

AMHARA CLAIM OF WESTERN AND SOUTHERN PARTS OF TIGRAY

By Mathza 11-26-20

We have been hearing and reading about the Amhara Regional State claim of ownership of the Welqayit, Tsegede, Qafta-Humera and Tselemti weredas (hereafter referred to Welqayit Group) and Raya, and Amhara Regional State threats of war against TPLF/Tigray. One of the threats states "some of the Amhara elite politicians continue to beat drums, as summons to war" (watch/listen) DW TV (Amharic) - July 30, 2020.

THE WELQAYIT GROUP

Welqayit Amhara Identity Committee (WAIC) was formed in Gonder to return the Welqayit Group from Tigray Regional State to Amhara Regional State. The Welqayit Group was transferred to Tigray during the 1984 reconfiguration of the administrative structure of the country based on ethno-linguistical regional states (kililoch) after the Derg was defeated.

It seems that the government of Eritrea has contributed to the Welqayit Group problem. According to *ህግደፍንአሸበርቲ ጉጅለታትን ብአንደበት...ቀዳማይ ክፋል* (watch) the Eritrean government had trained Ethiopian oppositions and inculcated opposing views between ethnic groups in Ethiopia, particularly between Amhara and Tigray Regional States, wherever it viewed appropriate for its devilish objective of dismantling Ethiopia.

The Committee recruited Tigrayans from Tigray Regional State to do its dirty work. An example is presented in a video, Tigray Tv: *መድረኽተሃድሶ ወረዳ ቃፍታ-ሐመራህዝቢ ጣብያ ዓዲ-ሕርዲ* - YouTube (watch) aired on Feb 01, 2017. It shows confessions by a number of Tigrayans from Qafta-Humera who were lured and bribed by the Committee to serve its objectives. Each of them gave details of activities they participated in and carried out against their own people. They expressed remorse and asked for forgiveness which was given.

The demand to return the Welqayit Group to Amhara Regional State is against the principle of the current constitution and federal structure based on ethnicity and language. If the Committee succeeds it will create a precedence for claims of territories and instability in adjacent Regional States all over the country. This, unfortunately, is already the case.

According to the 1994 (EC) Census the inhabitants of Tsegede and Welqayit were respectively 76.08%/23.77% and 96.58%/3.03% Tigrayans

(Tigrigna speakers)/Amhara (Amarigna speakers). The corresponding figures for Qafta-Humera and Tselemti were 86.26/14.38 and 89.12/10.88. Besides, the whole area is dotted with Tigrayan names, such as Edaga Hamus, Adyet, Adi Hdri, Adi Goshu, Enda Mariam, Golgol Ruba, Mai'gaba, Awura, Stelemti and many others preceded by Adi, Mai, Enda, Edaga, etc. The administrative centers of Welqayit is Ketema Nigus, Tsegede is Addi Remets, Qafta Humera is Humera and Tselemti is Enda Abaguna – all Tigrigna names. Names, such as Adi Arqay, Mai Liham, Mai Tsebri and Emba Giorgis abound in North Gonder implying there is more Tigrayan land there. If the inhabitants of the four woredas were not Tigrayans how does one explain such common Tigrayan names, all over the Western Group? The only logical explanation is the areas were originally inhabited by Tigrayans.

According to Lema Lema “16th to 19th century traveller’s account “Lasta, Kobo, Semen, Welkite, Tsegede were all territories of Tigray before they were annexed by the centrist elite in the early 20th century” (read). During his extensive travel starting in 1520 Francisco Álvares stated the area was Tigrayan territory. As stated in the “book” (see last para of this/my article), the 17th century boundaries of Tigray were “Alwaha-Milash in the south, Lemalimo in the west, the Afar depression in the east, and the Dahlak archipelagos in the northeast”. At that time Tigray “was four times the size of the present regional state of Tigray”.

The following, particularly the first, are among other evidences that Welqayit, Tselemti and Tsegede were part of Tigray, according to video titled Tigray TV - From Axum to 70 Wolqayit, parts: I (watch), II (watch), III (watch) as well as Memhir Gebrekidan Desta interview on Welqayit-Tsegede IV (watch). “Emperor Haile Selassie ceded historic Tigrayan territory map” is another source worth consulting

(https://www.google.com/search?q=emperor+haile+selassie+ceded+historic+tigrayan+territory+map&tbm=isch&source=iu&ictx=1&fir=gOw_).

In an article titled Reality-check: Tigray annexed Amhara lands? a 1989 (1978 EC) map of nationalities in northern Ethiopia (ብሔረሰቦች በሰሜን ኢትዮጵያ) prepared by the Derg regime confirms the present reality. Note that according to the area marked 2, Tigray appears to extend beyond the present Tigray Regional State. (<https://hornaffairs.com/2011/06/05/reality-check-tigray-annexed-amhara-lands/>).

Dr. Ghelawdewos Araia stated "Tigray administered proper Tigray, present-day Eritrea, and Wolkait on the western frontier and the Alamata-Woldia area on the southern (Alwaha Milash). Tselemti and Wolkait were gradually incorporated (1930-1957) into the Gondar area" (read). Emperor Haile Selassie ceded historic Tigrayan territory lying beyond the River Ala Wuha to Wollo Province and in 1957, enlarged Wollo to include Alamata and Kobo towns, which were part of Tigray Province

(https://www.google.com/search?q=emperor+haile+selassie+ceded+historic+tigrayan+territory+map&tbm=isch&source=iu&ictx=1&fir=gOw_).

It should be noted here that following the identity/linguistic basis for constituting regions, about half of the then Tigray province was annexed to Afar. The Tigray Regional State has not demanded its return, apparently, because the majority of the inhabitants were ethnic Afar.

According to Luul Ras Mengesha Seyoum "His father Luul Ras Seyoum governed [Tigray] up-to "WeHa MeLash" in the south and "Welksit Tesfedie" in the west until 1948-1949 when by decree regions were transferred to wollo and Begemdir, live on DW TV" (listen). In other words, both areas were part of Tigray until 1948-1949. Luul Ras Mengesha Seyoum governed the new smaller Tigray during 1953-1965. In 1995 EPRDF adopted the current federal system based on ethnicity/language which returned the Group to Tigray Regional State.

RAYA

Raya in southern Tigray is another claim by the expansionist Amhara Regional State. According to የራያ ጉዳይ የማንነት ወይስ የመልካም አስተዳደር ችግር?, 92.5% of the population is Tigrigna speaking (read). For more (read).

A demonstration by a handful of people in Addis Ababa goes "Raya Is Not Tigray but Amhara" (watch/listen). Alamata and Raya Azebo are the weredas in South Eastern Zone that border Wello. The 1994 national census shows the population of Raya Azebo: Tigrayan (87.21%), Amhara (9.77%), Afar (1.55%), and Oromo (1.4%) (read). The author of the article Identity Invasion already referred to above, a Rayan, despite his complaints in regard to lack of development in Raya Azebo, vehemently denies Amhara identity of Raya (read). He has no doubt that the Raya Azebo case is an example of Amhara strategy to expand the Amhara Regional State.

The Tigray Regional State knows the havoc that the Amhara Regional State has brought and continuous to bring to non-Amharas, the Cushitic Agew besides the Qimant in its own Regional States. According to OMN Reportage

on Qimant People Persecution, the Qimant people have historical and other legacies that the Amhara ignored and the Qimant continue to suffer persecution (listen). This is in contrast to the tiny minorities, Erob and Kunama nations in Tigray using their respective languages with access to and use of the Tigray Regional State media facilities. The April, 2019 mass killings of Gumuz people in Dangur wereda, Benishangul Gumuz Regional State, and in Jawi Woreda, Awi zone, Amhara Regional State was organized by ANM's and ADP's Amhara supremacists of the Amhara Regional State (read).

"Raya: a category error, and a catalog of errors" showing a 1976 EC Central Statistical Office language map published in National Atlas of Ethiopia in 1988 gives an idea of what Tigray looked like in 1976 (read). Other relevant articles on the Tigrayan identity of Raya include (read) and (read)

[\(Raya: a category error, and a catalog of errors - Ethiopia Insight\).](#)

Raya: a category error, and a catalog of errors - Ethiopia Insight

The people of Raya have diverse origins and so defy simple categorizations. A more accommodating federation can ...

Considering the many evidences given above, including, (a) historical and geographical accounts by foreigners who visited Ethiopia, (b) Emperors Menelik annexing part of western Tigray to Gonder and Haile Selassie part of southern Tigray to Wollo, (c) the ubiquitous Tigrayan names of places in the Western Group and Raya), (d) Luul Ras Mengesha Seyum's (former governor of Tigray) testimony and (e) the 1974 population census showing over 96% Tigrayans in Tigray Regional State there is no doubt that all the areas in the Western Group and Raya are Tigrayans.

The final decision rests with the Administrative Boundaries and Identity Issues Commission. Considering the manipulative nature of PM Abiy Ahmed I will not be surprised, despite the overwhelming evidences in support of the Tigray Regional State claim, if the Commission rules in favor of the Amhara Regional State.

Detail on the word "book"

"A book entitled 'Tractatus Tres Historico-Geographici' (Portuguese) or 'A Seventh Century Historical and Geographical Account of Tigray, Ethiopia' (English) authored by Manoel Barradas in 1634, translated into English by Elizabeth Filleul, and edited by Richard Pankhurst in 1996. The map of Tigray in this book covers Alwaha-Milash in the south, Lemalimo in the west, the Afar depression in the east, and the Dahlak archipelagos in the northeast (these are islands on the Red Sea, now in Eritrea). Tigray in the 17th century was four times the size of the present regional state of Tigray."