

This is a response to Dawit Seyoum's article on Aigaforum: "A Requiem for our Tegar Martyrs". [A Requiem for Our Tegar Martyrs \(aigaforum.com\)](http://aigaforum.com)

Dear Ex-comrade Dawit,

I read your article with great sadness and amazement. I only know you as a talented basketball player (with your brother, Zemariam) at the YMCA, in Arat Kilo. My friends, however, know you in the mountains of Tigary and Gondar as one of their compatriots and a commissar in the EPRA (armed wing of EPRP). Your comrades in arms felt betrayed and wondered how a onetime 'Marxist' degenerated into a vulgar tribalist and joined the traitorous and atrocious group that killed your comrades like, Yitzhak Debre Tsion, Tsegaye Gebremedhin, Belete Amaha, Aberash Berta, Gaayim

Your tedious narrative (with meaningless rhetorical questions) would require a book size response. However, I will try to be brief and deal with only the historical facts between Zemene Mesafint (Era of the Princes) and Zemene TPLF. You have some ironical rantings against Eritreans, EPLF and Isaias. I have very few remarks on those paragraphs. I will not return in kind, to your venomous, derogatory words and epithets against Ethiopians (you prefer Amharas). I have no comment on the current TPLF's madness, however tempting it is.

My purpose in this piece is to defend the truth. I have no desire to laud or demonize any historical event, personalities peoples or groups.

Your piece encapsulates 'all' alleged grievances the Tigrean elite have against Ethiopia. We should debunk your false narratives, specially when presented in mediums like Aigaforum. Haven't all Ethiopia's problems began with fallacious propaganda?

Before I delve into his charges, I have to express my sadness for being dragged into this 'us against them' altercation. I am sorry I took the bait and I apologize for the polemical character of the rebuttal. Please note that every time I say Ethiopians, it includes Tigreans.

Dawit begins his complaint with rhetorical questions, " Why do they hate us?", "Why do they want our subjugation and possible elimination?", "Where did we go wrong ?".

TPLF, whose very existence is predicated upon Amhara hatred has the audacity to accuse Ethiopians of doing the same thing against Tigreans. One need only read their founding manifesto to start with. They substituted "Amhara ruling class" for the Marxian tenet " class struggle". TPLF (in Dedit), deficient in

self-esteem, was competing against the more popular Marxists in the mountains of Assimba. Firstly, the Amharas were not the only 'ruling class'. Of all the others, the Tigrean ancestral nobility (privileged by intermarriage and blood) lasted with the Monarchy until the end. Ironically, the leader of the counterrevolutionary group, EDU, that wanted the return of the Monarchy was the Tigrean Leul Ras Mengesha Seyoum. Dawit, doesn't Walleign Mekonnen, the patron saint of the nationalists, tell us the 'Amhara and Tigrean ruling class' were the oppressors, in his pamphlet 'you' celebrate? The seeds of hatred was buried in that phrase. TPLF chose the easy way out; ethnic agitation over class based propaganda. Could a Tigrean peasant see through the crafty words and the demagoguery of TPLF? Not in a million years. Melese Zenawi's book, "Eritrean Peoples Struggle, from Where to Where ", is another declaration of their resentment against Ethiopia. The best critique of that book comes, ironically, from the reformed TPLF member and Tigrean, Abraham Yayih. Read it, to learn the extent of TPLF's betrayal.

Dawit, Ethiopians have no reason to hate you, indiscriminately. You are intertwined with us by blood, history, religion and culture. Our relationship was/is based on mutual benefit and understanding. You owe us nothing. We owe you nothing. We don't claim any part of your tribal territory. We have not settled in your "land". We haven't denied you anything that we had. We have no resentment against you because of 'your' forefathers. We don't dwell on our/your past. We have not erected monuments for civil wars we won or lost. We haven't poisoned our children with ethnocentric lies in our text books. We abandoned parochialism and provincialism a longtime ago, replacing it with Ethiopianism;(reasonable people and most Ethiopians have fought and continue to fight the chauvinistic, jingoist nationalist interpretation of Ethiopianism). We didn't create the historical famines and plagues in northern Ethiopia. We have nothing to do with the ecological disaster of your 'land'. We did not start a movement to separate from you.

Could you imagine what our relationship would have been if any of what you say had any truth? You are not careful. Remember that Tigreans still live with us.

Isn't, in fact, your antipathy the driving force behind all your actions. Don't tell me that it was love that made you kill Ethiopians with the Somali invaders in late seventies (recent information). Was it brotherhood that made you declare Eritrea an Ethiopian colony and kill us with EPLF for 16 years? Was it endearment that made you torture, maim and kill us in the prisons, streets and bushes of Ethiopia? Was it love that enticed you to play divide and rule along ethnic lines? Was it patriotism that made you rob us blind? To mention just a few!

You allege that we want your subjugation and possible elimination. It is a shame that you would talk about subjugation and elimination of Tigreans, only three years after the world heard about the horrors and crimes of the Tigrean elite's(TPLF) against Ethiopians; from the mouth of it's own surrogates. Have Tigreans ever suffered oppression that other Ethiopians have not? Has any Ethiopian government ever excluded or punished you, because you are Tigrean? Is there any law in Ethiopia that discriminated against you? Have you ever been denied political rights(whatever little we had) or economic rights that other Ethiopians had? Was there any government policy that deprived you the right to work, educate, trade or farm?

The fact is that you were never treated discriminately. In fact, your ruling elite were appeased throughout the Monarchy. We can talk about the ills of feudalism like nepotism and prejudices of one kind or another, which I have no doubt you experienced as well as participated in.

Whatever subjugation, historical or current, the record shows Tigreans have participated in it as rulers(the elite)and suffered as the ruled(the masses). It is obvious why TPLF wants Ethiopian history to begin with Menelik. The earlier records are not favorable to any particular group. When we come to the recent past, is there any part of Ethiopia or tribe that has not been abused, plundered or suppressed for the benefit of TPLF? Doesn't the balance sheet of subjugation show your side was the culprit against more of us than the other way around?

Dawit continues "Were we wrong to be responsible for and to be the original center of Coptic Christianity in sub-Saharan Africa? To have Axum Tsion in our midst ..." he goes on to tell us that they are heirs to the Axumite Civilization, Kingdom and Empire and that they are the original Coptic Christians in sub Saharan Africa and that they are the bearers of Geez script and many manuscripts, rock hewn churches ... and that they contributed to humanity ... and absurdly remarks, "maybe, our downfall was wanting to make our history theirs?"

Let historians ridicule you for your broad and simplistic assertions. We have no problem with your imaginary 'unique' & distinct(if, chauvinistic) history. We don't have to fight you over 'our' legacy but will fight your lies. Dawit, I assure you we have not forgotten that Ethiopia's current problems are deeply rooted in the false and delusional narrative of a once great & unique tribe sidelined by other(s), Amharas and now ironically Eritreans; who must now pay the price for your

tribe's failures. Please don't take this myth too far(if it is not already late); you will be disappointed and hurt.

Dawit continues: "Were our ancestors wrong as Axumites, to welcome followers of the Prophet Mohammed to be civilized enough to welcome them?"

It is true the Prophet sent some of his followers to the land of Habesh(Abyssinia) to protect them from persecution in Arabia, in the seventh century. You can own that history as that of Tigray, exclusively. Where is the continuity of the 'civilization' you bragged about? Civilized in the 7th and intolerant in the 19th century? Muslims suffered horrible atrocities in the hands of Tigreans more than anywhere else in Ethiopia. Most enduring intolerance in Ethiopian history also came from Yohannes the 4th himself. His anti Muslim fanaticism, in the name of "religious unification" is very well documented. I refer you to The Boru Meda Council of 1878, convened by him. What befell Muslims (and others) following that Council's resolution reverberates to this day. Ask today's Muslims of Raya & Azebo, Wollo and other places what happened to their ancestors. Dawit, if 'you' are so civilized as you claim, can you explain why Muslims are still denied the right to build a mosque in Axum?

You can't choose the past selectively. You have to own the good, the bad and the ugly too, as we do.

Dawit continues, " Where do you who dislike us think we went wrong? Were we wrong to defend our homeland from foreign invaders ...? Or was it because Yohannes responded to the pleas of Gondar when it was ransacked, burnt, looted by Mahdists ..? Or when he fell fighting gallantly ...at the Battle of Mettemma ...rout the Mahdists as they defend Yohannes' domain"?

What are you insinuating? Was Gondar an independent state? Somebody forgot to tell you that the Ethiopian empire was run from Gondar from 1632 to 1855. Your ancestors' power and titles were conferred on them by one or another of the emperors from Gondar. Yohannes the 4th was Emperor of Ethiopia from 1872 to 1889. He had asserted his suzerainty over Ras Woldeselassie of Gondar /Begemdir, since 1873 and Debre Tabor was his imperial seat for sometimes. Why would Gondar plead for his help? Wasn't it his duty to defend his country? In fact, we can blame Yohannes for his failure or neglect to defend Gondar in the first place. Was he not himself ransacking Gojjam and heading to Shoa for the 'eventual' confrontation with Menelik, delaying the defense of Gondar? Just in case you didn't know, the confrontations between Ethiopia and the Mahdists were the unintended consequence of Yohannes' 1884 Treaty of Adwa, also

known as The Hewett Treaty, with the British. Under (one of the articles) the Treaty, Yohannes allowed and assisted in the evacuation of the defeated and garrisoned Egyptians(from Sudan) through Ethiopian territory to the port of Massawa for their return/escape to Egypt. This enraged the Mahdists and they vowed to retaliate against Ethiopia. And they did; Yohannes the 4th paid the price with his life.

Dawit has another accusation against Menelik, "of splitting our family and land ...".with his intent to harm Tegar, ...conspired with a foreign force and disposed of Bogos ... for the creation of Eritrea .. as part of the Treaty of Wuchale(1889)"

Dawit conveniently skipped relevant historical facts leading up to the Treaty of Wuchale & he/they assigned, as usual, a conspiracy theory that is very hypocritical.

Long before Menelik, 'your land' or parts of it was occupied for centuries; by the Turks, the Egyptians &(for a little bit by the British) later, the Italians. Sometimes, some of the places were partially liberated and then reoccupied. 'You'('We', more honestly) were unable to dislodge them completely for historically complicated reasons. Among these are geopolitical (geographic location & competing powers) internal rivalry, betrayal from within and without. Nevertheless, attempts were made to dislodge the occupiers over the centuries. Some tried and failed. Others perished trying. For example, Sarsa Dengil, all the way from Shoa, tried to dislodge the Turks from Massawa in 1589. He couldn't. Yohannes the 4th tried to liberate Bogos and other areas from Egyptians repeatedly and succeeded partially at Gundet & Gura (despite traitors like Ras Woldemichael) but were reoccupied by Italians when Britain betrayed him. Yohannes & Alula Aba Nega's attempt to dislodge Italians also failed in spite of their success at Dogali, in 1887. They retreated to the south due to logistical problems aggravated by the Great Famine and to attend to the Mahdist's threat from the west and internal rivalry from the south. By the time Menelik became Emperor of Ethiopia(1889), a good chunk of today's Eritrea was under de facto occupation of Italy and it was continuing to expand further into the highlands. Dawit, what could Menelik do from 1000 km away, what 'you' in the neighborhood couldn't for centuries, at the time of the worst famine(known as the Great Famine of 1888-1892) in Ethiopian history? Could he have been able to raise an army & provisions from starving people?

Why didn't the Tigrean nobility dislodge the Italians, instead of rivalry between themselves(some even became collaborators) and vacillating between Ethiopia

and Italy? Why didn't they revolt against Menelik opposing the Treaty instead of submitting to him? In 1894, Ras Mengesha Seyoum, Alula Abanega, Woldemichael Solomon and Bahta Hagos sought Menelik's mercy by prostrating in front of him (in Addis Ababa) carrying stones on their shoulders. They were pardoned after they renounced their shenanigans with Italy. Poor Bahta Hagos of Akale Guzai was the only one who subsequently revolted against Italians at the end of the same year and lost his life. Are you not accusing them of collaboration with Menelik to divide 'your land', if we were to accept your allegation? The fact is that they realized that it was fait accompli and that Italy was playing them against Menelik for the ultimate occupation of Ethiopia. They didn't want to be seen as traitors to the majority of their people and fear of being excommunicated by the Orthodox Church, made them fall in line. It is in the context of all these that Menelik's cession of territories must be seen. He knew he couldn't stop them. In fact, Italians had expanded to more territories (including into Tigray) even before 'the ink dried' on the Treaty of Wuchale. He was a pragmatic man; saw it coming and tried to avert it by concessions of some lands (as did Yohannes and others). Remember that ceding one's territory under threat of aggression does not deprive one's right of reclaiming it later.

You assigned a sinister motive to historical challenges Menelik and Ethiopia had faced; like the ethno-nationalists who only see conspiracy everywhere. Just a reminder, your claim is hypocritical too. TPLF fought and killed Ethiopians with EPLF by declaring (Melese Zenawi's book) Eritrea was an Ethiopian colony. Why the crocodile tears now, over a settled issue whose beneficiaries seem to be happy with? I am sorry EPLF 'forgot' to include you in their narrative of Eritrean history.

Dawit continues " ..we allowed Menelik to forcibly take our land up to Metemma, give it to that expansionist force in Begemdir? ..." Was it because we destroyed the Italian imperial army at Dogali (1887) ... Amba Alagi (1895)?

Dawit is inserting, slyly, TPLF's territorial claim (for its future homeland) on parts of Gondar. Dawit, Metemma (also known as Galabat or Galabad or Qallabat in Arabic) has always been part of Begemdir/Gondar of Ethiopia, except when occupied by Egypt and Mahdists for short periods. Yohannes, to his credit, did not invade Gondar for territorial gain but to assert his suzerainty over Ras Woldeselassie and for the extraction of tributes. Yohannes lost his life in Metemma for Ethiopian territorial integrity. He was a much more broadminded Ethiopian nationalist than many of your elite.

Dawit expands his claim "...Or was it because Ras Mengesha Seyoum and Alula Abanega with Awalom and Hailemariam help made the mistake of absolutely annihilating Victor Emmanuelalong with his askari at the Battle of Adwa(1896)while the so called "Emeye" Menelik was attending a service at St. George church asking the almighty's deliverance and support"

I would have no problem if you were talking about unsung heroes. However, your claim that Tigreans defeated the Italians at the Battle of Adwa is laughable. It is too trivial for me to respond to this nonsense. Even the patron saint of TPLF, Melese Zenawi, didn't insinuate, let alone go that far in his speech at the centenary of the Battle of Adwa in 1996. The world knows about the Battle of Adwa and Menelik's role in it. He is, foremost, recognized as the leader who brought all Ethiopians together, led the campaign to defeat Italy. There is nothing in the history books that diminishes the contribution of the Tigreans. Many others from all regions of Ethiopia fought heroically too and everyone's part is chronicled orally and in the history books. Unfortunately, we can't help you and your kind if history shines on leaders, overshadowing others, fairly or unfairly.

Dawit, goes on to allege; "perhaps our cardinal mistake was that we tolerated and allowed the brutality of Menelik that rained upon the captured Tegar, our Eritrean brothers, a brutality which saw chopping their arms and legs, while 'we' let thousands of captured Italian prisoners of war go scot-free. Or was it also that we failed to protest and expose when he, with barbarism, chopped off the genitals of male Tegar toddlers in Tigray"?

You accuse Menelik of brutality and barbarism selectively, ignoring the brutality of his contemporaries everywhere. Let's hear from anyone who has the nerve to compare the violence of nations and kingdoms to their own or other peoples with that of Menelik's and come out innocent from the barbarities of 19th Century. Wasn't slavery part of America until 1865, the year Menelik became king of Shoa? Remember the Trail of Tears and extermination of the indigenous peoples (Canadians, Australians included), Manifest Destiny against, Mexico, Philippines, Cuba, Porto Rico? Britain's 19th century brutal colonization of a quarter of the world? King Leopold's horrors in Congo, Bismarck's and Garibaldi's rampages through European lands to unite Germany and Italy? France's barbarity in Algeria and Madagascar etc., Portugal, Spain and others were also delivering horrible violence in countries they occupied. Nothing worse happened in Ethiopia that has not happened in the 'civilized' world and elsewhere.

Ethiopia's powerful noblemen and kings had their share of brutalities, in pursuit of power and wealth. Contrary to what ethno-centrists have us believe, there were

no innocents and Tigreans were part it. For a comparison of atrocities between Menelik and his contemporaries; I recommend Bewketu Seyoums compendium: Ke-Amen Bashager

Perhaps, Zemene Mesafint (Era of the Princes) was the climax of brutality in Ethiopian history. Some examples: The famous Scottish explorer, who visited Ethiopia around the 1770s tells us the horrors of Ras Michael Sehul of Adwa (the first of the four Tigrean princes of Zemene Mesafint) in graphic details. In one of his notes he describes how Michael punished those he defeated" ... upon returning to the capital, Ras Mikael immediately killed a troop of traveling actors who had performed a satire of him. A number of former rebels, who had switched sides, brought to him a number of prisoners, including the Aqabe Sa'at Abba Salama: after a show trial Ras Mikael had them brutally executed. In the days that followed Ras Mikael wrought his vengeance on all who opposed him. Fifty seven died publicly by the hand of the executioner ... The bodies of those killed by the sword were hewn to pieces and scattered about the streets....I was miserable, almost driven to despair at seeing my hunting dogs ...bringing into the courtyard the head and arms of the killed men...the quantity of carrion, and the stench of it brought down the hyenas in hundreds ..as few people in Gondar go out".

Bewketu tells us more on Michael's atrocities as follows; Michael defeated an Oromo chieftain, Warragna Fasil, who escaped. Michael had 20 of the captives, had their eyes gouged and left them by Tekeze river for the hyenas. Wacheka was another captive who was skinned alive at Michael's order. Bruce tells us how Wacheka's skin was made a public spectacle.

I am not picking on Yohannes to take a side. All his contemporaries did atrocious things; I am simply trying to teach Dawit not to be too enamored of his clan, when it comes to the past(and even the present).

Let's jump to Yohannes's reign.

Bezbiz Kassa, later Yohannes the 4th, was particularly merciless against (countless regional chiefs) those he defeated before he became king and even after he became emperor. Even if we forget all his atrocities before he became emperor, his reign began with the stain of gouging the eyes of his prisoner, and his brother in law, Atse Teklegiorgis, whom he had defeated during their power struggle to rule Ethiopia. Three writers attest to this cruelty. W.Loreiing, Merab, Etienne and Conti Rossini.

His kingdom was further marred by even more cruelty, intolerance and fanaticism in pursuit of puritan morality and religious unification. For example, Charles

George Gordon (Major General) in 1886 noted the following about Yohannes' regime(በዕውቀቱ ስዩም እንደተረጎመው):"የምፅፈው በጥድፈያ ነው ።ይሁን እንጂ ስለኢትዮጵያ ያለኝን ትዝብት ባጭሩ እገልጻለሁ። ንጉሡ እየለየለት ነው ።ሱረት የሚሰቡ ሰዎችን አፍንጫ በመፍነን፣ ትምባሆ የሚያጫሱ ሰዎችን ከንፈር በመቁረጥ ይቀጣል፣ የበደሉትን ሰዎች እጅና እግር ይቆርጣል" በማለት ፅፏል።

During his reign he had rampaged through Wollo, Gondar, Gojam and even part of Show and other parts of Tigray(like Raya and Azebo) repeatedly. Most of the time he led these campaigns. Sometimes he sent his lieutenants like Ras Alula Abanega. He even bragged about his adventures to other powers like Queen Victoria. Here is one letter (courtesy of Bewketu Seyoum) in Amharic "ከግዛቴ ውስጥ አንዲት ሀገር አለች። ስምዋ አዘቦ ምትባል።በውስጧ ያሉ ሰዎች እስላምና ኦሮሞ ናቸው። እነዚያ ሸፈቱ።እኔም ዘመትኩባቸው። የወጣሁበት ነገር በእግዚአብሔር ሀይል ቀንቶኝ ተመለስሁ". Here is another one where he used his lieutenant (quoted from Bewketu's). Historian and admirer of Alula Abanega, Haggai Erlich writes about one campaign against the Baria tribes, just because their leader was unable to raise sufficient tribute/duty from the people: "Then he (Alula) ordered the greatest plunder in the history of the Baria tribes. During the last week in November, two thirds of the people and the cattle of Baria and Kunama north of the Gash were destroyed"

Let's now return to your actual charge of atrocities on Eritrean askaris, by Menelik's army, following the defeat of Italians. Dawit, you have earlier bragged about Tigreans annihilating the Italian army and their askaris. You also claim you let the Italian captives go scot-free. So, what did you do with the the captured askaris? Was there a separate Menelik army that you handed them over to, for their punishment? Isn't it most likely that Tigreans were the most distraught by the askaris killing of their own kinsmen and went on the rampage? You want to take the glory but hide from the dirty consequences of war. It was not hidden. His admirer, Afework Gebreyesus wrote about it in his biography of Menelik, Dagmawi Atse Menelik, saying it was a black stain on his reign.

Menelik was culpable. A brief quote from Anthony Mockler shows a better picture of what occurred "...Dabormida was one of the 262 Italian officers and nearly 4000 Italian soldiers who died that day.....Nineteen hundred Italians, including Albertone, and about a thousand askaris were taken prisoner. Infuriated by the death of their leader, the men of Dejaz Beshah , Menelik's cousin, killed all prisoners upon whom they could lay their hands -- 70 Italians and 230 askaris. For this crime Fitaurari Lemma was exiled by Menelik to an amba, a

mountaintop. The Eritrean prisoners were held to have betrayed the Emperor and after long debate were punished with the penalty reserved for traitors. Their right hands and their left feet were cut off: many died during the night; 400 mutilated survivors were eventually released...And there were no great rejoicing in the Ethiopian camp. Menelik cut short the boasting ceremonies and the war-songs

...Later he told Dr. Neruzzini that he saw no cause to rejoice over the death of Christian men."

You see, there was no choice. Pardoning and humane treatment of prisoners of war is a luxury you can talk about now; not then & there. The askaris who killed Ethiopians/Tigreans (some, who had just fled from the Italian army to join their brethren) with the enemy had to be punished(however gruesome the punishment). Nobody could have stopped them from avenging their fellow countrymen. Dawit, you want to take the moral high ground by condemning Menelik out of context and its period, based on a nonexistent universal code of conduct. Just in case you didn't know; the Geneva Convention about treatment of prisoners of war didn't come into existence until 1929.

Your accusation that Menelik chopped off the male genitals of Tegaruu toddlers is the most debased scurrilous charge/gossip that only a candidate prostituting for a TPLF position would fabricate. Menelik's achievements, as a man of his time, will never be tarnished by false accusations of Tigrean elite haunted by his shadow.

Here, Dawit jumps into the era of Haile Selassie. He tells us about Woyane One's revolt in 1943, as a badge of honor. Dawit, you can lionize it anyway you want. The fact remains that it was one of the many revolts HS's regime encountered. There were revolts in Yeju, Gedeo, Gojjam, Begemdir, Bale, Ogaden etc. and they were all suppressed (whatever their grievances) by the authorities. All nation states in the world crush revolts, whatever their political system. Didn't TPLF and EPLF eliminate their comrades preemptively, fearing revolts, even before they took power?

Woyane One was an opportunistic, traitorous and reactionary revolt. Ethiopia was weak, broke and still under British administration when your rebels tried to take advantage(as happened again by Woyane-Two). While you hype the significance of the revolt, you have inserted the 11th grade students' propaganda of the Sixties, calling Haile Selassie a coward and traitor (perhaps, you confused him with the notorious traitor/collaborator, Haile Selassie Gugsu of Tigray). Haile Selassie led the Maichew Front of The Italo-Ethiopian War of 1935. He fought

gallantly until he/we were defeated. Colorful witness accounts abound in the history books of what he did before and after the war. Your charge that he fled the country following the defeat is another lie (read John Spencer, who was there, and others). The council of nobility and the ministers voted 21 to 3 for him to leave the country and pursue the diplomatic struggle at the League of Nations, in Geneva. Scholars, on hindsight, agree that his action was the right one, considering the alternatives; death or capture by Italians.

Your insinuation that Woyane One were underdogs, that they defeated 'a trained' army supported by the British is another rubbish. Ethiopia had no standing army (the little it had begun to form, less than a year before the war, was wiped out by Italians, including the great Tigrean hero, Belay Haileab and his Black Lions).

Ethiopia was under British rule following the defeat of Italy (see Anglo-Ethiopia Agreement of 1942) "as an occupied enemy territory" with no power to do anything the British didn't allow. The British had obligation for national and internal security of the country. They had barely begun helping train the military and police when your bandits (awash with seized Italian weapons) began attacking local government officials and structures. It was bloody and the bandits even succeeded occupying Mekelle. The response was as brutal and air power was used. Dawit, aircraft was used by the British like any instrument of war. You make it sound like an exceptional event that befell the Tigreans only. No, thirteen years earlier (1930) Gugsä Wole's Begemdir rebellion was crushed by newly acquired aircraft, "... first showered them with leaflets and later with bombs", writes Bahru Zewde.

Dawit claims HS took their land up to Al Wuha and gave it to his son, Asfawosen

..

Fifty years after the Ethiopian Revolution settled the land ownership question, thereby dismantling feudalism, Dawit wants to relitigate the dead man, swept away by the Revolution.

What is the point of this allegation, unless TPLF is preparing for an independent Tigray and is counting (in your fertile mind) on some fertile land from Wollo, to be part of your future new 'land'?

Your other charge that HS denied you education is another blatant lie. There is no evidence this ever happened. Leul Ras Mengesha Seyoum (the ancestral nobleman) was the governor of Tigray from 1960 to 1974 and before that, his father. There is nothing in his memoir suggesting anything like that. In a book

written (about Ethiopian and Eritrean war) by one of your ancestral nobility of Adwa, Dr. Dejaz. Zewde Gebre Selassie Baria Gabir, there is a 1972 statistics in the appendix section that shows percentage of students who went to school in each province. Other than the big three; Addis Ababa, Shoa & Eritrea, there is little difference between the provinces. In fact, Tigray has higher percentage of students than Wollo and Gojjam, in spite of the higher population in these two provinces, and about the same with Gondar.

The fact is, in 1972 the nucleus of today's TPLF, Mahberi Gesgesti Tigray, was plotting the disintegration of Ethiopia from Haile Selassie University (ዳን ትምህርት ቤት ደህን?), where they were being educated at the expense of poor Ethiopians. I know you have finished your university education by then. Dawit, where did all these people tormenting us now, come from? Never mind, the scientists and prominent professors and others around the world. In Harargie, in 1972, maybe four times the size of Tigray and a much higher number of population (and supposedly the Emperor's home province) had no high school south and east of Harar in an area 3 times the size of Tigray. You may accuse HS of anything but not the malady that you all suffer from; tribalism. Remember his great grand children are Tigreans. He couldn't have denied them education.

Dawit writes in the next paragraph that thousands of Tigreans died because they were not welcome in other parts of Ethiopia, specially because Gondar (1950s) following locust invasions ...

Who is to blame uneducated people for having premonition that locust invasion is a punishment of a deity that followed it's victims? I suspect the locust invasion was a metaphor used by Gondares for their experience with marauding Tigrean invasions. The last ancestral ruler (his father before him) of Tigray (1960 to 1974) Leul Ras Mengesha Seyoum talks about the migration of Tigreans to Eritrea and other parts of Ethiopia, in general, due to lack of jobs from recurring droughts and locust invasions. Do you think he is hiding something? More Tigreans live, proportionately, in Gondar than any place outside Tigray.

There was no government (there couldn't have been because your elite were governors) or provincial policy that excluded Tigreans from migrating to anywhere, notwithstanding what the uneducated and prejudiced people say. Leul Ras Mengesha Seyoum tells us in his memoir that every year up to 40000 Tigrean seasonal workers went to Gondar, via Eritrea, for work before he had a bridge built over Tekeze River. Compare the significance of this number with the total number of industrial workers in all Ethiopia at that time. Your Malthusian theory comment is an indecent and silly analogy.

From this point on Dawit's tantrums, mudslinging and boasts get worse by the paragraph. They can't be referenced from any worthwhile records. All are from the Gossip columns of the TPLF encyclopedia of lies.

Dawit has a plethora of accusations, epithets and insults which I can't repeat here. I won't respond in kind and insult Tigreans in general, no matter how much a TPLF minion like Dawit descends into the depths of vulgarity. However, I will remind him what he omitted conveniently from 'our' records.

You have a slew of name callings that you allege were thrown at Tigreans in the olden days, but forgot to mention not even one of the name callings Tigreans directed at Ethiopians, specially at the Amharas. I can't mention them here. Your epithets belong to the uneducated and narrow minded ignoramus crowd meant to smear Ethiopians and Amharas, hoping they would garner sympathy from the camp of victimhood. But, I would include a few names Ethiopians called you that you 'forgot' to put in your piece; Banda(traitor), Yenat Toot Nekash (የናት ጡት ነካሽ), narrow-minded nationalists, scoundrels and liars. I suspect you skipped these ones because they are closer to the truth than your outdated ones wiped out by the cultural revolution in Ethiopia. Prejudices, stereotypes and epithets are wrong irrespective of who they are directed at or who they come from. They are signs of backwardness; nevertheless, they exist in all societies and are difficult to legislate against. For example, you talk about being called Agame. The people who called you Agame mostly are other Tigreans. Most prejudices were wiped out by the revolutionary change and recognition of the equality of nationalities and minorities. The question is which one of us showed progress in the last fifty years(from the Revolution until now) and who lagged behind or created new ones. Ethiopians' improvement can be considered radical. TPLF, despite its noise about rights and other ideals, has only managed to go backwards. TPLF and its sympathizers, like you, have created new epithets and derogatory phrases and have recycled old ones and weaponized them (Neftegna, for example) to the detriment of large groups of Ethiopians.

Those Ethiopians who called all Tigreans(mostly in today's Eritrea) 'banda', because of the askari, were wrong(no matter their atrocities with Italians). All reasonable Ethiopians condemned(continue to condemn) this ugly epithet. No historical event should be blamed on people who had no control over their destiny. By the same token, calling all Tigreans 'banda' because of TPLF's betrayal is wrong and must be condemned. However, calling TPLF Banda is not an epithet. It's a fact. They are legitimate target for betraying Ethiopia. It was shameful and unprecedented. No Ethiopian ruler(s) began his/their rule by traitorous narrative & actions as TPLF did.

Dawit continues his attack; calling Menelik and Amharas 'land grabbing expansionist', "settler chauvinists, extremist Neftegna culture" "land grabbing criminal being".

In addition to being insolent, you are incapable of gratitude for being alive now. The Ethiopians(Amharas, if you prefer) gave you everything you had/have after your parents migrated to the center of the country and joined the services of the ruling Aristocracy, unlike the millions of poor Tigreans who toiled under the feudalist repression of the period. The privileged Tigreans have been 'biting the hand that fed them' for quite a while. Dawit, if you can't be fair; shut up. Let the underprivileged, not part of the exploitative class speak.

You seem to have forgotten your history lessons. Ethiopia was mainly a feudal state. Feudal lords (kings/princes) fought each other for territory, wealth and power over others, That was what our ancestors did constantly. 132 years ago Shoans(not strictly Amharas) came to power after the heroic death of Yohannes the 4th. I don't think the Tigrean elite slept a night, ever since. You thought/think you were/are entitled to the Ethiopian empire and that the Shoans snatched it from you when Menelik became emperor, by default rather than by scheming, as you accuse him to this day. That was your first misapprehension. Your sense of entitlement gave rise to your repeated attempts to reclaim the throne but failed to achieve it, miserably. Yohannes's son, Ras Mengesha Seyoum fought Menelik three times to retake power and lost each time. Menelik tired of pardoning and reinstating him to his ancestral rulership, detained him in Ankober until he died there. Menelik never fought Yohannes the 4th, as luck would have it for poor Ethiopians. All that is history now and has nothing to do with subsequent generations. You however continue to be Fixated with Menelik and the Amharas. Why don't you let go for your own sanity! I sometimes wonder what you would have done to the Amharas, if Menelik had defeated Yohannes (like he defeated the Amharas in Gondar, Gojam and Wollo); probably worse than what TPLF is doing now!

The difference between your elite and that of Shoan's is that they learn from their mistakes and move on. Menelik submitted to Yohannes in 1878 at Lechie(Shoa) realizing he couldn't defeat him and avoided bloodshed. Read the heart warming magnanimity Yoahannes uttered at the submission of Menelik, whereas you continue to torment his descendants to this day. Menelik was a visionary who happened to be the right man at the right place, as was Yohannes in his time. That is all there is to it. I am glad he was the one rather than any of the others or the Ferenji. You demonize him for what he did better than what you did. You

never get tired of assassinating his character for deeds you made ten times worse than him.

Like I said above, expansion of territory is an integral part of feudalism and all of them(kings, princes, dukes, vassals) did it and all ancient nation states too. Feudalism lasted 1000 years in Europe and thousands in Asia. Nobody insults Charlamagne, the Czars or Kublai Khan, centuries later. They are history. If we include colonialism; it didn't end until the Sixties; you are a witness. Your vulgar phraseology aside, Menelik's 'expansion' was like any other. The Oromos, Amharas, Tigreans and the rest of them; whose level of development allowed them to do it. Contrary to what ethnic 'historians' want us to believe(other tribes' expansion narrative is Amhara myth) the evidence is incontestable. One doesn't even need to read Amhara 'historians'. Dawit, there were no innocents, Yohannes invaded and reinvaded Gojam, Gondar, Wollo and even northern parts of Shoa. Those were marauding invasions. Most of Menelik's 'expansion' or reclamations(as one of your ancestors put it) were under Yohannes the 4th's Reign, that is, between 1872 and 1889, with his tacit permission. Remember Yohannes's punishment of Negus Menelik of Shoa and Negus Teklehimant of Gojam for disobeying him? They were ordered not to fight over territory south of Gibe. They fought anyway (The Battle of Embabo, 1882) and both were punished. Some territories were taken from them and Menelik had to handover the weapons, he acquired as trophy, from the defeated Negus Teklehaimanot. Dawit, don't preach to us about Menelik's expansion only. Here is what the Great Grand Son of Yohannes the 4th, Leul Ras Mangasha Seyoum(who is alive and in his nineties) says in his memoir: Yetwelid Adera:

"እንደሚታወቀው ፣ ቅድመ አያቱ አፄ ዮሀንስ 4ኛ፣ ንጉሠ ነገሥት ዘኢትዮጵያ ፣ ከግራኝ መሃመድ ዘመን (1519--1534)ጀምሮ እስከ 18ኛው ክፍለ ዘመን ተበታትነው የነበሩትን የምስራቅ ፣ የደቡብና የምዕራብ ጥንት የኢትዮጵያ የግዛት አካል የነበሩ አገሮችን፣ ሲያመቸ በድርድር ፣ሲያምፁም በጦር ኃይል ተመልሰው የኢትዮጵያ አካል እንዲሆኑ የሸዋን ንጉሥ ሚኒልክና ፣ የጎጃሙን ንጉሥ ተክለሃይማኖት በትዕዛዝም በእውቅናም የአገሪቱ ድንበር እንዲስፋፋ በማድረግ አኩሪ ታሪክ ሰርተዋል።" (ገጽ 131)

Dawit's other statements; "settler chauvinists, extremist Nefteгна" and land grabbing criminal being" are just derogatory epithets and insults that I will not respond to. Dawit, you think we are short on epithets? Dawit, you manufactured an epithet out of a historical(over which individuals had no control) event (that has been dealt with half a century ago) and are using it against today's Amhara descendants. Dawit, if only your ancestors were innocent! Neftegnas(weapon bearers) were the foot soldiers(law enforcers) of the

feudal system in southern Ethiopia, long before the police and army were formed. They were, mainly, farmers during peace time but were always ready for calls for law & order. The system was already redundant before the Revolution, however the remnants were abolished and their weapons confiscated in 1975(following the Revolution) by the struggle of all Ethiopians, specially the Amharas themselves. Ironically, the two groups that left town to challenge(Ethiopia) and the Revolution were Tigreans.

Dawit continues "...Was it because finally our people decided that enough is enough ..started Second Woyane for justiceperhaps we went wrong getting rid of the derg ...for the ungrateful...the promulgation of constitution ...or we were wrong to be harbinger of a socio-economic movement unseen growth rate industrial production

..

You want gratitude from Ethiopians for overthrowing Derg. You also laud the economic and other successes of TPLF but all these mean nothing to Ethiopians. We would rather have an oppressive government than a traitorous enemy from within. We wouldn't allow the British to remain in Ethiopia after they helped us defeat Italy. Why would Ethiopians be gracious to TPLF? And you don't seem to realize that economic and infrastructure improvements mean nothing under an occupier. Dawit, Italians built great roads and tunnels and introduced many things including cultural changes(eating with fork!), But we never asked them to remain in our country. Dawit, economic growth(crony and kleptocratic capitalism like yours) does not translate into equality, freedom and justice. You are old enough to know that the most successful nations did it in less than your age and all of them were authoritarian, but they didn't have betrayers with hidden agendas.

Your attack that Amharas are lazy is profoundly insulting from somebody who grew up on the back of the Amhara poor. You probably gathered such gossip from around dinner tables of the well-fed Tigreans, like your family.

Dawit continues "What did we do wrong...was it because of our culture of tolerance strengthened over centuries, being a society that never invaded others,...never confiscating or appropriating land rightfully belonged to others? A people that never traded humans as slavesin fact, we as a people have no place in a criminalPerhaps the innate Tegar culture ...This basic warmth is not appreciated."

Dawit is promoting a myth for the less confident in their history. He will not succeed. It is only truth that liberates. I have dealt with some aspect of his falsehoods in earlier paragraphs. I have already told you about their level of

tolerance and invasions. The list of invasions and re-invasions by Tigreans is long, within today's Ethiopian territory. How many times did you invade Wollo, Gojam, Gondar and neighboring territories up to even parts of Shoa(one wonders whether warlords ever had anything else to do other than fighting). Let me add some here because Dawit seems to have not heard even anecdotal stories let alone read history.

You are proud of the Axumite Empire and yet you claim Tigreans have not invaded any people. Don't empires presuppose conquest and vanquishing other peoples? The Axumite Empire, at its pinnacle had conquered up to Southern Arabia and other places to the west. What do you call that? Were Axumites there to 'promote democracy' like today's Imperialists? It is an insult to you to offer an answer. Dawit, what is this boasting about not trading humans as slaves? All ancient societies practiced some kind of human bondage. It comes with the package. What did the Axumites do with the conquered peoples? Did they send them to Europe for scholarship? Captives were enslaved or sold for enslavement. You don't seem to know that the ports along the Red Sea were used for slave trade. Our ancestors participated in this evil(by today's standard) practice. By the way, you should have heard some anecdotal stories about slaves from your grandfathers. You should know better than other Ethiopians as to what happened to the slaves Menelik paid as a tribute to Yohannes the 4th, by treaty. For his submission(to avoid war) to Yohannes the following annual tributes were imposed on him:" ...the provisioning of the emperors army ...; an annual tribute of 500 slaves, 50000 talers, 500 mules, 1000 horses, 50000 head of cattle and several thousand measures of grain and (gambos) of meat and butter ..." What did Tigreans do with the slaves? Perhaps, this will be a good subject for research.

In the next few paragraphs Dawit is bitter and shrilling over Eritreans stance on the current war between Tigray and Ethiopia and other previous grievances. I felt sorry for him because he has some truths. When I summarize it, he is saying "we lied for you, betrayed for you, killed for you, got killed for you but you betrayed us, by excluding us from our common heritage ...Dawit however failed to say 'we killed you to advance our agenda'. Sorry Dawit, we have no sympathy for someone that betrayed Ethiopia by scheming with EPLF.

From this point on Dawit continues ranting about the current war, being betrayed by progressive forcesand condemns everyone but not Tigreans. They are always right and always the victims. No reflective opinion ... I better stop here for now.

Abate Tikko