

Ras Gobana: a heroic story of ethnic Ethiopians By Teshome Borago

April 9th, 2015

In response to my last article about Consociational democracy, i received many comments and feedback from readers. Some readers supported my proposal to redesign Ethiopia's federal structure to grant regional statehood to all identities in Ethiopia [like one-ethnic nationalists, mixed-ethnic Ethiopians etc..] But to my surprise, most responders emailed me about my statements on multi "ethnic ethiopians" or "mixed Ethiopians." Many people are asking, why don't we talk enough about mixed Ethiopians?

Since 1991, one of TPLF/EPRDF's missions has been to suppress millions of mixed "ethnic Ethiopians" because they do not belong to any of the ethnic identification categories.

While searching for the best angle to write about these mixed ethnic Ethiopians, i stumbled upon the heroic story of Ras Gobana Dacche.

So, What makes the story of Ras Gobana unique?

Historically, It is well-known that cushitic, omotic and semetic speaking people of the horn of Africa have been mixing and intermarrying for many centuries as Abyssinian kingdoms expanded southward, and as Oromos migrated north & west; while trade/competition for resources reshaped boundaries. But in recent history, Ras Gobana played the most prominent role which has a lasting impact on our identity.

Born in May 1821, Ras Gobana Dacche came from a family of warriors. When he was a child, half a century has already passed since the Yejju Oromo dynasty conquered and outmaneuvered its opponents in Gondar. His era was politically fragile and foreign interests on Ethiopian lands were also ripe. For example, during Gobana's time, the Sudanese Mahdists were planning to annex northwestern Ethiopia and the Ottomans still had their agents lurking in eastern Ethiopia while Europeans were fighting to control the whole region. This was the era and Gobana's powerful family was already involved deep in politics, including in the leadership of the influential Macha & Tulama Oromo clans.

In the eyes of the competing oromo clans, Gobana was the bravest and skilled fighter; feared by other Oromo mootis (kings). His Family from his father's side was also connected to Abba muda, the spiritual and traditional leader of oromo.

What everybody today knows about Ras Gobana is that his Shoan Oromo soldiers were allied with Emperor Menelik II; and this alliance defeated other Oromo and non-Oromo regions.

But one fabrication that we are repeatedly told in recent years by OLF & TPLF is that Ras Gobana was an Oromo "traitor." So... was Ras Gobana really a traitor?

The answer is simple. Some Oromo politicians today mistakenly think that Ras Gobana was a full Oromo. But several Oral accounts and historical books say that he was half-Oromo and half-Amhara. In his journal, the 1800s Russian scholar Alexander Bulatovich described Gobana's mixed ethnicity, by clearly stating:

"his father was an Oromo, and his mother an Abyssinian."

So, the main problem is that those people who accuse Gobana do not really know him or know how identity influences politics. Despite Gobana being the top Ethiopian minister of war, critics falsely believe that he was only serving Menelik, without his own personal interests. Many modern politicians do not know how Gobana's mixed ethnic identity shaped his political decisions to strengthen the unity of the Shoan Oromo family and the Amhara family into one strong country.

Long before he united with Menelik, Gobana and his horsemen were already powerful and very popular in the south. According to firsthand accounts by Alexander, "all the best fighting elements of Shoa thronged under his banners." Gobana was visionary and his Shoan Oromo forces also acted as peacekeepers between Oromo clans who otherwise "slaughtered one another like cattle," according to historian Prof. Donald Levine.

Other historical achievements that Ras Gobana is credited for include:

- 1) destroying the Gojjam Amhara forces that opposed Shoa.
- 2) settling disputes between warring Western Oromo clans
- 3) convincing the King of Jimma to peacefully unite with Shoa
- 4) helping save the Leqa Naqamte (welega) kingdom from Sudanese invasion.

These achievements prove that he was one of the visionary founders of a centralized Multi-ethnic Ethiopian state under Shoa rule. During his military leadership, other mixed Oromos were promoted into the highest ranks in the Ethiopian military, including the famous minister Habte Giyorgis Dinagde.

While he was not the first, Gobana's achievements were a major milestone in our transformation into a multi-ethnic Ethiopian society. So from a viewpoint of one-ethnic based politics, YES, Gobana might look like a "traitor" (the same way as the south-born Abraham Lincoln was a "traitor" for the southern Confederate states.) But from the standpoint of the evolution of a supra-ethnic Ethiopian identity, Ras Gobana is a pan-Ethiopian trans national hero.

In Summary, we should not underestimate the impact of ethnic mixture in Ethiopian politics. It is a tradition in Ethiopia that most people pick their father's side of ancestry during self-identification. But this bad tradition does not affect their school of thought or political consciousness, which is still defined by their mixed heritage. So I would argue that we improve our old tradition and embrace our mixed identities. Mixed people should be proud of their mixed heritage and avoid picking one-side of their family. They are simply "Ethnic Ethiopians" by birth since they are the byproduct of the Ethiopian nation-state formation.

In the book "Becoming Oromo" authored by Mekuria Bulcha, there is one short story of a man living in Sudan. He is originally from eastern Wallaga and he was approached by Oromo nationalists to recruit him for OLF. The OLF was apparently desperate and they did not know the man was a mixed Oromo. So an OLF representative eagerly asked him to join their organization. To their surprise, he rejected their offer by saying his ethnicity is "Ethiopian!"

In this important time for our country, it is time that all mixed Ethiopians stop picking only one part of their identity and embrace their whole being. It is time that we embrace our Ethiopian ethnicity by saying "Gosaye Ethiopia!"

Just like Ras Gobana, for millions of mixed Ethiopians, our "Gosa" is Ethiopia. The ethnic Oromo has Oromia region, the ethnic Amhara has Amhara region and the Tigrayans have Tigray; but for us ethnic Ethiopians both our identity and our ethnicity is Ethiopia. Thus

defending the Ethiopian state is our duty just like Gobana and his grandson Ras Abebe Aregai did. Ras Abebe (son of Gobana's daughter Askale Gobana) was the leader of the "Arbegnoch" in the 1930s, which defeated the Italian occupation and who later became the Minister of Defense under Emperor Haile Selassie.

Who among the TPLF camp would dare to tell Ras Abebe Aregai choose only one part of his ethnicity?

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1.

Adam

Thank you for this revealing article

We should build a statue for ras gobena and other military heroes like ras mekonnen and habtegiorgis.

2.

tewbel

Where is the PURE ethnic/racial Ethiopian?

Maybe one should from one's family origin and find out.

3.

Garo

think it is a personal decision for a person to claim his or her identity. I don't believe any one group has the right to say you are this or you are that. having said that a person may be born to a mixed family but most of the time culturally and linguistically they may not be that mixed. Which means urban people from mixed parents are going to be speaking Amharic and identifying with a dominant culture. Because of the stigma associated with other cultures in Ethiopia these people usually identify themselves not as mixed people but usually as a dominant culture and we know what that culture is.

The reason the mixed people are afraid of the identity politics is that some of them are ashamed of who they are and some of it has to do that although they claim to be from a mixed parents all they know is really one culture and possibly one language. For them change is scary because they really are culturally and linguistically not mixed.

I suspect most of the mixing happens in the urban areas of the country. If one adds up the urban population it is not going to be a significant percent of the total population of the country. This is not going to change the debate that we are having regarding the question of identity. I know one thing for sure, it is not going to go away by down playing the issue. It is real issue and it needs a real solution.

4.

Dany

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እውነት ምን ቢቀበር ሞቶ አይሞትም ,ቀኑን ጠብቆ በክብር ይነሳል.
 የኢትዮጵያ ታሪካዊ ጠላቶች ሀገራችንን ለማድማት እና ከፋፍሎ ደካማ ለማድረግ ጦር ሰብቀው መምጣት አላስፈለጋቸውም ኢዚሁ በሀገራችን የተፈጠሩ ከሃይማኖት መልምሎና አደራጅቶ የገዛ ሀገሩን እንዲወጋ ማድረግ ነው .ይህ ክስተት በተዘዋዋሪም ሆነ በቀትታ ከጣሊያን ጋር በተደረጉ ጦርነቶች ታይቶአል.የጣሊያን ጥይት ከጣላቸው በወገን ከሃይማኖት ከሁዋላ ተመተው የወደቁት ይበልጣሉ.
 ባንድ ወቅት የቀድሞው ጠ/ሚኒስትር መለስ ዜናዊ ስለ ግብጽ ቢገርላማ ሲናገሩ ‘አላማዋ ሀገራችንን በጦር ህይወት የበላይነት ተጽኖ ማድረግ ;በተገዙ ተላላኪዎች በውስጥ ትርምስ መፍጠር ና መንግስት ላይ መነሳት; ሶስተኛ አማራጭ በጎርቤት ሀገሮች አማካይነት ትንኮሳ ማካሄድን – ያጠቃልላል ብለው ነበር. ለዚህም ምሳሌ ሲሰጡ ሻቢያን ጠቅሰው, የሻቢያ ጦር የሚመራው በግብጽ ነው, መመሪያም የሚቀበሉት በቀትታ ከ ሴኩሪቲ ሃላፊው አሊ ሱሌማን መሆኑን ጠቅሰዋል .በራሳቸው ላይ የደረሰውን ትጽኖ ባያብራሩም.
 ታዲያ የጠላት ወኪል የሆኑ ሰዎች ለራሳቸው ክብርም ሆነ ጨዋነት ስለሌላቸው ለሀገሩ የተዋደቀውን ሲዋርዱ,በትንሽ ጭንቅላታቸው የፈጠራ ታሪክ ሲፈጥሩ የሚሰቀጥጥ ህሊና የላቸዉም.መድረኩን ሁሉ ለጀሮ በሚቀፍ ጩሀታቸው ስለያዙት እንደ ጸሃፊው አይነት ሰዎች ከመድረኩ ተገለው የትያትሩ ተመልካች ሆነው ቆይተዋል .
 ሁሉም የጁን ማግኘቱ አይቀርማና ዛሬ ለዘመናት ሲያደሙን የነበሩ ጠላቶቻችን በተራቸው እየደሙ እያየናቸው ነው ,ይንቁን የነበሩትም በጠረጴዛ ዙሪያ ለመደራደር እየተገደዱ ነው .
 ጥላ ከለላ የሆኑዋቸው እየደከሙ ሲመጡ በማያፍር አንደበታቸው ሌላ ታሪክ ለመጻፍ እየዳዳቸው ነው ያለፈውን ፈጠራ ታሪክ ,የታሪክ መዛባት ነው ብለው ሊያልፉት እየሞከሩ ነው ,ሌሎች እጅ መንሻ ይዘው ሀገር ወስጥ ለመግባት እየሞከሩ ነው .
 ሀገር መገነጣጠል መፍትሄ እንደማይሆን አይናችንን ካልሸፈንን በስተቅር ኤርትራያ ጥሩ ምሳሌ ናት.
 አሮሚኛ እይተናገረ አሮሞን የሚጨቁን ,ትግሪግኛ እይተናገረ ትግሬን ከጨቁን,አማራኛን እየተናገረ ተናጋሪውን የሚጨቁን ... ወዘተ ከሆነ ምኑ ነው ፋይዳው ?ቁዋንቁዋሁን መናገሩ ዲሞክራት አያረገውም.ሂትለር ጀርመንኛ እይተናገረ ለጀርመን ህዝብ ምን ሰራ.ቁም ነገሩ የህዝቡን ቁዋንቁዋ መናገሩ ወይም የናተ ጎሳ ነኝ ማለቱ አይደለም. ስለዚህ በህዝቦች መሃል መልካም አስተዳደርና እውነተኛ ዲሞክራሲ ከሰፈነ ሀገራችን ለሁላችንም ትበቃለች,የኤርትራ መሪዎችም ልቦና ሰጥቶአቸው ኢትዮጵያውን ወንድሞች/አህቶቻችን ናቸው ካሉ እሰዬው ደሮም ሕዝቡ መቸ ለዩን አለ ?
 ጊዜው የመተባበር የአንድነት ጊዜ ነውና የጊዜው አቅንቃኞች ጠባቦችና ቅጥረኞችን በሃሳብ ጦርነት ድባቅ ሊመቱዋቸው ይገባል.
 ኢትዮጵያ ለዘላለም ትኑር !

5.

Shaleka Demese

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WE ETHIOPIANS NEVER BEEN ENSLAVED BY COLONIERS

We Ethiopians regardless of from which tribe or religion always fought to preserve our independence and freedom.

6.

Anonymous

|

olf and tplf have labelled Ras Gobana as a traitor simply because he was a visionary ethiopian who saw himself as an ethiopian, served his country in the battlefield and made ethiopia proud. these shameless ethno-fascists like olf could not dare to label him as a traitor.

