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Review

Re-Africanizing the educational system of Ethiopia

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This paper tries to show the evolutionary development of education in Ethiopia along with its historic dysfunctions on the prospect of social transformation. The historical backdrop that centered on traditional educational system, which was predominantly ecclesiastical, is also briefly outlined for the sake of coherent understanding of the link and the miss-link in the educational system of the country. Ethiopia had started indigenized education in the Pre-Christian Eraatin Aksum as we witnessed it from local tradition. However, systematized ecclesiastical traditional education enshrined following the adoption of Christianity and the rise of Islam. These Educational institutions were not bereft of scientific thinking in their essence as in the usually discourse. But due to this misconception, in late 19thcentury they had given way for the newly inaugurated western school system initiated by missionaries who plan to use it for religious proselytizing. Thus, Ethiopia had imported western education by sidelining its traditional education system instead of creating at least a synthesis. Therefore, the country failed to create a uniquely Ethiopian system of education. Hence, the educational system was de-Ethiopianized or de-Africanized and thereby produced intellectual dependency and mind colonization that triggers many social evils as it has been witnessed since 1960s. Thus, this paper attempts to show how the conviction of being tabula rasa, otherwise called a zero beginning, for the commencement of modern education in Ethiopia served for colonization of the non-colonized state and polarized mindset among its citizens.

Key words: Africanization, colonization, education, Ethiopia, westernization

INTRODUCTION

The article tries to show how the imposition of modern education affects the locally grown traditional educational system and thereby reproduces social evils in lieu of promoting social transformation. For such end we tried to justify how modern curriculum alienated Ethiopian elite from their traditional education system and the Ethiopian society at large. Therefore both imported experts and

alienated Ethiopian elites did not have the socio-economic priorities of the Ethiopian society in their educational directions. Thus, such educational system was calculated means that served for the colonization of the non-colonized state and citizens. This paper has hardly any primary data rather it is based on review of literatures using historical causation model. Therefore,

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the paper is more of synthesis and analysis of research works undertaken so far. However, in many instances, the writers' personal experiences in many encounters are included. Therefore, the paper would serve for further research and academic debate because the educational and economic problems of today could have their root on the distance past.

It is necessary to have a vivid understanding of what education is meant before we begin narrating the historical evolution of education in Ethiopia. According to Paulos (2005:79), education is a conveyor belt of human values, skills, ideas, and facts, an integral aspect of a society's reproduction of itself. He further elucidates that the conflicts and tensions that germinate in a given society, the solutions, both functional and dysfunctional, that the political system generates to resolve them find their way into the educational system and condition its structure and content (Ibid). Education is a bridge from misery to hope, a platform for democratization and vehicle for the promotion of culture and national identity. Education opens doors that no other process can do.

Kofi Anan, in one of his great speeches, describes that 'for everyone, everywhere education is a basic human right and a road to human progress and the means through which every human being can realize his or her potential. Only a person who is aware that he or she has rights can better strive for rights, whether it is the right to obtain adequate food, shelter, medical care or to participate actively in socio-economic and political life.' It gives each person a way to understand the world and develop self-identity.

Education is an important tool in addressing poverty and the inequalities present within and between countries. Education is the key to national development and a path for the survival of civilizations. Thus, it is important that any educational process must take into account the cultural tradition of the target population. But this element was lacking in many African countries including Ethiopia at the onset.

Hence, this paper tries to show how the tabula rasa approach in the adoption of modern education in Ethiopia through complete neglect of the home grown educational system served as triggered and precipitator of many socio-economic ills.

African traditional education

In Ethiopia, the existence of inscriptions and carving on stones¹ indicates that indigenized literacy preceded the adoption of Christianity. However, the Christianization of Ethiopia led to the commencement of hierarchical

system of religious instruction organized and presented under the aegis of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church (Damtew and Altbach, 2003:317). Thus, church schools in the highland Christian community and as well Mosques in the peripheral areas and in few central communities such as Wollo were the responsible institutions providing education until they were eventually overwhelmed by western education in the early 1900s (ibid).

Monasteries and convents of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church were the epicenters of such educational system whose utmost objective was producing religious functionaries (Pankhurst, 1968:666) and as well as civil servants as secondary option. The emphasis on serving the church did not entail the confinement of the traditional system to the formation of priests rather it extended to producing civil servants such as judges, governors, scribes, treasurers and administrators (Wagaw, 1979). Thus, in addition to religious instruction, the curriculum was encompassing a secular component that focuses on the history, social customs, foreign and local languages, values and political organization of the society.²

Most studies branded the curriculum, the content and the philosophical orientation of the traditional system of education as Ethio-centric, not ethno-centric. In fact, the focus on the Christian doctrine and values, the use of indigenous languages and the extensive use of books with native contents bear witness to the fact that the subject of study was profoundly Ethiopianized and thereof its legacies and history. However, it is not exclusively national for it deals with the history and culture of multitude of peoples of the world and the planetary system.

The ecclesiastical scholarship had three distinct and successive stages which seem similar with elementary, secondary, and tertiary levels of modern secular schools. It begins with the learning of Ethiopic or Ge'ez syllable, Ethiopian writing system, by heart in accordance to their vertical and horizontal sequence along with simple arithmetic. This elementary education dispensed to students who finally became mainly ordinary deacons. Students who seek to pursue higher levels set out to known churches and monasteries in Ethiopia. Hence, secondary studies begin with "ZemaBet" (School of Music-hymn) in which students study the musical composition and the liturgy of the Ethiopian church (Milkias, 1976:81). Higher education commence at "Qiné Bet," which means "School of Poetry" (Ibid.). It focused on the composition of poetry added with the teaching of philosophy from Metsahafe-Falafsa Tabiban (Book of Wise Philosophers) with passages from Greek philosophers such as Plato, Aristotle, Diogenes and Cicero (Ibid).

The third level, called "MetsahafBet (School soft texts,

¹Ezana's inscription supposes pre Christian literacy. According to the oral tradition and local sources there was a pre Christian school called Betketinrun by Embrem, the high priest of Axum and the tutor of St. Frumentius

²Balsvik argues about the absence of the aforementioned secular subjects (Balsvik 2005):3

or books),” provided an in-depth study of the sacred books of the Old and New Testaments as well as of books related to monastic life (Ibid.). It also includes the study of major three books of Ethiopian history and code of laws, namely, “Tarike-Negest (monarchic history), Kibre-Negast (Glory of the Kings), Fetha-Negest (laws of the Kings)” (Ibid.1976:82). World history has been taught at the third level focusing on the societies of the ancient world.

The impacts and critiques of traditional schools

The description of the daily routines will be more of sociological than historical. Thus, it is mandatory to stick to historical narratives. The education has been with a transcendental power of political rivalries. So, it was an agent of unity and national cohesion via the national saga of the ‘Solomonic descent.’ This shows how educational power was abused by political elites of the time for social control and legalizing political positions. However, some scholars view the integrative nationalistic function of traditional education in terms of its depoliticization, a freedom from political influence and vicissitudes because traditional schools were “run by the church without the intervention of the state” in either designing the curriculum or covering the expenses. However, this is a blind folded assumption for the church and the state were identical twins reinforcing each other than separate entities. However, this does not annul the integrative role.

The critics of the traditional system have point out that the techniques and the contents of the education system were not particularly appropriate to develop either the understanding or to cultivate the intellectual faculties of creativity, criticism, and imagination due to the heavy dependence on “the role of rote memory (Wodajo, 1959). However, given the high level of poetry instruction which seeks great use of the imagination and creative mind of the pupil, it is unworthy to argue about the absence of reflective thinking in these native schools. How could a student in the remote rural parts of the country come to know about astronomy, astrology, medicine and even some extra sensory wisdoms if the system of education is mere imitation? Moreover, the school system focusing on Geez is not an arbitrary preference. Rather it is a well-founded because the language is believed to be the repository of all rounded achievements of Ethiopians for centuries. Thus, it is to enable the students to decipher such achievements by immersing themselves in the language of their antecedents that Ge’ez preferred to be medium of instruction.

Though access to church education was limited, the number of schools was numerous. According to the report of Hanlon quoted by Pankrust (1968:666) before 1936 in the highland parts of the country churches

were available in every village and every church was owing its own school. Thus, in spite of its partiality and exclusiveness, the level of literacy was sufficient of the need of the society of the period and compared favorably with many countries of the time (Ibid:668). According to Pankrust, the proportion of citizens able to read and writeth was about the same as Western Europe in early 19th century (ibid). Eventually the credit attached to literacy diminished and since late 19th century it was regarded as derogatory profession at least among the soldiers. The folk was making sarcastic as the ‘worst of the beasts is the scorpions, the worst of men is the (teacher) and intelligence is better than study (Pankhurst, 1968:673). Practically it has been observed that let alone the folk, half of the first Ministers of Menilik II received neither traditional education nor Western education (Ibid).

The De-Africanization of the native educational system³

Modern education in the Sub-Saharan Africa has a strong colonial component for it aimed to change an African to European image. Thus, deeper scrutiny of the Ethiopian experience depicts the same imprint of the continental experience, i.e. colonial schooling in non-colonized state. The attempt of instituting modern education in Ethiopia traced back to the 19th century Bahru, 2001). Emperor Tewodros II who was attracted by European technological advancement and military power had opened an armament manufacturing school at Gafat to train young Ethiopians in arsenal production (ibid). He was the first king with the concept of modernizing the country using the light of Europe long before Menilik II. Thus, he reached at a conclusion of catching up with the economic and social advancement of Western Europe by sidelining traditional schools and promoting western education. Thus, for the promotion of science, technology, and enlightened values, the distinctive features of modernity were valued than the indigenous knowledge. It is not because that there was not better means than the adoption of the western system of education to effect a rapid modernization. It was rather a failure of creating a synthesis between the new and the old, the local and the foreign system.

This policy of westernizing Ethiopian society undermines the role of the indigenous education to the society. This is the basic reason that inhibits the production of citizens who are capable of interpreting, enriching, adapting and synthesizing the heritages of the country to the new needs, new problems and situations. Thus, the country failed to come up with Africanized

³BahrucalleditModern(Bahru, 2002:104)and Richard Pankhurstlabeledit foreign(p.671)

modernity for it traversed in the path of the West without renewing its own traditional education. The process of adoption was an abrupt shift from the traditional system to the Western school through the dissolution of the traditional institutions and the infusion of the spirit of modernity. Thus, modern education in Ethiopia was instituted against powerful indigenous forces (Paulos, 1990:243). Due to this reason, the traditional system directly counteracted the effort of modernization by producing a mind that repudiates everything sanctioned by tradition.

The path traversed by Ethiopia was not to modernize the traditional system rather it was to erase past practices so as to implement a new system, that is policy of throwing away the old in favor of a new alien system (Damtew and Altbach:321). Wion (2006) also describes the state of students' mind and attitude towards their society and culture as follows:

. . . most Ethiopian students began to consider the home-grown knowledge system and the local culture as 'backward' or 'non-civilized and have been using these two words to designate their own society.

Moreover, as in many parts of Africa, the introduction of modern education in Ethiopia coincided with the arrival of missionaries who saw the provision of modern education as a prerequisite for winning converts (Bahru, 2002:23). Furthermore, the increased foreign contact since the reign of Tewodros II had resulted in oversea study of young Ethiopians under the auspice of missionaries (Pankhurst, 1968:671). Several youngsters were taken abroad basically by Protestant and Catholic missionaries (Ibid: 671). Thus, missionaries who were well aware of the role of modern education for proselytization were active in establishing mission schools⁴ and as well sending promising Ethiopian students to the metropolitan centers abroad (Bahru, 2001:103).

At home mission education was delivered by both local converts and foreign instructors (Pankhurst, 1968:672). However, due to the established tradition by the Ethiopian Orthodox Church there was strong resistance to these schools for they were believed to be centers of heresy.

Ethiopian's culture seems to have internalized this refusal to stand out and question. In spite of this fact, Ethiopia failed to create a uniquely Ethiopian system of education. This is due to eventual detachment of academia from the reserves of the past for they were uprooted by western education.

The other historical phenomena that caused the de-Ethiopianization of the educational system was the Italian invasion. Invading Italians changed the Ethiopian educational system in 1936 by exterminating thousands of

educated Ethiopians had been awaited for institutional transformation by relinking the local educational experience of the past with the recently introduced western education. As most of the pre-war educated Ethiopians combined traditional training with modern education, they could have secured a smooth transformation in the education system.

Once again Ethiopian education system fell in the trap of self-disillusionment because education in the post-war period has been exclusively dependent on expatriate advisors, administrators, and teachers. The 1936 Italian curriculum introduced a dual system of education and two types of schooling namely "Italian type of schools" and schools for" colonial subjects (Pankhurst, 1972:370). Thus, 1930s Italian occupation has left two distractive legacies, that is, the extermination of the cumulated local potential for indigenized transition and as well infused the spirit of colonial education.

Institutionalization of Western education

The institutionalization of the public education system was the result of a paternalistic voluntarism in its nature (Martin, 2000). Menelik's reign in the post Adwa period showed a significant concern for the expansion of western education. The sooner he started the project he faced the opposition of the church and most of the nobility. However, he overcame it through a compromise of importing teachers from Egypt. Accordingly, in 1906 10 Copts arrived in Ethiopia and sooner deployed at Addis Ababa, Harar, Ankober and Dessie under the direction of *Hanna Salibey* (Pankhurst, 1968:676). The students were learning predominantly languages such as French, Italy, English, Amharic, Math and Sport. French was the medium of instruction (Ibid: 676). Thought the government had imported staffs from Egypt to help build up formal education, these expatriates did not embody the indigenous Ethiopian cultural contexts, values and aspirations. As a result, the educational curriculum and policies they implemented was detached from the contextual reality of majority population of the country.

Emperor Haile Sellassie is also recognized as the dedicated promoter of western education in Ethiopia (Ibid, 677). In 25 April, 1925, he established schools in Addis Ababa and Empress Menen Girls' School opened in 1931 to educate Ethiopian girls. The school sought to give girls a technical education, but it also tried to preserve traditional female occupations. Thus, the curriculum was not free from gender bias and did not call for gender equity. These schools were heavily dependent on foreign staffs and curriculum. The schools established by these two imperial leaders produced some of the greatest but alienated Ethiopian intellectuals of the 20th century many of whom were cabinets in Haile Selassie's government.

⁴Isenberg and Krapfin Shewa, Flad at Meqedela had established Mission Schools

Similar conditions were also prevalent in higher education. In Ethiopia higher education has gone through three major changes since the early 1950s. The first is the phase of an elitist education system under the traditional monarchy. The second phase was when the country fell under the military rule where ideological control penetrated into the educational system. The third phase is the experience under FDRE. During the first phase of expansion half a dozen specialized technical colleges were established. The nation's higher education institutions strove with considerable early success to maintain international standards, but the cost was high with wastage rates approaching 40 percent in the late 1960s (Saint, 2004:85).

This has produced an educational policy that lacked direction and national objectives (ibid). This is mainly because neither the imported experts nor the alienated domestic elites had embodied the indigenous socio-economic situations and identified the priorities of the society. According to many scholars, the main reason for the lack of a national direction is attributed not only to the decisive role that foreign advisors, administrators, and teachers played in the establishment of Ethiopia's education system but also the Ethiopian alienated elites were not willing to help and lift their society, but to rule over them and manipulate their needs and fears. The curriculum at all levels reflected courses which were offered in Western countries. Moreover, educational opportunity was highly centralized (Balsvik, 1979:183).

Foreign instructors tended to think that what had proved successful in their countries would also benefit Ethiopian. Therefore, the development of higher education faced the shortcoming of Ethiopianization of the curriculum. Rather the curriculum was imported from UK, USA and various other European countries which were essentially constructed to serve a different society than Ethiopia. Most scholars criticized modern education in Ethiopia because the Western-orientation of the curriculum has left Ethiopian students wit in Western mental orbit with total ignorance of their own history and culture. In this regard Pankhurst (1990) wrote:

. . . it was common to observe that Ethiopian students have been taught more about Shakespeare in particular and Western philosophy in general. The students of such Western-oriented schooling knew more about the rivers and people of Britain and the United States than those of Ethiopia and its neighbors.

In the post-revolutionary period, the situation was hardly changed with the exception of the change of the contents from West to East, Stalinism. This was preceded by massive deployment university students, administrative and academic staffs towards the country side (Balsvik, 2005: 260). Government 'intervention in university affairs including security, surveillance, repression of dissent,

mandated courses on Marxism, prohibition of student organizations, appointment of senior university officers and control of academic promotions expanded (World Bank Sector Study, 2003:1).

The students were sandwiched between the military regimes who defy to relinquish power to the people and the resistance of the impoverished peasants.

The 'westernized mind, the plough culture of the peasants and the guns of the regime' failed to communicate each other about the causes of the underdevelopment in the country. If they were doing so, it was the beginning of the end of ignorance and the blood that stained the land could have produced verdant scenery. Thus, at the end of the day the students applauded and versed war songs and ended with tragedy. The awakened generation has lost the means of establishing a republic other than sings for war. I could not find the answer why the students failed to fetch the waters of democracy from the broken feudal dam under the popular revolution in lieu of handing it over to the soldiers who had again reassembled it and canalised the ferment of the revolution into 'soldiers' socialism.' The only vivid thing is that the soldiers commit treason against the people, and the students lost in the jungles of the rural Ethiopia and the second phase of the revolution continued. With the intensification of the civil war coupled with the recurrent drought and famine education was neglected. Tekest called the educational process seen during this time a crisis (Tekest, 1990).

Conclusion

Ethiopia aspiring to catch up with the economic and social development of the West, it has pursued an approach of sidelining traditional schools with a replacement of western educational system.

This has created a riff and failure to have creative incorporation.

Moreover, the introduction of the western educational system was postdated even the experiences of colonized states of the continent. Its advent has to do with the coming of missionaries. Generally, dispassionate lessons should be drawn from the past flaws for the development of the Ethiopian system of education and higher institutions must foster the creative and dynamic learning so that learners use their full potential in educational and research on technical subjects and core social values. Moreover, social awareness about the role of education for development needs to be improved gradually.

Conflict of Interests

The authors have not declared any conflict of interests.

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Review

Historiographical review of the current debate on Ethiopian land tenure system

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During the period of the Transitional Government of Ethiopia (TGE), that took power following the downfall of the Socialist Derg Government, the issue of land tenancy has hotly debated among politicians. At the ratification of the 1995 Constitution, though the ruling party, EPDRF, made attempt to formally end this debatable agenda by formally enshrining state ownership in the 1995 constitution, the ruling party is not yet able to conclude this controversial and thorny issue in its favour. Since there have been people and dozens of parties arguing for private land ownership, the debate on the issue continues till this day. Ethiopia's rural land tenure system in particular has become bone of contention. (Mulat et al., 1998; Hoben, 2002). Land tenancy presupposes land ownership.ⁱ And the dispute about the Ethiopian land tenure system is largely between those in need of changing the existing state ownership tenure and the EPDRF led government of Ethiopia. Currently, the continued debate in the state –private land ownership dichotomy has kindled the interests of scholars in various fields. Different scholars and parties are writing and debating on the subject. In this article an attempt is made to remark and analyze the major ones.

Key words: land tenure, resource management, landownership, peasant, debate, tenure security, eviction and land fragmentation

INTRODUCTION

Ethiopia is predominantly an agrarian state. As in any other states inhabited by agrarian society, land in Ethiopia has been the major means of production and livelihoods. Land is the major asset in both traditional and modern societies.ⁱⁱ It has been a crucial means of production for the rural society and for the ruling elite.ⁱⁱⁱ For rural society land is very valuable because its entire life is depended on land. Land served the people as its abode; as a means of production and as symbol freedom.^{iv} Land was taken as symbol of freedom because

in the pre 1974 revolutionary Ethiopia, only those people with land use right or *rist* land were considered as a liberated or free. People without *rist* land, on the other hand, were considered either as slaves or serfs for landowners. Moreover, it was highly valued by the society as abode of ancestors. For the rulers of the country land has been the basis of their political and economic power. Land was/ is equally important to the ruling elite as political instrument to manipulate the people.^v

Regardless of the centrality of land in the social,

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economic and political institutions of the country, systematic land tenure studies to understand the roots of the problem was generally scant until recent past. It is, however, not to overlook the comment and notes left by European travelers and missionaries. In the 17th century, Jesuit missionaries M. Allmeida and Pedro Paez wrote an account describing how tribute was collected and how powerful the Ethiopian emperors were. In the same century, the German historian Job Ludolf commented that the Abyssinian emperor was valiant who had power over the land of the country.^{vi}

In the 18th century the Scottish traveler and historian James Bruce and the French traveler Arnold d' Abbadie contributed a lot to the subject. A great number of the 17th and 18th century missionaries and travelers that came to Ethiopia for different purposes had also written accounts and notes on the contemporary land tenure. The works of these missionaries and travelers have one thing in common that what they had written on land tenure is routine, general and specific.^{vii}

In the 19th century catholic and protestant missionaries that came to Ethiopia for missionary work as well as travelers, diplomats and other Europeans left important comments about land related issues. For instance as the British traveler Henry salt described Ethiopia as feudal state, Plowden a British consul and one of the intimate friends of the Ethiopian Emperor Tewdros II(r 1855-1869) in Ethiopia, left us an important report about emperor's intended land reform.^{viii} Although fragmented and specific in nature such accounts of expatriates give highlights on the contemporary land system of Ethiopia.

It was however with the coming of the Italian scholars in the late 19th century that land tenure studies were started in a systematic and in a new fashion. The Italians, Ruffilo Perini and Conti Rossini, are noted for giving Ethiopian land tenure studies new life. Based on Extensive field work and investigations they had attempted to reconstruct the land tenure history of the country. Ruffilo Perini came to Eritrea as military officer and wrote different books on land and related subjects, based on his research findings, largely for the purpose of easing colonial administration. Although he was a military officer, his works earned Perini a scholarly status and recognition. Conti Rossini, a historian from the same country, mainly based on manuscripts he found and collected in Axum Tseon Church of Ethiopia, produced and published many books on land tenure. Another Italian scholar, Gudini, came up with many works and was mainly relied on Amharic manuscripts to write on land tenure and related issues. These three Italian scholars whose arrival dated back to the pre Italian occupation period (before 1935) undertook rigors research and produced different works mainly to minimize problems related to pave the way for colonizing Ethiopia and policy making for land administration in Eritrea (Shiferaw, 2001).

Some of the early 20th century Ethiopian intellectuals had also made a significant contribution in land tenure studies. Gebre Hiywot Baykedagne and TekleHawaryat Tekle Maryam, for instance, tried to reflect the contemporary land tenure system with liberal and critical eyes. As cited in one of Bahiru Zewde's works, the two scholars wrote commenting and criticizing the early 20th century Ethiopian land tenure system. By criticizing the inherent problems of the Ethiopian land tenure system, they advocated for change of the system. In this regard, Gebre Hiywot, who had strongly opposed the concentration of land in the hands of few land lords, underlined and suggested for equity. At the same time, however, he defended the right of private property and suggested to the then authorities to respect the right of land owners to sell their land (Bahiru, 2002).

Bejerond Tekle Hawaryat Teklemaryam, who drafted the first Ethiopian written constitution of 1931, was more radical in opposing the imperial land tenure system. Like Gebre Hiywot, his argument emphasized on equity in accessing land. He argued that since it was created for its entire abode for both men and animals; land should be accessed and used equitably. But Tekle Hawaryat made it clear that he was not an advocate of socialism or capitalism. Rather what Tekle Hawarayyat wanted was land to be redistributed on the basis of traditional and historical experiences of the country.^{ix}

Largely for the consumption of government's effort for reform and land administration traditional writers like Mahitama Selasie WoldeMesqal were also immersed with the task of reconstructing the history of the country's land tenure. In his one of his works, Mahitama Selasie WoldeMesqal attempted to reveal the system of land tenancy and the way how taxes were collected. Needless to say his work was compiled based on other sources like oral information. In addition, serving as a courtier, Maheteme Sellasie himself was one of the top officials of Emperor Haile Selassie I (r1930-1974). As such he was familiar with all what was going on in the imperial administration including land tenure system. As part of the imperial administrative system however, he lacked the courage to criticize and to reflect real situation in the country.^x During the Italian occupation of Ethiopia (1935-1941), the traditional land tenure system was disrupted. It is a known fact that the fascist Italians, though unsuccessful, embarked on land appropriation. By snatching the *gult* and *rist* lands of the Ethiopians, the Italians distributed it to their loyal servants. In this process the nobility and other land owners who had been closely associated with the ruling class became victims of the Italian land grabbing policy. By doing so the Italians seriously weakened and in some parts of Ethiopia they totally eliminated the land owning nobility. According to Habtamu Mengistie this event can be taken as a turning point in the history of lord tenancy relationship and hence in the whole land tenure system in Ethiopia.^{xi}

In the post liberation era scholars both foreign and Ethiopian, armed with skills of research and specialized with trainings in history, anthropology and other social sciences, joined the field of land tenure studies. From Ethiopia historians such as Tadesse Tamrat and Merid Wolde Aregay, both of them were professors in the history department of Addis Abeba University, and Donald Crummy a well known American historian, who had served in Ethiopia for at least a decade in Addis Abeba University, had a very significant contribution in land tenure studies. Three of them were embarked on rigorous field work and succeeded in unearthing seemingly forgotten Geez sources from all corners of the country.^{xii}

Largely based on sources collected from religious and secular institutions in different parts of the country, the three historians produced different works which they later published in the form of books and as articles in well known international journals. While Taddese's Classical and famous work, "Church and state in Ethiopia" gives general highlights on land tenure system and related institutions of medieval Ethiopia from 1270 to 1527, Mered Weld Aregay's different articles dealt with land and related issues covering the succeeding two centuries^{xiii} Likewise, Donald Crummy contributed to land tenure studies in various ways. His presence in Addis Ababa University provided Crummey a good opportunity to collect and assess sources from different churches and monasteries of northern Ethiopia. Largely relying primary sources such as manuscripts and first hand information, Crummy wrote a number of historical works the most important of which, "Land and Society in Christian Highland Kingdom from 13th to 20th century ." is not only his full fledged work but also it covers a large span of time in land tenure issues. In his book Crummey made an impressive investigation regarding the existed relationship between the land propertied institutions and the ordinary society. In addition to his systematic assessment of the complicated land tenure issues of Ethiopia from 13th to 20th century, Crummey recognized *alqenet* as new institution in association with the church in the 18th century. Thus through exhaustive use of his sources, critical analyzed and looked the different dimensions of land tenure and changed the static style of writing in the historiography of Ethiopian land tenure studies.^{xiv}

Before Donald Crummey's outstanding work, about four monographs were produced in a series of land tenure studies. The first and the second were the works of G.W.B. Huntingford and H.S Man both of which were compiled to ease the task of land administration. Huntingford's work is, however, a mere collection of land charters of Northern Ethiopia. From all corners of north Ethiopia, Huntingford disclosed Land charters granted to religious and secular institutions both by kings and other nobles of Ethiopia. Actually, the task of collecting and

translating numerous land Charters from Ethiopian to English language with new patterns of arrangement by itself is not an easy task.^{xv}

The second monograph as explicitly stated by Richard Pankhurst was written on the basis of extensive field works in one of the sub districts of North Shewa. And the third monograph in the series belonged to Richard Pankhurst, a historian from Great Britain and well known for writing on many other themes of Ethiopian history. In his work published in 1966, R. Pankhurst made an attempt to assess and analyze Ethiopian land tenure issues chronologically from the time of Axum right up to the 20th century. However, his work is too ambitious and lacks deep analyses of the issues raised by him. Moreover, other than putting evidences as string of events in a report form, Pankhurst make little effort to look into what is implied in the evidences with critical eyes. In addition, the author excessively relied on accounts of Europeans.^{xvi} From these points of view it is possible to safely argue that R. Pankhurst did not use sources wisely and exhaustively. Probably, he may refuse to suffer from painstaking task of collecting and interpreting rich varieties sources in Ethiopian language.

Alan Hoben, an American Social Anthropologist who came to Ethiopia in the last years of 1960s, embarked on field works in rural areas. Largely based on original and fresh data he produced dozens of articles and books including the fourth monograph that was published in 1973. Like Crummey, Hobben outshined other expatriate researchers in many ways. First of all his works are almost totally relied on grass root level field works. Secondly, he critically looked into property regimes with concomitant institutions as well as societal values in a bottom –top approach. Moreover, he brought the method of social anthropologists in to the field of land tenure studies. However, Hoben's studies remain restricted in narrow areas especially in Damot of Amhara region, Ethiopia.^{xvii}

Like Allan Hobben, Dessalegne Rahmato dedicated himself to land tenure studies for three decades. From his large number articles and a book produced on land tenure and related issues, the most important and influential one is 'the Agrarian Reform of 1984. As a source his book is important because it furnishes scholars in the field with fresh data. Moreover, by giving new insights on the field of land tenure studies, Desalegne's books arouse the appetite of other new researchers.^{xviii} The works of the two scholars, Hobben and Dessalege, are among the major sources of information to realize the background of the subject under question.

THE CONTEMPORARY DEBATE ON THE ETHIOPIAN LAND TENURE SYSTEM

Generally, different views and rational arose in relation to

the current debate regarding land ownership. Political scientists, social anthropologists, economists, government officials and to some extent journalists are involving as major actors in the ongoing debate. From social anthropologists, Allan Hobben, who has been contributing works in articles, traced the origin of the current debate on issue of landownership in Ethiopia to post Derg period. According to him the controversy started just before the ratification in 1994-95 of the Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia/FDRE/. He further elucidated that at the beginning the debate was between political parties. The Ethiopian Peoples' Revolutionary Democratic Front /EPDRF/ leadership, like the preceding Socialist regime, favoured state-public ownership of land. Most of the opposition parties have been arguing land to be owned privately. At the end, state ownership was decided and legally stipulated in to the 1995 constitution. In the FDRE constitution, article 40 sub article 3, it is stated that 'the right of ownership of rural and urban land as well as of all natural resources, is exclusively vested in the State and in the peoples of Ethiopia.' Soon after adoption of the 1995 constitution, the EPDRF leadership officially declared that the issue has been constitutionally resolved.^{xxix} The Ethiopian government continues to support state ownership of land whereby only usufruct rights are granted upon landholders. Usufruct rights prohibit land holders the right to sell or mortgage it.

However, following the 2000 Parliamentary election the issue resurfaced and the debate that revolved on the axis of state- private land ownership dichotomy began to be escalated than ever before. The ruling party EPDRF, its officials and some scholars continue their argument in support of state ownership. Rival political parties, Western oriented economic advisors, some donor agencies and a large number of academicians opted striving to private ownership.^{xx}

Each of the scholars, who belonged to those who are arguing in support of private land ownership are not unanimous in their argument and justification. Dessalegne Rahmato, one of the leading scholars debating in support of privatization, for instance, has identified land tenure insecurity, land fragmentation, land management as major rationale for argument behind the state –private landownership dichotomy.^{xxi} Actually, focusing on rural land tenancy, the debate revolves around these issues. The rival groups made themselves busy striving to resolve these land ownership related issues for the rural society.

One issue of debating fragmented land, as reflected in their works, is taken by contending groups as unviable to agricultural development. Each of the two contending groups realized that fragmented plots of land is not viable to agricultural development and hence they, though with slight difference, aspired to do away with fragmented plots of land. One of the supporters of private ownership

Bruce (1993:23) commented that land fragmentation leads to inefficient use of time and farmers' energy going between parcels of land^{xxii} and implicitly suggests fragmented land holding system to be eliminated. The EPDRF led government officials, the main advocates of state ownership, accepted Bruce's idea that the government is now working to put an end to land fragmentation. Moreover, they elaborated that since agricultural development on the plots of farm lands is unviable, the government will refrain from making land redistribution in the future. This is because as stated in its rural development strategy, further land redistribution will drastically reduce the size of plots in to smaller slices of land. Instead of taking land from individual peasants with use rights to youth residing in rural Ethiopia, the government encouraged voluntary resettlement program as a short remedy to land fragmentation.^{xxiii}

Proponents of Privatization and State ownership accept land fragmentation as a problem, what led the two in to disagreement is the way how to embark upon the problem. Individualists totally reject EPDRF's measures which it took as a strategy to deal with the issue. For them the best solution to deal with the issue and for intensification of agriculture is making farmlands to be consolidated into higher size holdings.^{xxiv} The explicit implication of this argument is that the government should allow land to be concentrated and consolidate in the hands of private owners. Actually, there is slight difference even among proponents of Private ownership. Desalgne for instance departs from the group and stood in support of fragmented land. He expounded that purposefully created fragmented farm lands are in some cases useful to cope up with natural and ecological problems. Basing his argument on experiences, Desalegne justified that when peasants' farm land consolidated in one area natural calamities like snow-storm can devastate all their crops and he suggested plots to be kept.^{xxv}

Regarding land tenure insecurity, supporters state ownership argue that as long as peasants use and develop their plots of land properly, no one can dispossess/evict/ them from their holding. By citing FDRE Constitution (article 40 sub Article 4), they elaborate that peasants have bestowed with full and legal right over their land to use and to improve it and that the state protects them from eviction. Moreover, the ruling party and its supporters defended that peasants' right for land are guaranteed by granting ownership certificates. To strengthen their sense of ownership to their land, peasants have been registered and received land holding certificate. Moreover, the EPDRF led government asserted that the certificate provides peasant households with robust land property rights.^{xxvi}

Proponents of private land ownership, on the other hand, argue that the current land tenure policy does not give peasants tenure security. In justifying this they

expounded that the government is taking peasant land away and redistributed it mostly to its supporters. And peasants are always apprehensive of land redistribution, which makes them lose confidence to work on and to improve/develop/ their plots. In this regard, supporters of this group mentioned the land redistribution of Amhara region of Ethiopia undertaken in 1996-1997 as a justification for their argument. The EPDDF led government claimed that the land redistribution was made to redress the unfair land redistribution and possession made by the Derg local officials and cadres who were blamed for taking the fertile farmlands for themselves. However, its implementation was contradictory to the constitution's provision and to EPDRF leadership rhetoric. Obviously, the government used land redistribution not for the sake of achieving equity as intended but rather as a political weapon to assault what it called "remnant bureaucrats of Derg".^{xxvii}

For advocates of private land ownership, the solution to the problem of tenure insecurity is providing peasants unrestricted access and right to use their land in whatever way they liked. This right should include the right to use land as collateral to exchange and sale. Such an restrict right, they added, will enable peasants to confidently and properly manage their land as a result of which land degradation can be minimized.^{xxviii} In many of his articles which he wrote in support of land privatization, Desalegne concluded that the only way to provide tenure security for peasants is land privatization. Based on empirical reasons, the same scholar made the government's fear of consequential dangers of allowing land for sale groundless. Desalegne's justification for this argument is that except in some rare cases peasants do not sell their land. And even in such rare cases it is possible to make land transaction uneasy by means of new legislation.^{xxix} At other instance Desalegne stood in support of land sale. The same author criticized the government's conservative position for prohibiting emergence of dynamic land marketing in Ethiopia. Desalegne does not give detail explanation on how the current land system inhibits land market dynamism.^{xxx} But his own position regarding land sale is far from being clear. In one occasion, he appears to assure that peasants never endanger their life caused by land sale; on the other, he blamed the government for prohibiting land sale.

As clearly elaborated in its Rural Development Strategy, the EPDRF led government has strongly opposed the idea of privatization as well as marketability of land. Accordingly, if it is subjected to sale, mortgage and other means of exchange, land will be concentrated in the hands of a few urban based unscrupulous capitalists. The state further expressed its apprehension that privatization of land may lead peasants to eviction and other disastrous socio political and economic consequence.^{xxxi} Hence considering itself as defender of the rural society

and the peasants in particularly, the EPDRF strongly opposed the idea of private land ownership and land sale.

The advocates of private ownership for their part strongly objected the governments' justification. Rejecting the state's rhetoric as defender of peasants, they argued that even though the government kept the land under its control to address the problem associated with peasants' eviction "landlessness refused to disappear" This is because the state itself has involved in the process of making peasants landless. They asserted that the government itself has been snatching and evicting peasants living in the semi urban areas.^{xxxii}

In their struggle for private ownership the issue of land sale is invariably taken by economists and western oriented advisors as a central agenda. They criticized the state's effort to move towards market economy while controlling land. They protested that "*One cannot move towards a market economy while keeping land-the most vital means of production on agricultural economy – outside the operations of the market*".^{xxxiii} However, the EPDRF led governments has aspired to keep its grip on land related issues. As a response to their strong desire to make land a private property and saleable as a commodity, the former EFDRE prime Minister as cited in Samuel (2006:78) defended that "land privatization in Ethiopia would take place only over the EPDRF's 'dead body'." Moreover, EPDRF and top government officials repeatedly notified that debating on constitutionally resolved issue is a 'sterile' argument.^{xxxiv}

There are some scholars who stood in support of state ownership position. Fantu Cheru and Marquardt, for instance, proposed land to be under state for equity reasons. Like the EPDRF led government, Fantu strongly defended land privatization. In justifying his position, Fantu expounded that reinstating a western style property right and land selling would led the country to its pre-1974 situation during which large number of peasants were made to be landless and forced to join the urban destitute. Moreover, he suggested state ownership for equity reasons. For him land has to be under state ownership so that it could be distributed to the rural people equitably and land tenure security, he added, could be maintained through legislation.^{xxxv} With slight difference to Fantu, Marquardt argues in support of state ownership. In his justification, Marquardt expounded the existence of governments' ultimate power overland even in countries where privatization is well established and implicitly supported the government's position.^{xxxvi}

Very few writers try to search ways of minimizing the controversy by forwarding some options that narrow the polarized positions in between pro –private and pro-state ownership debate. Deininger can be taken as a case in point. In his report, Deininger suggested land use rights to be granted to land occupants or users in a formal long

term lease. According to him, if long term use rights are given the disparity between state ownership and private ownership could be narrowed and users could be more secure in their tenure. The experiences of other countries like China, Israel, and Vietnam are cited as examples that in these countries while land was owned by the state by means of long –term lease land tenure security and investment promoted.^{xxxvii}

The other controversial issue in the subject under discussion is land administration and its resource management. Allan Hoben criticizing the EPDRF's top – down authoritarian approach forwarded an optional one by the name of "Frame work approach"^{xxxviii} Another leading promoter of land private ownership, Dessalegne Rahmato, has his own approach known as Associative ownership.^{xxxix} While the former gives emphasis to enhancing popular participation by way of bottom–up decision making on land and resource management, the latter give priority to defending 'outsiders' from sharing peasants' rural land. The term 'outsider' implies others who compete for the lands of certain peasant community both from nearby and distant other areas. Both of the approaches, however, have no room for investors and hence no agricultural intensification with involvement of capitalist investors. Moreover, in both cases what role the government should play in land and resource management is not clearly elaborated. Apparently, the two approaches/options focused on holding back government's interference which cannot be practical elsewhere.

As it is possible to look from the literature from land tenure related issues more emphasis is given to state – private ownership dichotomy. And the contending parties are criticized for focusing on a single land tenure issue and for failing to listen to what the rural society – pastoralists and peasants- say about the issue under discussion. The EPDRF considering itself as champion of the rural society strictly took state ownership of land as a guarantee for peasants and pastoralist tenure security; the rival political parties, on the other hand, argue that only giving the rural society full authority on their land as a private property will make them more secured and confident to improve and manage farm land (Yigremew, 2001).The protagonists of the current debate are still busy either trying to persuade rivals to accept their rationale or in making effort to bring the debate to an end in their own way. However, the main stakeholder of the issue, the rural society, other than being told what has been decided, has not yet got involved in choosing what is better to it. Therefore in some cases the rationale and assumptions of the contending groups discovered being invalid for each position fails to reflect the reality around the rural society. Some researchers confirmed that both of the contending parties debated on the issue of land ownership largely based on either calculated assumptions or political ambitions. Accordingly, during the field work

as cited in EEA/EPRI (2002:40-49) when randomly selected farmers from different regions of the country asked " if you are given the right to use your current land as you wish, would you sell it partially or totally?" Over 90% of them were said to have responded "No we do not sell." Out of them some responded that in whatever conditions they will not sell their lands making EPDRF's hitherto upheld 'fear' regarding land sale groundless. On the other hand, in relation to assumptions of pro- private land ownership, the question asked was " Is the current land tenure system good or bad?" As response to this, the majority of the farmers particularly that of Afars and Somali responded "it is good" supporting the current land tenure system.^{xi}

Obviously, this case has two obvious implications. On one hand, the contenders, on both sides of the argument, are more likely reflecting their own interest and ideologies without fully investigate the interests of rural society. On the other hand, each of them may not fully understand the adverse effect of deciding land policies without letting the concerned section of the society. Thus as Allan Hoben rightly commented it will be better if contending parties listen what the people say and take into account the social ,cultural and historical contexts of the society before designing and revising land policies and strategies.^{xii}

Conclusion

From our sources used to reconstruct this article it is possible to realize that debates on land ownership are variations on the same theme. For a country inhabited by different communities at different stages of development and with diversified socio-cultural values and political experiences a single state-private choice will not be suitable. What is recommended as optional tenure system for such a country is flexible and adaptive arrangement that will go with different experiences and dynamics of the subject in question. If the contending parties aspired the land policy to serve as basic instrument to effectively address issues tenure security and proper land use and development, the contending parties by disregarding personal assumption and political interest needs to reach at a genuine decision for an alternative land policy based on pre agreed principles or criteria.

Government's role has to be restricted to participatory land law making and overseeing its proper enforcement and the task of land and its resource management may be left to democratically elected land committee to be accountable to the electorate community. By doing so the right of land ownership will be bestowed to the community and idle lands can be distributed for the wider needs of the people and development schemes of the government.

Conflict of Interests

The author has not declared any conflict of interests.

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- ⁱ Ibid,EEA/EEPRI(2002),vi
- ⁱⁱ Ethiopian Economic Association / Ethiopian Economic Policy Research Institute, / EEA/EEPRI hereafter) *Land Tenure and Agricultural Development in Ethiopia* (United Printers, Addis Ababa, 2002), VI-vi
- ⁱⁱⁱ Svein Ege, *Land Tenure Issues in Northern Shewa: Tenure issues in different Agro Ecologies*. In Dessalegn (eds) *Land Tenure and Land Policy in Ethiopia after the Derg*, Proceeding of the Second workshop of the Land Tenure Project,(the University Of Trondheim, Center for Environment and development Unit, 1994),163.
- ^{iv} Ethiopian Economic Association / Ethiopian Economic Policy Research Institute / EEA/EEPRI, *Land Tenure and Agricultural Development in Ethiopia* (United Printers, Addis Ababa, 2002), VI.
- ^v Tafefese Olika, "Ethiopia: Politics of Land Tenure Under Three Regimes: a Carrot and Stick Ruling strategy" in Alexander, Kassahun and Yonas (eds) *Ethiopia Politics ,Policy Making and Rular Development* ,(2006),1-5; In the Pre-1974 Revolutionary Ethiopia as *Rist land* was inherited from fathers and forefathers to descendants and in so long as the holder pays tribute to the concerned authority no one could take away the *rist* land of each peasant.
- ^{vi} Richard Pankhurst, *State and land in Ethiopian History*, (the Institute of law of Haile Selassie I university in association with Oxford University: Addis Ababa, 1966), 1-5.
- ^{vii} Shiferaw Bekele, "A historical Outline of Land Tenure Studies" In Bausi (ed) *Anthropological Document on 'Rim' in Ethiopia and Eritrea*,(Torino ,L, Harmatan Italia ,2001),12.
- ^{viii} Richard Pankhurst,(1966),10-24.
- ^{ix} Ibid,
- ^x Mahtema Selassie Wolda Masqal, "Land Tenure and Taxation from Ancient to Modern Times: the Land System of Ethiopia" *Ethiopian Observer* (1957) I, 283-288.
- ^{xi} Habtam Mengeste, *LAND TENURE AND AGRARIAN SOCIAL STRUCTURE IN ETHIOPIA, 1636-1900*, PhD dissertation (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign ,Urbana,2011),212;Binayew Tamrat, *A History of Zege Peninsula,1902-1991*,(M.A Thesis, Addis Ababa University 2009) ,39
- ^{xii} Tadesse Tamrat's <Church and State in Ethiopia,1270-1727,Oxford:Clanderndon Press(1972)' Donald Rummy's 'Land and Society in Christian kingdom of Ethiopia from 13th to 20th centuries, Addis Ababa: Addis Ababa University Press' and Merid Weld Argay's works, among other themes, deals on land tenure issues. The works of the three history professors relied mainly on archival sources in position of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church.
- ^{xiii} Before its gradual replacement by Amharic after the 19th century, Geez was an official language of the Christian highland Kingdom of Ethiopia; Shiferaw Bekele, (2001),28-30.
- ^{xiv} Ibid, sheferaw (2001)28-31.
- ^{xv} Richard Pankhurst,(1966),V; G.W.B. Huntingford , *the Land Charters of Northern Ethiopia*(the Institute of Ethiopian Studies and the Faculty of Law of Haile Selassie I university in association with Oxford University Press ,Addis Abeba,1965),1-25.
- ^{xvi} Richard Pankhurst ,(1966),v-75; Though British by birth, R. Pankhurst is one of the outstanding Historians who dedicated much of his effort, resources and time in reconstructing Ethiopian past and wrote dozens books on various themes of Ethiopian history. But his works almost totally relied either on accounts of travelers and writings of diplomats.
- ^{xvii} Allan Hobben, *Land Tenure among the Amhara of Ethiopia, the Dynamics of cognates' Descent*,(Chicago University press,Chicago,1973),1.
- ^{xviii} Shieferaw,(2001),37-44;Dessalegne Rahmato, *Agrarian Reform in Ethiopia*, Scandianavian Institute of African Studies, Uppsala, 1984.
- ^{xix} Allan Hobben,(2001),25; Negarit Gezeta , *Constitution of Federal Democratic Republic Ethiopia(FDRE) 1 year, No.1*,(Addis Abeba_August 1995),46; Temesgen Gebeyehu, *Peasants, land reform and property right in Ethiopia: The experience of Gojjam Province, 1974 to 1997*,(2013),145.
- ^{xx} Yigremew Adal, "Some Queries about the Debate on Land Tenure in Ethiopia" in Mulat and Tassew(eds) *proceedings of the Tenth Annual conference on Ethiopian Economy, Ethiopian Economic Association/ECA/* (2001),56;Dessalegne Rahmato, 'Land Policy in Ethiopia at the Cross roads.'

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^{xxi} Dessalegne Rahmato,(1994),8-9.

^{xxii} Bruce,(1993),23

^{xxiii} FDRE Rural Development Strategy,(1998),30-35.

^{xxiv} Samuel Gebre Selasie(2006),45.

^{xxv} Desalegne Rahmato,(1994),8-11.

^{xxvi} FDRE constitution (1995), 45; 'No Loans with Land ownership Certificate as collateral' The Reporter (Amharic, private News Letter (Hidar 2000 E.C) vol.13, No 12.

^{xxvii} Temesgen Gebeyehu,(2013),152;Getie (1997) gives highlights about details of the land redistribution program in Gojjam;EEA/EPRI,(2002),18-19; Samuel(2006),45.

^{xxviii} Ibid;EEA(2002),23-25

^{xxix} Desalegne Rahmato, 'The Land Question and Reform Policy; Issue for Debate' Dialogue Third Series, Vol.1, No 1(1992)43-57.

^{xxx} Desalegne Rahmato, 'From Heterogeneity to homogeneity Agrarian class Structure in Ethiopia since the 1950s .in Desalegne and Taye(ed.).Land and the Challenges of Sustainable Development in Ethiopia, Conference Proceeding (Forum for Social Studies :Addis Ababa,2006),3.

^{xxxi} The FDRE Rural Development Strategy; written in Amharic, (1998 E.C),27-28.

^{xxxii} Yigremew Adal,(2001),60-64;Allan Hoben,(2002),15.

^{xxxiii} J.W.Bruce, Allan Hobben and Desalegne Rahmato, After the Derg: An Assessment of Rural Land tenure issues in Ethiopia (Institute of Development and Research and Land Tenure Centre,1993),41-44.

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Full Length Research Paper

The humanity of the foetus: A Yoruba perspective

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The question of when life begins in the foetus remains a serious philosophical debate which cuts across philosophies and philosophers of all intellectual traditions. Principally, the question has led to the evolution of different schools of thought in western bioethics discourse. However, in spite of the numerous responses generated in reaction to the personhood of the foetus, no particular answer has been accepted, that is, none of the answers has addressed the issue adequately, hence the focus of this paper on the Yoruba intellectual tradition. In Yoruba cultural thought, there is a clear conception when the life of the foetus begins, and this conception arguably addresses some of the inadequacies inherent in western perspective on the issue. Therefore, we examine the Yoruba ontological creation theory because it is with a clear knowledge of this that we can appropriately understand the Yoruba conception of when life begins in the foetus. And given this understanding, we argue that the Yoruba conception takes care of the inadequacies inherent in western theories.

Key - words: Foetus, Yoruba, Orisa Nla, western bioethics, humanity, *Emi*, creation.

INTRODUCTION

Discourse on the ontological nature and status of a foetus is one of the perennial issues in philosophical discourse. The most direct fundamental problem generated by this discourse has to do with whether or not abortion should be morally and/or legally acceptable. Overtime, the question of the humanity of the foetus has led to the evolution of divergent views with some abortion and others rejecting it depending on their convictions about the ontological status of a foetus.

In western intellectual tradition, biology knowledge of human reproduction teaches that the mixture of the male spermatozoa and the female ovum produces what is known as zygote (a single fertilized cell); and that the zygote begins the process of cellular division which

results into multi-cell zygote that begins to grow and have shape in the uterus.

In addition, the biology teaches that the fertilized ovum is called a zygote until the implantation process is completed which takes up to two weeks; and then immediately the brain waves are detected, the ovum is then designated as 'embryo' – which is the stage at which the organ system begins noticeable development. Further, the fertilized ovum is formally acknowledged as a foetus from the ninth week of conception - which is the stage at which life begins (Singer, 1981; Gillespie, 1977). One obvious problem with the western intellectual tradition's biology knowledge of reproduction as demonstrated above is that the tradition assumes that

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when life begins in a foetus is determinable. This assumption is greatly responsible for the divide between those that argue for the legalization of abortion and those that frown at it. It is important to note that if it is determinable, there would not be any controversy over the issue of abortion.

Another important problem arising from this western conception is that it fails to incorporate and account for the reality of still-births. That is, the western account on the issue of when life begins in a foetus cannot address the questions of why, how, and what is responsible for still-births. These are two important problems that we strongly believe the Yoruba intellectual tradition adequately and sufficiently address.

YORUBA ONTOLOGICAL CREATION THEORY

A good number of written literatures are available on the Yoruba theory of ontological creation. To mention but a few, we have Bolaji Idowu in his famous book *Olodumare: God in Yoruba Belief*, J.O. Awolalu and P.A. Dopamu's book *West African Traditional Religion*, Akin Makinde's article "An African Concept of Human Personality: The Yoruba example" Segun Gbadegesin's chapter "*Eniyan*: The Yoruba Concept of a Person" in the book *The African Philosophy Reader*, as well as so many others too numerous to mention.

Although, these scholars differ in some respects in their accounts of the ontological status of human nature in Yoruba traditional thought, but common to all these accounts are three principal components that constitute a person. These components are the *Ara* (the human body frame and all physical internal and external organs), the *Emi* (a component which is difficult to identify its english equivalent; however, for convenience and the purpose of this paper, its english equivalent is taking to be "the vital principle of life", that is, that whose presence or absence in a person respectively determines the consciousness or non-consciousness of a person), and finally *ori* (specifically called *ori-inu*, which literally translates as the inner-head, but technically means the personality-soul which is an embodiment of human destiny). These three components, as we earlier posited, feature prominently in all (and any for that matter) accounts of Yoruba conception of human personality, therefore, indicating their very significance in Yoruba worldview of a person.

At this point, let us consider the Yoruba ontological submission on how the three components are incorporated into the human person; in this connection, it is important to emphasize that all scholars that have written in this respect agreed that the moulding of the *Ara* (human body and its organs) is the assigned divine responsibility of the arch-divinity called *Orisa Nla* (one of the primordial divinities in Yoruba pantheon), and

according to the story, *Orisa Nla*, first of all mold the *Ara* after which the *Emiless* (that is, lifeless) body so mold is taking over by *Olodumare* (the supreme deity in Yoruba theology). This aspect of the Yoruba story is appropriately articulated by the following scholars: The physical element of a person is collectively known as *Ara* (body), a creation of *Orisa Nla* (the Yoruba God of creation) who is charge by *Olodumare* (God of Heaven) with the responsibility of molding human beings out of clay. These bodies were molded in different shapes, some of which are characterized by their beauty and some by their ugliness and deformity (Makinde, 2007: 103-104).

And,

Orisa Nla is responsible for molding the beautiful and the ugly, the tall and the short, the albino, the cripple and the deformed (Abimbola, 1971: 69-85)

And,

Eniyan is made by the combined effort of *Olodumare*, the supreme deity, and some subordinates. The body is constructed by *Orisa Nla*, the arch-divinity. The supreme deity then supplies *Emi* which activates the lifeless body (Gbadegesin, 1998: 153).

As we can see, *Orisa Nla* constructs the human body, but the body remains lifeless until *Olodumare* intervenes. It is this intervention by *Olodumare* after the finished body work by *Orisa Nla* that is primary to make the lifeless body to be *liveness*, that is, the intervention by *Olodumare* results into the breathing of *Emi* into the lifeless body in order for it to have life. Recall that we translated *Emi* as the vital principle of life, thus, *Emi* is life and *Olodumare* is the giver of this life. Hence one of the numerous names of *Olodumare* is *Elemi* (Owner of life). Elucidating further, this aspect of the story receives attention in the submissions of the following thinkers:

Emi is that which gives life to the whole body...., its presence in, or absence from, the body is known only by the fact that a person is alive or dead...., and it is *Olodumare* alone who puts the *Emi* into man, thus giving him life and being (Idowu, 1962: 179).

And again,

Emi... is the vital principle, the seat of life, and *Olodumare* is the giver of this life, thus the Supreme Being (*Olodumare*) is called *Elemi* (Awolalu and Dopamu, 1979: 181).

Most clearly,

Olodumare... is believed to be responsible for the creation of *Emi* - after *Orisa Nla* has molded all the physical elements... indeed, it could be said that the act of creation by *Olodumare* lies in the process of putting *Emi* into the finished work of *Orisa Nla*. *Emi* is therefore ... a fraction of the divine breath which *Olodumare* puts into every individual in order to make him a proper human being (Abimbola, 1971: 69-85).

And finally,

Emi is regarded by the Yoruba as the basis of

existence. It is the entity which gives life to a person, its presence or absence in a person makes the difference between life and death. It is conceived as that divine element in man which links him directly to God. According to Yoruba world-view, it is *Olodumare* (the Supreme Being) who breathes it into the bodies formed by *Orisa Nla* (a primordial divinity) to make them living human beings (Oladipo, 1992: 19).

This ontological creation theory does not stop here, thus, it continues with the next stage of the process associated with what is called *Ori-Inu* (simply *Ori* in some accounts). It is important to note that at this point in the process we already have a conscious person (and not a lifeless being), thus, capable of (some) conscious activities.

Therefore, the story continues: immediately before participating or the coming to participate in living experience, the conscious person moves (consciously rather than bodily) to the house of *Ajala* (who is regarded as the potter of all *Ori-inu* in Yoruba theology), and this would-be sojourner to earth will either choose/given or be affixed (a controversial issue that falls outside our discussion in this paper but most important is that the elected candidates for earthly sojourn must possess it) with his *Ori-Inu*. For clarity and substantiation of this process, the below scholars submit thus,

...while *Orisa Nla* is the maker of *Ara* and *Olodumare* is responsible for the creation of *Emi*..., *Ajala*, "The potter who makes heads" in heaven is responsible for the creation of *Ori* (the inner head). After *Orisa Nla* has molded human being, he passes the lifeless figures to *Olodumare*, who by giving them *Emi*, gives them their...vital life force. The human being so created then moves on to the house of *Ajala* who gives them *Ori* (Abimbola, 1971: 70).

In furtherance of this point,

The creative process of the human being is a combined effort of the Supreme Being and some subordinates, (*Orisa Nla* and *Ajala*), and *Ajala* is the potter of *Ori*. "The idea is that after *emi* has been put in place, the newly created human being proceeds to the next stage - the house of *Ajala* - for the "choice" of an *Ori* (Gbadegesin, 1998: 155).

Though it is quite controversial whether one really chooses *Ori-Inu* in the house of *Ajala*. Some myths have it that it is affixed or allotted unto one while kneeling in the house of *Ajala*. Whatever is the case, the *Ori-Inu* is the bearer of one's destiny and each and every person coming into the world must possess it. The content of one's destiny determines, amongst other things, the individual personality in earthly existence. Given this general exposition of the Yoruba account of human creation story, let us now turn to consider the issue of when life begins in the foetus within the ambit of the story in our next section.

THE FOETUS' HUMANITY: THE YORUBA CONCEPTION

It is a scientific fact that sexual intercourse does not necessarily result into pregnancy even when the spermatozoa of a man and the ovum of his female counterpart are medically proven to be satisfactory active. This is also a long standing truth in Yoruba belief system, for instance, it is a commonly remarked among the Yoruba that "*Olorun ni o n fun Eniyan ni Omo*" (God is the giver of children). On this note, whenever *Olodumare* blesses the union between a man's spermatozoa and a woman's ovum during or after sexual intercourse, the Yoruba will say of a woman that *O ti fe Ara ku* (the woman has conceived) and as a result they will say "*Olorun ti gba Adura*" (God has answered prayer). At this point of conception, the Yoruba will not say "*O ti loyun*" (she is pregnant) because of the stages/processes involve between the moment of conception and the delivering of the baby (for instance *Orisa Nla* may or may not carry out the function of molding the *Ara* of the human person).

Immediately after the blessing of the union of spermatozoa and ovum of the two sexes by *Olodumare*, *Orisa Nla* sets to work, that is, *Orisa Nla* will embark on his assigned duty of constructing the body frame and all other physical organs. It is important to state that this process of body construction takes months ordinarily, however, it also depends on many factors: the availability of metaphysical material needed to carry-out the job, the mood of the *Orisa*, and so on. These reasons partially account for why some conceptions are lost early as a cluster of bloods or other kinds of fluid.

If the project of body construction takes place and completed as desired by *Orisa Nla*, this divinity then reports back to *Olodumare* categorically asserting that he has finished his assignment of body construction. This period is usually regarded as the first trimester of pregnancy to use the scientific term. At this point, *Olodumare* takes over the finished lifeless body from *Orisa Nla*, and on his own volition, either breaths or not breath *Emi* (life) into the constructed body. For some reasons that we may or may not be capable of comprehending, *Olodumare* (being the giver of life) can withhold that divine duty of breathing *Emi* (life) into the lifeless body; at some other point at this stage, *Olodumare* may breath *Emi* (life) into the constructed body and after sometimes (which can be before actual deliverance, at the point of deliverance, or after deliverance) *Olodumare* may withdraw the given life.

Most important, however, is that if *Emi* is withdrawn by *Olodumare* before birth or not given at all, and the human person is delivered as a lifeless body (known medically as still birth), that simply indicates that life does not begin in the foetus. But if the *Emi* is withdrawn in the process of

deliverance or immediately after deliverance, the Yoruba believes that it is here that life begins, only that it is cut short immediately it began. More precisely, the Yoruba hold life to empirically begin from the moment a person is born, make some noise or movements and if this conscious activities stop immediately, that is, if the *Emi* of the new born leaves the body to make it lifeless, the Yoruba strongly believe that this is not 'directly' the handwork of *Olodumare*, rather some causative factors may be responsible. Unambiguously, the Yoruba conception of when the life of a person begins is at the point the person is born as a baby, and he is seen to perform some psychical actions like crying and moving.

The implication of the foregoing is that the question of 'when life begins in the foetus?' does not yield uniform and absolute answer for the Yoruba as it is the case in western intellectual discourse. That is, the answer given to the question 'what is the humanity of the foetus?' is contingent. Hence, for the traditional Yoruba, given credence to their cosmogony, life can neither be categorically said to begin in the foetus either with reference to the point of conception (that is, union of spermatozoa and the ovum) or to brain functioning nor can life be universally said to begin in the foetus with reference to viability. The point at which it begins in different individuals varies in line with the whims and caprices of *Olodumare* who is the giver of life and who gives and takes at will. This understanding can at best be described as 'elastic conception' of the humanity of the foetus.

In the light of the above, to argue that the foetus possesses life (or does not possess life) at some period during development or precisely before birth does not arise in Yoruba belief system; this is so because the function of *Olodumare* in this process is shrouded in mystery. And this is one of the many mysteries that the western intellectual tradition is yet to uncover and refuses to admit as incomprehensible by the human mind, by extension therefore, this also accounts for the many misconceptions in western philosophy regarding when the life of a foetus begins.

In clear statement, the enterprise to determine or argue when the life of a foetus begins (as it is done in western thought) does not arise in Yoruba traditional system of thought as demonstrated above. Hence, the contest of arguments over whether abortion should be morally/legally right or wrong remains a not too serious problem in Yoruba thought. We must note however that the issue of whether Yoruba belief supports abortion or not is entirely a different discourse from this present one, thus by this supposition, it should not be mistaken for any intellectual position concerning Yoruba thought on the issue of abortion.

Furthermore, unambiguous understanding of Western intellectual tradition on this matter of when the life of a

foetus begins show that none of the various and diverse arguments argues or favors at-birth liveness of the foetus, a position that is clearly held by the Yoruba belief system as demonstrated above; in addition to this, none of the western theories on the foetus' humanity gives account of why still-birth occurs in some cases, and the Yoruba account given above adequately takes care of this.

CONCLUSION

From the above, the Yoruba conception of when life begins in the foetus is clearly articulated as whenever *Olodumare* breathed life into the created being by *Orisa Nla*, and that this life can at any point be withdrawn by the benefactor (*Olodumare* being the sole giver and taker of life) from the beneficiary (the would-be person as a foetus). This action of withdrawing life from the foetus by *Olodumare*, as we have shown above, can be necessitated by factors within or without the confine of *Olodumare* but not without the effort and knowledge of *Olodumare*.

Fundamentally, the Yoruba conception of the foetus' humanity raises some difficulties and questions not necessarily of some magnitude raised in western bioethical discourse. While the questions: 'is the foetus a human being/a person?' and 'does the foetus have a right to life?' have preoccupied the attention of western bioethical thinkers, for the Yoruba, these may not necessarily be important as the question: 'what is the humanity of the foetus?'

Thus, it is very clear that the Yoruba conception of when life begins in the foetus takes care of the inadequacies inherent in western conceptions, and by extension addresses some of the controversies generated in western philosophical discourse on the issue.

Conflict of Interests

The author has not declared any conflict of interests.

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Full Length Research Paper

British colonial reform of indigenous medical practices amongst the Asante people of the Gold Coast, 1930-1960

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This paper focuses on the influence of the colonial administration on indigenous medical practices amongst the Asante people of the Gold Coast. The extent of the influence caused the indigenous medical practitioners to form herbalist unions and associations among others. The British Colonial administration further introduced through some advanced native heads, the registration of indigenous healers. These, among other things, prevented quackery in the indigenous medical field. Data for the historical narrative were gleaned from archival sources. Such evidence is corroborated with oral interviews and secondary sources from books. The historical narrative in this paper fills a gap several historical studies in the area of colonial reform and influence on the Gold Coast and Asante in particular has not been fully looked at.

Key words: Colonial administration, license, psychic and traditional healing, Asantehene, association of African herbalist.

INTRODUCTION

According to Edmund Burke, the Irish-born British statesman and philosopher, "People will not look forward to posterity who never looked backwards to their ancestors" (Buah, 1998). It is therefore essential to study the past, to inform the present and to shape the future. One of the important themes which have been of keen interest to both researchers and historians alike has been

the nature of the relationship between Europeans and Africans before, during and after colonization. Closely linked to this is the impact or influence the Europeans had on Africans during and after colonization. It is essential to state that this paper focuses on some of the influence the British colonial administration had on the Africans or indigenous people of the Gold and Asante in

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Abbreviation: IPH- Indigenous Priest Healer.

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particular. Attention is paid to the colonial administration's influence on indigenous medical practices in Asante.

According to Max Weber, the present society we are looking at is based upon what he refers to as "tribal system" which had currency before and during the colonial rule (Weber, 1964). In studying the indigenous Gold Coast society, attention could be paid to David Apter's social norms which are enshrined in traditional cosmological patterns (Apter, 1963). It is therefore not surprising that the indigenous people in the Gold Coast and Asante in particular, practiced such medicines that were highly influenced by their traditional cosmology. With such a traditional world view and arcane medicine, the British colonial administration was sometimes suspicious. The medical needs and well-being of the Gold Coast was sometimes perceived or literally seen to be under threat by quacks within the indigenous medical milieu. Attempts at reform were to nip this quackery in the bud. It was also within the period under review that the indigenous physicians desired to gain recognition and support from the British colonial administrators. Such persistence on the part of the British colonial administration to reform the system and open collaboration from the Africans in the Gold Coast made their collective efforts worth studying and bringing to the fore. The gains made in attempts at reforming the activities of indigenous healers which could not have been possible without the support of the native heads (chiefs) through the indirect rule system is worth paying attention to.

Prior to the advent of the Europeans to the Gold Coast also referred to presently as Ghana, there was a medical practice which was predominantly indigenous except those introduced by Muslim physicians or clerics. Diseases were noted to have been caused by disease demons, mostly necessitated by an act of misdemeanor of the offender who might be suffering from such health challenges. He or she was further precluded from engaging in the social activities till he or she was declared as healed by the indigenous medicine man.

Although spiritual attributions were given to diseases and treatment especially from the indigenous priest healer or medicine man, he or she did not only receive the measure of the spiritual power of the Supreme deity to help him or her to determine the cause of the disease but also to know the kind of herbs or stems or roots that would be useful to cure the disease. To a large extent, the patient or the sick person was also enjoined to stay away from committing further misdemeanor and was also enjoined to follow the instructions and rules set by the indigenous healer.

The territory then referred to as the Gold Coast by the Portuguese as well as other Europeans was medically pluralistic. The introduction of European medical forms which existed side by side indigenous medical practices

gradually gained dominance especially by the close of the nineteenth century when the British colonial administration had fully annexed the coastal regions of the Gold Coast (Ghana) which was also referred to as the colony. The gradual cessation of Asante power with the Yaa Asantewaa war of 1901 being the last straw which broke the camel's back, Asante plus her vassals were annexed. The Asante and the Northern territories came under the control of the governor at the Gold Coast superintended by the Queen of England.

It was the political control from England that gave the governor and his colonial staff the responsibility to take administrative decisions including health or medical care which tended to shape or influence the way of life of the indigenous people positively or adversely. One noticeable area which is healthcare saw the colonial administration regulating the medical field by encouraging enlightened chiefs like those in Asante to register indigenous medical practitioners or physicians. The success story of this resonated at the colony (coastal areas) of Ghana and was further adopted in 1948.

As early as the 1900s, the indigenous medical practitioners sought for ways to persuade or convince the colonial administration to enable them to continue with the practices. However the British colonial administration was sure of not wanting any quack within the field. The success or otherwise of this colonial legacy has not been fully captured, especially that of Asante still has gaps. The use of historiographical skills should permit us to come through the pages of mostly non-digitized and partially digitized primary archival sources to help bring to the fore some essential aspects of the colonial history.

MATERIALS AND METHOD

The article has been presented theoretically through the gleaming of information from archival and secondary sources. The archival evidence has been corroborated with the secondary sources. In the reconstruction of the colonial history in Africa, the use of archival sources has proved invaluable.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Reform of Indigenous Medical Practices

The major challenge that confronted the indigenous healers and the colonial administration at large in the first half of the twentieth century was the attempt to modernize indigenous therapies or remedies, validate them by modern procedures and the attempt by the practitioners to persuade the colonial administration to license qualified indigenous healers.

The quest for recognition and the need for indigenous healers to improve upon their service delivery as

demanding by the colonial administration necessitated the formation of traditional healers associations like the Society of African Herbalists, which was formed at Sekondi on 12th December, 1931 with its president being Kwesi Aaba. Their quest was to raise the local practice of "Medical Herbalism" to a high and refined standard and to seek for a free and unhindered practice for its members (Patterson, 1900-1955). It has been noted that the colonial administration although came to terms with this fact, they denied them the official recognition they wanted but made no attempt to suppress herbalists or any other indigenous healers (Patterson, 1900-1955).

In 1934, efforts were made by the Society of African Herbalists to rid the indigenous medical system of what has been described by the colonial administration as charlatanry, fraud and superstition. This was attributable to the fact that several of the practitioners in Asante engaged in some form of religious practices, either in the form of propitiation of deities or the making of incantations. According to the colonial administration, it was the ignorance of the indigenous people couched in a belief in magic and witchcraft that cannot be explained by reason which resulted into a state of fear. Specifically, members of The Society of African Herbalists were required to report all contagious diseases to government doctors. In spite of these efforts, the indigenous healers were refused an official license of recognition because the colonial administration hinted that there were verifiable heaps of quack remedies in their practice (Patterson, 1900-1955). Also, it was considered unnecessary at that stage of the society's development. In addition, a colonial office circular dispatch, citing a suggestion made by Lord Hailey in an African survey that raised questions on studying native medicine, was rebuffed because the Medical Department lacked the resources to do so (Patterson, 1900-1955). Again, Kwesi Aaba proposed an herbalist school where he will teach subjects like African dietetics, material medicine, diagnosis, modern hygiene and sanitation. The others included African Herbal Massage or manipulative therapy, Astro-Herbalism and Organic Chemistry (Patterson, 1900-1955). However, this was to no avail. In his booklet, *African Herbalism: a mine of Health*, Aaba wrote and predicted that future African chemists will find useful medicines in local herbs. This was indirectly rejected on the premise that a study in African herbs was expensive. It was noted that any screening programme would be expensive and moreover, it had to be done in Britain because there were no local laboratories with the necessary facilities. The Department of Medical Service doubted that anything useful enough to enter into pharmacopoeia would be found, clearly a sign of disregard by the colonial administration for what the indigenous medical practitioners could provide for the indigenous people (Patterson, 1900-1955). Although the

indigenous healers were not given firm recognition, the Medical Department was fairly tolerant. They conceded that a minority, primarily among the herbalists, were honest and were able to help some patients. Customary rulers, as are found on the Asante Confederacy Council, were given the power to license traditional medical practitioners who were determined to be honest and capable.¹

By 1952, indigenous medical practice continued to be closely associated with deities and the role of their intermediaries who are also known as *Akomfo*. Again, there was an attempt by indigenous medical practitioners themselves to streamline their activities.² After the Association of African Herbalists, was another healing association that took off in the 1950s. This was the Ghana Psychic and Traditional Healing Association. At its embryonic stage, according to Kwaku Gyewahom, what is known to have become part of the Ghana Psychic and Traditional Healing Association formed with a grand opening in Larteh Akuapem in 1962 included members with no formal education.³ However, the literate amongst them did not understand what went into the indigenous healing practices. They joined the association for their personal gains. However, prior to the coming together of various practitioners in Kumase and for that matter Asante, individuals practiced in their enclaves and sometimes chose to do what pleased them.⁴

Unlike the Association of African Herbalists that sought to take out religious underpinnings in indigenous medical practice, the Association of Ghana psychic and Traditional Healers Association was formed under presidential directives to uphold, protect and promote the best in the traditions invested by the ancestors in the IPHs including priestesses and herbalists in Ghana. The membership of the association included herbalists, priests and priestesses.⁵ The Indigenous Priests and Priestesses who were admitted into the association were those who had successfully undergone training at a reputable shrine and possessed an unquestionable knowledge of Ghanaian herbs. Such practicing priests or priestesses were licensed. All the traditional priests and priestesses who had undergone intensive training in the herbal milieu were clearly classified as priest-physicians. Also, a person who possessed unquestionable knowledge about Ghanaian herbs acquired through a period of training at a reputable shrine or under a competent

¹ Ibid, Manhyia Archives of Ghana, Kumase, MAG 1/1/22, Applications for physician licenses 1934-1947

² An Interview with Kwaku Gyewahom, at his residence, Krofrom Abodwese, Kumase, 10th December, 2007

³ Ibid

⁴ Ibid

⁵ Ibid

¹⁴ Manhyia Archives of Ghana, Kumase, MAG 1/1/102A, Correspondence between the Ghana Psychic and Traditional Healing Association, Ashanti Regional Secretariat and the *Asantehene*, 3rd August, 1963

herbalist and was licensed to be a member of the Association.⁶

Members were required to pay a membership fee of four shillings a year. The executive members of the branch in Asante paid one pound four shillings a year. This was divided as follows: ten shillings was kept in the District Treasury, ten shillings in the Regional Treasury and four shillings in the National Treasury. This was to ensure the smooth running of the association, which was manned by a Chairman, Secretary, Organizing Secretary and the executives all year round.⁷

In spite of the goodwill of the members of the Association, it was found out that since its inception, the association suffered from several internal unrests. The following precipitated the unrest: extortion of money by officers, unpopular officers, disrespect shown to District Commissioners or Chiefs by officers of the association. The others included questions on the Local, Urban and City Councils especially in connection with the issuing and renewal of licenses as well as tensions brewed by the interference of medical authorities and foreign agents.

⁸ In spite of its setbacks, the association had regulations which would guide it and the entire indigenous medical practice in Ghana and Asante in particular into future prospects.

Regulations for the psychic and traditional healing association

The association aimed at upholding, protecting, and promoting the best in psychic and traditional healing in Ghana, and collectively to cooperate with the Ghana Medical Association and the Ghana Academy of Sciences in the promotion of the science of herbalism, as well as psychiatric and psychosomatic treatment.⁹ Membership was opened to any person actively engaged or interested in psychic and traditional healing in Ghana, for example, herbalists, priests and priestesses as well as those associated with shrines. Membership carried with it the obligation to accept and abide by the aims of the association and refrain from acts that could bring the association's name into disrepute. In addition, members were to refrain from any practices, which could in any way endanger public health and morality.¹⁰ Such a regulation was essential because it had the tendency to prevent quackery and also ensure public safety.

The constitution of the association placed it under three functional headships in terms of organization and administration. These were the National, Regional, and District levels. The activities of the association were formulated and supervised by a National Committee comprising a National Chairman, National Vice Chairman, National Secretary, National Treasurer and National Organizing Secretary. Not more than one of these officers was to be from one region.¹¹ The National Committee was required to meet at least once every quarter. The National Chairman, in consultation with the National Vice Chairman, and the Regional Chairman, convened meetings. Two-thirds of the recognized members formed a quorum. The National Committee consisted of selected people from the various districts. The names of the proposed officers were to be submitted two months in advance. These were voted on by the outgoing members of the committee. Officers were elected annually.¹²

Again, regional officers were determined by the National Committee in accordance with the political and administrative regions of the nation. Each region had the following officers: The Regional Chairman, Regional Vice Chairman, Regional Secretary, Regional Treasurer and Regional Organizing Secretary. The officers at the regional level were elected annually by popular votes of candidates or electorates that represented the various districts. Two thirds of the recognized members formed a quorum.¹³ Also, the district branch formed the unit of the association. It comprised all indigenous priests and priestesses as well as herbalists who formed the membership in a district. There was an indigenous Head-Priest or Priestess who was chosen in consultation with the District Commissioner and the chiefs concerned. The executives at the district level were made up of competent indigenous healers in the district, at least one from each town or village. The district branch was required to meet periodically, and its deliberations communicated to the regional branch, whose responsibility was to discuss and inform the National Committee where necessary. During the deliberations of the district branch, two-thirds of members present formed a quorum. In addition, a general executive meeting of the district was to be determined by the executive. It is significant to emphasize that the district branch was the foundation stone of the association.¹⁴ To emphasize, such devolution of power was to ensure that the association was able to

¹⁵ Ibid

¹⁶ Manhyia Archives of Ghana, Kumase, MAG 1/1/102A, Correspondence between the Ghana Psychic and Traditional Healing Association, Ashanti Regional Secretariat and the *Asantehene*, 3rd August, 1963

¹⁷ Ibid

¹⁸ Ibid

¹⁹ Ibid

²⁰ Ibid

²¹ Manhyia Archives of Ghana, Kumase, MAG 1/1/102A, Correspondence between the Ghana Psychic and Traditional Healing Association, Ashanti Regional Secretariat and the *Asantehene*, 3rd August, 1963

²² Manhyia Archives of Ghana, Kumase, MAG 1/1/102A, Correspondence between the Ghana Psychic and Traditional Healing Association, Ashanti Regional Secretariat and the *Asantehene*, 3rd August, 1963

operate effectively at the local level since it had the propensity to bring together competent practitioners at the district level and expose those whose charlatany made the practice unpopular during the colonial period.

Again, the association's constitution or any part of it could be amended, rescinded or altered by a resolution carried by three-fourths majority votes of a National Committee meeting. The mandate for such changes was first to be obtained from the general meeting at the district levels. A proposal regarding any such changes was to be submitted to the National Committee, two months in advance.¹⁵ Significantly, these rules and guidelines for operations ensured that there was advancement in the indigenous medical practices in Ghana and for that matter, Asante. It also suggests that the period of the first half of the twentieth century and beyond ensured the transition from a hitherto disorganized group of practitioners into a seemingly formidable group whose role in the healing of the sick persisted before the advent of the Europeans into Asante.

Registration of indigenous healers in Asante

From the period 1934 to 1955, the Asante Confederacy Council began to issue licenses to honest and capable indigenous medical practitioners. The licenses were intended to separate the genuine practitioners from the quack ones (here, quackery referred to those whose claims to cure were proven not to be true and those whose medicines according to the colonial administration were harmful to the individual's health and well-being). This was so because of the belief that the references upon which such registration could be granted to persons who applied would come from chiefs and people well respected in the respective communities in Asante where such practitioners engaged in their healing practices. Primarily, it was based on the bye-laws made by the Asante Confederacy Council relative to the need for native physicians within the Confederacy to procure licenses to validate their practices and to eliminate quack physicians.¹⁶ The office of the *Nsumankwaahene* played a significant role in the issuance of the licenses. Most of the applicants applied through the office of the *Nsumankwaahene* whose office objects such as the use of *Suman*, amulets, rituals and indigenous medicine mattered in Asante customary practices. Significantly, applicants of the physician license had to obtain a testimonial or references from prominent persons in the area where they practiced. The referee was preferably a

chief or an *Odikro* and any person who could attest to the efficacy of the practitioner's therapy or remedies.¹⁷

Four categories of practitioners applied for the physicians' license. There were those who sought for the license to operate as herbalists, that is, they used purely herbs, stems and roots of plants for the preparation of concoctions and decoctions for the treatment of diseases. There were also indigenous priest healers who employed both the supernatural powers and herbs in curing diseases. They resorted to the use of customs, rituals and propitiations or employing the powers of the deities in the healing process. There were "Spiritual healers" like *akomfo* and those from spiritual churches like the Twelve Apostles Churches.¹⁸ Some of these spiritual healers engaged in fortune telling, full life reading and exorcism. They believed that diseases were caused by contrary spiritual forces that have to be annihilated through "spiritism". "Spiritism" in this sense means employing supernatural forces to counter contrary spiritual disease spirits that cause the medical predicaments of the presumed innocent.¹⁹

The fourth category, were those who sought for the license to sell herbal potions either on the streets of Kumase or specified areas in Asante. Most of these people were not necessarily experts in the preparation of herbal potions but they were into retailing and marketing. Those who procured the license in order to offer herbal remedies were charged not to administer or prescribe any poisonous medicine or perform any act that is dangerous to life or contravened Cap 57 sections 15, 16 and 17 of the laws of the Gold Coast, 1936.²⁰

Again, the bearer of the medical herbalists' license could not pose as a witch or wizard finder. Exposing people as witches or wizards was contrary to Order in Council number 28 of 1930. This notwithstanding, the practitioner could cure anyone who felt that his infirmities were caused by disease demons or witches. Also on 31st January, 1936, practitioners were told not to charge more than thirteen shillings.²¹

Rules and regulations for holders of the physician license certificate in Asante

Holders of the physician license were charged to renew their license every year. They paid a maximum of four pounds three shillings for the renewal of their license.

²⁵ Ibid

²⁶ Ibid

²⁷ Manhyia Archives of Ghana, Kumase, MAG 1/1/102A, Correspondence between the Spiritual Head of Cherubim and Seraphim and the *Asantehehene*, 4th April, 1955

²⁸ Manhyia Archives of Ghana, Kumase, MAG 1/1/102A, Correspondence between the Spiritual Head of Cherubim and Seraphim, and the *Asantehehene*, 4th April, 1955

²¹ Ibid

²³ Ibid

²⁴ Manhyia Archives of Ghana, Kumase, MAG 1/1/22, Applications for physician licenses 1934-1947

The certificate bore the signature of the Financial Secretary of the Kumase Division Native Authority and the name of the native physician to whom the license was granted. The holder of the certificate also had a serial number prefixed with an alphabet, which made his certificate distinct from other holders of the physician license.²²

The bearer of a physician license was required to adhere to several rules, which were paramount so far as the practice of indigenous medicine in the first half of twentieth-century Asante was concerned. They were required to adhere to the following.

Every native physician was to hold a license in the form and manner as explained in paragraphs one and two. Anyone who breached this order was punished with a fine not exceeding twenty-five pounds or was imprisoned with or without hard labour not exceeding three months. In certain instances, the offender was required to pay a fine of twenty-five pounds and in addition to that, serve three months imprisonment with or without hard labour.²³ Also, every holder of a physician license who was found guilty of practicing harmful medicine with the intent to endanger human life was punished with a fine not exceeding twenty-five pounds or to imprisonment with or without hard labour not exceeding three months.²⁴

Again, any licensee who attempted to defraud, extort or charge unreasonable fee was guilty of an offence and based on summary conviction was punished with a fine not exceeding twenty-five pounds or to imprisonment with or without hard labour not exceeding three months or both. Upon demand by an accredited person who was duly authorized by the *Asantehene* to inspect a physician license, any holder was under obligation to produce his license for inspection.²⁵ The native physician license was subject to renewal in January every year provided the 3d license was handed in for such renewal or upon affidavit that the previous license issued got missing before the period of renewal of license. All particulars of endorsements in the old license were to be entered in the new license for the necessary references. Lastly, annual fee payable on this license was four pounds, thirteen shillings.²⁶ Significantly, holders of the physician license were by inference to live above reproach in their practice. Their ability to do so did not only encourage them to operate freely in the indigenous medical milieu but it also had the capacity to allay the fears of the colonial

administration insofar as the practice of harmful medicine was concerned.

The rigidity with which the rules were applied in Asante resonated in the colony. In 1948, as a result of the seeming success of the herbalists' license in Asante, request came from the colony to the Asante Confederacy Council to enable them access the documentation in reference to the herbalist license in Asante and to further replicate it at Cape Coast.²⁷ The Acting Secretary of the Confederacy further forwarded a specimen of the license granted by the Kumase division and minutes of Asante Confederacy Council meeting held in 1942, which dealt with the question of granting of physician license and fees charged.²⁸

These records proved invaluable and amply met the expectations and needs of the colony.²⁹

In 1948, as a result of a conviction obtained in Accra against a quack doctor, J.S. Prince Agbojan for practicing surgery and medicine, receiving payments for practicing medicine, importing dangerous drugs and poisons and for dealing in poisons, the Commissioner of Police drew the attention of native authorities to the fact that Agbojan possessed a medical herbalist-practicing license purported to have been signed by a chief whom he had no connection with.³⁰ It was further recommended that, though the practice the culprit engaged in did not directly fall under indigenous medicine, based on his experience it would be necessary that before herbalist licenses were issued by the native authorities, the applicants were to be referred to the nearest police officer, who after enquiries, would be able to advise whether or not the licenses should be issued.³¹ Upon further correspondence between the District Commissioner and the *Asantehene*, in 1949, the Asante Confederacy Council granted permission that information about applicants of herbalist licenses be seen by the police before such licenses were issued.³² Such efforts did not only lessen the burden on both the colonial administration and the native authorities but rather it improved quality and efficiency in the indigenous healing practices.

Conflict of Interests

The author has not declared any conflict of interests.

³⁰Manhyia Archives of Ghana, Kumase, MAG 1/1/22 Rules and Regulations For Holders of the Physician license, a sample Certificate issued to Kofi Mensah of Nkawkaw on 31st December 1953

³¹Manhyia Archives of Ghana, Kumase, MAG 1/1/102A, Native Physician License, 1933

³²Ibid

³³Ibid

³⁴Manhyia Archives of Ghana, Kumase, MAG 1/1/22, Rules and Regulations For Holders of the Physician license, a sample Certificate issued to Kofi Mensah of Nkawkaw on 31st December 1953

²⁷Manhyia Archives of Ghana, Kumase, MAG 21/1/77, Correspondence between The Acting Secretary, Asante Confederacy Council and The Secretary, Joint Provincial Council- Cape Coast, 30th October, 1948

²⁸Ibid

²⁹Ibid

³⁰Manhyia Archives of Ghana, Kumase, MAG 21/1/77, Correspondence between Chief Commissioner, Asante and the Asantehene, 29th October, 1948

³¹Ibid

³²Manhyia Archives of Ghana, Kumase, MAG 21/1/77, Correspondence between Chief Commissioner, Asante and the Asantehene, 24th February, 1949

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Full Length Research Paper

Inter-ethnic relation among Awi and Gumuz, Northwestern Ethiopia since 1974: A shift from hostile to peaceful co-existence

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Longstanding relationship (amicable and hostile) has existed between Awi and Gumuz nationalities since Aksumite era. Their early relationship had been full of pain because of the fact that the successive highland kings had appointed Awi chiefs to run state affairs in Gumuz community, which left bad seed on the future relation between two generations. As time went on, a shift from hostile to friendly relation marked since the change of politics in 1974 because of socio-political developments and the dynamic nature of the interaction. The study focused on driving socio-political and economic developments which promoted tolerance, cohabitation and diffusion of the indigenous agricultural knowledge system between these two people. The Gumuz and Awi inhabited Woredas of Awi and Metekelzonez were selected for this study. The researcher attempted to consult wide ranges of primary and secondary sources. Elders from Awi and Gumuz are extensively interviewed. They responded that agricultural alliance leads to the shift of indigenous knowledge such as traditional agricultural activities, management of crop production etc from Awi to Gumuz. The sources are critically collected, scrutinized and analyzed. The validities of the sources are cross-checked one against the other.

Key words: Peaceful- coexistence, indigenous knowledge system.

INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY: HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF THE EARLY AWI-GUMUZ INTERACTION

The written sources left by travellers and the existing local accounts reveal that the Awi-Gumuz interaction dated back to Aksumiteera. The ruling houses of the

Aksumite kingdom assigned the local Awi chiefs to collect tribute from the Gumuz community and run government activities since the second half of the third century (McCrinkle, 1897:53, Taddese, 1972:28; Sergaw, 1972: 28,37). The relation between these people strengthened through time after the settlement of Awi in what is today Awi Nationality Administrative and some parts of Metekel

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Zones.

The archaeological excavations, oral and written sources indicated that the land presently inhabited by Awi people had been formerly occupied by the Gumuz (Melaku, 1997:87; Pankhurst, 1997:91; Getu, 1992:4). The present day Enjibara and its environs such as Mount Fudi, Gembaha, foothills of Mount Senbu in Quwaqura (near Dangila) had been the strong hold of the Gumuz. Nowadays, the place names that are closely related with the Gumuz culture are witnessed in several parts of the present day Enjibara and its surrounding environs such as የቦንጋሠጌር (villages of Bonga), የሊዊሠጌር (villages of Liwi), የመርጊሠጌር (villages of Mergi) and የፊሊሠጌር (villages of Fili). These place names seems to have derived from either the clan names or the village chiefs of the Gumuz.

On the other hand, oral source reveals that during the settlement of seven houses of Agaws in AgawMeder and Metekel, they were said to have warmly welcomed by the famous Gumuz woman called Aduck. According to oral tradition, Aduck played very important role in the peaceful division of the land to the seven Agaw brothers and provided them protection from the attacks of the Shinasha people. Due to her great contribution, the Awi elders are thankful to Aduck and upon her death all of the founding fathers of seven houses of Agaw were said to have come together and buried her dead body in what is today west of Enjibara town, where stone ruins are currently witnessed.

In spite of the fascinating argument, however, if Aduck was either political or spiritual leader of the Gumuz people, she could not have good attitude towards the incoming Awi who were frequently uprooting her own people [Gumuz] into the inhospitable areas of the Blue Nile. If she was influential, she could have organized her own people [Gumuz] against the incoming Awi. Instead, she might be enslaved by Awi and later became their loyal servant.

The interaction between Awi and Gumuz consolidated during the Gondarine period than ever before. The successive Gondarine kings appointed the formidable Awi chiefs to collect tribute in gold and goats, and facilitate slave raid in Gumuz communities (Abdussamad, 1995: 58-59; Tsega, 2006:38). For instance, Iyasu I (1682-1706) empowered an Awi chief called Chihuay to run political works in the Gumuz community. As time went on, following the incorporation of Metekel into Gojjam Province (1898), Nigus Tekle Haimanot (1882-1901) and later his son, RasHailu (1901-35) gave the political privilege for Awi chiefs over the Gumuz. They assigned the Awi chiefs to oversee the tax collection and the day-to-day political running in the Gumuz community (Abdussamad, 1984:4; Gebre, 2004:57). The position of Awi over the Gumuz worsened after the appointment of

the Awi chief, *Qegnazmach* ZelekeLiqu (later elevated to the rank of *Fitawrari* (1905-1935) over Belaya and Tumha. He situated his power base in Belaya and exacerbated the slave raid in Metekel (Gumuz villages). Zeleke appointed his loyal officials at each custom posts traditionally called *teqotataries* (accountants).

Years of ethnic policy that rulers had been applying for their political benefit left bad seeds on the fate of the future interaction between Awi and Gumuz generations. The political system narrowed the rooms for the possibility of the existence of friendly relation between two nationalities. Refusing what Awichifes were doing in Gumuz communities, the periodic Gumuz revolt broke out in Metekel since 1940s to the early 1970s (Alemayehu, 2012: 91-92).

To begin with, after liberation (1941), periodic Gumuz revolt flared in Metekel. They bitterly protested the secret continuation of the slave raid by Awi masters, taxation system of the government, and the chain of their patron-client relation with Awi (Bazezew, 1990:20, Jira, 2008: 31).The illicit firearms trafficking¹ in Metekel encouraged the Gumuz of Mandura, Debati and Zigem to kill Awi and destroy their crops.

The first open Gumuz revolt against Awi broke out in 1944, following the death of *Gerazmach* Zeleke Birru, formidable Awi chief who established his power base at Sigadi (near Changnিতown) (Bazezew, 1990: 20). They rejected the continuation of the early “patron-client” kind of relationship. As pretext, they refused to pay tribute to the government through Awi local chiefs. The Gumuz of the Mandura, Dibati and Zigem expressed their resentment by killing Awi tax collectors, harassing local people on market days, setting fire on Awi houses and their crops, and trapping cattle keepers.

In 1960, the most serious and devastating Gumuz revolt happened in Madura, Debati and Zigem. The revolt was led by famous traditional Gumuz chief called Lamcha, self-appointed rebel leader who was calling himself “colonel.” (Interview with: TilahunAdal, Tufa Doyu and Sewunet Ambaye). The uprising was locally called Lamcha rebellion, named after the rebel leader. The revolt was able to create sense of unity among the various Gumuz communities and soon, it spread throughout the entire Gumuz lands in northwestern Ethiopia including Dedessa Valley.

The government took brutal measures against the Gumuz. The government recruited local Awi *Cheqa shums* in 1940s, 1950s and 1960s and assigned them to allegedly disarm the Gumuz. They disarmed the Gumuz, and set fire on their villages in Mandura, Debati, Guba,

¹The illicit firearms trafficking in the post liberation was the result of the Italian occupation of the Guba and AgewMeder.

and Zigem (Jira, 2008:38). In order to bring lasting peace, the government established the garrison centers in Mantewuha, Debatji and Mandura, where the Gumuz revolt was too strong. In addition, it massively armed local Awi *nechlebash* forces and other non-Gumuz people in the region. Berihun (2004:267-268) stated measures taken by the government against Gumuz as follows:

The earlier uprisings that occurred in 1950s and 1960s were the basis for the government to justify concerted military actions and disarming the Gumuz. The military interventions were concluded by establishing new and permanent administrative centers that were intended to oversee the Gumuz region. Among others, the police and administrative centers at Debatji and Mantewuha, place located southwest of the Chagni town were conceived.

After the Gumuz revolt led by Lamcha crushed, there was popular saying among Awi. This was read in Awgni language:

ላምቻጉዘሪ YouLacha fat
ድኻምቸዘሪ : Your race shale extinct

Weapons collected from Gumuz were distributed to Awi and other neighboring non-Gumuz localities aimed at checking the security problems of the region. The governments also set out restricted laws. For instance, any kind of fabricating spears, bows and other traditional weapons² at local level were strictly forbidden. An attempt to produce these weapons leads to corporal punishment, property confiscation and arrest (Interview with: Tilahun Adal, Mengistie Asres, Ambaw Agidew).

The ethnic disturbance adversely affected the cultivation of the crops both in Gumuz and Awi communities. When the security and the local Awi forces landed in Mandura, Dibati and Guba, the Gumuz left their village for Sudan and lowland areas of the Blue Nile and as a result, their cotton remains on field (not harvested). The effect of the Gumuz revolt on regular cultivation of their cotton product was expressed in Awgni language as follows:

ላምቻጉዘሪ ኸኃኔ ሊ The evil caused by Lamcha
ትተካይጉኸካኔ ሊ : made cotton to remain along with its stem at outside.

The Ethnic policy of the imperial regime left long lasting effects on the memory of the Gumuz. They developed strong hatreds against Awi and government that they consider killing non-Gumuz as good culture (heroism).

² The production of local weapons using the indigenous knowledge are common in the Gumuz communities.

Throughout the years of Gumuz revolt, the government always took harsh measures against Gumuz. They were considered as problem creators. Unlike other peasant rebellion, the government did not attempt to elevate the rebel leaders. For instance, in Bale and Gojjam peasant uprising, it attempted to follow the pacific approaches and at the end, the arrear land tax was cancelled and rebel leaders were given amnesty.

METHODOLOGY

This research was conducted based on the qualitative approach. Both primary and secondary sources of data are utilized. This includes key informants, focus group discussions, document analysis and archival materials. To begin, unstructured interviews were carried out with the intention of collecting the required data. Gumuz and Awi who are paired in agricultural work, elders and ex-regime local appointees were interviewed in depth. Focus group discussions with six to eight discussants in each group were conducted on different issues of topic under study. The selection of the discussants was made based on their nearness to social interaction, agricultural alliance, duties and responsibility of the conflict management process. In addition, letters, reports, newspapers, articles, research papers, minutes, diaries, documentary films and other manuscripts stating the nature of the relation between the two communities are consulted from Awi and Metekel Zones of security, agriculture, culture and tourism departments. The written documents are cross-checked against the oral sources, collected through focus group discussion and key informants. Finally, data analysis was made through interpretation, description of meanings, views and perceptions of the community elders. The collected data were critically and skeptically analyzed through narrative and document analysis approach.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

From conflict to cooperation

Roads leading to peaceful co-existence and amicable relationship

The end of the old Ethiopian imperial in 1974 was the landmark in the history of Awi-Gumuz relationship. This was because the Ethiopian revolution brought an end to the century old “patron-client” nature of relationship between these two peoples. Following this historic event, Derg made an attempt to elevate some Gumuz elders at local levels to run politics. In addition, series state policies of the Derg such as development through cooperation campaign, literacy campaign, adult training, agricultural cooperative, created rooms for mutual cooperation between Awi and Gumuz. In its cooperative agricultural policy, Derg attempted to shift traditional agricultural knowledge system from better experienced Awi to less equipped Gumuz. To this end, the Gumuz who had been

poor in oxen plough, milking cows and other agricultural activities were made to be paired with Awi. In other words, the Awi farmers who had the better experience in the knowledge of traditional agricultural work were assigned to educate the techniques of oxen plough, cow milking, harvesting and management of crops to Gumuz. Though the change was not significant, at grass root level, the Gumuz were made to attend adult training and literacy education together with Awi. These series of the government policies had its own role in promoting social interaction of Awi and Gumuz and changing the image of early painful relation into cooperation. Although the change was invisible, the policy became the pioneer in integrating Gumuz with Awi and changing the early history of the Gumuz society from hunting and gathering way of life into shifting cultivation and sedentary agriculture (Abebaw et al, 1975: 25; Dessalegn, 2010: 71). In relation to these, Gebre (2004:63) noted that the Gumuz were encouraging the seasonal migration of the Awi into their land; since then it becomes good opportunity for them to draw the lesson of oxen plough and other traditional indigenous knowledge of crop production and management from the latter. Therefore, Awi became the apostle to transfer their working habits and indigenous knowledge system to the Gumuz community. Someone may ask why the government chooses Awi to shift their agricultural knowledge to Gumuz under the umbrella of its series of policies. This was because Gumuz and Awi knew each other and live together for long time. In addition, as compared to other neighboring non-Gumuz highlanders, the Gumuz have relatively better friendly relation with Awi (Dessalegn, 1988: 131; Gebre, 2003: 53; Vaughan, 2007: 28). Moreover, after the 1980s, personal relationship between Awi and Gumuz consolidated (Berihun, 1996: 135). When conflict between settlers and Gumuz took place, the latter were asking for advice from the Awi. The Awi became the neutral and negotiators of the disputants. With regard to the role of the Awi in arbitration, Berihun (1996:144) stated:

in the irk, there were Agew elders who were elected as arbitrators by both groups. Then, the Agew elders killed the goat of the Gumuz (on behalf of Gumuz), while the Wallo's goat was killed by their own elders. Almost all were sharing the goat that was slaughtered by the Agew two young Gumuz men who were eating with Wallo. One Gumuz then came to the Wallo team and said "only two GumuzWallo" i.e. only two Gumuz have Wallo inclination.

The other factor which consolidated the amicable relation between Awi and Gumuz was the need for illegal exchange of the firearms. The illicit firearm trafficking has

been widely expanded at the eve of the collapse of the Derg rule to 1990s. Numerical firearms were left by the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party (EPRP)³ and Derg troops distributed in Metekel and Agew Medir. During these years, Awi who largely benefited⁴ from firearms left by the two fighting forces became the major supplier of the guns and bullets to the Gumuz people. The Gumuz and Awi who have *mijim* and *wodaj* ties were the major actors in the illicit firearms trafficking and trading. According to the local informants, the Awi of Chagni, Zigem, Ahiti, Mandura, Debaṭi, Ambela established bridges for firearms exchange with the Gumuz. They became the major recipients of firearms from the other highland Awi and Amhara and then distributed it to the Gumuz (Interview with: Commander Tewaba Tefera, Belayneh Wondim, commander Simachew Yihunie).

The rate of firearms exchange was high between Awi and Gumuz than between the later and non-Awi. This was because on one hand, the Gumuz had hostile relation with the settlers, where there was no safe room for firearms exchange. On the other, the settlers did not want to sell any firearms to Gumuz since; it would encourage them for killing and crime.

The volume of firearms exchange between Awi and the Gumuz increased from the end of 1980s to 1990s. There were two main factors for the wide expansion of the illicit firearms sales between Awi and Gumuz. One was increasing the demand of the firearms among the Gumuz community because of the outbreak of the bloody ethnic conflict between Gumuz and settlers in Metekel (1992-1994). To this end, they have been using Awi as closer advisors and firearms suppliers. Secondly, following the demise of the Derg rule, the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (PRDF) in collaboration with the local militia forces were collecting the firearms left by EPRP and the former government forces particularly from Awi.⁵ They were whipping and brutally treating pro-EPRP and Derg members of Awi to return the weapons that they have received from them. Therefore, the Awi preferred to sell weapons to the Gumuz rather than returning it to the newly instituted government (Interview with: Engida Tessema, Tufa Doyu and Solomon Dereso).

³ EPRP, rebel force was very much active in Metekel and Agew Medir and fighting against Derg from early 1980s to 1991

⁴ After the news of the flight of Mengistu Haile Mariam into Harari, Zimbabwe, several Derg troops sold their guns and bullets to Awi in very low price even in exchange for civilian clothes.

⁵ The rate of collecting fire arms was high among Awi than Gumuz community. Firstly, EPRDF security forces could not penetrate into the lowland Gumuz areas, since there were remnants of the EPRP insurgents operating in the region. Secondly, when the security forces arrive, the Gumuz left for lowland Blue Nile areas.

Post 1991 developments: Focusing on mutual agricultural alliance and peaceful co-existence

The post 1991 political rearmament reshuffled the territory of the former AgewMedir and Metekel which is early inhabited by Awi and Gumuz. Accordingly, some Awi and Gumuz are separated from their main groups. In other words, some Gumuz and Awi are left outside their respective zones, Metekel (Binishangule Gumuz Nnational Regional State) and Awi Nationality (Amhara Nnational Regional State) respectively. Significant numbers of Awi are living in Metekel Zone particularly in Mandura, Debaṭi, Dangurworedas and other environs. Similarly, considerable numbers of the Gumuz population are living in Awi Zone such as Zigem, Ankesha and Jaweworedas. According to the reports of 2007 Central Statistics Authority (CSA), among 670,847 entire population of the Benishangul Gumuz National Regional State, 28, 468 (four percent) are Awi people. Similarly, out of 981,491 total population of the Awi Nationality Administrative Zone, about 13, 074 (one percent) are Gumuz. However, the geographic separation did not stop their interaction, rather the lowland Gumuz welcomes the seasonal Awi migrants. Regardless of the difference in administrative unit, the Awi-Gumuz interaction is characterized by the mixed settlement and cross border relations.

The friendly relation between Awi and Gumuz and greater extent of economic cooperation witnessed after 1991 political change than ever before. This happens due to rise of the need for mutual economic benefit and consolidation of individual social bonds. To promote their mutual economic benefit, they maintained social links such as *anguṣahugni* (cross ethnic adoption), *abelij* (Godparent relation) and *wodajinet* (friendship) and land rent. After 1990s, both Awi and Gumuz were eager to maintain friendship because of the several developments that took place in the region. One was land shortage among Awi, which became acute problem after 1996/7 rural land decree of the Amhara National Regional State (ANRS). When the 1996/7 rural land redistribution program caused shortage of the farmland in Awi Nationality Zone, the Awi from highland areas migrated to the Gumuz land. As the demand for land increased, large numbers of the Awi from densely populated areas migrated to several Gumuz lands such as Enabara, Jawi, Zigem. Better economically organized and seasonal laborers crossed their zonal boundary and maintained economic cooperation with the Gumuz of Metekel Zone (Tadesse, 2002: 12). The Gumuz who owned virgin land emerged as the potential allies for Awi land hunger because the rural land redistribution did not affect them living in Awi Nationality and Metekel Zones.

Secondly, raising the price of food grains in market is one of the driving elements that made Awi and Gumuz claimants eager to consolidate their agricultural alliance. As investing on agriculture becomes more beneficial, the landless youths, small-scale individual agricultural investors and even town dwellers from highland areas of Awi Nationality Administrative Zone made the seasonal migration to the Gumuz inhabited lands such as Enabara, Ambela, Zigem, Mandura and Dibati searching for land lease (mutual crop sharing).

The Gumuz are welcoming the periodic migration of Awi and social ties with them, because they are much benefited from mutual crop sharing, draw traditional knowledge of agricultural experiences and management of the crop production, which promotes food security. Mutual crop sharing reduced the dependence of Gumuz on hunting and gathering who were supplementing their diet through hunting and gathering particularly in summer season (Interview with: Tufa Doyu, AgegnehuAbie, and Solomon Dereso).

The post 1991 change also paved the way for unemployed youth migration into Benishangul Gumuz National Regional State (BGNRS). Among the newly structured regional states, BGNRS lacks the potentials of educated manpower. Awi, the immediate neighbor of Gumuz were frequently migrating to Metekel Zone searching for better employment opportunities. The job opportunity in the densely populated Awi Nationality Zone is competitive. In each year, several Awi students who completed their secondary education left for Metekel Zone because of the presence of the better employment opportunity. They are working as teachers, health and agricultural expertise and other civil servants.

Assessing the outcomes of the agricultural alliance mutual understanding

The need for economic cooperation and mutual understanding leads to the consolidation and further formation of new *wodajinet* (friendship). When the relationship between Awi and Gumuz began, they are calling each other *wodaj*, meaning friend. This leads to the establishment of the *wodajinet* (friendship). *Wodajinet* could be extended into *mijim*, meaning best friend. *Mijim* is strong friendship in which the individuals establish very close relationship. *Mijim* ties could be assumed by the succeeding generations of the Awi and Gumuz even after the death of original parents. It is not easily breakable. They are helping each other in different aspects of social life. Informants described that the *mijim* relation between Awi and Gumuz is age-old, but relatively expanded since the post liberation period. Though the early relation

between two people was full of hostile and tension, Awi tax collectors were said to have started such relation with Gumuz villagers (Interview with: Tufa Doyu, Solomon Dereso and Engida Tessema).

The other manifestations of the friendship relationship between these two people are *anguṣhugni*⁶ (cross-ethnic adoption) and *abelij* (God-parent relation). *Anguṣhugni* is a kind of parent-son relation, where the claimants agreed to act as parent and son. They made an oath in front of elders and spiritual fathers to keep their relation forever. However, no biological ties (actual blood relationship) existed between the claimants. In *abelij*, when new baby is born, biologically unrelated guy/lady assumes the position of parenthood during baptism.

Above all, farming alliance between Awi and Gumuz paved the way for experience sharing and shift of the working habits from the former to the later. The Gumuz, who had been poor in oxen plough, milking cows, cultivation and management of crop production able to learn such techniques from Awi. For instance, the Gumuz living in Awi Nationality Administrative and Metekel zones such as Jawe, Enabara, Zigem, Dibatiand Mandura are becoming settled agriculturalists and good in oxen plough and management of the crop cultivation. Among others, the Gumuz of Enabara, Zigem, Jawi and Mandura learned alternative means of plough. They are using donkey for plough when their oxen died. They found that donkey easily adapted their natural environment (hot climate) and relatively costs low price in the market than ox (Interview with: Tufa Doyu, Solomon Dereso and Engida Tessema).

Nowadays, the Gumuz of Zigem and Mandura, in particular are able to learn the processes in *teff* cultivation, which needs repeated plough and critical traditional knowledge during sowing, winnowing, chaffing and threshing. In their history, Gumuz had been using stick to thresh the other food crops. This is time consuming and boring. In recent years, they learned the techniques of threshing crops on ground using oxen foot. In addition, the Gumuz had not been using pack animals for loading crops and goods rather they use traditional balancing. Surprisingly, when the two sides load failed to equally weighed, they add stone or other material on one side to make it equally weight. In recent years, they learned the technique of loading sack of grain on donkey. The other mutual agricultural alliance is manifested in the areas of animal rearing. When the shortage of the grazing lands occurred in summer season⁷, the Awi sent their cattle to Gumuz villages where adequate grass is

available.

Because of their closer interaction with Awi, the Gumuz also learned how to manage the annual food crops in home. They had been too much extravagant. They do not consider their economic ability during weeding, *tezikar* (death memory) and other social festivals. Moreover, they sold their food crops in nearby market in winter season mainly to buy locally prepared drinking substances like *areqi* and *tella* (Interview with: Tufa Doyu, Solomon Dereso and Engida Tessema). In recent years, there are improvements in reducing the degree of the extravagancy. They are learning the habit of saving food crops than being dependent on seasonal hunting and gathering. In some areas, the Gumuz females are learning the processes of distilling local drinks like, *areqi* and *tella* and preparation of traditional food such as *injera* and *wot* from Awi women (Ibid).

Day-to-day interaction between Awi and Gumuz also brought changes in house building among the Gumuz. In earlier periods, the Gumuz were living in simple huts. James Bruce gave his account stating that:

*The Shanqellas*⁸ during the fair half of the year, live under the shade of tree, the lost branches of which they cut near the steam on the upper part and then bend, break them down planting the ends of the branches in the earth (Quoted in Pankrhust, 1976: 27)

As their interaction with Awi fostered and income level improves, they began to build well-roofed and walled houses. Some of the Gumuz built corrugated iron roofed houses. Several Awi friends that are economically and socially chained with the Gumuz involved in building their residential home.

Conclusion

Historical sources tell us that the inter relationship between Awi and Gumuz was longstanding and started since Aksumiteking do. The early interaction between these two people was mainly characterized by hostile ways because of the fact that the successive Ethiopian highland kings appointed Awi local chiefs for their political benefit. This paved the way for the emergence of "patron-client" nature of relationship between Awi and Gumuz until the downfall of the imperial regime in 1974.

The Ethiopian revolution of the 1974 relaxed the nature of the inter-relationship between the two communities. This was because the Ethiopian revolution ended age-old patron-client relationship and Gumuz were given some

⁶ This is Awgni language

⁷ The shortage of the grassing land became critical in summer season because much of the land use for plough.

⁸ It was the name given by the highlanders to Gumuz

degree of the political privilege. Above all, through its series of policies such as agricultural cooperative, peasant association, literacy campaign, adult training and development through cooperative campaign, Derg attempted to integrate Awi and Gumuz. The Gumuz who are poor in oxen plough and other agricultural activities were made to be paired with Awi. This was made to shift traditional agricultural work experience from the latter to the former. After 1990s the relation between Awi and Gumuz were greatly improved. The need for economic cooperation and increasing the demand for farmland among Awi created fertile grounds for agricultural alliance. The Gumuz, which had been poor in traditional agricultural works such as oxen plough, cow milking and house building learned techniques of such traditional knowledge. The day-to-day interaction and economic cooperation between Awi and Gumuz played crucial role in improving the early images of economic activity and social life of the Gumuz. The friendly interaction between Awi and Gumuz changes not only the images of their early history but also reduces the security problems and promotes peaceful co-existence.

Conflict of Interests

The author has not declared any conflict of interests.

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