Ethiopianism In Today’s Ethiopia

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Abstract: Ethiopia is the country recognised as being the origin of mankind. For the first time, coffee plant was discovered in Ethiopia. Ethiopia is a country which the blacks took as a symbol of independence in political and religious spheres. In history, Ethiopia is the first Black Country who defeated the colonial power and remain independent. “The victory of Adwa, which has defined Ethiopia and Ethiopians more than any other event in modern history” (Bahru 2008). When other African countries were under colony Ethiopia was among the first countries that joined the League of Nations. Ethiopia has many firsts which she achieved in her history; however, these firsts does not help here in keeping the unity of the country in today’s Ethiopia. In today’s Ethiopia ethnic grouping took priority than patriotism. There is a shift in political movement from “Ethiopia or death” to “my ethnic group or death”. The struggle for independence in the Adwa victory which the Ethiopians taught to the world and serve as symbol for other liberation movement are nowadays changed into the symbol for ethnic conflict.

Key words: Ethiopia, Ethiopianism, religious movement, political movement, Activist.

Introduction

Ethiopian contribution for the expansion of two dominant religions in the world such as Christianity and Islam are evident. Not only this but also the contribution of the country in serving as a symbol of identity especially for blacks and colonized people in fighting for their freedom also apparent.

Despite the present formation of states in the country on ethnic line conflict is the characteristics of today’s Ethiopia. The emergence of the so-called activism in the country and diaspora grouped on an ethnic line, the tendency of political parties organising on the basis of ethnicity which was not part of the country experiences in history, resulted for Ethiopianism and its principle to gradually worsening. The ethnic extremist who has no knowledge of the country led by emotion and blind acceptance of what they are told resulted for the country to be in the worst stage. The ethnic extremists are an instrument for those who unable to win the country on the battle field but want to disintegrate the country through poison drug ethnic centrism. They are messengers of the historical enemy of the country. This group brought ethnic agenda to the front for the citizens of the country to fight one another.

This article is based on the historical perspectives of the country from what make her symbol in the world politics and religious movement. And why Ethiopianism which other people took as principle for freedom died in today’s Ethiopia is the central issue of the discussion.

Ethiopianism

Ethiopianism cannot simply be defined as a religious phenomenon (Duncan 2015: 199). However, it is both political and educational. This is because for Ethiopianism to emerge the 1889 Adwa victory led by Emperor Menelik II to the colonial-imperialist power of Europe plays a significant role for both black people all over the world. Ethiopia is an independent nation who had for a long period of time has her own administration free from colonial domination. The Adwa victory initiated many of the black countries to firmly struggle for their independence. Adwa victory is one and the main cause for the political movement of the black people for their independence.

From the religious perspective, the name Ethiopia mentioned in the Bible in different verses. The Ethiopianism root can also be traced in the biblical passage (Psalms 68:31) on which the pan-African appearance of Christianity was based on “Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands unto God”. However, in the Bible the name Ethiopia is mentioned in various verses to cite some examples Acts 8:27, Jeremiah 13:23, 2 Chronicles 14:9-15, 2Chronicles 16:8, Isaiah 43:3, Amos 9:7, Isaiah 18:1-6, Isaiah 18:1, 1 Chronicles 1:9- Ezekiel 38:1-23 ,Acts 13:1-52, Nahum 3:9 are some.

In its religious movement, the idea of Ethiopianism began to emerge when the movement aspires for an independent Christian church when the western domination the blacks were denied of progress in the hierarchy of the church due to racism. In much western intellectual writing
Africans have no history and the western knowledge de legitimized other ways of knowing as savage, superstitious, and primitive (Akena 2012:599-691). Achebe (1988) said that “by the European, African was named as the granary of ignorance, and a ”dark continent” without its own history, culture, and self-defining memories”(Cited in Abebe and Vambe 2006:358). However, the idea was disproved by the historical place Ethiopia had in and the role the Ethiopian played in defeating the colonial power. Ethiopia is the oldest independent countries in Africa and among the ancient and historical countries in the world. Above all currently accredited as being the origin of mankind; it is the hometown of Australopithecus afarensis (Lucy), which is the oldest humanoid remnant ever discovered in the Afar plain in the North –East part of Ethiopia. An old fossil dating to about 4.5 million years has also been discovered in the same area (Gillespie, 2003), which witnessed Africa is the origin of civilisation on the earth.

It is important to notice that Ethiopian civilisation is the ancient civilisation named with The Persia, Rome and China. The land of Ethiopia, which is Africa in other word was one of the first nations on earth who is both politically and economically strong. Ethiopia is one of the oldest civilisations on earth who have the first organised church, religious festivals and different forms of worship, which disproves the idea that Africa has no history.

In the recent politics after the victory of Adwa, in the year 1941, Ethiopia again defeated for the second time the powerful Italy Mousseline power invaded Ethiopia in 1935.

Ethiopia is a symbol for the black people in the world, she is among the first countries who found the league of nation when other African countries were under colony.

In many works of literature, Ethiopianism is associated with the Christian church or Adwa. However, in Muslim religion also Ethiopia is a symbol. In Islam religion, Ethiopia also has an important place. For them, Ethiopia is synonymous with freedom from persecution and emancipation from fear. It is because in Muslim history, the first migration was in Ethiopia and the second migrations to Medina have considered the foundation for Islam as a worldwide religion. It was difficult to assume Islam religion today on earth if the first Hejira was not successful. It was an Ethiopian king, Negus or Al-Najashi, was a person well-known for justice and in whose land human rights were valued. It is because the associates and relatives of the Prophet Mohammad were residing on this land after they suffered hardship in their place.

"The first Hegira,” al-hijra al-‘ula, was to Christian Ethiopia. The Prophet’s initial followers, the Sahaba, persecuted in Mecca in 615-616, were ordered by Muhammad to seek asylum with the Christian king, al-najashi Ashama, of al-habasha. The episode, a story of generous hospitality, survival, redemption, and success is in itself outside our scope. It left a double message for Muslims. The Ethiopian Christian najashi’s generosity, his refusal to betray the first small community of Muslims to their Meccan persecutors, his befriending of and correspondence with the Prophet, and his contribution to the latter’s victory, left a special message of gratitude for Islam (Erlich 2013).

This implies Ethiopianism exemplified living together with all inequality without discrimination.

In the Islam religion one of the prominent figures was Bilal Ibn Rabah, an Ethiopian slave living in Makkah, became a principal companion of the Prophet Muhammad. To Bilal, Ethiopia is his innate land, the country which was chosen by the Prophet Mohammad when his followers and relative needed security and freedom from oppression. Hence, Ethiopia is chosen as the land of peace and justice by Islam followers. The implication in the process is that it is the principle embodied in Ethiopianism that not only defeating the colonial power but also considered as the place where human right is respected regardless of religious background. This is clearly indicated in the idea of the Prophet Mohammad because he was not frightened that his followers would convert and give up their faith in favour of any other established religion, even though Ethiopia was the land of the Christian kingdom at the time. As many writers explained, though the term Ethiopianism was derived from the Bible. This concept of "Ethiopianism" includes the appreciation of Ethiopia's ancient civilisation as well as the Adwa's victory against the Italian fascism in 1896. The term is also found in Islam religion in one way or another. Ethiopia is the place where both religions live together respecting one another. Sometimes it is difficult to trace single events for Ethiopianism to emerge due to the existence of multiple heroic activities
performed by individual personalities and as Ethiopian in a group.

To mention some of the patriotic activities performed by personalities who were on power during historic times. For the reason that it is important to trace back history to critically understand the present situations we are in.

In 1868 Lij Kassa who is retitled Emporer Tewodros II is defeated by British expeditionary force. However, emperor Tewodros rather than captured by the British force and live as a slave under them he choose to sacrifice and decided to kill himself and not to be surrendered in foreign hands.

In 1889 Yohannes IV is killed while fighting with Jihadist forces and in 1895 Ethiopia is invaded by Italian forces but defeated by Ethiopians forces led by Emporer Menelik II, and in 1935 Italy for the second time invaded Ethiopia, but defeated by Ethiopian resistance fighter. At this time though Emporer Haile Selassie flees abroad he plays his own role in the international diplomacy by explaining the situation to international community, other Heroes of Ethiopia like Gebrye, Balch Aba Nefso, Abdisa Aga, Belay Zeleke Jagama kello, Alula Aba Nega, etc. are few of them. The Ethiopia flags colour is the Pan-African colour. That is why after independence African countries adopted colours of Ethiopian flags, which many of us currently not give respect for those who sacrificed their life for this flag.

Ethiopianism in today’s Ethiopia

The expression of Current Ethiopia let alone as a symbol for different movement in the world, the later country's history is changed into famine, ethnic rivalry, and poor country. It is sometimes difficult to accept is it really this Ethiopia who has been an epitome for all the black movement in the world. Ethiopia as the model of African independence and self-determination is currently in poverty. The symbolic history of Ethiopia changed into natural disasters, famine and conflict among ethnic groups. Activism for nationalistic patriotism and 'Ethiopia motherland' or death changed into activism for ethnic supremacy. There are many individuals who call them activist without knowing let alone the history of the county, but the history of the ethnic group for which they call themselves representative. The name activism is flourishing among the Ethiopian diaspora for which their aim is not clear. Activism nowadays is a fashion without clear objectives. The black diaspora previously took Ethiopianism as principle of fighting for liberation and self-determination of black diaspora. “Ethiopia thus became the trigger for a modern black political tradition, which combined political activism with trade unionism and anticolonialism with early civil rights initiatives”( Adejumobi2007), which is quite opposite to the current many Ethiopian diaspora so-called activist who took ethnicity as an agenda for struggle. It is really quite disgusting.

It is obvious that when we look at the separatist movement of Eritrea, the ethnic rivalries and the various social crises in Ethiopia is Western creation, but the previous Ethiopians were not easy for this division, they were brave enough to defend their country. The current money politics in the world killing the current generation and created so called activist on ethnic line. This type activism is not loyalist to the country’s benefit but simply money driven self benefit.

The situation in Ethiopia currently is similar to the early stage of the beginning of Genocide in Rwanda. Before colonisation in Rwanda Hutu, Tutsi and Twa were not ethnic grouping, it was work-related groupings, and the group share a common language, religion and national identity. Hute and Tusi which is the dominant group intermixed through marriage and other activities (Bahr2011). However, the ethnic identity is created by the Belgian colonial rule (ibid).

“The ethnic ID card came to define permanently person's ethnic affiliation. Even then, there were cases both before and during the genocide when Tutsi contrived to pass for Hutu - to gain privileges or to save their lives - and Hutu were stigmatised as Tutsi - to strip them of their loot during the genocide”(Ibid ).

The situation in Ethiopia is now similar to the initial stage of the conflict of the time in Rwanda. This conflict was the worst incidence human sufferings was seen on our planet. The reason for my comparison of Rwanda genocide with Ethiopian situation is that currently in Ethiopia we identified on our ID card by the recent classification of our ethnic identity. When we apply and employed for the job it is mandatory to fill your ethnic grouping. We are going towards ethnic identification than national identity. What is surprised is at least we can't deny Ethiopia is the origin of human being (Lucy) let alone the Adwa victory and other important history associated with religion, nationalistic and international freedom movement symbolizing Ethiopia. At the time other black people including Ras Teferianism aspire to be
Ethiopian and consider Ethiopia is our country our land the symbol of our unity. However, the current Ethiopian is trying to disintegrate using forces driven by money politics. It is important to understand the global trend, to save the country from the coming upheaval. The current situation in Ethiopia also provides a glimpse of Ethiopian situations to which direction the country is moving. However, everything is not black. There are many Ethiopians who are struggling to defend the country from the sabotages, which is central to utilize this positive element.

It is important to remember that Neol Dyre a Jamaican Ras Teferian who migrate to England and then to Ethiopia crossing several countries by train and on foot until he put in prison in Sudan for three months. Lastly, the Ethiopian Ambassador take the initiative to help Dyre to enter Enter Ethiopia (Bonacci2015). The main reason for Dyre to immigrate to Ethiopia is the discrimination that was existed in Jamaica and England. However, Dyre flee to Ethiopia which at the time was the land of justice in which no racial and economic discrimination as of the two countries he was lived. Still there are many Dyer’s even though not share the justice of the time but who is struggling to re-establish the previous history that many Jamaicans, black people in the world and religious group had taken as standard for independence and freedom.

It was the role that Ethiopians played in defeating the colonial-imperialist power and the mythical and biblical passage about Ethiopia which initiate Dyre and later other Jamaican to flee to Ethiopia (Ibid). The saddest news is, it was this symbolic patriotism that initiates the black diaspora in USA to struggle for freedom and for African countries that were under colony to unite against colonialism for independence, currently lack unity among her population. A country having such great history currently divides on ethnic grouping by the force of power and money in the global world. These forces use her own citizen which does not have knowledge of the history of the country and the principles embodied in Ethiopianism. We are killing the country, even more, difficult to estimate the future because of the conflict the country is in and created due to multiple pointless factors which are not natural to the country. Ethiopia is now suffered not only manmade problem but also the natural disaster, famine and poverty. The solution for the problem is in the hands of Ethiopians only when they start believing in dialogue rather than forced argument. Habermas the German critical social theories call deliberate democracy or discursive democracy in which deliberation is fundamental to decision-making. It assumes elements of consensus, decision-making and majority rule that has to be governed to avoid the existing lethargy. This has to be the principle that should be embodied in today’s Ethiopianism movement.

Conclusion

Ethiopia is the oldest independent country in Africa. The country is a symbol for black movement both in the religious and political arena. However, the last 26 years in Ethiopian political history have been marked by tensions of ethnic conflict internally and with neighbour Eritrea, which was part of Ethiopia but later separated from Ethiopia in 1991 after 30 years of war. Due to this fact Ethiopianism is gradually eroding from the Ethiopians themselves who was the maker of history. The problem in Ethiopia even though supported by the existing money and power-driven politics in the world, the main responsibility goes to the Ethiopian themselves, especially those who call them activist and grouped on ethnic line. The problem in Ethiopia can be solved when all the people are part and parcel of both decisions in shaping the future of the country.

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