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The Oromo national memories*

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Abstract. The author defines nation as a territorial community of nativity and attributes significance to the biological fact of birth into the historically evolving territorial structure of the cultural community of nation, which allows to consider nation as a form of kinship. Nation differs from other territorial communities such as tribe, city-state or various ‘ethnic groups’ not just by the greater extent of its territory, but also by a relatively uniform culture that provides stability over time [22. P. 7]. According to the historical-linguistic comparative studies, “in terms of the history of mankind it is incontrovertible that some of the earliest and greatest human achievements have been accomplished in civilizations founded and headed by Afro-Asiatic peoples” [28. P. 74]. The Oromo people is one of the oldest nations in the world with its own territory (Oromia) and language (*Afaan Oromoo*). The Oromo possess a common political culture (*Gadaa* democracy) and pursue one national-political goal of independence to get rid of the Abyssinian colonialism. Oromo national memories consist of memories of independence and national heroism, memories of the long war against expansionist Abyssinian warlords and the Abyssinian invasion of the Oromo land in the 19th century with the new firearms received from the African co-colonizing Western European powers, and these weapons were used not only to conquer the Oromo land but to cut the Oromo population in half. The Oromo nation consider the colonization of their country, loss of their independence, and existence under the brutal colonial rule of Abyssinia to be the worst humiliation period in their national history. The article consists of two parts. In the first part, the author considers the theoretical background of such concepts as nation, national memory, conquest humiliation, and some colonial pejorative terms still used by colonial-minded writers (like tribe and ethnic groups). In the second part, the author describes the Oromo national political and social memories during their long history as an independent nation from the Middle-Ages to the last quarter of the 19th century; presents ‘the Oromo question’ through the prism of the global history of colonization, occupation of their territory, slavery, and the colonial humiliation of the Oromo nation by the most cruel and oppressive Abyssinian colonial system; presents the two last regimes of the Abyssinian system and the final phase of the Oromo National Movement for sovereignty, dignity, and peace, which contributed greatly to the stability in the Horn of Africa.

Key words: memory; nation; Oromo; national memories; identity; colonialism

Theoretical foundations of the study of the Oromo national memory

According to Voltaire, “if you wish to converse — define your terms!” [29. P. 3]. In any intellectual undertaking we certainly need to clearly explain the basic terms, and in this work, these are ‘tribes’, ‘ethnic groups’, ‘nation’ and ‘nationalism’.

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The origins of peoples' inequality are imbedded in the European philosophy. The founding father of this non-scientific and inhuman idea was the French pseudo-philosopher Gobineau, who in his *Essay on the Inequality of the Human Races* claims that biologically human beings are divided into three “great and clearly marked types, the blacks, the yellows, and the white” [4. P. 137]. White people led by Aryans are considered the superior race, while the yellow and black — inferior to these groups: “The question is ultimately concerned with the infinite capacity for improvement possessed by the species as a whole, and with the equality of races. I deny both points” [4. P. 116]. Moreover, “the Negroid variety is the lowest and stands at the foot of the ladder” [4. P. 134]. Genetic theory proved him wrong for all human beings are equal, originated in East Africa and migrated to other parts of the world [12. P. 21]. History also proved him wrong from the perspective that the white high civilization's characteristics are “sociability, and the hatred of violence — in other words the demand that the head, not the fists shall be used for self-defence” [4. P. 91].

History tells us completely different facts about ‘white’ civilization, which brought the worst genocide to indigenous American people, brought death to Australian indigenous people and Africans — particularly Belgian Congo and German West Africa (Namibia) — by killing peoples to colonize their territories. Similar to Gobineau's racist ideology, in the Abyssinian ideology humanity is divided into three groups: the whites on the top, the yellows (Asians) in the middle, and the blacks at the foot of the hierarchy. According to the Abyssinian ideology, the Oromo are evil-spirited robbers, outlaws, and thieves.

The first ideology of dehumanizing the Oromo comes from a book *History of the Galla, Vision of King Lebna Dengel and the Invasion of Grañ*. The book was said to be originally written by a grandson of Azzaž Marqorewos, who was the *Sahafi te'ezaz* (clerk) of Ase Zar'a Ya'eqob (1434—1468). According to the Abyssinian ruling group's mythology, the Oromo came into being from a starving woman who entered the service of Lalo (a man) so that he would provide her with milk. He took her for his wife, and she gave birth to seven children. As these children grew up, they became thieves, outlaws, and robbers. Lalo was alarmed by the wrath of his master and took his children to a sorcerer *Gabato* in *Kataba*, who used to call the devil *Wagleya*. Lalo asked *Gabato* how he and his children could escape from Azmač Endreyas. The sorcerer called up the devil, and he told to say “*Waqqa Wagleya, dufe, dufe, kot, kot*” if Azmač Endreyas came. Lalo believed all that he was told and did all that was commanded; thus, he worshiped the devil. Lalo was instructed to fight and was assured that he would defeat Azmač Endreyas (regional governor), but he was scared and fled. Lalo's children fought and killed Endreyas at the river Galla, from which their name was derived. Thus, the author of this story presented the Oromo as followers of the devil and children of Lalo, who became thieves, robbers and outlaws, which certainly contrast the image of the Christian Abyssinians.

Another Abyssinian author, Abba Bahrey (1593), starts his essay with: “I began to write a story of Galla to know the number of their clans, their readiness to kill and their animal character” [23. P. 75]. The Orthodox Church in the 1960s excommunicated

the Abyssinians for having sexual intercourse with the Oromo and compared them with animals. Haile Selassie's regional governors threatened the peasants with deportation as if the Oromo were foreign to their own ancestral land. Hajji Robale Ture, the Macha Tulama Self-Help Association leader from Arsi Oromo, when Haile Selassie invited him for a talk, used this chance to ask the Emperor about where the Oromo came from to this country, but the Emperor did not reply. And the most shocking example of humiliation is the second colonial group, the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) that occupied the Oromia land in May 1991 with tanks, and committed human rights violations against the Oromo and other nations of the south.

The development of national movement can be divided into three periods: Phase A — scholarly interest (historians and lawyers write the history of the oppressed nation); Phase B — patriotic agitation (teachers, journalists, and other educated groups disseminate a written history of the nation); Phase C — national movement becomes mass movement. These phases in the Oromo national movement periodization are: A — to 1962; B — 1962—1991, C from 1991. In 2015, the Oromo national movement became a movement for Oromia independence and national identity. First, the Oromo people are a strong nation with deep-rooted national unity and national consciousness — “an amalgam of feelings, impressions and ways of thinking, which find their expression in the psychological and physical solidarity of the group experiencing them in common” [25. P. 186]. Second, the Oromo moved peacefully from east to west and from north to south, and collectively demanded the national right to rule themselves as the Independent Republic of Oromia. The demonstrators used the Oromo Liberation Front flag as the national flag of resistance against the colonial rule of Abyssinia. Third, another important element of Oromo Gadaa democracy is the role of women who took part in demonstrations and sacrificed their lives for the independence of their nation. The violent reaction of the colonial government of Ethiopia led by the Tigrayan minority group proved the violence of the Abyssinian political elite that became the killer of civilian demonstrators.

The colonial system deformed many concepts of social sciences by defining terms in the metropolitan power differently than in the colonies. Thus, African kings became “chiefs” [16. P. 258], African indigenous democratic societies — stateless [18. P. 5], African governments — primitive [38], African indigenous religions — primitive [15], African peoples — tribes (“group of (primitive) families or communities linked by social, religious or blood ties and usually having a common culture and dialect and a recognized leader”) [1]. However, in colonial powers, there are kings, exceptional democracies and nations. Finally, after many criticisms from the free northern and southern intellectuals, the term ‘tribe’ was taken from the mainstream of social and cultural writings and replaced by ‘non-Euro-American societies’ or ethnicities. In literature, these new words are interchangeable [36. P. 185].

The term ‘ethnicity’ originated from the word ‘ethnic’ derived from the Greek *ethnikos* which originally meant heathen or pagan. The term was used from the mid-14th to the mid-19th century, when it entered the racist theory. In the 20th century, the United States divided people into two unequal groups: people of British descent were

considered superior, and the others, including southern Europeans, Jews and Africans, were viewed as inferior. “In the United States, ‘ethnic’ came to be used around the Second World War as a polite term referring to Jews, Italians, and other people considered inferior to the dominant group of largely British descent” [13. P. 4]. Today, racial identities created by the European pseudophilosophers have been scientifically disproven: our species appeared in East Africa as *Homo Sapiens* more than 60,000 years ago, and immigrated throughout the world [12. P. 21] to reach the farthest point in South America 12,000 years ago. So, we all are Africans [50. P. 19—20].

There are two groups of authors who use pejorative terms: the first know about the lack of biological differences between peoples of the world and understand that we share a common origins from Eastern Africa, but refuse to accept it; thus, they classify Euro-Americans as one group and use other terms for other peoples. The second did not accept the fallacy of the first and use the term which labels them and their people as an inferior group. Achebe rejects this pejorative term and uses the term ‘nation’: “I like it (nation), because, unlike the word tribe, which was given to me (by colonial authors), nation is not loaded or derogatory, and there is really no good reason to continue answering a derogatory name simply because somebody has given it to you” [1. P. 5]. Ehret, an American historian and linguist, asks many fundamental questions, such as: why, during the war between the Igbo nation and the Nigerian Military Government in 1967—1970, more than 10 million Igbos were called tribe in all newspaper articles on the war, while 200,000 Ruthenians (who resided in Slovakia, Poland and Belarus without their own territory) and less than 400,000 citizens of Malta were called nationalities: why Shaka, the famous 19th-century ruler, was called a king of the Zulu ‘tribe’ when he was actually the king of a centralized and military state, etc. Unfortunately, many African intellectuals use these terms, especially the term ‘tribe’, thus, calling their own people a ‘primitive’ community. ‘Primitive’ supposes backwardness and lack of skill and accomplishment; therefore, this term should not be used in the academic discourse.

Another key word is nation: it comes from Latin, in which *natio-* means something born [21. P. 4]. “The nation is a territorial community of nativity. One is born into a nation. The significance attributed to this biological fact of birth into the historically evolving, territorial structure of the cultural community of the nation is why the nation is one among a number of forms of kinship. It differs from other forms of kinship such as the family because of the centrality of territory. It differs from other territorial societies such as a tribe, city-state, or various ‘ethnic groups’ not merely by the greater extent of its territory, but also because of its relatively uniform culture that provides stability, that is, continuation over time” [22. P. 7]. According to Smith, one of the founders of the ethno-symbolic nationalism, nation is “a named human population occupying a historic territory or homeland and sharing common myth, and memories; a mass, public culture; a single economy; and common rights and duties for all members” [48. P. 20]. Wiebe believes that “nationalism is the desire among people who believe they share a common ancestry and a common destiny to live under their own government on land sacred to their history” [53. P. 5].

Thus, Oromo is one of the oldest nations in the world with its own territory and with the common origin based on their genealogy: “Groups in space are related to com-

mon ancestors and their present distribution explained as the result of the movement of brothers away from each other” [35. P. 25]. The Oromo nation, with the same mother tongue and similar worldview, express their identity by three pillars of *Orommumaa* (Oromoness) — Oromo-nation, *Afaan Oromoo* — Oromo language, and *Oromia* — their ancestral territory. The *Qubee* generation (the current generation educated in the Oromo language using Oromo alphabet *Qubee*) use slogans like “Oromia belongs to Oromians, like man without skeleton a nation without its own territory is unthinkable” and “We want to govern ourselves (we want our independent state)”, which brings us to the idea of nationalism as “an ideological movement for the attainment and maintenance of autonomy, unity, and identity on behalf of a population deemed by some of its members to constitute an actual or potential nation” [48. P. 20]; “a doctrine and a movement designed to promote and to safeguard the existence of a nation” [47. P. 3]. According to Masaryk, “a nation which does not struggle for its independent state is not a nation” [41. P. 23]. When you have an independent state, you have freedom to develop all aspects of your national life.

Collective memory is the basis of every national identity. According to Renan, the tragic heritage can be more effective than a triumph: “Suffering in common unifies more than joy does, where national memories are concerned, griefs are more value than triumph, for they impose duties, and require a common effort” [37. P. 50]. These words are no more applicable to the Oromo and other nations that were conquered at the late 19th century by the Abyssinian army led by Menelik II [7. P. 72; 45. P. 73—74], the cruellest invader in the African colonial history. The Horn of Africa had the same fate due to the lack of modern firearms. The violent conflict between the Abyssinian warlords and the Oromo is one of the longest wars in history. At the third phase of their expansion, the Abyssinians refused to recognise their colonization of independent nations on the south of the expanding empire.

Colonialism is domination which implies the subjugation of one people to another. The term comes from Latin *colonus* that means farmer, which reminds that colonialism usually implies the transfer of population to new territories, where people live as permanent settlers as long as they ensure political allegiance to the country of origin. History shows that African, Asian, European and indigenous American civilizations were traditionally of a colonial character, i.e. the strong state declared wars against weak states, defeated and occupied them and settled one’s people on the new occupied territory to rule it. After the occupation of Oromia, Menelik II settled the Abyssinians building military bases that gradually became cities [7. P. 45]. According to the statistical data, the Abyssinian population of several important Oromo localities were: in Ticho — 86%, Goba — 85%, Assala — 80%, and Asebe Teferi — 73%.

The Oromo identify three periods in their history: (1) from the ancient times to the late 19th century — they originated and developed their religion [5; 7; 32; 34] with the northeast African peoples as the first monotheism in the world [12. P. 66; 46]. Freud named three African cultural contributions to the Jewish people — monotheism, circumcision, and a system of writing [19. P. 98]. Circumcision, which Africa contributed to the Jewish culture, originally belonged to Egyptian and Cushitic peoples. There are many other traditions the Jewish people took from northeast African people, for instance,

genealogical trees — the main basis of the Oromo identities (each Oromo can count one's ancestral background to twelve generations), which reminds of the Matthew's book in the New Testament.

Language, according to the theory of national identity, makes 'we' (speakers of the same language) and 'others'. "The first original, and truly natural boundaries of states are beyond doubt their internal boundaries. Those who speak the same language are joined to each other by multitude of invisible bonds by nature herself long before any human art begins; they understand each other and have the power of continuing to make themselves understood more and more clearly; they belong together and are by nature one and inseparable whole" [17. P. 223]. President Nelson Mandela, in his speech after 27 years of imprisonment under the apartheid racist government, commented on the importance of mother tongue: "If you speak in a language they understand, you speak to their head. If you speak in their own language, you speak to their heart" [9. P. 1]. Thus, language is a founding pillar of national identity that unites the first generation of its speakers with all other groups including contemporary and future generations; language keeps all memories of the nation and allows the national culture make people think similarly serving as a "collective programming of the mind" [10. P. 71].

According to Smith, humiliation occurs when people are subjected to the outrageous forced displacement, or exclusion, or both, from the position they rightfully consider their own; and this process is perceived by those who suffer it as a painful and destructive attack on their identity and interests that they cannot prevent or ignore [49. P. 21]. There are three types of humiliation: (1) conquest humiliation — when a person, group, institution or society accustomed to a high degree of relative autonomy is overwhelmed by another person, group, institution or society and forced into subordination (military invasion, feudal vassals, captives turned into slaves, when new recruits into the armed services or police are put through humiliating ritualized practices, etc.); (2) relegation humiliation — when an individual, group, institution or society is forced into a lower position in the existing hierarchy against their will and in a way that contradicts their own perception of their social identity and interests (for instance, at end of World War II the West European superpowers relegated their position and had "been forced to accept the global lordship of the United States" [49. P. 41]; (3) exclusion humiliation — when people are forcefully excluded or ejected from membership within specific groups, hierarchies or networks, to which they believed they had the right to belong (excommunication of heretics by the church, ejection of religious and ethnic minorities from specific territories, etc.). I would add the fourth type — reinforcement humiliation: when those who were humiliated are reminded of their degraded status in the eyes of others (by stereotypical terms).

There are three potential responses to humiliation [49. P. 42]: (1) escape from a humiliating situation (the reborn victim can succeed in establishing a protected place of his own); (2) acceptance of humiliating acts within the relationship while trying to interpret them as non-humiliating; (3) rejection of the humiliating act, person, group, institution or society in the form of passive or active resistance, search for satisfying revenge, or both — to limit the destruction of humiliation and to act in an autonomous and effective way in pursuit of one's objectives.

National memory of the Oromo as a sovereign nation

Linguistic evidence shows that not only the Oromo but also Cushitic and Omotic peoples and all peoples of the Afro-Asiatic language family originated in the heart of the Horn of Africa [11. P. 172], and that the Semitic peoples of Abyssinia migrated from Yemen to this part of Africa. The first stop of these immigrant traders was the African seaport, Adulis, on the south of contemporary Mitsiwa — the land of the Saho of Eastern Cushitic, who still live in region today. The first Yemeni immigrants were the Saho and the Beja of northern Cushitic peoples: “Some of these migrants reached the southern Beja land, where they were assimilated into the local stock, although they imposed elements of their Semitic tongue, which came to be known as Tigre” [24. P. 13].

Ethiopia is a country of Cushite, the Semitic speaking people, and the majority of them are the Beja and Agaw [23. P. 101]. The second colonial phase was the expansion into the Agaw land, they were forced to pay tributes to the Aksumite kingdom but refused and fought to regain independence: “Aksum became the victim of its former tributaries, above all from the Cushitic speaking Agaw kingdom of Damot, which overrun and sacked what remained of the capital city in the 10th century” [44. P. 116]. After destroying their oppressors, the Agaw continued to rebuild their own kingdom using their mother tongue as the official state language, and expanded Christianity to the south and west. But the immigrants, using the church as their ideological weapon, reorganized in the 13th century. The immigrants were headed by the Amhara warlord Yekunno Amlak who overthrew the Zagwe dynasty led by Yitbarek: “the emperor was consistently defeated, finally falling in 1270 in the parish church in Gayint, murdered in front of the altar by Yekuno Amlak, who thereupon proclaimed himself emperor” [40. P. 16].

If we divide the Abyssinian expansion into three phases, the first was their gradual expansion to the territory of the Northern Cushitic Beja and the Eastern Cushitic Saho, and gradually to northern part of the Afar land. In the second phase, the Abyssinians first occupied Agaw land (*Agaw midir*), the Agaw threw the Abyssinian from their land and destroyed Abyssinian kingdom of Aksum but later the Abyssinian returned. The third phase of the Abyssinian expansion to the south was in the Oromo land. After the new Amhara kingdom was established on Agaw land by Yekuno Amlak, the Amhara army was not able to conquer the Oromo nation, so they made alliances. A year after Widim Asferre became king (1299—1314), there were two peoples fighting against the expanding Amhara kingdom: the Muslims (Wallo Oromo and Yifat people) and the Oromo. “During the second year of his reign, when the Galla (Oromo) on one hand and the Muslims on the other continued to rise up and wreaked havoc on them, the king, officials, and the clergy came together and counselled in unity to make peace with Muslims of Yifat (Ifat) and Wello (Wallo) in order to combat only the Galla” [23. P. 187; 27. P. 79].

In the next two centuries, the majority of the Oromo were pushed to the south while some remained under the new domination. Those who refused to accept the Abyssinian conquest moved to the south and, after restructuring their Gadaa system, started to push back the new invaders — the first Oromo anti-colonial war against occupiers of their

ancestral land started in 1522. This war (1522—1602) was led by Oromo Gadaa leaders, namely Gadaa Melba (1522—1530), Mudana Gadaa (1530—1538), Kilole Gadaa (1538—1546), Bifole Gadaa (1546—1554), Michelle Gadaa (1554—1562), Harmufa Gadaa (1562—1570), Robale Gadaa (1570—1578) Birmaji Gadaa (1578—1586) Mullata Gadaa (1586—1594), and Dulo Gadaa (1594—1602) [25. P. 22—27]. It was the longest war in the African pre-colonial era. The Oromo pushed the Abyssinians back to where they came from, and this is a part of the Oromo national memory of heroism.

At the end of the 19th century, the occupation of Oromia and other neighboring nations became a part of the colonization of Africa by West European states. King Menelik II participated in this colonization and negotiated with European leaders to divide the Horn of Africa between himself and others. For example, when he wanted to conquer Harar, he proposed to the Italian King Umberto to occupy Zeila and Barbara [42. P. 56—57]. The Horn of Africa was colonized by Abyssinia like other African nations who were the victims of West European states. But what makes the Abyssinia colonialism exceptional is its brutality — half of the Oromo population was destroyed [6. P. 12]. Independent states to the south of Oromia suffered the most after the Oromo were defeated: “Before 1897 the population of Kaffa... was estimated at about 1 million and at the present is about 800 thousand” [54. P. 15].

One of the official reasons of West European colonization of Africa was to destroy slavery, but the Abyssinians brought slavery to the Oromo land: the Oromo were enslaved and sold as goods in order to depopulate Oromia and to resettle Abyssinians here. “Uncultivated ground gives just as fine a harvest as that which has been sown. Beehives hang from all the high trees near settlements. The honey from this area is celebrated for its strength. The general impression produced by this region is the most delightful: if it is possible to apply the phrase ‘flowing milk and honey’ to any country, then truly this is a country” [6. P. 12]. “Galla lands together with their population belong to the emperor by right of conquest. All Galla are considered obliged to pay rent, and at the present time the same process is beginning which took place in Russia at the time of Boris Godunov — the process of turning people into serfs” [6. P. 84].

Menelik II issued a proclamation that was disseminated by a town crier in the Addis Ababa market on August 20, 1903: “Regarding the Galla slave question. Before now I wrote letters to all districts; proclaimed proclamation and excommunicated; but you still persist in stealing Gallas, and selling them for slaves. But hereafter, whoever I shall find selling Gallas, I shall not only punish him with his property, but I shall also give him a bodily punishment” [45. P. 106]. In August 1907, Menelik issued another law that prohibited to steal and trade human beings: “Whoever is caught in the towns or in the countryside stealing and trading in human beings shall himself be given as a slave to the person who catches him and brings him to me” [45. P. 106]. However, Emperor Menelik II was known as ‘the greatest slave entrepreneur’ who had 70,000 slaves in the early 20th century, and his generals, soldiers and priests were slave owners who depopulated many areas of the empire [2. P. 543—556]. The slave trade and slavery were a part of the Abyssinian political system until the empire was occupied in 1936 by fascist Italy and slavery was outlawed.

After the First World War, the League of Nations was established in 1920 to provide a forum for resolving international disputes. Abyssinia became a member of this organization in 1923. In 1935, the League of Nations sent its delegation on a mission to Abyssinia. The delegation reported of the miseries of the colonized people under the Abyssinian rule. The League of Nations legally recognized that Abyssinia conquered independent political communities, and that the conquered people and their territory were registered and given to Abyssinian families without any payment. “The inhabitants of the conquered country were registered in families by the Abyssinian chiefs, and to every Abyssinian family settled in the country there is assigned one or more families of the conquered as *gabbar*. The *gabbar* family is obliged to support the Abyssinian family, it gives that family its own lands, builds and maintains the hut in which it lives, cultivates the fields, grazes the cattle, and carries out every kind of work and performs all possible services for the Abyssinian family. All this is done without remuneration, merely in the token of perpetual servitude resulting from defeat sustained 30 years ago” [7. P. 507].

The 1960s were a politically dynamic period in the administrative history of the Ethiopian Empire: the military coup in 1960 headed by Mengistu and Gername Neway was not successful because of the United States Embassy’s interference and support of the anti-coup group. But the question brothers Neway raised were fundamental for the empire, such as the land tenure system, lack of education and health care.

Haile Selassie sent Gername to Walaita province as a governor. In that province people were landless and poor but there was a plenty of unused land. Gername distributed uncultivated land among the poor. The Emperor ordered Gername to come to his royal office and “asked why he had interfered with the land tenure-systems. Because I am the Governor, Gername replied, and the people had nothing to eat because they had no land” [21. P. 372]. Haile Selassie got angry and sent him to Jijjiga province with no problem of land tenure, because all the people there were pastoralists. However, Gername strived to improve the living standards of the people by solving the problem of water shortage and by building hospitals, and schools. When his plans were rejected by the ministers, Gername “decided to overthrow not just an Emperor but the whole system of the Ethiopian government” [21. P. 372]. When the first coup failed, a group of officers prepared another one with the manifesto that exposed the key problems of the empire, such as cultural, religious and linguistic oppression. It was not possible to reform a colonial state, only to dismantle it and build new states on the ashes of the colonial empire. The Oromo took that path to rebuilt an independent Oromia.

After the Oromo land was occupied by the Abyssinians at the end of epy 19th century, they reorganized and revolted in many parts of Oromia. The Unified Pan-Oromo National Liberation Movement emerged from the Bale Oromo armed struggle (1963—1970) and the Macha Tulama Association (1963—1967). The statement of General Waaqo Guutu, one of the founders of the Oromo National Movement, and the leader of the Bale Oromo armed struggle against Abyssinian colonialism, declares a call for the Oromo to free themselves from the humiliation of the Abyssinian rule: “When the Amhara occupied our country with the help of European imperialists in 1885—1891, many of our people were massacred. Then the survivors were allotted like slaves to settlers who also partitioned our lands among themselves... Remember that they distorted our historical legacy and violated our dignity by calling us ‘filthy Galla’. Do you realize

how many times you were denied justices in their courts? ...It is today that you can free yourself from the shackles of oppression... rise up and arm yourself to destroy the oppressive rule of Haile Selassie” [31. P. 159]. General Waaqo recalls Oromia as an independent country, points to the Oromo long independent history and how the occupiers reduced the Oromo to inhuman creatures, speaks of all kinds of colonial humiliation of the Oromo as a nation and calls the Oromo to live in a renewed and independent Oromia.

Ali Birra, a talented Oromo resistance singer, reminds his people of their long, heroic historic period of independence under the indigenous Gadaa democracy and calls to renew the period of their heroism in his songs: “Where is the path to Abbaa Gadaa’s abode? / Go and reinforce his temple/ His history I shall sit and record / Even if a sceptre breaks / That of Abba Gadaa won’t break / Unless we deliberately ignore / No one is poor of history’s sake”. Ali Birra calls his people to renovate their cultural heritage, their independent Gadaa democratic system, to return to their pre-colonial period and write their own history.

Macca and Tuulama (Macha Tulama) self-help Association (1963—1967), after struggles with imperial officials, finally was recognized by the government in 1963 as a non-governmental organization. It aims at solving acute social problems; its headquarters is in Finfinnee (Addis Ababa) and expands according to the state administration structure to the districts in the Oromo land. According to founding fathers of the Association, the government did not allow them to use the name of Oromo, and only after the elimination of the monarchy the military government was forced to recognize it officially in the September Revolution of 1974. Macca-Tuulama mobilized millions of the Oromo from all strata and regions of the Oromo land, thus, turning into a pan-Oromo national movement [26. P. 206], contributing to the development of the Oromo National Liberation Movement and confronting the Ethiopian colonial regime.

The history of the Ethiopian government shows its inability to reform and transform due to its colonial nature. In the national struggle for independency, the interaction of individual Oromos, who developed their national identity and rejected colonialism, played a great role. First, the question was about meaning of being an Ethiopian: the poem of Obbo Ibsaa Guutama reveals two identities — the identity of many students, who did not identify themselves with the official identity of Amhara culture — ‘one people, one language and one country’. The Oromo students were the core group of the Ethiopian students’ movement with the slogan ‘Land to the Tiller!’ and national question. The slogan was introduced by two Oromo leaders — Obbo Tesema Negrei and Obbo Baro Tumsa. “Land to the Tiller!” became the motto of the Ethiopian Students Movement for nine years (1965—1974), until the end of the Haile Selassie regime.

The Oromo, especially members of the Macca-Tuulama Association from the Ethiopian Army and University Students, played a great role in bringing down the Haile Selassie’s regime. The main players to bring an end to this regime in the army were Takka Tulu, Demise Dheeressa, Demise Shifaraw and Debelaa Dhinsa, who were elected by their divisions as members of the Dergue (Provisional Military Administrative Council). Oromo students in the leadership of Haile Selassie I University Association, led by its Secretary General, Abooma Mitiku, and congress members, Ayale Zawuge, Yohannes Banti, Masale Dhaaba and Admasu Taasawu, secretly organized activists

of the Oromo students and played an important role in solving the national question and changing the land tenure system, thus, presenting the development of the Oromo National Movement from the Macca-Tuulama and Bale Oromo armed struggles through the new generation of the Oromo students to the Oromo Liberation Front.

The idea of independent Oromia came from these two movements, which turned into the Oromo Liberation Front with a clear political program in 1973 — “A nation as a communion of memories and hopes”. The Oromo defined their future or common national destiny in their political road map. The Oromo Liberation declared that Oromia became colonial territory after it was conquered by the Abyssinian colonial power and lost its sovereignty (humiliation), and its goal was to overthrow the colonial rule and to build an independent Oromia — the People’s Democratic Republic of Oromia. The Oromo armed struggle led by the Oromo Liberation Army started in Eastern Oromia, where the General Tadesse Biru was imprisoned in Galamsso, and was headed by Elemoo Qilxuu (1936—1974).

In the Ethiopian Revolution, which can be called Oromo Anti-Colonial Revolution, “a major effect... was to take land away from Amhara and distribute it to Galla (Oromo), and for a time the revolution was suspected of being a Galla plot” [30. P. 8]. The struggle was to take back the land that the colonizers illegitimately took from owners and distributed among settlers. The Oromo soldiers were supported by many lower ranking Galla non-commissioned officers from the south, where tenancy and exploitation were the key issues. General Tadesse Biru and Colonel Hailu Ragaasa started distributing land in rural areas, and under the powerful pressure from the Oromo students, teachers and armed forces the new military government made radical changes in the land tenure system.

The rural land reform started on March 4, 1975. According to the decree, the government nationalized all rural land, abolished tenancy and put peasants in charge of the whole scheme (every farming family was to get a plot of land no larger than ten hectares). This Rural Land Decree ended the Naftanya system and destroyed one of the pillars of the Abyssinian domination. However, the new Abyssinian military government refused to distribute the land among the peasants, which meant that the Abyssinian landlordism ended but the Abyssinian state became the only land owner in Ethiopia: “individual Amhara landlordism was replaced by collective Amhara landlordism. The state which is the collective property of Amhara colonialists, is the landlord and our peasants are its tenants” [31. P. 120]. The Ethiopian Revolution, which started with a slogan “Ethiopia without any blood” turned into the Red Terror after Colonel Mengistu Haile Mariam became the chairman of the military government of Ethiopia on February 3, 1977. The name “Red Terror” was officially used by the government to eliminate the opposition groups and to terrify the population, and it was one of the most systematic uses of mass murder by the state ever witnessed by Africa: at least 10,000 were killed in the Red Terror in Addis Ababa (the political center of the empire), with many others tortured and imprisoned in Adama, Dire Dawa, Jima and other cities and towns. Many peasants were shot in mass meetings, burned alive in their homes, invited to local administrations in many parts of Oromia only to be massacred [42. P. 95; 52. P. 212—213]. Apartheid had already become the past history, but the Abyssinian colonial system was butchering the people of colonized territory under another government system until 2016. The Abyssinian government changed many times after Oromia was colonized, but

the Abyssinian political culture was always the same: horrendous, cruel, inhuman activities against the Oromo constitute the memories of the Oromo from Menelik II to Mengistu Haile Mariam (1879—1991).

The colonial relationship between the Abyssinia-Ethiopian state and the Oromo nation was horrifying. Oromo were killed and tortured, their families were terrorised by the forced disappearance of relatives, exposed to famine and avoidable diseases like cholera and tuberculosis, suffered imprisonment in inhuman conditions, castration and death poisoning of prisoners. The Tigray Liberation Front government used Malthusianism to reduce the Oromo population by “premature death: disease, starvation and war” [39. P. 61].

The Oromo resistance against the Tigray Liberation Front occupation of Oromia started when they crossed the Abay river and put their feet on the Oromo land, particularly in the Ambo city, which remembers the strongest fight back his militia had faced in their occupation. The Oromo nation has a clear idea for regaining their independence. If the Tigray Liberation Front government respected its own Constitution Article 39.1 which states that “every nation, nationality and people in Ethiopia has an unconditional right to self-determination, including the right to secession”, there would be no suffering of the Oromo people. The turning point of the Oromo struggle for independency was 2015 when it turned into a peaceful mass movement in all parts of the Oromo land — 220 cities and towns. In these mass demonstrations, the students made themselves a stepladder to reach the largest billboard with the largest photograph of Meles Zenawi. The students pulled down the photograph, cut it into pieces and covered the billboard with the Oromo Liberation Front flag, which for millions of Oromo became the national flag of Oromia. The Oromo are on the final stage of the struggle for their national independence on their ancestral land.

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Национальная память народности оромо*

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Автор определяет нацию как территориальное сообщество, исконно проживающее в конкретном регионе, и придает особое значение факту рождения в исторически развивающейся территориальной структуре данного культурного сообщества, что позволяет рассматривать нацию как особую форму родства. Нация отличается от иных форм территориальных сообществ (племени, города-полиса и различных «этнических групп») не только большими размерами территории, но и относительной единой культурой, обеспечивающей нации устойчивость во времени [22. Р. 7]. Сопоставительные историко-лингвистические исследования показывают, что «с точки зрения истории человечества неопровержимо, что некоторые самые ранние и великие достижения человечества были обретены в цивилизациях, которые основывали и возглавляли афро-азиатские народы» [28. Р. 74]. Народность оромо — одна из древнейших в мире с собственной территорией (Оромией), языком (афаан оромо) и политической культурой (демократия гадаа), и в течение длительного времени она стремилась избавиться от абиссинского колониального правления. Национальная память оромо включает в себя воспоминания о колониальной зависимости и национальном героизме, о долгой войне против абиссинских военачальников и абиссинского вторжения на земли народности оромо в XIX веке благодаря новому вооружению, которое африканские колонизаторы получали от западно-европейских колониальных держав и использовали не только для захвата земель, но и уничтожения народности оромо, которая считает абиссинское колониальное правление периодом самого страшного унижения в своей национальной истории. Статья состоит из двух частей: в первой части автор работает с теоретической интерпретацией понятий «нация», «национализм», «унижение» и ряда уничижительных колониальных понятий, которые до сих пор используются в литературе (как «племя» и «этническая группа»). Во второй части автор реконструирует национальную социально-политическую память оромо как самостоятельной нации в период со средневековья до последней четверти XIX века; рассматривает «вопрос оромо» в контексте глобальной истории колониализма, захвата территории оромо и превращения их в рабов, истории унижительной колониальной зависимости от абиссинского деспотизма; характеризует два последних абиссинских политических режима и Национальное движение оромо за независимость, достоинство и мир, сыгравшее важную роль в стабилизации ситуации на территории Африканского рога.

Ключевые слова: память; нация; народность оромо; национальная память; идентичность; колониализм

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