



Oromo Studies Association

Oromo Studies Association

OSA Newsletter

May, 2008

A Message from the President

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Dear OSA family,

Greetings! For those of us who live in the Northern Hemisphere, especially in the temperate zone, the winter has subsided, giving way to spring. The snow-covered peaks and valleys have now turned to lush greenery. It is refreshing and rejuvenating.

Our newsletter was not published last month (April) and this (May) issue attempts to provide you with events and developments since March. I will briefly highlight some of the pertinent pieces of information that probably is older time-wise, but is worth knowing just to put thoughts in perspective.

As you know, our mid-year conference took place on March 22nd. Given the time of the year (in the middle of the academic year, for most of us in higher education) and the climatic factors in consideration (winter travel), the attendance

was encouraging. A good many of our members and other guests took advantage by participating in the conference. The program and the panel were put together by Bonnie Holcomb, OSA Board of Directors Chair, and Ezekiel Gebissa, Journal of Oromo Studies (JOS) Editor. Abebe Adugna, OSA President-Elect, partnered with both Bonnie and Ezekiel in bringing the event to fruition. Dr. Arega Negero of Howard University was instrumental in securing the logistical needs at no cost to OSA and I am grateful for his contribution.

I must say that the mid-year workshop panelists articulated succinctly their insights and understanding about peace in the Oromo context. Because of the overwhelmingly positive feedback received about the workshop, we have requested the panelists to once again present on the topic at the upcoming OSA Annual Conference. The panelists are, therefore, in the process of revising and fine-tuning their proposal which will be included in the next issue of our newsletter.

As for the upcoming annual conference, I would like to share with you that the planning and preparation for the event is full swing. To this end, OSA has assembled a team of local volunteers willing to assist in the planning. I am

grateful to Bula Atomsa, Arfasse Gemed, Regassa Oljirra, and Amaano Dubee for their support and commitment to help out with the planning.

In addition, several OSA members – new and returning – have positively responded to our “Call for Papers”. What is even more encouraging is the geographic diversity of the presenters along with the multidisciplinary nature of the topics submitted for presentation. I also have received requests from certain individuals for an extension of the deadline for submitting proposals. In light of the request, the Executive Committee is delighted to announce that it will consider proposals submitted by May 31, 2008.

Among the abstracts received so far for this year’s conference, are topics that are uniquely crafted and utilize technology in shedding light on the people and cultures of the Oromo. For instance, we have a presenter from Australia

who spent a considerable amount of time traveling in Oromia and is currently producing a documentary. This presentation, I think, adds to the quality of the papers presented at this year’s conference and the abstract will appear in the next issue of our newsletter.

In order to whet your appetites and give you a snapshot of what to expect at the conference, I have included the presenters and abstracts of their presentations below.

I hope you will find these topics to be of interest to you personally and professionally. I look forward to seeing you in Minneapolis for the conference on August 1st and 2nd.

Best regards,

Melaku Mekonnen, Ph.D.
OSA President

The State of OSA Finance

As you may very well know, major public events such as our annual conference have tremendous budgetary implications. A few of the costs associated with such events are logistics (auditorium and breakout rooms), travel expenses for invited guests, printing and publications, and other miscellaneous expenses. I would like to provide you the specifics so that you are aware of where we end up spending membership fees. Among the big ticket items, the rental fees for use of meeting rooms, auditorium and audiovisual equipment for the two-day conference is not less than \$3,000. In addition, we have to print program brochures and conference proceedings. Based on past practices, I would estimate for this type of

expense this time as well to be around \$3,000. Probably the largest category of expense and yet mission-critical to OSA is the expense associated with the printing and distribution of the Journal of Oromo Studies (JOS). Producing a single issue of JOS costs us close to \$4,000. Over the last two years, OSA has maintained the publication of two issues per year - thanks to our editor, Dr. Ezekiel Gebissa. This year, we have been lucky to gain the support of Oliqaa Foundation, who donated \$5,000 that would partially defray the cost of JOS publication. The purpose of stating the above is to make you aware of the financial challenges facing our association and ask for your generous support. Our success in general and the quality of our

program in particular depends on the availability of resources and your contribution will make a significant difference. Donations to this effect can be sent to OSA Treasurer Dunne Banti and you may notify her by e-mail at tsilgaa@hotmail.com.

I thank you for your generosity and I hope you will open your wallets to help OSA financially.

2008 Conference Presenters and Presentation Topics

OSA is pleased to announce that the following members have submitted proposals to present papers at the annual conference on August 2nd and 3rd. I would like to state that the order of listing of the presenters and abstract below is random and does not imply any ranking.

Presenter: Musa Guro Hawasi
From: Oromiya, Karrayyu District

The Impact of Land Privatization on the Pastoral Life of the Karrayyu Oromo

Abstact: Karrayyus are Oromo pastoralists who live in the upper awash valley of the Fantaallee district. Their life is solely based on animal husbandry. Rare among the Oromo, they are the living embodiment of the rich cultural legacy of the Oromo where the indigenous Gada democratic system is still practiced. Even though the Karrayyus share much in common with the rest of the Oromo culture, they have some peculiarities, including the marriage of twins, and the ritual of Dhibayyuu for men and the ritual of Siiqee for women.

Since the time of Abyssinian colonization, almost every aspect of the traditional and cultural life of the Karrayyu Oromos has faced drastic alteration. Climate change has combined with man-made factors to significantly reduce pastoral land availability and pose a serious threat to their survival as a community. Among man-made, policy factors that have had serious consequences for the life of the Karrayyus are land eviction for sugar plantation, and land privatization for agricultural purposes. The scarcity of grazing land and water resources has in turn fueled conflicts with the neighboring Afar and Argoba communities.

This paper examines the impact of land privatization and plantation on the cultural and social life of the Karrayyus. It examines the evolution of land policies in historical perspective, and how the latter have impacted pastoral land availability—and hence the core of community survival. It also highlights remedial policies that may help alleviate the impending social and cultural crisis, and the very survival of this community.

Garoma B. Wakessa and Tesfaye Deressa
Human Rights League of the Horn and York University (Toronto)

Human Rights and Development in Oromia

Abstract

Two mysteriously twinned occurrences – human rights violations and socio-economic crises are abundantly evidenced in most developing countries like Ethiopia. The two usually co-exist or go hand in hand. But, why?

There has been a classic belief that underdevelopment or poverty persists due to local causes. Those who hold such beliefs claim that these local causes include factors such as poor climate, weak social and cultural institutions, diligence and performance differences among the peoples of developing countries in particular, and others. But, only very few notice and mention that human rights violations are the major cause of persistent underdevelopment; despite a close cause-effect interconnection that exists between the two. This paper will attempt to explore how human rights violations impact on human virtues and visions. It will also explore the direct and indirect influences of human rights violations on human potentials and prospects to produce and grow. It will attempt to bring to light how millions of people in Ethiopia have been trapped in poverty simply because of the never-ending human rights violations inflicted upon them by irresponsible rulers. It will also attempt to shed light on how human rights violations are systematically perpetrated against innocent people; and make some remedial recommendations.

Debissa Arero Godana
Addis Ababa University, Social Sciences College

Oromo Culture and Language

Abstract

Do the Oromo possess a representative sample culture today? Culture and religion are the two faces of the same coin, with religion occupying the sovereign's side, and thereby influencing and molding culture. Therefore, change in one's religion results in changes in one's cultural aspects like name, procedures and practices of marriage, funerals, inheritance, divorce, etc. Boorana have preserved their ancient Religion and Culture so far. Culture also includes games, sports, lyrics, calendar, language, etc. My current estimation of Oromo People's religious divisions- 65% Muslims, 30% Christian, 5% Waaqefatu.

Language is one of the indicators of the existence of an ethnic entity. Therefore, we are talking about the existence of a particular entity known as the "Oromo", when we talk about the Oromo Language. Languages are the living monuments and roving ambassadors for such ethnic entities. Languages are

born, then grow, mature and die, Afan Oromo is matured and rich, having five dialects but without a writing dialect or modern grammatical guides which it requires to become a competitive language.

Debissa Arero Godana
College of Social Sciences

Oromo Political Movements: Challenges and opportunities for unity

Abstract

Oromo Rases ruled from Gonder, is, 1784-1853. At the time, the oromo people were living freely in the huge area stretching from the Tana River valley in the present day Kenya to South up to the Red Sea coast to the North, and from the Indian Ocean to the East up to the Sudan Boarder to the West. Those Rases could have easily amalgamated them in to the one United strong Nation then. But they failed to do so and the opportunity was last.

After the death of Imp ire Menelik II in 1913 Empress Tayitu Lij Eyassu, Ras H/Giyorgis, King Mikhael ,etc... could have controlled the empire. when Empire H/selassie was deposed in 1974 the Oromo failed to Unite behind MEESON. OLF should have succeeded in 1994. During the last Ethio-Eritrean war the OPD failed exploit the situation. Were there popular based and supposed movement before 1991?

Zewdie Jotte Tulu
University of Bonn, Germany

Traditional Resource (Forest) Management Practices and the Challenges from Large Scale Investment Projects in Shaka Area.

Abstract:

The presentation attempts to highlight the impact of changes in socio-cultural and economic conditions and its immediate consequences on the traditional forest management practices. It clearly stipulates how forest management practice is closely linked with the life of the people of Sheka. It also bring to the attention of the people that changes in the land use practices mainly the expansion of large scale investment has a great impact on the livelihood of the local community and forest management practices. The study is based on the intensive field work conducted for one month.

For more than hundreds of years, local people have been lived harmoniously with their environment through their traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) that mainly enabled them to balance their interaction with natural forest and other resources. Forests, wetlands, rivers and waterfalls are natural resources that communities manage through their traditional ecological knowledge. The bases for the conservation of these resources is the religious belief that impose resource and habitat taboo through

the gudoo and dedoo belief system. Others administered through inherited customary rights and practices, Kobbo.

The weakening of the traditional social organization, the shift of cultural forests in to government forest, since October 2004, and attitudinal change among people towards selling fuel wood increased deforestation. However, the presentation gives special attention to how the expansion of unchecked investment (coupled with the diminished role of clan leaders) aggravated deforestation. Though sound investment is the base for employment generation and to boost the economy, the case of Chewaka Uto tea plantation is completely different. Problems associated with investment outweigh the employment opportunity and other benefits. Granting the natural forest for investment without the consent of the people forced many of them to shift their life from farmers to daily labourers. The investment activity also forced people and wild animals to leave their place (the area) in search for new environment. The growing population due to the in-migrant workers of the tea plantation and the expansion of social problems on the existing limited resources also increased illegal extraction of forest products. Deforestation for tea plantation in chewaka area has a profound influence not only on the upstream wetlands that serve as a source of Baro river but also on people living around the down stream and the overall ecosystem of the region.

Compensation of indigenous peoples' traditional lands and territories that incorporated in plantation areas with out their free and informed consent and ensuring legal right for the indigenous people over their customary forest lands are among measures that needs to be taken. It is also essential to design environmentally friendly alternative investment options and to incorporate communities' customary subsistence use of their forest in the future investment project to reduce deforestation. Expanding social services in the investment area, Supporting indigenous people to organize themselves to deal effectively with outside initiatives affecting their rights and livelihood also require due consideration. Promoting effective use of beliefs as a potential strategy for the conservation of forests and ensuring alternative energy sources and income generation mechanism to reduce deforestation for fuel wood consumption are also measures that have to be encouraged.

Habtamu Dugo title: Dr. Mr. Mrs.
Addis Ababa University

Oromo Diaspora, quest for freedom and democracy, and new media.

Abstract:

This paper examines the phenomenon of how the wide-spread Oromo Diasporic communities make use of the new media-specifically the Internet and its applications such as the World Wide Web and online discussion forums for political activism, for establishing and maintaining communication with people in Oromia and with one another around the globe in a wider national quest for democracy and self-determination. This problem is worth examining because of the increasing trends of Oromo diasporic formations as a result of being exiled because of political repressions and marginalization in their country

of origin. It is also important to discuss the role of new media as viable alternatives in the face of state restrictions/denials of press freedom and Oromo media ownership rights. This problem is also important as it is happening at a historical juncture where the public (audience) is criminalized and targeted for accessing information through opposition radio broadcasts from overseas. It is important to look at how, to some extent, new media is trying to bridge this gap by linking the Diaspora population with the mainstream population in the Horn of Africa. The paper found that not only are new media important as channels linking the globally spread Oromo population with the ones that have access to the Internet at home, but also the nature of the content produced in Diasporas and sent back home for causing democratic change is of immense importance. The content produced in diaporic new media forms are indicative of the relative freedom of expression and the existence of plural ideologies and views as opposed to the mainstream media run by the government of Ethiopia. The paper assumed that Oromo Diasporic communities use the mentioned new media for establishing and maintaining communications with people in their places of origin and settlement, and for political activism in a wider national quest for democracy and self-determination from an east African perspective. Based on the literature reviewed and data analyzed, the conclusions arrived at are consistent with the hypothesis although the conclusions seem to mainly holds true for an insignificant portion of the Oromo population who have basic computer skills and have access to technology and the Internet through offices and schools.

Getahun Benti
Southern Illinois University - Carbondale

“Majority” within Majority: The Demographics of Major Urban Areas in Oromia and Oromo-Minority Relations

Abstract:

The Oromo constitute the largest ethnic population in Ethiopia. But non-Oromo ethnic groups form the “majority” population in major urban areas of Oromia. Using archival and government documents, oral interviews and various primary and secondary sources, I propose to investigate the various dimensions of being a “majority” and the social, economic, and cultural interactions between the non-Oromo (“majority”) population and the Oromos living in the same urban areas. The paper also assesses how political factors weighed heavily in their relations and concludes with recommendations on how both groups can forge mechanisms for amicable relationships. References will be made, among others, to Jimma, Shashamane and Adama - towns with a significant “majority” population.

Key words:

“Majority” – refers to non-Oromo groups who constitute the largest ethnic population in some major towns in Oromia

Majority –refers to the vast Oromo population in the state of Oromia

Minority – refers to “Majority” as compared to Majority

Boserup and Agricultural/Economic Policy in an Oromo-Led Government

Abstract

In 1965 Ester Boserup challenged both the Malthusian paradigm of agricultural development as well as the neo-colonial/modernization development paradigms with the publication of her small book, "The Conditions of Agricultural Growth." In that book she argued that agricultural development—the intensification of agricultural production—was brought about as the result of population growth, and not the other way around as the Malthusians argued. She made this argument by looking at the transition of agriculture from the hunter/gatherer stage, through the long fallow slash and burn stage, and bush fallow, to increasingly intensified short fallow systems, showing that in each case, the shift was not the result of technological change—the technologies had often been known for centuries if not millennia, before they were adopted—but of an increase in population which both provided the necessity for the additional food production and the additional labor needed to implement the new technology. An increased population density provided both the means and the necessity for the changes we have seen in agricultural production systems. In contrast with the post-WWII modernizationists who saw native agricultural systems as primitive and static, Boserup argues that these systems were dynamic, responding to external and internal pressures.

An Oromo-led government will need to develop agricultural policies within a milieu in which 80 to 85 percent of a growing population is involved in agricultural production, most in remote areas with limited infrastructure. Development specialists often see conditions like these as impediments to growth that need to be overcome by reducing the number of farmers and shifting the population to urban areas to work in industrial and service settings, often despite the lack of these opportunities in urban areas. Boserup on the other hand argues that "communities with sustained population growth have a better chance to get into a process of genuine economic development than...communities with stagnant or declining population, provided of course, that the necessary agricultural investments are undertaken." Much of this investment is made in the form of direct human labor with a smaller portion coming from outside capital (essentialized human labor). The role of the government is to provide an atmosphere in which the population is willing to make that investment of human labor. Government, in close cooperation with the populace, must also make those capital investments in agricultural research and infrastructure improvement. As Boserup sees it, the intensification of agricultural production provides/requires employment of the growing population. As agricultural surpluses are produced, some of this labor will be released to other economic sectors providing goods and services needed by those remaining in agriculture. Key issues to keep track of in this development process include: 1) continued investment in agriculture, 2) keeping the focus on increasing the production of staple crops, 3) regulating the flow of labor from rural to urban areas, making sure there is not an underinvestment of human labor in agricultural areas, 4) monitoring food imports so they do not reduce the investment in local agricultural production, and 5) ameliorating the rural-urban social tension as standards of living initially increase more rapidly in urban areas than they do in rural areas.

Haile Hirpa
Department of Labor

All Oromos Must Have Permanent Last Names.

Abstract

Historically, Oromos used to have last names. For example, in rural areas of Oromia, people identify themselves as Warra Illuu, Warra Babboo, Warra Jibaati, Warra Giddaa, Warra Ammummaa Warra Solan...etc. These names started as family names and ended up being clan names. To develop and nourish the basic understanding of Oromummaa, and implant self pride and consciousness, Oromos have to adopt the global pattern of using permanent family last names.

Every thing is in the name. In the western society, respect for the family names helped them to carry their way of life with them for generations. Today, European settlers in USA truck back their roots because of their last names.

Before the introduction of Christianity and Islam, Oromos used to have Oromo names only. Religions have played a big role in changing Oromo names. Colonization has also played a great role in destroying Oromo names. Colonizers changed the names of colonized peoples to destroy their identity. People without Identity do not have self respect and self pride. This leads to the destruction of nationalism.

In Oromia, when two oromos from different part of the country meet, it takes few minutes to know each other and create trust relationships, if they have Oromo names. Today, Oromo nationalism is developing and young people are giving their children Oromo names regardless of their religious backgrounds and political affiliations. That is why we are seeing names Kulani, Iddoshe. Siddisee, Bekkaa, Siifan, Ana’ol, Keebekii, ...etc. This trend has to go beyond this situation and establish a permanent Oromo family last name.

Seifudein Adem
State University of New York at Binghamton

Republican Institutionalism versus Architectural Glory: Does Mazruiana Offer an Antidote to Ethiopianist Discourse?

Abstract:

“We have a more glorious past than other peoples”, so goes the Abyssinian narrative, which is sometimes employed in order to justify the political and economic subjugation of the majority of non-Abyssinians. These “other” peoples notably include the Oromos.

In their condescending attitude to the identity and history of the peoples of Africa, the Europeans, too, had used a similar approach in their colonialist narratives, aspects of which had been quite effectively challenged by the famed historian, Dr Ali A. Mazrui.

The paper examines the relevance of Dr. Mazrui's analytical framework for similarly unmasking, challenging and blocking the above forms of Abyssinian narrative particularly that which was directed at the Oromos of the Horn of Africa.

Steven W. Thomas
College of St. Benedict and St. John's University

The Oromo Renaissance within the Marketplace of World Literature

Abstract:

This presentation will analyze the current state of what several Oromo artists and scholars have called the "Oromo Renaissance," with a focus on Oromo literature written in diaspora and intended for consumption by a non-Oromo, world-wide audience. It will illustrate challenges of publishing in a world market with special attention to the unique challenges faced by Oromo writers. For instance, one of those challenges is the long history of "Ethiopia" as a symbol (not as a reality) in the European and American imaginations and in world literature. What I hope to contribute to the conversation among Oromo artists and scholars is my expertise as a professor of English and American literary history. The exigency for my argument is the necessity for the Oromo to gain a global audience and international allies to support their civil and human rights.

Name: Michael Mamo
Westminster College

Electoral Competition, Checks and Balances, and Economic Development: Growth Prospects in an Independent Oromia

Abstract:

Many studies have indicated that the economic performance of developing economies around the world is contingent on the presence of appropriate institutional factors that are compatible with economic growth. Institutional and governance structures affect the economic performance of countries in several ways. One such mechanism by which the institutional environment could hinder the growth of economies is referred to as the 'natural resource trap'. The idea of a natural resource trap suggests that a country could be lacking the requisite institutional and political structures that would enable it to propel its

economic growth by using its natural resource wealth. Natural resource wealth could bring about poor economic performance primarily due to its influence on the way political institutions operate.

Empirical findings suggest that there is a general worsening of governance in countries with abundant resource revenues. This effect is particularly strong in countries with limited or no democratic institutions. What is more significant is the finding that the decline in governance quality occurs even in countries that have already introduced democratic institutions into their electoral systems. In other words, the management of a country's resource wealth could potentially cause an otherwise healthy democracy to breakdown and thereby inhibit the growth prospects of a resource-rich economy.

This paper argues that the structure of Oromo democracy creates a unique environment that would weaken the virulence of the natural resource trap inherent in other forms of governance. Turning resource abundance to economic progress requires democratic institutions that strongly emphasize political restraints as well as electoral competition. Without the necessary restraints in place, countries that have introduced democratic governance primarily through electoral competition have failed to capitalize on their resource abundance. By contrast, this paper stresses that, fundamental elements of Oromo democracy are characterized by a coherent balance between electoral competition on the one hand and an embedded system of checks and balances on the other. When resource abundance is likely to produce autocracies in other forms of democracies, the institutional restraints imposed on office holders in Oromo democracy and their accountability to the public serve as crucial forces of stability that ensure positive growth outcomes and prevent the emergence of autocracies in an independent Oromia.

Garoma B. Wakessa and Tesfaye Deressa
Human Rights League of the Horn and York University (Toronto)

Topic: Human Rights and Development in Oromia

Abstract:

Two mysteriously twinned occurrences – human rights violations and socio-economic crises are abundantly evidenced in most developing countries like Ethiopia. The two usually co-exist or go hand in hand. But, why?

There has been a classic belief that underdevelopment or poverty persists due to local causes. Those who hold such beliefs claim that these local causes include factors such as poor climate, weak social and cultural institutions, diligence and performance differences among the peoples of developing countries in particular, and others. But, only very few notice and mention that human rights violations are the major cause of persistent underdevelopment; despite a close cause-effect interconnection that exists between the two. This paper will attempt to explore how human rights violations impact on human virtues and visions. It will also explore the direct and indirect influences of human rights violations on human potentials and prospects to produce and grow. It will attempt to bring to light how millions of people in Ethiopia have been trapped in poverty simply because of the never-ending human rights

violations inflicted upon them by irresponsible rulers. It will also attempt to shed light on how human rights violations are systematically perpetrated against innocent people; and make some remedial recommendations.

Rundassa Eshete
Business owner

The Oromo Identity, the story of spin, scandal and the selling Oromo cause

Abstract:

The Oromo Identity, the story of spin, scandal and the selling of Oromo cause Delves into the snarled causes and devastating consequences resulted by the constant stand shifting done by Oromo political leadership. Furthermore, This paper will explore Oromians seemingly chronic weakness and their inability to bring “the enemy” and their “major challenges” into focus by analyzing how the ideological, cultural and emotional connections they have with borrowed identities that have warped their understanding of, and respond to the Abyssinian's dived and conquer tactics.

This paper also will analyze how a shift of attention from real task to scandal rooted in Oromians lack of respect of their own identity by being caught up in the middle of supper power nation’s global domination and influence that mislead the theoretical prospective and meaning of globalization and self determination.

To understand the cascading misconception and mistakes that many Oromians make regarding the concept of nation building or globalization, it is very important to look into those reasons that casted doubts in the minds of the Oromians and approach them from different angles.

Although they obviously played an important role in motivating many Oromians, localist identities and religious sentiments were not the only forces that put the Oromians into the an extreme web of complex, instability and contradictory political impulses.

One theme that constantly resurfaces, nevertheless, is an imagined power craving that inflicted injuries among the Oromians. Emphasizing Oromians lack of consciousness and the issue of globalization, what ever it reveals, also terminates inquiry prematurely by encouraging us to ignore our lack of appreciation to our belief system and Oromo ideology which is founded in the idea of pursuit of Walabummaa and Nagaa.

According to Oromo belief and the Gadaa system, the principle of being an Oromo is to remove oppression and totalitarianism by establishing a de-centralized government system that has the capacity to eliminate barriers that may hinder the unity of the Oromo nation.

These Oromo theory includes not only the idea of fighting for independence but it includes loving creator and his creation, resisting the pressure of other powerful societies, staying on the straight path

steadfastly and having the courage to stand for what is right by understanding the real meaning of “what is right not who is right”.

The Oromo outlook also teaches the importance of winning the freedom by preemptive strike not by submitting to powerful nations political pressure. To free the nation from tyranny, the Gadaa principle teaches that offensive and defensive actions to be a compulsion duty of the Oromo liberation movement that requires educating the Oromo nation via an open and free environment provided by the Gada parliamentary system.

In general, this paper will explore how the current political tradition is seeking to remake the world while imposing an attitude of dual commitment in the minds of those who claim the leadership role in the Oromo politics and yet who are causing unfolding division followed by increasing confusion and weakness.

Asfaw Beyene
San Diego State University

Proposed panelists are, tentatively: Prof. Asafa Jalata, Obbo Ibsa Ahmed, Obbo Hassan Hussein, and Dr Mohammed Hassan (to be confirmed).

The State of Oromo Affairs

Abstract:

This panel will explore outstanding issues related to the advancement of Oromo society, with emphasis on contemporary challenges in the area of resource mobilization, leadership, environmental challenges, and international developments affecting the life of the Oromo people. The group of scholars will explore possible solutions to help design a strategy that will help open more venues for future research and active popular support as well as involvement. The format of this panel will be unique in that the panelists are expected to make brief presentations and provoke questions from the audience for intelligent participation, to better dissect all the critical issues and synthesize the outcome of the panel. The proposed panel may seem to overlap with the already existing Panel (I). However, the existing panel (I) seems to focus on current affairs with a strong political undercurrent, while this proposed panel attempts to address a broader scope of challenges, social and environmental included, with emphasis on researched solutions.

Mohamed Hussein
International Somali Ogaden Studies Institute

Ethiopian Nation-State: Theory and Practice

Abstract

This presentation will address the gap between the theory and practice of Ethiopia as a nation-state. Specifically, I will talk about the federal structure as coded in the Ethiopian constitution, how the current regime practices government operations within these structures and what impact do these practices have on issues related to stability, volatility, democracy, and development.

Mohammed Hassen
Georgia State University

“A forgotten Oromo nationalist: the case of Asefa Dula”

Abstract

Asefa Dula was a self-made man of humble background, who became a famous lawyer and well known Oromo nationalist during the 1950 and 1960s, who is forgotten today. He was a reform minded lawyer, who was involved in the 1960 attempted coup against Emperor Haile Selassie. He was detained and tortured by the imperial regime. Asefa Dula was an active member of the Macha and Tulama Association. He earned fame for winning court cases against the rich, the powerful and the well connected individuals. His life was cut short by the son of Ras Mesfin Silashi, who lost a court case because of Asefa’s legal skill and formidable intellectual power. This paper attempts to present a brief history of Asefa Dula and his interest in Oromo issues. The paper is based both on primary and secondary sources.

Daba Gedafa
Kansas State University

Causes and Effects of Oromo Migration Since 1900

Abstract

Ethiopia is located in the Horn of Africa. There are nine regional states in the country. Oromo people live in Oromia that is the largest regional state of the federal government. They are the largest ethnonation in the Horn of Africa. They constitute 40% of the Ethiopia’s total population. They have their language, culture, economy, and socio-political system. They have been under the subjugation of different systems of Ethiopian rulers since they were conquered as a result of brutal military conquest which was facilitated by the collusion of interests between European imperialism and internal colonialism during the second half of the 19th century. They have been marginalized, oppressed, and have become second class

citizens in their own country. Their voices for freedom have been silenced, their culture and language suppressed and their resources exploited to sustain the oppressing systems. They have been trying to free themselves from Ethiopian oppression that resulted in political migration from their country. Many of them who left their country due to political problems live in North America, Europe and Middle-east. Separation from their social and geographical environment causes severe emotional distress and crisis of discontinuity.

Mid Year Conference Panel (Tentative)

"Toward Understanding and Interpreting the Oromo Concept of Peace"

Part 1 -- Oromo Peace, Philosophical Foundations

Panelists:

Lahra Smith, Georgetown University

Charles Verharen, Howard University

Charles Schaefer, Valparaiso University

Part 2 -- Oromo Peace -- Moral and Practical Dimensions

Panelists:

Tenna Dewo, Addis Ababa University

Tsega Endalew Etefa, Colgate University

Bonnie Holcomb, The George Washington University

Abstract for this panel is being worked on and will be made available in the next issue of our newsletter

NB.

Please note that those of you who submitted proposals, OSA expects the full text of your paper to be sent by July 15, 2008.

Thank you