LIFE IN TWENTIETH-CENTURY ETHIOPIA
AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL NARRATIVE OF
BRIGADIER GENERAL MEBRAHTU FESSEHA

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## CHAPTER ONE
1. **Back ground and Introduction**
   1.1 Back ground ........................................... 1
   1.2 Introduction .......................................... 3

## CHAPTER TWO
2. **Autobiographical Narrative**
   2.1 Childhood.............................................. 6
   2.2 Anti Fascist struggle and service in British army ............ 8
   2.3 Marriage and children .................................. 11
      2.3.1 Marriage ............................................. 11
      2.3.2 children ........................................... 13
   2.4 Early and higher education ............................. 15
   2.5 Friends and partners .................................... 17
   2.6 Government service .................................... 18
   2.7 Hobby ................................................... 26

## CHAPTER THREE
3. **Miscellaneous Information**
   3.1 The post world War II crises in Eritrea .................... 27
   3.2 The observation of Rural life in GamoGofa province after
       the 1974 revolution ...................................... 28

## CHAPTER FOUR
4. **The Inception Of Ethiopian Student Movements**
   4.1 Background .............................................. 31
   4.2 Factors that contributed for the emergence of
      Ethiopian Student Movements ............................. 33
      4.2.1 The expansion of educational institutions ............. 33
      4.2.2 The influence of ideologies and attitudes from out side -- 35
      4.2.3 The impact of African scholarship students ............. 36
   4.3 Early activities of students ............................ 38
      4.3.1 Early attempt for self-expression ...................... 38
      4.3.2 The first demand of students ........................ 40
      4.3.3 Early form of student organization .................... 41
      4.3.4 The 1960 coup and the first mass agitation of
          university students .................................... 43
   5. **Foot Note** ............................................ 46
   6. **Bibliography** .......................................... 51
   7. **Appendixes** ..........................................
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Chapter One
Back Ground and Introduction

I Back Ground

The writing of Autobiographical account had several motivations. From historical point of view the main target is to collect and preserve historical experiences, which can play significant role on building a national history. Several books define the term autobiography in many ways. Autobiography is the story of one's life written by himself. In other word it is a man's recording of his own life. Others regarded it as the method and the way to record the daily experience of one's own life.¹

Generally it is regarded as one method of sharing experiences of what is worthy in ones lifetime. Above all it is very important and useful for future generation to know about their ancestors. The accumulation of autobiographical account makes research relatively easier and serves as source material for future historians.

The main advantage of writing autobiography is that we will be able to acquire cultural, economic and social histories, which are almost neglected in the history of our country. Most of books written in our country focused only on political history of a given society. The other parts of our history including social, cultural and economic aspects have remained taboo. Therefore, writing autobiography has its own role to play in tackling and in solving this issue.

When for the first time I started my senior essay, my mind felt that I would not accomplish this work successfully. Later on through steps I tried to familiarize my self with the task.

Writing autobiography needs more attention and consciousness. It also demands much effort to organize and arrange it according to its order. There are challenges among which presentation according to its order is the most tiresome. I have employed different procedures to select my informant among large number of candidates. At first I selected candidate informants and I compared and evaluated them by their memory capacity and their willingness to
tell the truth. All these evaluation methods were important and finally this procedure helps me to get the right person. I tried to get a woman informant, favorable to my work. Actually I got one female informant but she traveled abroad for better medical treatment and I could not get the chance to meet her again.

In the course of writing this senior essay I have faced different problems. There were many constraints. I will try to explain them as much as possible in their sequences from the time of the beginning of my writing. The problem begins with lack of writing experience and extends up to confrontation with unwilling informant. I came across obstacles when I started finding an informant. I could not easily get the kind ideal person I had pictured in my mind. And this took me some time. After I got informants with the help of some people the candidate informant, would happen to be below the age of qualification.

The effort of getting elders more than 70 year by itself is cumbersome. I told what I wanted for everybody that I knew from my locality and other respected persons who know many people. But it was not easy to hit the target.

One of my high school friends introduced me with a very important candidate informant. He looks a very old man. He is among the first musicians who worked in Bodyguards music band. His name is Ato Zewge. Before I met with him his son told me that his father, the candidate, is exactly 72 years old. When I asked the age of the informant, however, he told me that he is 63. I was confused. I do not know why our society stick to keeping their age secret. This was just before I explained about my objective. Later on when I explained everything he became interested told me that he is above 70. But I felt that if he lied his exact age how could I be sure whether his narration would be genuine or not. There is a proverb in the Bible;" You has been faithful over a few thing, I will make you ruler over many thing". How could I trust him, if he lie me on such a minor thing. Finally I left him and I continued to find another informant.

After all these challenges an important idea occurred to my mind. It so happened that I am a member of one Protestant Church, so I decided to tell the
laity as well as the pastor what I want. I know that I have the access to communicate with many individuals. Accordingly, I told what I needed to my pastor and believers of the church. I hoped to get many informants through this process.

Systematically I would easily get what I wanted. Communicating with many people by it self cannot bring informant. What we have to do is, according to my experience, visiting the area where peoples came together. That would be the best solution for lack of informant. Churches and local assemblies are ideal and best places where peoples gather. According to our culture, elders single-mindedly focus on attending churches on their last stage of life. How did I get informant from church area? At first I contacted with the priest and he responded that there are a lot of elders. I told him my objective and he provided me names of two informants that attend church properly with their status. The next day with appointment the priest agreed to introduce me face to face and I become happy by this. It was in this way that I met with Brig. General Mebrahtu Fisseha and other well known persons of the Imperial and the Durg Regimes.

II Introduction

My Informant, whom I present as my principal informant, is Brig. General Mebrahtu Fesseha Kifle. He lives in Addis Ababa city in the area known as Kirkos Kifleketema. He is 85 years old. He came to Addis in the early 1920's with his parents while he was a two years old child.

He worked in Police Force for 20 years at different positions starting from ordinary policeman up to deputy commander, and later changed his occupation because of various reasons. He served as diplomat and counselor of Ethiopian Embassy in Nigeria. He served in the Navy after his return from Nigeria. He also served as Deputy Minister in the Administration of International Boundary under the Ministry of Interior during the imperial government. In addition he served in Wild Life Conservation Department under the Ministry of Agriculture for a few years. Then after this he was appointed as deputy Governor General of Bale Province. Finally he served as Governor General of GamoGofa Provincial
Administration. Presently after retirement he is running his own multi-million business organization, which is called Inter Alpha Trade Enterprise PLC.

His lifetime experience was mainly categorized in the period between 1930's up to 1970's. His participation in national affairs started in giving service for British Army, which arrived during the Second World War to fight against Italians in East Africa particularly in Ethiopia. His lifetime experience during this struggle has one part in this senior essay. After the war he engaged in the police force and he discusses his lifetime experience during his service in police force. His narration also includes the 1960 coup d'etat. He was one of the participants in the coup. He has the memory regarding Eritrean Crises after the end of WWII. His daughter Martha Mebrahtu was among the student who led student's movement. His narration also touches up on his daughter and student’s movement to some extent. He also discusses about his time as deputy Minister and Minister Of International Boundary Administration and wild Life Conservation Department. He narrates his educational level and also about his relatives. He also discusses his experience during his time as Governor General of GamoGofa province where he argues that, he faced the greatest challenge in his life. Most of his narration focused around his experience at the time of the government service. He also talks about his family. Generally he narrates his personal experience related with national history.

Starting from the time of our meeting we had a contact time of a long period. Before starting the interview I made clear each and everything about my objective. After we understood each other I started the interview with tape recording. We met several times to conduct the interview. I arranged my interview in an organized form by dividing in to categories .For example the first interview was about childhood. After we finished all the issues on childhood, then the next sub division is covered. Each category took a one day interview except public service which took more that a day. There were also other topics that by my informant treated with in the sub divisions.

Weekends are committed for church program and other activities. The alternative was to do the interview on working day. Our interview had taken
place in his own office. He favored to be interviewed alone. We took more than half an hour in each interview. After we accomplished an interview we would fix the next interview including the date and the time. I would give him outline of the next interview and he would prepare himself by collecting all his attention for the next interview and that way we were able to accomplish the interview without much difficulty. If during narrating time he forgot a name or period of events we abandoned it for the moment and continue the interview on other topic. But later on after he remembered what he forgot he would inform me even on telephone. All our interviews passed through this process.

It is obvious that with the advance of age memory capacity decreases. This is normal and law of nature. My informant is 85 years old. Though his age is at its peak, his memory capacity is good and he recalls most of his lifetime events. There were times when he forgot but with some effort he would memorize and bring what he forgot. So there was no significant problem regarding recollection. Because of his strong memory he was able to narrate his experience related with other events.
Chapter Two  
Autobiographical narrative

2.1 Childhood

I was born in the town of Asmera in 1922. My father was named Fisseha kifle and my mother was W/o Amlesset Solomon. Their place of origin is Eritrea. Both of them had taken missionary education and grew up together in missionary school in Asmera. I was the first child for my parents. My father came to Addis Ababa earlier in 1923 in which he crossed the entire desert and accomplished the journey on foot. On those days Eritrea was under the control of Italy, and my father had a serious problem with the Italians since he was one of the Hamasien group who favored Ethiopia or death.

My father was an educated person and after he came to Addis Ababa he was employed in the municipality as assistant engineer for Mose Minas who was the chief engineer for Addis Ababa city. My father started to live a peaceful life but he was not happy because he lives alone and he send massage to my mother through merchants that he was in Addis Ababa and she should come with me to meet him. During colonial period, it was almost impossible for natives to travel out of Eritrea by any means. Further more it was also difficult for my mother to travel on foot by crossing the desert and the long distance. The only alternative was traveling on ship through Djibouti. I came to Addis Ababa with my mother when I was two years old. We traveled from Asmera by ship up to Djibouti and then from Djibouti to Addis Ababa by train. Therefore, after several challenges we have arrived at Addis Ababa.

I grew up in Addis Ababa in the area locally named Seba Dereja. When I was young enough I started my education in Entoto Mekane Iyesus primary school room. Where in fact I was not lucky to stay. During the time of Empress Zewditu, Hakim Workineh Eshete was appointed as governor of Chercher province. The head town for the province was Asebeteferi. Hakim Workineh needed an engineer for the town and based on his request my father was appointed as engineer for the town of Asabateferi, today known as Chiro. Hakim
Workineh took my father with himself. Because of this reason all the family moved to Asabatefari town.

In Asabatefari Hakim Workineh established a Primary School and I continued my education in this newly inaugurated school. The director of the school during the time was Kibur Ato Amanuel Abreham who later became Minister of Education during Emperor Hailesillassie’s regime. While I was on the mid way to finish my primary school, my father received order of transfer from Asabatefari to Addis Ababa—my boyhood city—and he brought all of us back with him.

The return of our family to Addis Ababa created a good opportunity to me. I continued my education in Menelik II primary school. The education was the highest quality ever before. My stay in this school was very successful. I scored good grades and, I always had the 1st rank from the class.

In 1935 a major episode in Ethiopian history occurred, i.e. the Italians invaded Ethiopia. The country fell under fascist control. Every activity was paralyzed during the time end. I also stopped my education. My father abandoned his family and joined the patriotic movement against the Italian invaders. Italian categorized my father and the Hamasian group as enemies who betrayed Eritrea. They were well aware that it was dangerous if merciless Italian killers called “policia coloniale” caught them. My father joined the patriotic movement led by Ras Emiru to liberate his country from fascist dominations. Although his ambition was great he was scarified his life on the battlefield of Gera area in 1936.

All these circumstances had created economic crises in our family. To solve this problem I was forced to find a job in a local grocery called “Hendel grocery”. I was only 13 years old. I served only for a brief duration. The salary was too small to solve the economic problem of our family. My mother had no alternative and decided to return to Asmera to take care of her children with the help of her family.

Because of these reasons our family traveled back to Asmera. After I reached Asmara I did not went make to contact with the colonial authorities. I
was slightly educated person at the time and I had the chance to get a job easily. But my educational level would arise the question where I had learnt? How and, why did I came? Because it was impossible for a black child to learn above grade four. If, I decided to work with the Italians I knew also that I would lose the chance of fighting for the sovereignty of my country and of making revenge for the blood of my father.

During the Second World War because of colonial policy Asmera was a besieged city for young adults. It was difficult to go out from Asmera to other areas. Colonial forces encircled it and I was forced to remain in Asmera until the condition was conducive for my ambition to return to Addis Ababa. Until I was 17 I was able to work in one business organization called opim. The urge to fight against the colonial rule crept in to my head while I was 15th years old. My craving turned in to reality when the British army came to Eritrean land to fight against Italians.

2.2. Anti- Fascist struggle and service in British army

I had strong desire to avenge the blood of my father and to help restore the sovereignty of my country. My only dilemma was how and which army to join.

While I was thinking this idea an important opportunity cropped up. The British army, which came from Sudan under the command of Major General William Platt advanced to Eritrea. The army made the great fifty five day war in East Africa and destroyed the Italian strategic base in keren. Then it marched toward Asmera triumphantly. I received this news with great pleasure.

At this time Italy was alienated both with France and Britain. The British were ousted from the British Somaliland by the Italians and fearing the Italian expansion waged war against Italians. They also decided to help the patriotic war in Ethiopia. Therefore the British army moved to attack the enemy in Ethiopia from different directions and continued the attack on large scale. With that my question of finding an army against Italians also goten answer. I heard the news that the British army was stationed in the area between Asmera and keren at a place called “Embatzum”. So I traveled secretly to join the British
army and as soon as I reached Embatzum British soldiers took me to their leader, Brigadier General Lash. At first glance he asked me; “Are you from the royal family? I answered no. Then he asked me from where I came, where I was educated the English language and the reason why I decided choice to join the British army. I answered briefly and clearly that I came originally and acquired my education in Addis and my main motive was to avenge the blood of my father and to restore the sovereignty of my country. He was astonished to find English speaking Ethiopian in this desert and he allowed me to join the army. Initially I was kept with in the watchful range of the eyes of the British. Then I started to give translation service, while attending military training. I continued in translation of English and Italian language in the army. In addition from the Ethiopian languages I spoke Amharic and Tigrigna fluently and was skilled in writing. I served as translator all through the war in the British army.

Since I joined the British army while I was only 17 years old. Furthermore, there was limited educated manpower and this helped me to get a good place in the British army. The British needed educated persons for various jobs. After I served for some time I became chief translator in the army.

I had established rich social relationship within the army. I continued as well as to attend the military training. Finally I entered Asmera with the victorious British army. After I finished my training I became permanent soldier.

In line with the decision of the British government to help Ethiopia, the army advanced southward through Adigrate and entered the Ethiopian land. By then there were large number of Ethiopians in the British army.

The Italian army had established strong defense bases and fortification to protect themselves from the patriotic war in main towns and strategic areas. One of them was strategic Mountains of Ambalage. They made strong forks in this mountain. The Italian army tried to get full victory by using their utmost potential against the patriotic war and the British army. But this was not successful and recognizing defeat the Italians began to surrender in large numbers. I met in this war field my long time friend Negash Woldmikael. It is a
great pleasure for me to meet with my friend and we stayed together until the enemy’s total vanishment.

Although the Ambalage war was feared to take longer period since we opened attack in different direction the war was over with in a few days. The war on our side demanded scarification to some extent. On the Italian side, however ordinary soldier as well as higher military leaders were killed and captured. The Italians were dispersed but did not escape from surrendering. Among the captives there was one colonel. I tore the Italian flag on his face. Captured war leaders called their soldiers all over the area to surrender for the British army and the patriots. In the Ambalage battle the backbone of Italian army was broken. This battle opened the way for the British to control more areas.

The victorious army advanced successfully to Adigrat, Adwa and other areas. It March to Mekele then to Desse and finally interred Addis Ababa in April 1941.

The army that entered Addis Ababa marched in mid-may 1941 towards Gonder. I also moved with the army from Addis Ababa to Gonder. Most of Ethiopia was liberated except the remaining Italian force that gathered in and around Gonder from different areas, So Gonder was not liberated at this time. The army, traveled through Desse, returned back to Mekele and moving from Shire to Limalimo headed directly towards Gonder.

The remaining Italian forces established their last defensive line around Gonder particularly on Qulqual gate where they concentrated their soldiers. Our army confronted the enemy at Amba Giorgis front. In this front the hopeless enemy force fought desperately but it failed and we concluded our last war in Gonder triumphantly.

After we controlled Gonder the Ethiopians that cooperated with the enemy became bandits, which was their only alternative. The heroic Ethiopians concluded the war with victory and our country became fully liberated from Italian domination.

In Gonder it was important to train local men to secure peace for the society. The responsibility was given to one named Shamble (captain) Berdet and
I became his assistant. Captain Berdet and me continued on consolidating and restoring the security system of the region.

The local peoples did not clearly distinguish the aim and target of British from the Italians. They regarded both as ferengi. It was our responsibility to explain the difference and change the sentiment and we served as middlemen between the British army and the society. We tried to change the attitude of the society and gradually the society started to regard the British as their friends.

After the end of the war for my contribution in anti-fascist struggle the British government awarded me two medals

1. Medal for African war
2. Medal for the Second World War

2.3 Marriage and children

2.3.1 Marriage

I did not have a love story before marriage. When I was young I refreshed with my friends wondering in the city’s new places like hotels, groceries and other areas for the sake of getting pleasure. I had a joyful time with my friends and sometimes I made affairs. These events had unforgettable mark on my life. In my working time I honestly conduct my work with out rest but in my leisure time I spent most of the time with my friends on recreational areas. Most of the time our recreational center was Rass Hotel. In those days amusement centers were not as abundant as today. I do not have any girl friend before marriage like my relatives. The custom of marriage was that at first our parents perform the selection and later the would-be lovers contact through time and know each other. My parents therefore selected a suitable girl for me and then I love her and she loves me finally we made marriage. The marriage was accomplished in more traditional manner.

I established marriage in 1949 with W/o Ariyam Gebre Eyesus and we live together for more than 57 years. My wife was a beautiful girl and was dreaming to marry member of a royal family, but she married me. When I established marriage I was 27 years and my wife was 18 years. We made a lavish wedding ceremony. It took place in Five-kilo Mekane Iyesus Church.
We traveled to Asmera for honeymoon. At that time Asmera was regarded as a foreign city because of its progress. There was no air transport but we traveled on our car.

Marriage Picture of General Mebrahtu and his wife

My wife used to act in theatres. W/o Sinidu Gebru the 1st women high school director of Etege Menen School wrote a book called "yelibe metsihaf" and later when this book was changed into drama and my wife played a part of this theatre. She also played in many theatres. She was an admired actress. She was a believer in Five-kilo Mekane Eyesus Church and she served as the leader of women association for over 12 years in the church. When handcraft school was opened she was among the first to lead the administration. She had a good participation in all aspects of the society. She commands a respectable place in our family. She nicely shaped up her children with good ethics and behavior. She fed not only her breast but also her good advice and wisdom for her children.
I had a joyful time with my wife. Some times we would visit some historical places like Aksum where we spent most our leisure times. We have great respect for each other and this is a corner stone for our strength in marriage. Her love to me is always full as mine is to her. Her support for each of my work was vital and my life is always associated with her. She is on my side both during my success and failure. We passed together the challenge of life.

2.3.2 Children

Totally I have five children. My first child Marta Mebrahtu was born on August 23, 1950 in Addis Ababa locally named Amistegna Police Tabiya. She attended her high school education both in Debrezeyit and Nigeria schools. She had the chance to join Addis Ababa University in her early teenage. The interest of our family was for her to study engineering but she did not favor it. Her interest was studying medical science. When she was later killed only one semester remained for her to graduate from Addis Ababa University as a medical doctor.

Martha Mebrahtu
1960’s were the high time of student movement. She had tremendous role in the student movement and had a great place in Addis Ababa University particularly in medical science students. Medical science students elected her as president.

When Emperor HaileSelassie I sent me to Nigeria as a counselor to Ethiopian embassy in Nigeria she had the chance to attend her high school education in Nigeria. She had good awareness and participation on the issues around African women. Her teachers admired her attitudes toward current politics and praised her, “a child who understand the problem and poverty of African women”

She also got the chance to learn in America for a few years. These enriched her knowledge about current political situations. She also had the chance to continue her college education in America, however she did not want to stay abroad. Her interest and vision was to return back to homeland to struggle and bring change in Ethiopian life.

Her ambition was translated in to reality when she came back to Ethiopia and tried to bring change through struggle. She strived with her fellow students to spread student movement on large scale among educated youth and intellectuals.

She always made a debate and argued against me on many issues I remember once I bought land and started farming. Her reaction was negative and she said; “we struggle to change the system and give land to the tiller, but you try to posses it.” When I think her idea in retrospect she was right. I was also surprised by the students' idea. It was a basic idea for the time, which gradually led to radical change in Ethiopian history.

Marta struggled for the right of oppressed Ethiopians. She always tried to change the attitudes of back ward Ethiopians. Marta was one of the students who had played a major role in the student movement. From among her friends she had strong relationship with Wallelign Mokonen and other prominent student movement leaders. One day before their assassination in December 7 1972 her university friends told me that she was writing manifesto all through
the night. On December 8, 1972 Marta and her friends planned to attempt hijacking. Seven students planned to alter the direction of the plane in to the battlefield, which fly from Addis Ababa to Asmera. They planned each and everything cautiously and secretly. But among the students one person in formed the plot to government authority the plotters did not know this.

The government authority followed the matter more closely to control the activity of the students. According to their plan they entered the plane successfully. They were now happy but that was not the end of their mission. At the starting of the flight the students tried to alter the direction of the plane. They entered the plane without sufficient weapons. The anti hijacker or inspectors who knew and are waiting what would happen after a moment mercilessly murdered all the student except one girl. The action of the policemen was shameful and they committed a fatal mistake. Even if the work of the students was a mistake it was possible to stop them with out blood shade. I served the Emperor honestly all my life but no one had mercy to my child. Marta struggled for the right and equality of human beings and finally she scarified her life for all oppressed Ethiopians. She is a hero Ethiopian woman.

My second son Tewodros Mebrahtu is a computer engineer. He had struggled for more than five years with EPRP (Ethiopian Peoples Revolutionary Party). He is still alive. There was EPRP movement in northern Ethiopia and he struggled in this movement particularly in Gonder area. He also played a key role in the leadership. He devoted every thing for the struggle. The rest of my children also contribute much for the struggle of human right. My third son Samson Mebrahtu is a medical doctor. My last child W/o. Tsehay Mebratu was an audiologist. I had many grand children totally about seven. Some of my children and grand children are living abroad and some of them live here in Ethiopia. I had one child who died in his early age named Fisseha Mebrahtu.

2.4 Early and higher education

I was educated at a time when education was provided only for a few urban populations particularly for royal and landlord families. When I started education it was unpopular and illiteracy was rampant among our society.
Schools were opened only in urban centers and it was impossible for rural population to get education. Even in urban centers schools were only handful. The quality of education was improved through time and it became more advanced later on after the Emperor paid much attention to it. The number of students, which was much fewer initially also increased. Education was not easily available for the youth making the rate of illiteracy very high. It was possible to get a job even with a primary education because of lack of skilled manpower during the Emperor's regime.

I was a five years when I started attending education. I was the youngest boy in the school. First I attended my elementary education in Asabatefari primary school. I had acquired my high school education in Menelik II secondary school. Due to Italian colonial regulation my education was interrupted for a short period of time. At the time of Italian occupation education prohibited above primary school for all Ethiopians. There for I forced to stop education in grade six. I continued schooling after the defeat of Italy in 1941. In the immediate post-Independence period education was only up to eight grade and it grew to secondary school up to twelve gradually.

After the war was concluded I served in police force, and it was impossible to continue my education at daytime. The only alternative I had was to join the evening program. Therefore, during the daytime I served in police force and on the evening I attended my high school classes. This way I was able to finish high school education in 1952.

After I had completed high school my work condition prevented further education at university level. After I missed a few years I had decided to continue my education in the extension program and joined the law faculty. It was difficult at that time to manage job and learning simultaneously. Not in frequently I missed classes and examinations standing firm against all these problems I successfully finished my stay and I graduated in advance diploma from law faculty of Addis Ababa University in 1957. When I was taking my college education I had already occupied a higher authority in the police force.
My graduation from Addis Ababa University was not my last education. It was essential to broaden once knowledge in all fields. Accordingly, I joined Addis Ababa Police College. In this college I acquired skills that helped me later in my career. The college provided its students both academic and military training. Finally I was graduated as higher police officer. After the police college I also took part in some educational seminars, workshops and short-term trainings at different times on various issues.

2.5 friends and partners

Due to my work and other social activities I had many friends. After the end of the patriotic war against Italy and after I returned back to Addis Ababa in 1941 I met with my Schoolmates including Negash Waldemikael. They were already employed in police force and persuaded me to join the police force. Accepting their suggestion I joined the police force and since then I had got many friends.

Among others Ahadu Sabure was one of my friends. He was a well known and respected person during the Emperors regime. He was not my partner but personally we are friends. Ideally and ideologically we had similar outlook. It is impossible to enumerate all of my friends including higher government authorities. However most of them are not alive.

General Aman Amdom was one of my best friends. We spent much time together. Our relations went beyond work. He was a good man. A week before his assassination I was still serving in GamoGofa as administrator of the province. By then, I had little conflict with derg officers. I sent him a message requesting to work with him. He was not happy and said, “I did not yet take a full authority so stay there until things improved”. A week later the Derg government killed him. He was famous and popular among the army. The army requested the Derg government to bring Aman as a leader of the Armed Force.
Lieutenant General Aman Michel Amdom

2.6 Government service

After I entered Addis Ababa with British army I was employed in police force. The police force was newly organized at the time. I had joined the police force in April 1941. I had started serving the police force in Gonder, where I stayed for a few months. Since then, I was returned to Addis Ababa. After I had served for a few years then, I was promoted as an inspector (Yemeto Aleqa) in 1942. In 1944 the police force promoted me as captain (Shambel). I continued working in police force. After I served for a few years I was promoted as major (Yeshi Aleqa) in 1946. Later on, in September 1948 eleven police officers were promoted to lieutenant colonel, and I was amongst them. All my promotion was during the Imperial regime. After a long year service on July 24, 1958 I was promoted to Colonel. By the time, I was popular in the police force.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Promotion</th>
<th>Year</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lieutenant or Inspector (Yemto Aleqa)</td>
<td>1942</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Captain (Shambel)</td>
<td>1944</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major (Yeshi Aleqa)</td>
<td>1946</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lieutenant Colonel</td>
<td>Sept. 11, 1948</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colonel</td>
<td>July 24, 1958</td>
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<tr>
<td>Brigadier General</td>
<td>July 1967</td>
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Brigadier General Mebrahtu's ranks of Promotion in Police Force
I had served the police force for 20 years from an ordinary policeman up to the status of deputy commissioner. The emperor awarded me a gold medal in May 1962 for my long time service in the police force.10

After the end of the war with Italy the police force fell under British control. The British had reestablished it in a more organized way and gave it a modern structure. At that time of British domination the police force was under a British man called Laid Low. But, he led the police force only for a brief period. At that time there were only 4,000 policemen. The police force was later transferred to Ethiopian government in 1942. It was now by far better organized than the earlier police force. In 1948 about 24,000 ordinary soldiers and patriots of the war were recruited and joined the police force after being acquainted with the basic and necessary training. That was how the number of the police force increased. In those days most of the training was conducted by the British officers. The newly appointed commander at the time of the transfer was General Philip Norton Banks. I had with him a memorable successful time. He had written plenty of appreciation letters for my hard work and sometimes jointly with other members under my administration. I had served for a longer period of time as his deputy. On September 11, 1956 General Philip was replaced by General Tsige Dibu. According to the tradition I was to be a commander but the government had appointed general Tsige Dibu as a new commander from the armed force. I had again served for a long period with General Tsigge Dibu as his deputy commissioner.
Brigadier General Mebrahtu Fesseha (left), General Philip Norton Banks (Center), and General Tsige Dibu (right).

The head quarter of previous police force was in the building of the Ministry of Interior. Later on it became essential to separate. Accordingly, I had taken the responsibility of locating a suitable base area for the police force and established a head quarter at Mexico area, which is also a present police head quarter. This transfer was made with the assistance of the British military force.

The police force of my time, during the Imperial regime was different from the present police force in various aspects. Even with in the Imperial regime there were differences. It had made progresses from time to time. The previous police force of the Imperial regime had difference in training, salary, size of police and leadership than the present police forces, because the later has modern form of training and the salary has increased. In the early days I remember that the salary of an ordinary policeman was only 18 Eth. Birr and Yemato Alaqa (Inspector or Lieutenant), earned only 55 Eth Birr. Today the salary is improved significantly and the number has also increased in accordance with the increase in the population.
Towards my last years service in the police force the 1960 coup d'état was attempted. The coup was first planned by the bodyguard office. The mastermind behind the coup was Girmame Niway who used the power of his brother Mengistu. Mengistu was the commander of bodyguard, who was being assisted by other military and civil officers. The coup makers were composed of the bodyguard, the army and the police force.

A day before the coup was attempted General Tsigge Dibu summoned me on the phone at midnight. Accordingly, I went to the place where they were discussing about the issue. General Tsigge had introduced me to General Mengistu Niway who welcomed me with great pleasure. After we had discussed various issues relating to the coup, General Tsigge entrusted me with the responsibility of leading the police at the head quarter and securing the peace of the metropolis more strongly and cautiously. I had summoned all the high police officers to acquaint them with the plan and the orders from General Tsigge Dibu. Some of the police officers did not endorse the idea. Some of them even strongly challenged me. Among those Captain Mulgeta, said that; "how do we betray the trust of the Emperor and abandon our loyalty". I told him that our responsibility is only to do the best for the security of the people.

The attempted coup was not successful because of various reasons. General Tsigge Dibu and other officers were killed in the attempt. I had been with General Tsigge Dibu until the coup failed. After the coup had failed General Isayas from the army force occupied the police head quarter. Besides, the army force under Lieutenant General Meri’ed Mengesha defeated the rebellious army marked the end of the coup.

After the attempted coup I continued in the police force as deputy commissioner under General Isayas. There were Israeli officers in the police force who proposed the idea that I had to lead the police force taking over the former position of General Tsigge Dibu. But the government did not agree on this suggestion. Finally, because of my participation in the coup the government decided to remove me from the police force in May 1961. Later on the
government sent me as a counselor for Ethiopian Embassy in Nigeria following the Emperor's mercy for the guilty\textsuperscript{13}.

I served as counselor in Ethiopian embassy in Nigeria from 1961 up to 1964 (for four years)\textsuperscript{14}. It was while I was in Nigeria that OAU was established. Member countries sent their representatives to Addis Ababa where the meeting that formed the OAU took place. I had participated in the assembly that formed the OAU representing the Ethiopian government.

After my return from Nigeria I had served in the Ministry Of Foreign Affairs. When Zambia celebrated her liberation day I was sent to Zambia representing the Foreign Affairs together with Eskindir Desta who was representing the Emperor. We were instructed to prepare a report on the political situation in Zambia by the Emperor. I had written a 10-page report while Eskindir submitted to the Emperor. Meanwhile, the Emperor asked the author of the report and Eskindir told to His Majesty that I had written it. At that time Eskindir Desta was Commander-in-Chief of the Navy under the Ministry Of National Defense. The Emperor admired the report. Consequently, Eskindir requested the Emperor saying that; “give me this man and I would have a place for him.” Later on the Emperor called me to the palace and I was astonished when the Majesty said; "you are appointed as Chief of Staff of the Navy."

While I was in the Navy my peers in the police force were appointed as Brigadier General and I made a complaint to Eskindir that my colleagues are now above me. He reported my request to the Emperor, and then I was promoted as Brigadier General on July 1967. Then after, I was served for a brief period in Massawa port administration.

While I was serving in the Navy, a person the name of whom I do not want to expose with a position of Yamato Alaqa (inspector), who worked in the Navy’s head quarter accused me of participation in Eritrea’s politics. At that time in 1952 the Federation of Eritrea was abandoned and Eritrea was united with Ethiopia as one province. Consequently, there followed a strong political crisis in Eritrea. Because of this blame I was transferred to another area.
Meanwhile, the Minister of Interior Dejjazmach\textsuperscript{15} Kifle Yirgetu took the responsibility to find another job for me. Accordingly, he decided to return me to my former place in the police force. At this time the police commander General Yilma Shibeshi did not agree on the idea of my return to the police force. This was because I was more competent than him to claim the position of commander-in-chief. As a result I was appointed under Dejjach kifle Yirgetu as Deputy Minister for the International Boundary Administration\textsuperscript{16}. I had excellent records in this administration. While things were moving smoothly the Emperor enquired an issue, i.e. the work of wildlife conservation being not done properly and the organization for that purpose had accomplished nothing. At that time the environmental issue became an international issue. Developed countries focused on it seriously. The Emperor aware of the problem in our country called the Cabinet and demanded that He wanted competent person to rectify the environmental problem in Ethiopia.

The Emperor ordered Bitewoded\textsuperscript{17} Zewde Gebrehiywot who was, the Minister of Interior to provide names of five well-experienced persons. Accordingly, the committee entrusted for that purpose submitted the name of five persons and I was one among the five. Finally the Emperor appointed me as the Director of the Wildlife Conservation Department- a department under the Ministry of Agriculture-in June 1969\textsuperscript{18}. At that time Kibur Ato Abebe Reta was the Minister Of Agriculture. I had served in this department for three years. When I was on this duty some one accused me of taking the money about 70,000 Birr that General Yakubu Gowon\textsuperscript{19} donated for the department in to my own pocket. Due to this reason, I was suspended from work for seven months.

Following my dismissal from work I was engaged on farming by possessing large agricultural land. At that time, in 1972, there were not only good conditions for agriculture but industries also developed and production became improved. Land was available only for those who had good capital. The cost of agricultural product was not high as today. Now a day every kind of agricultural product is expensive. After the 1970’s and the economic situation experienced change from time to time even in the imperial regime. In 1940’s and 1950’s the
value of commodities was very low, but with the advance of time it increased. In the last period of the imperial regime in 1970’s there was a good market, which was comparable to the people’s living standard. For example in early 1970’s a hundred kilo of Teff was bought only between 20 and 30 Birr. But today it has exceeded 500 Birr. This is really astronomical and alarming difference.

When I have engaged in agriculture the government was investigating my case the accusation was true or false. Finally, it was only after 7 months that I had been declared innocent from any kind of crime of corruption. I was then appointed as Deputy Governor of Bale province in October 1973. The Governor General of the province at that time was Lieutenant General Jagema Kelo. I had only stayed there for months because the Emperor appointed me as the Governor General of GamoGofa Provincial Administration on 13 May, 1973. Subsequently, Ato Assefa Chabo was appointed as the administrator of Gardula province and Meto Alaqa (Lieutenant) Pawlos Bogale was appointed as administrator of Gamo province. At that time Desijazmach Zewde Gebresillassie was the Minister Of Interior. My service as governor of GamoGofa province continued through the Derg regime, which renewed my appointment.

Meanwhile from September 1977 onwards the Derg political cadres became strong and had taken the administrative authority all in all. Therefore, the provincial administrators became nominal rulers. This situation put the population in to difficult problem. In government policy the Derg cadres hold superior authority and this enabled them to do what they wished. They went on to say that they were the real administrators. Any higher administrative officer who tried to accomplish something without the cadre was considered as a man playing with fire.

It was under these circumstances that a dangerous incident happened to me. The Derg officers brought name list of 27 persons to be executed and asked me to put my signature on the document of 27 persons. They decided to kill all of them only under the guise of anti-revolutionary. The individuals only had complained for their property opposing nationalization by the government. I refused to comply with their idea. I told them that I would never do anything
against these innocent persons. Among these 27 persons Qagnazmach Abate was one. I knew some of them and because they did nothing wrong killing in the name of anti revolutionary was unacceptable on my part. It was the greatest challenge during my lifetime. I decided to refuse their idea. I told them that I would confront their bad intent by scarifying my life if it is necessary.

Under my administration with the police officers of the province and other authorized persons including Taye Zeleke, Shalaqa Sofoniyas Abebe who are still alive. We decided that the 27 men should not die. It was announced at the first that the revolution would be accomplished without a droplet of blood. Therefore, assassination was unacceptable for me. Finally with great challenge the decision was aborted. During this time the Derg Commissar of the province Ato Asefa Chabo, filed a complaint to the Derg government saying that I did not allow him to work freely. He had complained that I was a major constraint for his work. The Derg government told me; "if you are not voluntary to do with the revolutionary government you have to withdraw from the work." They forced me to withdrew from work not as a dismissal but as retirement. Finally, on September 1976 after serving as Governor General of Gamo Gofa province for 3 years I was retired. It was not my age for retirement but they forced me to withdraw from work because I challenged their intolerable acts. It was during my position as Governor of GamoGofa Province that I really faced the greatest Challenge in my life and I had paid the necessary sacrifice for my righteousness.

During the Imperial regime there was relative peace than the Derg government. The political system between the two regimes had great difference. The main characteristic feature of Derg government was prevalence of oppressive rule and injustice. The rights of peoples were not respected. The Derg government was a dictatorial government. There was no rule of law. Arbitrariness was at its peak. The Imperial government was more lawful than the Derg government. Generally, the political situation during the Emperor was better than the Derg regime.

There was great cruelty and blood shade during the Derg regime. Peoples were murdered with out any reason, simply under the guise of the revolution. I
had opposed the Derg officer’s policy of assassination. They were merciless killers. It was this worst political situation that resulted in the overthrow of the system. The derg government put a black dot in the Ethiopian history. Both the Imperial and the EPRDF\textsuperscript{27} government had a political system better than the Derg.

Today the right of life and property are respected and we are in a much better political system. The democratic system is flourishing in our country. The peoples are guaranteed democratic freedoms much better than before. We are in a relatively good political environment, if not comparable with other democratic nations.

After the Derg government forced me to retire from my work I committed myself to my own private business organization. My organization is a sole and exclusive agent and representative in Ethiopia of IATECO\textsuperscript{28} private limited company of solar light for Africa. I am running this private company at present.

My main source of income was salary, from the time I was employed in the police force until I was retired. At present my income is a profit from my own private company.

2.7 Hobby

I spent most of my time in my work. During my leisure time I usually play polo with my friends at Janmeda. Polo is my favorite sport. In addition to that, I also used to play football at Janmeda. I am good footballer. I used to play for Omedla’s football club. After, I stopped playing soccer, I become the prominent member and supporter of Omedla Club. I was member of the Ethiopian Football Federation and had given free service for the Federation for along time.
Chapter 3

Miscellaneous Information

3.1 The Post World War II Crises in Eritrea

As we know the Eritrea’s issue became controversial after the Second World War. All Eritrean did not have the same interest. Some of them were in favor of independence. By contrast others claim unification with Ethiopia. Beyond the two countries, this problem was understood by the major European countries and attracted their attention for a time. Under the guise of Eritrean issue both Britain and Italy went to secure their own political interest. For instance the main motive of British government was to incorporate Eritrea to their adjacent colonies. The Italians on their side with some Eritrean allies supported the independence of Eritrea strongly. To fulfill their own interest the British and Italians continued to achieve their policy behind the people. The Italians had supporter because of their colonial influence. At that time Italian colonial rule had ended but their influence was still strong. Because of this, some Eritrean favored independence jointly with Italians.

The Eritrean problem became a serious crisis and it could not get a solution easily. In Eritrea there were groups of people who aspired to join the Ethiopian government. The Ethiopian government was assisting these groups. The Eritrean who favored to join with Ethiopia was not well equipped. It was necessary to help these Eritrea’s to secure their interest.

The British did not help any group officially. The Eritrean who struggled for union with Ethiopia demanded Ethiopia's military assistance. According to their request our government sent armament from police force. During this time I was chief staff officer of police force and the commander was General Phillip Norton Banks. The aid was made through me. I was the responsible person, because at the time the police store was under my control. I had sent armaments from the police store to the Eritrea’s. Some persons who opposed the union of Eritrea with Ethiopia informed the situation to British government. The British understood that the support was from the police force. As a result, the
British blamed me for the support of Eritrea’s. The British government ordered the British embassy in Addis Ababa to investigate the situation. The British Embassy asked General Philip Norton Banks about the issue. He had told them that there was no assistance to support the Eritrea’s and the police force knew nothing about this issue. General Philip explained for the Embassy that the police force was neutral from Eritrean politics and then the British abandoned their accusation.

After the arbitration of the Eritrean problem under the auspice of the UN, Eritrea joined with Ethiopia as a Federation. Eritrea partially was returned to its motherland. Most of Eritrea’s were happy by this decision except for few peoples who strongly favored and expected independence. After ten years Eritrean federation failed and Eritrea become one province under the full control of the central government. The issue of Eritrea’s independence which, begun at that time continued for decades and finally get a solution in 1990-91.

3.2 The observation of rural Life in Gamogofa Province after the 1974 Revolution

After the overthrew of the Emperor the Derg government made a bad decision on 60 Imperial government’s higher authorities. This was followed by the decree of land to the tiller. At first the feudal landlord group resisted not to submit their former property including land. The feudal landlords opposed the Derg government refusing to accept nationalization of land. In some part of the rural area these feudal landlords were organized and were equipped with weapons. In the province where I was Governor at the time, there were bloody confrontations between the landlords and the government. Even though the landlords were few in number they had their own followers or supporters.

In the “Ediget Behibret Zemacha”¹, students had played tremendous role to implement the decree of land to the tiller in rural areas. At that time it was impossible to announce on television, radio or newspaper. The students play significant role in my province to teach the concept of the decree to the farmer. They had penetrated areas, which were difficult for transportation at that time.
In GamoGofa province "Ediget Behibret Zemacha" students had accomplished their mission. There was attack from opponent forces. Therefore, protecting the student from this anti-revolutionary force was the responsibility of the administrator of the province. We had secured the students from the attack by opponent group.

In the feudal system the main source of the economy was the land and the issue of the land could not be removed easily from the mind of landlords. It was impossible to think peace in a simply way.

The feudal landlords were regarding the students as enemies. They were trying to hurt the students as much as possible. We had followed the situation more closely. In those days the police officer of the province was Colonel Admasu Habtemariam. We did many things in collaboration with the police force to secure the peace of the province. The provincial police officer made significant role in the protections of the students from the attack by landlords. Sometimes there was a conflict between local policemen and the students.

In the district of Yewib Hamer, Zemecha students taught the local farmers that the old feudal system was abolished by the February 1975 land decree. They taught the farmer by saying that; “the land is yours, the cattle you herd and the crop you produced is yours, the property you have at your hand is also yours’. ‘The system based on landlord and serfs was abolished”. The students went further saying that; “If landlords came to you do not accept him”. The landlords at first were not aware about the decree. But after they were informed about the situation it was bitter for them to swallow. This had led to conflict in local area with the farmer as well as the students. Local police had no awareness. They supported the landlords, but later on this was changed. In various parts of the administration there were similar problems. The difference from other province was that, there was conflict between policemen and students.

In Gamo Gofa Province the Jinka district was the area always happened to be unstable security condition. Sometimes the problem became beyond the control of policemen of the district. Therefore, they frequently reported the
situation and requested support from the central administration of the province. It was during my Governorate time of the province one complicated dispute occurred between the policemen and the farmers, who jointly agitated with the Zemach\textsuperscript{4} students. The farmer of the district called them selves all over the district areas. Consequently 30,000 estimated farmers were gathered at Jinka airfield. These farmers were equipped with traditional armament as well as firearms. The out numbered policemen confronted face to face with the farmers. I received message from Jinka police office that the situation has become escalated. Accidentally at Arbaminch there were missionaries who came to visit our province. By using their plane I reached Jinka and through many discussions with the farmers the dispute was settled. The lives of the policemen as well as the civilian were all saved.

At the time, the GamoGofa province had relatively better peace and stability than other province in Ethiopia. This was because of our attention to solve problem immediately in the conflict area.

The main success for the decree was the support of the student. The students become the first apostle for this decree in teaching the farmer. They had accomplished their historical responsibility successfully.

District administrators and students were calling us when they faced any problem. Accordingly, We used to visit various areas to make decisions so as to solve problems. The students were always complaining. For instance, once students called me to discus about their problems. I move from Arbaminch-the head town of the province-to a place where the students were stationed in Lante Zemecha sation. When, I reached Lante the students raised their problem. Their problem was not too difficult. It was regarding home, food, the weather condition and the time of working. All the problems were solved through discussion. Among the students who made the complaint, my third son, Samson Mebrahtu, participated in this Lante station.
CHAPTER FOUR
ANALYSIS PART

The Inception Of Ethiopian Students Movement

1. Background

The Main objective of this chapter is to shade light on the main topic so as to understand the narrated part particularly about Ethiopian students movement. Martha Mebrahtu was one of the prominent students leader who played significant role in the history of Ethiopian students movement. Like Martha there were many students who dedicated themselves for students' struggle. It is interesting to investigate more facts about these students. Therefore, I was highly motivated to research early activities of students' movement in the course of this chapter.

Most of the time intelligentsia are a group of people who strongly seek change and modernization in a given society. Students are parts of the modern intelligentsia. As elsewhere in the world Ethiopian students were the first to challenge the ruling class in our country. They confronted the Imperial government for the first time in a bid to promote their country into a new era. In Ethiopia students were not the only intelligentsia group. There were a lot of educated peoples who were serving in government bureaucracy. But these groups of peoples were favored and opted not to antagonize the ruling class. It was students that were the pioneer to break out the darkened atmosphere and confront the government.

Many authors argue that students were the outcome of modern education. Through modern education students' political awareness were changed. Students' psychological consciousness grew up or enriched along with the access of acquiring modern education. The expansion of educational institution on rapid rate generated educated society in our country. The expansion of such institutions played significant role for the emergence of student community.
Education opened the eyes of students to understand the backwardness of their country and compelled them to aspire change and progress.\(^2\)

Most authors had similar attitude concerning the idea of the influence of African scholarship students in university college of Addis Ababa as well as the influence of ideologies and attitudes from outside. As far as I observed from different books the African scholarship students played significant role in instigating students activities in the university campus of Addis Ababa. These scholarship students were the main instigators behind the emergence of student's participation in all activities. In addition the influence of western ideology and attitude was highly discussed by many authors, which had its own contribution for the emergence of students' movement.\(^3\)

The first student's demand was the right to express ideas and views without restriction and interruption of the academic administration. The demand raised the issue of free press and union. The main force behind their demand was their awareness of the socio-economic and political aspect of other countries outside Ethiopia.\(^4\) Nothing reached its peak without certain process and evolution. It was clear that the student's activities grew up from small council only restricted on academic environment to a worldwide Ethiopian student's unions. Before it emerged as a powerful students body, their activities were passed through different steps\(^5\)

The first student union was emerged in the early 1950's, which was tiny in number and power. At their initial stage students aim for unity was not political, rather to discuss and to solve the administrative problem in the campus. Initially with the instigation by foreign African scholars they began producing a newspaper to exchange views, ideas and experiences among students. This opened the way to facilitate the free flow of information among students. But this process had always a problem. Students were some times forced to stop publication of newspaper and academic authority stopped their activities. Eventually through all these constraints their movement grew up into more organized form. Parallel to this their activities were escalating from time to time
in the campus. But according to many authors students did not participate in the national affairs until 1960.

The student's first mass agitation appeared in 1960 with the aim of supporting the December 1960 coup d'etat. According to many books the first mass involvement of students in a political affairs appeared in this year $^6$

2. Factors that Contributed for the Emergence of Ethiopian Student Movement

2.1 The expansion of educational institutions

The Ethiopian student movement was the outcome of several factors. It's beginning was not as simple as a spontaneous event. There are both long and short-term factors, which contributed much for the emergence of student society. First of all, the enrichment of their mental or psychological consciousness on social, cultural, economical and political aspects led to its genesis, which finally resulted in militant confrontation with the imperial government. Therefore, the expansion of educational institution is regarded as one major factor.

Girma Amare, in his book Modern Ethiopian Intelligentsia and its Evolution claimed that student societies were the product of postwar Western educational system. According to him the intelligentsia including students were created in many forms such as through contact with Western reading and mainly education in Western modeled school.$^7$ Girma further clarify the impact of the expansion of educational institution by saying that;

In the reconstruction program education was given top priority. These developments had an immediate impact up on the younger generation Ethiopians, then studying in the institutions of higher learning, and led to restlessness in the student body. $^8$

Addis Hewot had shared Girmas' idea by arguing that students were the product of post war educational effort. According to his explanation in the year 1940's and 1950's the government expanded educational centers on rapid rate.
According to his explanation the expansion of educational Institute had tremendous contribution for the emergence of student society.\textsuperscript{9}

Bahiru Zewde also had a brief explanation concerning this issue. According to Baharu's discussion post-war period was characterized by the expansion of educational institutions. The year 1960's and 1970's were the time of the expansion of education in particular. According to his figure by the end of 1960 the number of students reached 700,000. He also mentioned the activities of missionaries and individuals role in association with government in promoting education.\textsuperscript{10}

The roles of primary and secondary level schools were decisive on preparing students for higher educational institutions. In 1960's many secondary schools were found in the major towns of different provinces. Addis Ababa and Eritrea contribute maximum number of students on feeding the university. According to Balsvik's assessment half of the total number of students were from Addis Ababa. Besides the government schools, the role of private schools run by the Americans, Germans, French and English, the Nazareth schools, and st. Joseph were increased the number of students and expand educational enrollment process incrementally. The expansion of education was increased when higher institutions were inaugurated under full control of foreigners. Balsvik explained in her book that the university college of Addis Ababa was opened in 1950, the first class begun at university college of Addis Ababa, December 11, 1950, with nine America and European teachers and 25 male students. The University College of Addis Ababa contains few faculties initially. This initial stage was followed by the establishment of several faculties. In 1954 the College of Agriculture established in Alamaya and a training program for Public Health Officers begun in Gonder. This achievement was followed by the establishment of additional faculties including School of Social Work, the College of Business Administration, the Faculty of Law and the Faculty of Medicine. During these times the number of students was increasing parallel with the opening of new faculties. In addition to all these enrolment the
university established extension program in 1962. All these transformation led to the emergence of student society.\textsuperscript{11}

Fentahun is among the prominent author concerning Ethiopian student movement and precisely explain the role of educational institution as an integrating factor for the emergence of student society by arguing that, "since the establishment of the university college of Addis Ababa, the student community increasingly integrated ..." \textsuperscript{12} Therefore, according to the literature I consulted, it is possible to claim that the expansion of educational institution play significant role for the emergence of a student community in our country.

\textbf{2.2. The influence of ideologies and attitudes from outside}

The other dimension of the growth of education was the chance of obtaining higher degree's abroad, which also had its own contribution in creating student society as well as transforming the attitude of the students. Considerable numbers of Ethiopians were sent abroad for better education, which was not available in the country. According to Bahiru's discussion large number of students went to developed countries such as United States and Europe. In 1970 about 700 students were attaining education only United States alone. Earlier from this time in the 1950s and 1960s a number of Ethiopian scholars had got the chance to attain education abroad. Balsvik also stated that in the year between 1941 and 1951 about 553 men and women students returned from higher studies abroad. These Ethiopian scholarship students organized themselves so as to mainly address the ideas and ideologies from abroad to their country. It was this influence combined with the above discussed internal factor that contributed for the emergence of a new and conscious generation. Addressing this issue Girma also discussed the impact of ideas and attitudes from out side by saying that;

\textit{These individuals were greatly inspired by new idea and very much impressed by the progress achieved by European countries. They become profoundly conscious of the problem of back wardness of their own country and become critical of the existing social and political condition}\textsuperscript{13}
Girma further explains the reason for the emergence of the intelligentsia in two categories, i.e. cultural and philosophical westernization. According to him, cultural westernization is, "the process of assimilating certain way of life developed in the secular...modern European civilization." He also discussed the other form of westernization by arguing that," philosophical westernization...where a small group of people assimilated the thinking underlying the rationalist and scientific movement that was responsible for the political, social and economical revolution of Europe." It was this critical group that devoted itself to a new progress in our country and initiated the Ethiopian students movement.

The influence of western ideologies and attitudes, probably regarded as simple, had significant impact in changing the attitude of the students. The access of acquiring modern education opened the eyes of the students both at home and abroad. They aspired to bring some sort of change in all system including social, economical and political aspects. I think the chance of knowing and reading many books in the colleges confronted students with new ideologies like socialist and Marxist - Leninist which they tried to reflect on the surrounding environment. These students, who had some education, got the chance to escape from the narrow traditional attitude to a wider of well advanced knowledge, which compelled them to think for radical change.

2.3. The impact of Africans scholarship students

Concerning this idea, the most prominent authors on the topic of Ethiopian student movement Balsvik and Fentahun extensively discussed about the impact of African scholarship student in the University College of Addis Ababa. It was regarded as the immediate factor for the enrichment of student's psychological consciousness. Influenced by their classmates they were able to understand the political and economical aspects of the existing world outside Ethiopia. These students were the main instigators behind Ethiopian students in all activities of the campuses life.

According to Balsvik Emperor Hailesillassie I offered 200 students to join higher education in Ethiopia at the Conference of African independent countries in Ghana in 1958. These scholarship students began to come from different
parts of Africa. From Balsvik point of view the interaction between students open
the way to share ideas and experiences. According to her the attitudes of African
students were that intellectuals were the instigators and leaders of great
movements of opposition and changes. This idea was completely new for
Ethiopian students. We can understand from this explanation that the thinking
of African scholarship students was quite advanced and was beyond the
psychological consciousness of Ethiopian students. 15

The daily interaction between students in the campus contributed much
in shaping the attitude of Ethiopian students. The scholarship students tried to
persuade Ethiopian students that, "attacks on personalities were common
elsewhere in connection with the academic affairs, sex and politics". They taught
the students that discussing on this idea had no harm but rather made the
college life more interesting. The scholarship students encouraged their
classmates to participate in the campus life actively. Balsvik explanation clearly
shows how much the African scholarship students helped the Ethiopian
students to get rid of their traditional fear of participation in politics or
criticizing the system as a result, "the wider spread fear of criticism among both
staff and students was laminated by scholarship students." It is clear that the
African students played a significant role, in developing confidence concerning
the issue of criticism which Ethiopian students had never practiced before. The
first involvement in expressing idea in the form of written newspaper in the
university was started by African scholarship students. For instance in March
1959 Omogi Calleb, a Kenyan student with others started a newspaper called
the "campus stare". Depending on Balsvik discussion it is possible to claim that
the African scholarship students action was regarded as the first fluid path or
pioneer for the emergence of students activities in the campus.16

Another author who devoted one whole chapter for the Ethiopian students
movement, was Fentahun Tiruneh who extensively discussed the impact of the
African scholarship students from wider dimension; He strongly connected the
growth of student’s psychological consciousness with the Pan-African
movement. For him the enrichment of political consciousness of the Ethiopian
students in the university was a direct outcome of the Pan-African integration activity. He also supported Balsvik's idea of experience sharing between the students. According to him some of the guest students had previously participated in independence movements and were still receiving newspapers from their respective political parties. Some Ethiopian students therefore, had access to these newspapers. Fentahun took the interaction little further beyond students. He discussed that; "the university students met with fellows students, diplomats, prominent guests of government and delegates who came to attend various conferences in Addis Ababa". All these interaction increased the awareness of students on various issues. While Balsvik only discussed the interaction between students, Fentahun came up with wider dimension of interaction, but the context of their discussion is generally similar. Fentahun explicitly discuss that in due course students begun to argue openly on major political problems, such as the Apartheid in South Africa and white minority rule in Rhodesia. Through all these interactions and after the students become more conscious, about the aspect of life outside of Ethiopia, they began to think the problem of their own country. Consequently all these interactions opened the avenue for the emergence of early student participation and lead to the genesis of the movement.17

3. Early Activities Of Students

3.1 Early attempt for self-expression

From the early 1950's onwards students urge to express their ideas and views became forceful. According to Balsvik the first student's magazine in the University, College of Addis Ababa appeared following the establishment of writer's club in 1952. Student's begun to publish a University College Calls (UC Calls). Both Fentahun and Balsvik clearly discuss the aim and purpose of this magazine. Initially, its main focus was campus activities. According to Balsvik this paper discussed news about sports, a film show and debating. On this paper students expressed opinions about campus problems as well as about the real reflection of Ethiopian life. At this time the students first major interest was
discussing about the problem of campus affairs. It was clear that there was no political motivation behind this magazine. The students faced problems in producing these magazines. Initially students found it difficult to express themselves in foreign language.

Balsvik discusses that students were impressed by philosophical writing including moral value, culture and the influence of foreign teachers. She mentioned that some of the students title included, "Pride"," Responsibility", "Problem of life", and "A Gentle men". Later on some self-analysis topics emerged among students, some were saying that; "Do I have a well-established moral position...? what advance have I made on my previous characters or personality?" In addition students also wrote advisory messages for them selves. According to Balsvik some of it said:" ' be good mannered and sociable, considerate and sympathetic'; 'Let truth be armour, abide by your self made laws, and follow not emotions or instinct '; 'use your head and you will be a man.'

Contribution of papers by the majority of Ethiopian students was not evident. It was the product of only a few active students. The literatures claim that the main reason for student’s non-involvement was their cultural background. Baslvilk mainly claims that to express ideas freely was a new phenomenon among students: "the culture is deeply committed to respect for seniority and authority; the free expression of opinion, much less of questioning, had never been encouraged." The editors of UC Calls dictated students not to write around issues of "politics", "religion" or any thing concerning "tribe". According to Balsvik students background as well as the influence in academic environment could not allow students to express themselves freely.

Criticism was common among intellectuals but students opted them selves out from being involving around this issue. According to Fentahun, Girma, Balsvik and other authors who share similar views concerning this issue claim that criticism only begun by the influence of foreign African scholarship students.
3.2 The first demand of students

The first student demand that emerged in the university campus was the question of free press. Bahiru, Addis and others claim that the demand for free press was student's first question in the history of their movement. Bahru Zewde wrote that; "the early years of the students movement was characterized by the struggle for a free press, ..." Balsvik also stresses that free press was the first demand in early student's activities. For her demand of free press by students existed in the late1950 and the major elements behind these demand were the African scholarship students. They protested that students should have the right to use the press with full freedom. The other main cause for the rise of the demand at that particular time was that the student's leader called Gebeyehu Firissa came back from Sweden after learning about the situation of students in Oslo University. According to Balsvik he made speech stressing that students in Ethiopia were prohibited to express themselves in free press. He strongly criticized the university administration, which prevented free press on the pretext that students were not mature enough to handle it. The student's leader incited students to protest to the emperor that university students should have to possess student's paper.

Following the student leader's speech, discussions among students continued in support of the idea of free press. The reply of the academic administration and the government for students' demand; stated that, "a free press could not be achieved because of the political and social conditions prevailing in the country".

By1961 students demand for free press became a very serious issue. According to Balsvik for the first time the right guaranteed and enshrined in the Ethiopian constitution was tested by the students. At this time students regarded themselves responsible citizens aspiring to make the academic freedom unlimited. They also regarded themselves as pioneers of progress for their country by contributing on activities of free press.

In 1961 the students elected a Kenyan student called Stanley Gulvi as press and information officer. According to many authors the Ethiopian
students believed that this foreign student would achieve the demand of free press more successfully. They hoped that the newly elected student's council would continue on pushing their demand. It is interesting to note the role African students played in early student activities.

### 3.3. Early form of student organization

Bahiru Zewde discusses that; "the earliest form of student organization was the student's council, which goes back to the establishment of the university college." Balsvik also claims that the first form of organization was the university college of Addis Ababa student's council. She extensively discusses the responsibility and function of the student's council. The student's council had various responsibilities such as, "sports activity, social entertainment, the debating society and various clubs."

Generally prominent authors on the issue agree that the student's council had no political aim outside the campus affair. Behru claims that the struggle for a free union and free press was essentially concerned with on-campus affairs.

From 1959 onwards students' demanded to control student affairs and to take all responsibility had intensified. Each and every activity of students was controlled by the university administration. This situation led to alienation. Pausewang who was instructor in the Sociology Department during that period wrote a book entitled, "Students In Developing Society; Social and Psychological Situation of Ethiopian Student". He discussed the feeling of students toward the campus as follow;

*Ethiopian students blame the University for not taking any independent steps, and not giving sufficient guidance to put in to practice its ideal of rationality in technical, economical, social and political fields. This create a rather ambivalent feelings towards the University, which they considered just a Government department.*

41
Student's begun to oppose the total control of the student's council by the campus administration. In this demand the African students were active participants. In 1959 the Kenyan students, Omogi Calleb was elected as secretary general of the student's council.\textsuperscript{28}

According to Balsvik students urged unity strongly without interference of any government organ. The students needed to serve their interest via their participation. Their Jesuit teachers and administrators also influenced the activity of students. The students were always opposing the university administration and Bahru has discussed that;" students were pitted against the authoritarian rule of the French-Canadian Jesuit fathers who administered and taught at the college in its early years." Similarly Balsvik also discussed the relation between the students and the Jesuit teachers. According to Balsvik students felt discomfort with the education provided by the Jesuit teachers and, "students also strongly resented courses in scholastic philosophy". The student's negative feeling towards their education indicated how much they were dissatisfied by the education. Concerning the education students said that, "at the examinations we consciously spat to them the correct answer, the answer they wanted. That was for us a matter of survival." \textsuperscript{29}

Addis Hewot also explain the disagreement between the administration of the Jesuit teachers and students; he described the situation between the two groups as follow; "In 1960 the university college students were fighting for the right to form democratically elected union. This brought them more than once in to open confrontation with the expatriate Jesuit university college administration."\textsuperscript{30}

All the three authors clarify the hostile atmosphere between the students and their foreign teachers. Any one could easily raise or pose the question as to why the Jesuit teachers prohibited the independent participation of student's activities through their own union. My speculation is that the foreigners feared that if they could not watch these activities closely it would lead to uncontrollable situation. Before it broke out and creeps in to the student's body the only solution was suppressing and paralyzing it. The teachers thought that
the student's interest would never be satisfied. If they were allowed to get what they needed today, tomorrow they would come with new demand.

3.4. The 1960 coup and the first mass agitation of university students

1960 was significant year in the history of students' movement. Many authors marked that year as the birth date of the students' movement. Others regard the year as the turning point in the history of student's activism. Fantahun emphasized the importance of the year by saying that, "the year 1960 was significant because students engaged in intense political activity supporting a coup attempt...." 31. According to Addis Hiwot, "1960 was the first baptism of Ethiopian students in militancy and spirit of democracy - i.e. the birth of the Ethiopian students movement", 32 Balsvik also regards the year 1960 as a turning point in student's activities. From Bahru's point of view, 1960 was a turning point because students begun to think beyond their campus life.

According to these authors students had no participation in the planning of the coup. They heard the news, while they were attending classes. At first student's leader were summoned to the headquarter of the bodyguard. Balsvik discussed the propaganda Mengistu Niway had used to win the support of the students. According to Balsvik explanation, "he asked the student not to misunderstand the motive of those who tried to overthrow the government; they did not do it for self-enhancement, but in the wider interest of all". Balsvik also narrated that the university student council arranged a meeting of student's body where the clothest friends of the students, the African students refused to present.33

The students spent the night on preparing slogan and songs. Among their songs Balsvik mentioned the following:

- **Wake up my compatriot, do not forget yourself**;
- **For you have a history behind you.**
- **Erase your slavery and renew your freedom today;**
- **wake up, wake up. Do not forget yourself**
- **your dignity will be safeguarded and you will**
- **be rewarded with enternal happiness.**
- **Wake up, wake up. Do not forget yourself.**34
Students prepared slogans in English a few of them said;

> *Ethiopia is peacefully changed for us all;*
> *for every one-bloodless revolutions;*
> *you who have suffered under injustice-wake up!;*
> *let us stand peacefully with the new government of*
> *the people; our goal is equality, brotherhoodness*
> *and freedom.*³⁵

Students tried to change the thinking of the mass population by stressing the change of the government. Some of the student’s leaders made speech at different places of the city. Students also tried to persuade the soldiers not to fight against the coup. During this time the students openly demonstrated in mass. It was the first strike on the history of students’ movement.

After fighting broke out students refrained from distributing news and papers. Later when the failure of the coup became clear students burned all the paper, which they distributed. The closest friends of the students, the African students, fled to British Embassy to safeguard themselves from the incident. Balsvik openly discusses the condition in the campus after the failure of the coup. The mass population regarded the students as enemies. Some groups of people entered the campus to beat students. The staff members of the campus sheltered the students until the condition subsided. Finally the president of the campus advised the students to sign a letter of apology to the emperor for their previous misconduct.³⁷

Student’s activities were interrupted because of the incident. Student weekly paper was not published for two weeks. According to Balsvik reactions against the students crowded the title of Ethiopian Herald.

After the conditions restored to normalcy the Emperor called the students to the palace and made a heartbreaking speech to the students. Ethiopian Herald published the whole speech of the Emperor. The following is only selected from the speech of the Emperor;
.... But trees that are planted do not always bear the desired fruit. We expanded Ethiopia's educational system. We sent students abroad for higher training, expecting that they would return and devote their learning to the service of their nations.38

On the other hand Addis Zemen newspaper presented the emotional feeling of the student. Balsvik translated and quoted it as follow;

All students were biting their lips, remembering the love and upbringing of their father, the king of kings, and their eyes were full of tear and there face were glowing with anger.39

1960 coup was by no means the end of the student's activism or militancy, rather it was the beginning of a decade of mass agitation. Student participation in the 1960 coup was the first student major agitation in their history. Generally, in this short chapter I have tried to discuss the inception of the Ethiopian students' movement beginning with the factors that contributed to the emergence of the student's movement and their early activities including the student's attempt for self-expression, the first demand, early form of organization and the first mass agitation. We have to know that students' movement is a vast topic and it is not the purpose of this paper to present the whole activity. This analysis is meant to raise core points concerning the inception and early activities of Ethiopian students movement.
End note

Chapter one
2 Local mead drink prepared by fermentation using honey, water and other ingredients.

Chapter two
1 He was named governor of Tchatcher district in 1930 where he had built reservoir piped water, roads, bridges and a dispensary. Chris prouty and Eugene Rosenfeld, Historical dictionary of Ethiopia (Metuchen; The scarecrow press, 1981), p.183
2 A title awarded to well-respected persons, an equivalent for Sir.
3 Italian soldier or policemen in colonial territory
4 A name used to call all white foreigners in Ethiopia by local people.
5 Evangelical sub-protestant local church.
6 A fiction literature written by w/o Sindu Geberu.
8 He was killed resisting arrest at his home the night of 23/24 November 1974. Prouty and Rosenfeld, p.13.
9 Letter from commander inchief of police force to the Minister of Interior in which requested the Ministry of Interior to promote Shambel (Captain) Mebrahtu Fesseha as a major (Yeshi Alaqua). Dated march 4, 1947. See appendex I.
10 Written information that described about medal reward of General Mebrahtu Fesseha from emperior Hailesillassie I. According to this written document Brigadier General Mebrahtu Fesseha was awarded a Gold medal for 20 years long time service in police force. Dated February 13, 1970. See appendex II.
11 Fortune Magazine, vol.3 No. 133 Nov. 17, 2002. This magazine wrote about Brigadier General Mebrahtu's contrbution on locating the present headquarter
of police force. It further clarified that Brigadier General Mabrahtu played a
decisive role for the establishment of new head quarter, which is the present
head office. See appendix III.

12 Letter from Police Force to Brigadier General Mebrahtu Fesseha. Dated
December 3, 1976. According to this letter Brigadier General Mebrahtu Fesseha
served in police force from April 9, 1941 to May 8, 1961. See appendix IV.

13 Letter from Prime Minister and Minister of Pen Tsehafe Ti'ezaz Aklilu
to this letter Brigadier General Mebrahtu was appointed as counselor to
Ethiopian Embassy in Nigeria following the frustration of the 1960 coup d'état.
See Appendix V.

14 Letter from Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the Minister of Interior. Dated
December 13, 1976. This letter further explains about Brigadier General
Mebrahtu's service in Foreign Affairs after return from Lagos. According this
letter the principal informant served in Foreign Affairs from April 1963 up to
December 1964. See appendix VI.

15 Commander of gate. Prouty and Rosenfeld, p.127

Some what equivalent to general-Addis Hewot, *Ethiopia: From Autocracy to
Revolutions* (London: Merlin press, 1975). p-

16 Letter from Ministry of the Pen to Kibur Dejazmach Kifle Yirgetu, the Minister
Mebrahtu Fesseha had appointed as Deputy Minister of International Boundary
Administration and transferred from the Navy Force to the Ministry of Interior.
See appendix VII.

17 Literally, 'most favoured' ; imperial counselor(Addis Hewot).

18 Letter from Prime Minister Office to Kibur Ato Mamo Tadesse, the Minister of
Interior. Dated August 15, 1969. This letter deals with the transfer of Brigadier
General Mebrahtu Fesseha from the Ministry of Interior to the Ministry of
Agriculture on June 25, 1969. The transfer was made after his appointment as
director of Wild Life Conservation Department. See Appendix VIII.

19 President of Nigeria from 1966-1975, who came to power by a military coup by
overthrowing President Johnson Aguiyi-Ironsi in July 1966. (African Political
leader Data)

20 The creal out of which the staple bread known as injera is made. Fentahun
Tiruneh, The Ethiopian students; their struggle to articulate the Ethiopian
Revolution (Chicago: Nyla type, 1990), p.76.

21 Letter from Minister Getahun Tesma to Brigadier General Mebrahtu Fesseha.
Dated November 5, 1973. According to this letter Brigadier General Mebrahtu
authorized as deputy Governor General of Bali Province on Oct.16, 1973. See
appendix IX.

22 Letter from Dejazmach (doctor) Zewde Gebresilassie, the Minister of Interior
to Brigadier General Mebrahtu Fesseha. Dated May 25, 1975. According to this
letter Brigadier General Mebrahtu had appointed as Governor General of
GamoGofa province on may 13, 1975. See appendix X.

23 The key group of officers and enlisted personnel necessary to establish and
train a new military unit. Random house, p.292. In our country it represents
the Derg political officers.

24 Commander of the right flank (Addis Hiwot)

25 An official in any communist government whose duties include political

26 Letter from the Provisional Military Government of Socialist Ethiopia, Ministry
This letter announced that Brigadier General Mebrahtu Fesseha should to be
retired from government service since September 17, 1976. See appendix XI.


28 Inter Alpha Trading Enterprise PLC.

Chapter 3

1Development through cooperation campaign -Bahru Zewde, History of Modern

2 Represent a group of people whose land and property were nationalized by
Derg government.
Letter from Yeshi Aleka (Major) Debella Dinssa, Chairman of Ediget Behibret to Brigadier General Mebrahtu Fesseha. This letter Acknowledges Brigadier General Mebrahtu for his good cooperation with the work of Ediget Behibret. Beside this letter also explain that Brigadier General Mebrahtu Fesseha played tremendous role for the success of Ediget Behibret Zemecha in GamoGofa province. Dated April 28, 1977. See appendix XII.

Campaigners - Bahru, p.240.

Chapter Four

2 Ibid.
4 Ibid. p.222.
7 Girma, p.4.
8 Ibid.
9 Addis, p.94.
10 Bahru, p.221.
11 Balsvik, p.43-44.
12 Fentahun Tiruneh, The Ethiopian students? their struggle to Articulate the Ethiopian Revolution (chicago; Nyala type, 1990), p.43.
13 Girma, p.5.
14 Ibid.
15 Balsvik, p.75.
16 Ibid.
17 Fentahun, p.43-44.
Balsvik, p.21.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Bahru, p.222.

Balsvik, p.77.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Pasuewang, Siegfried Students In a Developing Society; Social and Psychological Situation Of Ethiopian Student (Addis Ababa, Haile Sellassie I University, n.d.), P.5.

Balsvik, P.83.

Ibid, p.96.

Addis, p.94.

Fenathun, p.15.

Addis, p.95.

Balsvik, p.95.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Ibid.


Balsvik, p.95.
Bibliography


