

**Refugee Review Tribunal
AUSTRALIA**

RRT RESEARCH RESPONSE

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Questions

- 1. When was the Matcha and Tulama Association formed in Ethiopia?**
- 2. Could a person have worked for the association in the mid to late 1950's?**
- 3. When did the Derg regime come into power in Ethiopia?**

RESPONSE

- 1. When was the Matcha and Tulama Association formed in Ethiopia?**
- 2. Could a person have worked for the association in the mid to late 1950's?**

The Macha-Tulama Association was formed in the early 1960s as a civic organisation aimed at providing social relief and similar assistance to Oromo people. The Association originated as a result of the merger of three other self-help associations in Addis Ababa.

An article published by the Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization, an independent body formed in 1991, summarises;

The successive colonial regimes banned all political, social and spiritual institutions of the Oromo and those of other colonized Peoples. During Emperor Haile Selassie's regime (1930–1974), the only organizations allowed, under a strong vigilance, were a few self-help associations. In the beginning of the 1960s, there were three Oromo self-help associations which had their offices in Addis Ababa (Finfinne) namely the Jibat and Macha, Metta Robii, and Tulama Shawa self help associations. These three associations merged in 1963 and formed the Macha-Tulama Self-help Association.

It embraced all Oromos irrespective of religion and region and other non-Oromo nationalities who accepted the objectives of the association. The formation of the Macha-Tulama

Association was a basis for the subsequent centralized leadership of the Oromo struggle for liberation (Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization, undated, 'Oromo', UNPO website, <http://www.unpo.org/content/view/7917/135> - Accessed 2 September 2009 – Attachment 1).

A scholarly monograph also provides more detailed information on its origins and purposes;

The year 1963-1964 was a turning point in Oromo history because a core of Oromo nationalists, such as Hail Mariam Gamada, a lawyer, and Alemu Qixxeesa, a retired colonel, merged their small self-help association and formed the Macha-Tulama Self Help Association. The three groups that initially merged were the Meta-Robbi, Jibat-Macha, and Tulama Shawa self-help associations. The creation of the new association marked the public rise of Oromo nationalism. There were two levels of objectives of the association: first, the establishment of schools and health clinics and the construction of roads wherever they were needed in Oromia; second, the construction of churches and mosques for Christian and Muslim believers who did not have them and the provision of financial and legal assistance for disabled and unemployed persons.

...

Although in the constitution of the association it was mentioned that the association would assist its members during accident, illness, death, and other serious problems, the main emphasis was given to Oromo national development. The association was open to anyone interested; there were individuals from other colonized nations who did join. As the popularity of the association grew, increasing numbers of Oromo scholars, university and high school students, merchants, high-ranking military and civil officials, soldiers, and farmers became members... Within three years, its registered membership reached over 2 million (Jalata, Asafa, 1993, *Oromo & Ethiopia. State Formation and Ethnonational Conflict, 1868-1992*, Lynne Rienner Publishers, Boulder, pp. 155-156 – Attachment 2).

Another commentator puts the membership at a few hundred thousand before it was outlawed in 1966. The organisation was not in conflict with the Amahara or other ethnic groups and in an extended article Mekuria Bulcha suggests that it initially was seeking recognition and renewal of Oromo identity within a broader ethnic pluralism. Nevertheless, the organisation soon attracted large numbers of people to its meetings through the leadership of key figures in the organisation including military general Tadesse Birru and it opened branches in eight administrative regions;

What made Tadesse a charismatic leader was not only his devotion to the Oromo cause but also his ability to speak and arouse the crowds... At the various meetings of Macha Tulama, he spoke on various issues: land tenure, education, poverty, culture, and so on. He constantly pointed out that although they were the majority in Ethiopia, the Oromo were a neglected people, economically exploited and politically dominated by an ethnic minority.

...

Meetings organised by the association were attended by large crowds, often tens of thousands. Supporters of the association traveled hundreds of kilometers to attend meetings in the capital and in the provinces. It was at these gatherings that the contours of their national landscape became clearer for the first time to many Oromos... After a few years the Macha Tulama was no more a mere meredaja mahber (self-help association) as described in its constitution. Having set up branches all over the Oromo country, the organisation turned into a pan-Oromo social movement (Bulcha, Mekuria 1997, 'Modern Education and Social Movements in the Development of Political Consciousness: The Case of the Oromo, *African Sociological Review*, Vol. 1, n.p., Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa website, http://www.codesria.org/Links/Publications/contents_asr/asr_1_1.htm - Accessed 4 September 2009 – Attachment 3).

The Haile Selassie regime became concerned at the potential of the Association's activities to take a non-peaceful turn and began harassment of its members, eventually culminating in the 1966 imprisonment of Birru;

Local and regional government functionaries created obstacles when leaders traveled from place to place to describe the objectives of the association... When leaders attended meetings at Kachisi, Jeldu, Kalacha, Bishoftu, Bako, and Dheera, local governments attempted to disperse the meetings.

...

[Eventually, the] regime accused the leaders of being conspirators aiming to overthrow the government. It also used a bomb explosion in a cinema house as a pretext to imprison General Gaddasa Biru and to hang other leaders, including Captain Mamo Mezemir. Other prominent Oromo nationalist who were imprisoned from three to ten years including Hail Mariam Gamada, Alemu Qixxeesa, Makonnen Wasanu, Lamessa Boru, Seifu Tasama, and Dadi Fayisa. In 1967, the government finally dissolved the association. General Tadasa Biru was released from prison in 1974 and murdered by the military government in 1975 (Jalata, Asafa 1993, *Oromo & Ethiopia. State Formation and Ethnonational Conflict, 1868-1992*, Lynne Rienner Publishers, Boulder, pp. 156, 157 – Attachment 2).

3. When did the Derg regime come into power in Ethiopia?

By the beginning of 1974, the combined effects of famine, unemployment and inflation had caused substantial popular unrest and discontent with the 83 year old Haile Selassie and his government. Conflict between strata of the military created additional pressure and the 16-year term Prime Minister Akililu Habte-Wolde was replaced by Endalkachew Makonnen on 28th February. He too

was unable to contain discontent among military, labor, and student groups. By late spring many aristocrats and former government officials had been imprisoned, and on July 22 Endalkachew was forced to resign in favor of Mikael Imru.

In June, however, the Provisional Military Council (the 'Derg') which had about 120 representatives was established and assumed de facto control of the state' (Jalata, p. 117).

Succeeding events are summarised by Banks et al. in *Political Handbook of the World*:

On September 12, 1974, the military announced that the emperor had been deposed and that a Provisional Military Government (PMG) had been formed under Lt. Gen. Aman Mikael Andom. Initially, the military presented a united front, but rival factions soon emerged. On November 24 approximately 60 officials, including two former prime ministers and Aman Andom, were executed, apparently on the initiative of (then) Maj. Mengistu Haile-Mariam, strongman of the little-publicized Armed Forces Coordinating Committee, or *Dergue*, as it was popularly known. After November 28 the *Dergue* acted through a Provisional Military Administrative Council, whose chair, Birg.Gen Teferi Banti, served concurrently as acting head of state and government.

Former emperor Hail Selassie, in detention since his deposition, died in August 1975. Earlier, on March 21, the PMAC had decreed formal abolition of the monarchy while declaring its intention to organize a new national political movement "guided by the aims of Ethiopian socialism" (Banks, A.S., Muller, T.C. & Overstreet, W.R. 2007, *Political Handbook of the World: 2007*, CQ Press, Washington DC, p. 393 – Attachment 4).

List of Sources Consulted

Internet Sources

Government Information and Reports

Immigration & Refugee Board of Canada <http://www.irb-cisr.gc.ca/>

Non-Government Sources

European Country of Origin Information Network <http://www.ecoi.net>

UNHCR Refworld <http://www.refworld.org>

Region Specific Links

All Africa.com <http://allafrica.com>

Oromo Liberation Front <http://www.romoliberationfront.org/>

Oromo Support Group <http://www.oromo.org/>

Search Engines

Webcrawler <http://www.webcrawler.com>

Hakia <http://www.hakia.com>

Copernic <http://www.copernic>

Alta Vista <http://www.altavista.com>

Databases:

FACTIVA (news database)

BACIS (DIAC Country Information database)

REFINFO (IRBDC (Canada) Country Information database)

ISYS (RRT Research & Information database, including Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, US Department of State Reports)

University of Melbourne Library Catalogue

List of Attachments

1. Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization, undated, 'Oromo', UNPO website, <http://www.unpo.org/content/view/7917/135> - Accessed 2 September 2009.
2. Jalata, Asafa, 1993, *Oromo & Ethiopia. State Formation and Ethnonational Conflict, 1868-1992*, Lynne Rienner Publishers, Boulder.
3. Bulcha, Mekuria 1997, 'Modern Education and Social Movements in the Development of Political Consciousness: The Case of the Oromo, *African Sociological Review*, Vol. 1, n.p., Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa website, http://www.codesria.org/Links/Publications/contents_asr/asr_1_1.htm - Accessed 4 September 2009.
4. Banks, A.S., Muller, T.C. & Overstreet, W.R. 2007, *Political Handbook of the World: 2007*, CQ Press, Washington DC. (MRT-RRT Library)