61). His work is believed to be the most remarkable on a History of Limmu Enariya until his time. He also wrote among others *les Oromos grande nation Africaine*. In it, he presented about the Oromo conspicuously their way of life. He persuaded the French parliament to honour the Oromo. He was the one who called upon the Pope, Gregory XVI, to send missionaries to the western Oromo lands, particularly Guduru. Among those who came following his call was Cardinal Massaja of the Capuchin order about whose work we raised above. He was later promoted to episcopate and made "the first apostolic of the Oromo" in April 1846.²⁹

The explorer and British agent at Maji, Major Henry Darley, also contributed something not only towards studies of the Oromo but also of the southwest up to Maji. He stayed in Jimma for two weeks in the early 20th century and in 1926 published: *Slaves and Ivory: A Record of Adventure and Exploration in the unknown Sudan, and among the Abyssinian Slave-raiders*. He thanked Abba Jiar II, who saved his life through his judicious verdict according to him. He appreciated Jimma's security and the king's wisdom and wise judgment. He also disclosed the greenery landscape of Jimma kingdom and orderly set up of the palace of Abba Jifar II. He depicted this as: "one of

²⁸ Bahru 2002; Bairu 1987.

²⁹ Salvaic 1901, p.54.

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the richest and most fertile and best governed in Africa.”³⁰ Just to add one statement of this eyewitness about Jimma Kingdom:

The palace was cleaner, and better ordered, in every way, than the palace and court at Addis Ababa. There Abu (a) reigns like a patriarch of old, and when he dies, his name ought long to be held in revered memory by his people. Not only has he saved them from being devoured by the Abyssinians, but by his assistance to trade, the liberality of his views, and his open-handed policy, he has brought them into the position of being the wealthiest, and I fully believe, the happiest native governed state in Africa. At his death, however, I fear for the future of these friendly and peaceable people.³¹

I have used his material for writing *Abba Jifar II of Jimma Kingdom 1861-1934: A Biography*, 2012. Many others used his material and will be used in the future for reconstruction of Oromo history and, especially on slave trade in southwest Ethiopia. As he was not professional historian, it should be carefully used counter-checking with other sources. The work of Arnold Weinholt Hodson, a traveler, published his travel accounts under the title *Seven Years in Southern Ethiopia* in 1927 touching upon many areas including Oromo areas like Arsi³² is also important.

Another explorer, Donaldson Smith left us his eyewitness accounts of many areas of the south including Oromo areas like Bale and Arsi and other southern peoples' territories in his: "Expeditions through Somaliland to Lake Rudolf" published in *Geographical Journal* in 1896. He particularly described the condition of the Arsi Oromo as miserable four years after Menilek's conquest.³³ C. F. Rey also falls in this category. He travelled far and wide in southern Ethiopia and wrote: *The Real Abyssinia* in 1935 in which he relates the harshness and exploitative nature of the *gabbar* system, particularly in Arsi during his sojourn there.³⁴ These works are so many to be comprehensively presented here. I think those presented here would be telling. However, utmost care should be taken while using them with due respect and gratitude to this group of writers for their contributions, particularly for Oromo studies as it has been shrouded under the tightly controlled policy of the state, particularly after conquest and incorporation into the Ethiopian empire.

Contribution of Scholars: Historians and Others

Among the first scholar contributed to the Oromo studies in the nineteenth century we can mention, Dr. Charles T. Beke, who was in Shewa between 1842 and 1843. He also collected some dependable information from merchants about the Gibe region being in Shewa. Antonio Cecchi was in the Gibe region between 1879 and 1880. He gathered important information nearly from all Gibe states. His information helped later the reconstruction of a history of the area. He went up to the frontier of Kafa. In

³⁰ Darley 1935, p. 128.

³¹ Darley 1935, p.128.

³² Hodson, 1927.

³³ Smith, 1896, p.123.

³⁴ Rey, 1935.

the beginning of the twentieth century, he published about stories of his sojourn in Ethiopia under the title of “In the Countries South of Abyssinia” in the *Journal of Royal Geographical Society*. Enrico Cerulli had visited the Gibe region and subsequently collected significant data about the area; immensely helpful information in reconstruction of a history of the area. His major research theme later on came to be *Islam*. Among others he also wrote important material on Menilek’s conquest of the Oromo lands. This came out in *The Folk Literature of the [Oromo] of Southern Ethiopia*, Harvard, 1922.³⁵ This material presented its studies mainly in Afaan Oromoo in poem form. The poems are very historical and need to be used for the reconstruction of a history of that particular epoch.

In the above material, Cerulli, for instance, described about Menilek’s conquest of Arsi and the Arsi Oromo’s appeal to Gobana to side with them. According to him, they also dispatched the same message to King Abba Jifar II of Jimma (c.1861- 1934) and the Salale Oromo of the Tulama moiety. He showed so clearly rich Oromo tradition of composing songs, poems and singing them. He also produced *Etiopia Occidentale*. But, Cerulli situated the Oromo origin in northern Somalia while Huntingford cited Ogaden. His many other works on Ethiopia and the Oromo people are so important and are analyzed in other sections of this study.

We have also Huntingford’s another publication on the Oromo: *The [Oromo] of Ethiopia: The Kingdom of [Yam] and Kafa* in 1975. It has some importance regarding intra-Oromo relations.³⁶ As anthropological work historians could filter out what would fit to their discipline.

The contributions of German scholars both anthropologists and historians like Eike Haberland and Ulrich Braukamper have been significant. Among others the former authored a huge volume book: *[Oromo] Sud Aithiopiens* [‘the Oromo of Southern Ethiopia’]. Haberland published this material in 1963 in German language and ten pages summary has been given at the end in English. These ten pages are so important in dealing with the origins of the Oromo taking into account multitude of evidences. At the end, he established independent view on the Oromo. He concludes that the origin of the Oromo is Bali highland.³⁷ He came up with his own opinion opposing the views of many scholars and writers that located the Oromo origin outside present Ethiopian region.

The American Herbert S. Lewis wrote important anthropological-historical works on the Ambo Oromo’s *Qallu* and Jimma kingdom. The latter under the title of *Jimma Abba Jifar: An Oromo Monarchy, Ethiopia 1830-1932* was first published in 1965. He lived among the Oromo for so long since the mid of the twentieth century and produced the above book and other research works on the Oromo.³⁸ His research has been based on observation as on the literature and other sources. He also contributed to the Oromo studies as we can learn from various articles including that of “the

³⁵ Beke, 1843; Enrico Cerulli, 1922; see Mohammed 1994, pp.84-85 as well; Cerulli 1933.

³⁶ Huntingford. 1975.

³⁷ Haberland, 1963.

³⁸ Lewis, 1965.

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Development of Oromo Political Consciousness, 1958-1994” as late as 1996 that appeared with many other similar articles in *Being and Becoming Oromo* in 1996. As he related in one panel discussion at Jimma University in 2018, he faced serious problems during his research from local officials, who alleged to him that Jimma had no monarchy but only *balabbat* (local chief introduced after Menilek’s conquest) in its history. It was against these odds that he could produce his book that was banned later by the imperial regime. However, the recent publication of the same book appeared in 2001.

General scholarly works on Ethiopian history have no much about the Oromo. In many cases, they cite the Oromo to fulfil their geographical or historical narrations and simply glossed over. This trend has continued up to these days. Local history has been given less attention at the expense of general or northern Semitic oriented history based on “Solomonic” origin of Ethiopian emperors and the Axumite civilization. Others in this category paint the Oromo with unhistorical derogations. In this respect, one can cite Edward Ullendorf in his infamous book *The Ethiopians*, which blamed the Oromo “for dragging Ethiopia behind and provided none to its development: material or intellectual.”³⁹ He even forgot mentioning the *Gadaa* system that has been recognized by UNESCO in November 2016. Such inappropriate and disparaging statements are usually made by Semitic ally stuck scholars, who could not even hide their blatant bias and prejudices. His is even exceptional among such scholars.

Ethiopian historiography based itself for so long on the Orthodox clergy, which came to produce among other chronicles, hagiographies and different manuscripts. As Church and State were two sides of one coin all along during the Imperial times till 1974, written history by these writers or based on their sources came to be religious, state centered and hegemonic. It was about Orthodox Church, “Solomonic” origin of Ethiopian Emperors, Semitic north, military victories and, etc.

The *Gadaa* System

On the Oromo’s most important institution, the *Gadaa* system, the seminal book of Asmarom Legesse is still in the lead. He is Eritrean scholar whose work could not be yet surpassed in its erudite scholarship on the *Gadaa*. He is anthropologist whose work might transcends anthropological discipline into history, philosophy and many others. His material which was originally prepared for PhD degree was published in 1973 as: *Gada: Three Approaches to the Study of African Society*. The *Gadaa* grades as a life cycle and the analyses given on the Borana Oromo are paramount for those interested in the *Gadaa* system among others. His book is so important at this age of the resurgence of the *Gadaa* system all over Oromia not only in Borana.⁴⁰ On November 30, 2016, the *Gadaa* system was registered as the World Intangible Heritage by UNESCO on its eleventh conference held in Addis Ababa. Consequently, it becomes the third intangible heritage to be registered for Ethiopia after *Mesqel* (the Founding of the True Cross) and

³⁹ Ullendorf, 1960.

⁴⁰ Legesse 1973; Legesse, 2018.

Fiche Cambalalaa of the Sidama people). Professor Asmarom who is now more than 80 years of age published second edition of this book with the same title in 2018. Necessary editions, substantiations and interpretations have been made. This shows that he is unreservedly committed to the Oromo studies throughout his life time.

Oromia Regional state and the Borana Zonal government have accorded him recognition though this may not compensate his contribution and the suffering he underwent during his producing the first book on the *Gadaa* of the Borana Oromo. Jimma University has made him life time honorary staff of the University attaching him to Anthropology department in 2020. Professor Asmarom also authored another book on the Oromo, i.e. *Oromo Democracy: An Indigenous African Political System*. It was published in 2006. The book explores deeply about the *Gadaa* as a democratic institution and its role in warfare and other affairs of the Oromo; the *Gadaa* chronology and that of *Abba Gadas*. It also touches upon other issues like the *Qallu* institution and its relations with the *Gadaa* system.⁴¹

Other materials are so general that they dedicate only some pages to the *Gadaa* system. This category of literature includes the first written document on the Oromo by Bahrey and those after him. For instance, the book published by namesake of the *Gadaa-Gadaa* Melbaa, *Oromia: An Introduction* provides some accounts under its section of “culture.”⁴² This part of course deals with the *Gadaa* drawing analogy with the present terms for the *Gadaa* officials and their functions for the Tulamaa Oromo. Finally, it discusses about factors that led to the decline of the system.

Theses, dissertations, articles, books, etc. produced outside AAU; at other universities after 1991 have been contributing their share as well. The process has been even intensified and hopefully will continue to flourish in the future. This could be corroborated by the fact that the Oromia Bureau of Culture and Tourism (OCTB) sponsored production of two books on the *Gadaa* system of the Tulama Oromo in 2009 and another on the Maccaa Oromo in 2015. The former was produced in English while the latter was in Afaan Oromoo. They are given Vol. I assuming that other volumes will follow.

So often the limitation of such materials sponsored by OCTB is that they have not been produced by history professionals. Consequently, some of the authors lack methodological skill and professional training to engage in such highly demanding research. Of course, we suggest that they better work with universities’ researchers. The publication of such materials in Afaan Oromoo is appreciable to reach as many beneficiaries as possible. Publication of this office is in fact multilingual, i.e. Afaan Oromoo, Amharic and in fact English. This is the case with a series of volumes titled *History of the Oromo to the 16th century*, and the next volume appeared extended its temporal scope to the 20th century.⁴³ Thus, collaboration with universities and

⁴¹ Legesse, 2006.

⁴² Gadaa Malbaa, *Oromia, Introduction*, Khartoum, pp. 10-17.

⁴³ Oromia Bureau of Culture and Tourism (OCTB) sponsored production of two books on the *Gadaa* system of the Tulama Oromo in 2009 and another on the Maccaa Oromo in 2015.

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professionals in the needed area is essential rather than producing books and other literature based only on OCTB's staffers.

Religion and Religious Institutions

Religion and religious institutions have attracted attentions in the world and Ethiopian historiography since antiquity. This was the case as ancient world was explained from mystical and mythical points of view. Other disciplines like Anthropology and Sociology also have been playing immense roles since their involvement as disciplines in theological studies. In relation with Ethiopian History, we have a number of materials dealing with religions. We can mention Sergew Hable Selassie's *Ancient and the Medieval World to 1270*, which has dedicated wide space to Christianity and Islam. This book says none or little about the original Oromo religion (*Waqeefannaa*) and others as well. The late Professor Tadesse's *Church and State, 1270- 1527* that was published from his PhD dissertation is another. It treats as the title goes state and church relations.⁴⁴ Traditional religions like *waqeffanna* and Islam are given little attention in Ethiopian historiography in general and in this material as well. But the following could be cited in relation with the Oromo.

We can mention Karl Eric Knutsson, who wrote on *Qallu* institution of the Maccaa of Ambo area. Its title is *Authority and Change: A Study of the Kallu Institution among the Macha [Oromo] of Ethiopia*. It deals with *Qallu* institution and its ties with the *Gadaa* system.⁴⁵ One can use this book in the present resurgence of the Oromo culture and values. It has been widely used in reconstruction of the Oromo religion. Lambert Bartels also wrote on the Oromo religion and rites in *Oromo Religion: Myths and Rites...* in 1983. His also produced on the Maccaa Oromo during pre- Christian and pre-Islamic times. However, as Bartels was missionary and anthropologist, historians should analyze his accounts to use them from historical perspectives. The general works of Cerullii and Trimmingham: *Islam* and *Islam in Ethiopia*, respectively, are also important for the Oromo's religious studies. They allocated significant number of pages and assessment of their accounts to the Oromo areas.⁴⁶ As they are general works on Ethiopia, they lack depth and objectivity.

We also find Ulrich Braukamper's 'The Islamization of the Arssi Oromo' .and many others on the Oromo and other southern peoples like the Hadiya are important. Braukamper had collected essays on Islamic Culture in Southern Ethiopia in his ethnologue of 2002 under the title of 'Islamic and Culture of Southern Ethiopia' which serve historical reconstruction. This paper Bd. No.9 has many more articles on different shrines like Dire Sheik Hussen of Annajina in Bale and others in other parts of the country.⁴⁷ His works were presented at different International Conferences of Ethiopian

⁴⁴ Selassie, 1972. See for Christianity, pp.89-121 among other pages and pp. 181-203 for Islam. See also Tamrat, 1972.

⁴⁵ Knutsson 1967.

⁴⁶ Trimmingham, 1965.

⁴⁷ Braukamper, 1984; Braukamper 2002. He has also other articles on the Oromo and other southern peoples like Braukamper 1980.

Studies and printed in proceedings and could reach many sections of the public and researchers.

Mohammed Hassen has also contributed an article on Islam besides his other remarkable contributions to the Oromo studies, which will be discussed in this paper later. For this sub-topic he has ‘‘Islam as a Resistance Ideology among the Oromo of Ethiopia: The Wallo Case (1700-1900)’’ in 2000. In fact, for Wallo the work of the late Professor, Hussein Ahmed *Islam in the nineteenth century Wallo: Ethiopia* is so wide and comprehensive for enhancing the Islamic studies in the Oromo areas. It has been published in 2001. It has been written by the Wolloye from within.⁴⁸

Guluma Gameda’s article in *Journal of Ethiopian Studies*: ‘‘The Islamization of the Gibe Region, Southwestern Ethiopia from c. 1830s to the early twentieth century’’ is also important for further reconstruction of religious history of the Gibe region.⁴⁹ But as the Islamization of the Gibe region started before the first decade of the nineteenth century, we need more researches to close the gap. Later, a number of these also appeared on the region first under supervision of HSIU-AAU University and after 1991 under new Ethiopian universities and foreign universities as well. This process is still going on and these works need to be published in many volumes to add depth and breadth to the study of the Oromo.

Socio-Economic Realms

Like elsewhere in the world, socio-economic historical studies came on board lately in Ethiopian historiography. Recognizing this, AAU tried to alter themes to socio-economic issues like urban history, land and land tenure system, tenancy, etc. Land came to take the lead in this respect. This is because as Bahru aptly puts: ‘‘there is nothing more solid than land and there is nothing concrete than food.’’⁵⁰ The Arssi Oromo also have the same saying *lafti lafee*, ‘‘land is bone or simply crucial or solid.’’⁵¹ In relation with this we can mention: Tesema Ta’a’s ‘‘The Political Economy of Southwestern Ethiopia’’, Benti Getahun’s MA thesis on Shashamanne and his PhD are focused on socio-economic developments, respectively. Guluma Gameda, Daniel Ayana, Tekalign Wolde Mariam in their MA and PhD theses just to mention a few.⁵² AAU led this process as the only one. In 1983 the Second Departmental Seminar of the Department of History held at Bishoftu (Dabra- Zait) acknowledging the inseparable relations between economic and political history and designed mechanism to conduct the studies on both in combination. The focus was to be land and agrarian affairs. The above quotation related with land was composed as guiding principle for the department’s change of the research direction from politics to economics.⁵³

⁴⁸ Hassen, 2000.

⁴⁹ Gameda, 1993, pp. 63-79.

⁵⁰ Gameda, 1993, p. 29.

⁵¹ Common tradition in Arssi.

⁵² These theses and dissertations are so many to list here beyond those cited in the text above.

⁵³ Bahru 2008, p. 29.

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John M. Cohen had produced very essential work on Chilalo *awraja*. The recently produced dissertation of mine (2010) is also on land and Agrarian development. It was published into book: *The Political Economy of Land and Agrarian Development in Ethiopia: The Arssi Region since 194 in 20181*.⁵⁴ The works of CADU-ARДУ-SEAD are important for Arssi-Bale's studies from the 1970s to 1990s. These works were produced by the Swedish and Ethiopian experts and excelled in showing the way forward in socio-economic developments.⁵⁵ The work of Bizuwork on tenancy and attempts to have tenancy bills to improve conditions of tenants is very important and led to production of many more.⁵⁶ There are official works like that of *Dajjach* Sahlu on Arssi and other governors for other regions.⁵⁷ General works on land and socio-economic developments appeared as articles, books and monographs. They are also important as they also touch upon the Oromo and Oromo inhabited areas though they gloss over as it suits them.

Political Developments and Historiography

Anthropologists, politicians and even historians involved in political affairs or political history. This study has also been intermingled with ethnographic study of the Oromo. Political history as we know has ancient roots. But it has been almost a taboo to study political history and ethnicity and even socio-economic developments in Ethiopia in relation with the southern peoples including the Oromo. Those attempted to do so were penalized and in case they were foreigners deported or prevented from entering the country. Those who produced something on these issues were banned from distributing their works. Let alone political but also other subjects were seen with skepticism and even prohibited from being studied or banned after publications,

Despite these restrictions, a number of works were produced, especially after the end of the *Derg* regime in 1991. Writers continued to write political history taking radical views and those of ethnic groups in fact engendered by oppressive political situations of different Ethiopian regimes, especially from the imperial to the *Derg* regimes and to a certain degree during the EPRDF government. P. P.T. W. Baxter, Sisai Ibsa, Holcomb, Asafa Jalata, Mekuria Bulcha, etc have played important roles in this aspect. Some of these are Oromo diaspora and Oromist expatriates. One can see their published articles in *Being and Becoming Oromo* and *Nationalism and Self Determination in the Horn of Africa* among others.⁵⁸

In association with this, non-historians have also been participated. We can mention anthropologists, sociologists and political scientists as well. Not only professionals in these disciplines involved, but also non-professionals from other disciplines including hard sciences came in and wrote "pseudo-scientific history." Still

⁵⁴ Ensene, 2018.

⁵⁵ CADU-ARДУ-SEAD works are so many. They focus mainly on socio-economic developments. Some also treat socio cultural aspects of Chilalo, Arssi and lastly Arssi-Bale.

⁵⁶ Zewde, 1992.

⁵⁷ Defaye, 1962.

⁵⁸ Baxter, 1996.

others without having professionalism in sciences and social sciences have taken part in historical reconstructions. These could be amateurs including the writers of “pseudo-scientific history.” The Oromo history has been exposed to the amateurs of all kinds in fact and it needs some protection.

After the assumption of power by EPRDF, in fact to this date, two parallel developments of Ethiopian historiography continued. First, works produced by academicians at universities by students and scholars. Second, all kinds of “amateurish” historians came up and “published” their works. This is also true for the Oromo history. Biologists, engineers, artists, language experts, etc. produced their own works on the Oromo and other peoples’ “history.” Besides, Culture and Tourism Bureaus also used non-professionals to write a history of different ethnic groups without skill of historical writing and professional affiliations as we mentioned above. These works sometimes created trouble among peoples who would claim superiority or the same historical heritage or figure. This is true for small “book” of “Bilile” produced by a certain Napoleon to give Bilille to Saxama district taking from Segmo in Jimma zone. Works of Culture and Tourism Offices though better than works like these, have been creating confusion, trouble and posing questions than answers so often.

History came to be narrated by mainstream media like radio, television and print media. Social media also intervened and causes confusion, mess and even conflict as one can witness after 2018 political change in Ethiopia in particular. On mainstream and social media, historical interviews and explanations mostly come from non-professionals, who only approached for their being activists rather than their professionalism. These kinds of narrators or writers tell hearsay or their own interests and emotions. These interests could be political, religious, economic or otherwise. The wider public could hardly differentiate between professional history and the amateurish, whose literature filled book markets, libraries, book centres, and streets of big cities and towns. Both professional and amateurish works have been obtained and read and told almost equally. Even the latter has been told more or promoted loudly and widely on media both social and the mainstream.

When what the listeners and readers know, think and assume coincided, the public appreciated the writers and narrators; whereas, what they do not know and do not like are told, they start even questioning history itself as a discipline and the development of historiography in general. This demoralizes the professionals and objective historians from producing professional works. This could also deprive them of getting readers, listeners and learners and in effect purchasers of what they produce.

Thus, there should be awareness creation on what constitute history and story on part of the wider public and others including scholars in other disciplines. Historians have great responsibility towards awareness creation in collaboration with other scholars. Mass media, publications and trainings and other means could be used for this purpose. But public history should be encouraged for Oromo and other peoples as it simplifies history and its studies and goes up to the public through media, in printed forms and audio-video.

Conclusions

This paper shows that in recent past, there has been stride in the development of Oromo historiography unlike the pre-1974 epoch. The developments of the post-1991 period is particularly encouraging as a history of Ethiopian peoples started to be written and taught in more objective and inclusive way. The Oromo take their own share in this prospect. Oromo studies multiplied both at home and abroad. Oromo Studies Association (OSA) was formed in connection with the latter in 1992 in America. At home, historical, anthropological and linguistic studies have been multiplied on the Oromo. The subjects covered have also been expanded to include social, economic, environment and cultural aspects of the Oromo people. Institute of Oromo Studies (IOS) was formed in Ethiopia, first at Jimma University in 2015 and then Wollega and other universities in Oromia have intensified Oromo studies.

Afaan Oromoo had first become an official language in Oromia in 1992; it has become working language, language of instruction, etc. Afaan Oromoo department was first opened in Jimma University and subsequently Oromo Folklore and Literature followed and fostered Oromo studies. Subsequently, other universities have done the same. In short, Afaan Oromoo's being official language and department on its own at universities in Oromia enhanced Oromo studies. Historiography has also been to be conducted in Afaan Oromoo. A number of historical papers, books, articles, etc. have been started to be produced in this language and Amharic besides English works mainly produced at universities by students and other researchers. These developments are found to be encouraging. As long as historical studies are concerned, many universities have opened history department across the country and subsequently studies on Oromia and Oromo people have been diversified. Journals like *Gadaa (Barruulee Gadaa)* of Jimma University emerged in January 2018 and flourishing. In fact, the diaspora has played more important role through OSA. Oromo Studies publications came out in *Journal of Oromo Studies (JOS)*, which has been issued since 1992, the year OSA was founded.

But, there occurred pitfalls and precautions that should be taken into account. There have been ailing signs that need care and remedy. True, the production of historical studies in Afaan Oromoo attracted wide readership among the broad masses. Amateurish writers got in using this opportunity and involved in writing up of political story that lacks reliable sources and sound methodology; the major attributes of professional historiography. Some are full of rhetoric and unrealistically nationalistic. Besides, the Offices of Culture and Tourism at regional and local level all over the country also involved in historiography and other popular studies. Many of the writers are called "*hayyuu seenaa*" ('history scholars' or historians) and produced their "amateurish" history" against the above attributes.

This would cause distortion, bias and controversy which was in the past on the other side of the pendulum. Thus, utmost care should be taken in historiography to obtain what history could offer, pursuit of truth not story, fantasy and fiasco. Let the professional historians, Oromo or otherwise do the job in collaboration with others. In fact, the professional historians should not also restrict themselves to the language of instruction or teaching, English, at higher level but they should write in Afaan Oromoo,

Amharic and other languages that the broad masses could understand to appreciate their work and see the difference between professional and amateurish history.

Thus, Oromo studies be intensified in interdisciplinary and integrated manner involving multidisciplinary approaches. Historians should employ rich Oromo oral traditions and some archives besides the extant limited literature sources of different disciplines. This study could not claim to be the first of its kind or comprehensive investigation. However, it can claim that it could contribute something to the limited Oromo studies and fosters further studies as it shows the pitfalls and prospects of Oromo studies and the existing literature.

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