

[HararianForum] Harar Review/

Tuesday, 29 September 2009

By Salah Khairo:

The Holy month of Ramadan is now over. May Allah accept the our fasting, prayers and meditations and bless us to reach for the next one.

Recently I have had a chance to visit my beloved city of Harar for a period of six weeks (24 July – 5 Oct. 2009). Harar is pleasant; and more so is during the blessed month of Ramadan in which Hararis welcome the month by cleaning up and decorating their houses, preparing food and lifting their Islamic sprits through prayers, meditations charitable deeds and attending Islamic lectures from the honourable Shaikh Ahmed Abdulahi.

It was a great pleasure that I witnessed the Holy month of Ramadan in Harar in 10 years, visited historical places and met with many interesting people including the Harari President and few of his office bearers and advisors, Awe Haji Yusuf Abdurahman Al-Harari (Aka, Basha Birigne) and his advocates, the honourable Shaikh Ahmed Abdullahi, Shaikh Abdulaziz Barro and his tablighis, few Ahbashites of Shaikh Abdulahi Alharari, brother Abdulkarim of Sweeden, br. Nuredin Adam, br Abdurahman Gutu and his Gemaas, Muhammad Al-harari, leaders of HNL and HDP (HADID).

I have gathered some information, which I thought, may be relevant to our discussions and debates; while enjoying many invitations, plenty of fresh fruits, legumes and subsequent Berchas with colourful jokes, discussions and debates on Harari politics, economy and social issues. As usual, Hararies have always been welcoming, respectful and hospitable. I am very grateful to my family, friends and to those Harari souls who have opened their homes, hearts and share their thoughts on many important issues relevant to us all.

Harar Review/ Meeting with the Harari President

I met the Harari President, his honourable Murad Abdulhadi, perhaps, after about 14 years, in the morning on Wed 19th Aug 2009 at the end of graduation ceremony organised for the inauguration of district attorneys and judges (see for news clip on: www.hcaaustralia.com)

). Obviously, I found him welcoming, hospitable and friendly. We a kind of hugged each other while throwing friendly jokes at each other in which he said “what is happening with you, Salah, that you are getting younger”. I smiled back saying “that is the best of good news that have been said to me since I have arrived to Harar”. Later we had a bit of chat on his intended visit to Australia before he called for photo opportunities with the graduates.

In a sense, his joke carries truth. As a matter of fact, most Hararis in Harar appear at least 10 years older than their actual age and it is sad to see that their physiques are quickly drying up and loosing weight. I have no doubt the main reasons behind such appearances are the consumption of a lot of qat, smoking cigarettis, poor dietary habits, lack of physical exercise and proper sleep. The appearances of those Harari souls who are free from qat are quiet appealing to all and perhaps can be described as the best of the West and yet they are only few it them in Harar.

It is very common to see and hear that the Hararists, run into all sorts of health, financial, social and family problems associated with qat. There are many practical stories that we can relate. A Harari girl whom I had a chance to talk to told me that she is no longer interested to marry a Harari lad because she does not want to have a partner who has lost his teeth to qat and smoking.

Rushby (1999) in his book entitled: Eating the flowers of Paradise: One man’s journey through Ethiopia and Yeman, described qat as not only a drug dictating the lives of people in Ethiopia and Yeman but also as the main reason for developing multiple personality disorders. That is the person assumes different personality in the morn, noon, afternoon and night; (4 in 1) and contradicts the very decisions he/she has made at different times of the day. In medical language this is called Dissociative identity disorder.(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dissociative_identity_disorder)

). Qat is categorised as one of the addictive drugs in Australia , the USA , Canada and the Uk although these countries

differ on restriction on its importation and uses .

Just before lunch that day I met with the Harari President again at his stylish and neat office. To my surprise I could see no files or documents anywhere in his office except a beautiful chair, desk, a couch, a TV set and a couple of telephones. It is not unusual to expect piles of files and documents needing the attention of the president who was absent from his office for about 2 months. But actually there were none that I could see. Nothing for the attention of Harari President in Harar?

Any how we sat for a bit of chat and catch up with each other. I knew that he just came back from overseas, so I broke our silence by asking how was his North American trip? He gave me an overview of how he sees Hararian Diaspora; and his fund raising mission followed by a review of his past achievements, challenges, future plans and strategies for the socio-economic development of the Harari state through Harari Revitalisation Initiatives.

When he finished, he threw at me a tester question:

“What do you say about it?”

he question took me aback for a moment. I did not expect that sort of question but a question which gives me an opportunity to narrate stories about my part of the world: - the stories of Australia and Harari communities in Australia including the Harari Community Association, Saay Association, the Harari Organisation (aka, Abshir or Ahbashi Jemma), and Biraqul Harar association in Australia.

Obviously, those stories could have benefited him a lot because he had told me about his impending visit to Australia that is going to happen very soon. In response, I could have given him my perspective overviews of the pros and cons of these organisations and provided him with some tips, strategies and tactics so that his mission be a successful one.

Instead, I was obliged to answer his question as he had already pulled out his cigarette, lit it up and puffed it out a number of times while staring at me and waiting for my reply.

I knew that his question was actually meant to test the water: are you with us or ...? The Bush style!!!

“Well, I believe that you have done very well in many ways but not to the extent that it has been expected of you”; was my reply; and put forward an example: your government has taken no action to limit the production, consumption and negative implications of qat addiction; and emphatically stated that most of our public servants are suffering from chronic fatigue because of not getting sufficient sleep, lack of physical exercise and poor dietary habits.

I believe that we are the lost generation but the younger ones need to be prevented from being infected with this substance. Couldn't you do something about it, say, by instating State Act and law making the use of qat illegal at least for those under the age of 18 years?

He stirred a bit in his sofa chair, puffed his cigarette again and said "we have been trying to minimise its consumption and side effects by imposing some wilful restrictions on its use at social functions and gatherings although so far we have not successful"; He then suggested the benefits and contributions of market based instruments and other incentive mechanisms, such as the taekwondo classes coordinated by br. Mohammed Alharari, in managing qat use among the Hararists or Bercholes.

See the issue must have been in his mind for sometime and knows some ways and strategies to address the problem but have no courage to do something about it. Do you know why?

It is because many people told me that qat is one of the best friends and advisors to the President. The people who are very close to our President told me that he loves qat more than anything he has ever loved and appreciated in his life. Does anyone expect that our President to preach against qat while in reality keeps the king of qats under his podium and most of his cabinet ministers are, in fact, living on the substance as we speak? If he acts against it, it would be foolish and doomed to failure for the obvious question: Why do you preach something you don't practice?. No one would istens and practices such nonesenses unless you practice them yourself.

Our Oromo brothers rightly named qat "Hambis"; that is to say it is something that drags a person back and makes him/her lazy. How many brilliant brains have we lost to this drug? Surely, we have lost many brilliant Hararies who are capable of not only leading Harar into prosperity but also have the capacity to run the entire Ethiopia . But Hambis, a drug which is nourished by internationally banned chemical (DDT), fertilisers and irrigation schemes and a weapon of Shaitan, is holding on to the new generation and killing the older ones spreading like a wild fire as never seen before

Opinion is divided as to whether qat is Hallal or Haram. The Honourable Shaikh Ahmed Abdulahi of Harar, in one of his Islamic lectures at the Grand Mosque in Harar in Ramadan, indicated that there are both sides of agruments in the Islamic religious circles and preferred to leave it as it is. however, he wisely indicated his opposition to a person who can afford to pay for qat but provides indequate or no sustenance for his family by substantiating his arguments quoting authentic Hadiths.

Some of those who are infavour qat consumption, however, small, include the Harari President Murad Abdulhadi, Biraqul harar, Yemage idris, Arief Abdulhafiz. Mohammed Abduraman, Salahadin Cuba, Abdusalam Abdosh, Ayub Feki, Ahmed Abdosh, and Abdurahman Gutu to mention a few. However, almost all Harari women, Awe Haji Yusuf Abdurahman, Shaikh Khalid, Hassen and Dia (Lebanese Ahbashi Missionaries in Harar), Mohammed Shash, Arief Mohammed, Abdulhakim Abogne, Teweleda Abdosh, Ilyas Abdumalik?, Abdulhakim (head of Housing agency), Mohammed Al-harari, Awe Haji Khairo, Awe Mohammed Sabit, and myself would definitely be in oppositions.

At my first ever encounter with Awe Haji Yusuf Abdurahman (AKA Basha Birigne), the cleverest Harari personality I have ever met, asked me if I am into qat? Having got my answer “no”;, he showed some interest and willingness to share with me a bit of his time.

I found him indeed as one of an interesting Harari personality and has had a lot to say about Harar and Hararis.

I have written a list of about 87 shortcomings on you, the Harari youth, which were not prevalent in our time” said, Awe Basha Birign. “Could you please tell me some?,” I asked; Without hesitation he started numbering them while promising to wite them down in the form of book.

1. Qat;

2. Sigara;

3. Wer;

4. Feret;

5. belema meqesha, so and so forth and finally a bit of fatherly and private advice.

I met Awe basha Birign on three separate occasions in Harar. One never ceases to love and respect him for his captivating intelligence, wisdom and knowledge, strength and courage to face any challenge at the age of nearly 100. One would wonder how superb was his personalities in his early years of his life. I will have to come to the discussions

that I had with this great Harari when I discuss about the Ahbashis but for the time being let me get our of the office of our President Murad Abdulhadi.

At some stage I also stated that Hararis are getting impoverished in this land of their ancestors while new arrivals are practically controlling the economic and services sectors of the State. Do you have any affirmative state policy that would protect the interests of Harar and Hararies in this State established on affirmative constitution? I guess there is none.

In fact, had this statement and question was thrown on the X-Harari President, Mr Fuad Ibrahim, I believe that he would have said "It is non of my business who controls the economy and who is not. I am the President of Harar and not specifically appointed here to serve the interest of Hararis but the interests of all. With this attitude, he gave an executive order to submit the whole complex of Harar Military Academy to Alemaya Agricultural University in the pretext of short term lease arrangements; and lease its huge cafeteria with many offices inside to the Department of Family Planning, which had only few employees while the Harari State was desperately searching for offices, apparently for no price. He actually rode on the back of Hararis to get to the level of Federal State Minister for Education and yet he has never been grateful or regretful to Hararis whom he had practically produced nothing in their interest.

Courageous Hararis who have opposed and declined to take action on his decisions were systematically prosecuted, harassed, and removed from their positions and postings. Now, Alemaya University of Agriculture is undertaking huge construction projects inside the complex and I wonder how Mr Fuad Ibrahim would be able to reclaim the site after the end of his so-called lease agreements unless it is in his dream or becomes the PM of Ethiopia?. One really wonders who actually Mr Fuad Ibrahim was serving in Harar?

This President is different and much better than his predecessor. He first, threw the Family Planning Unit from the office and provided it to those offices in desperate need. Unlike his predecessors he has the ultimate feeling of belonging to Harar and quiet sensitive to the issues of Harar and Hararis. Besides, some including Abba Ayub Feki and br Iran Abdella think high of him for his humanistic attitudes and concerns for the welfare of others. I also found him as simple and easy to communicate with as I knew him in the past. But I some times question their approvals looking at his government's human rights violation and injustice done against br Zeydan Bekri who is still awaiting court decision, and is subjected to various forms persecution and reprisal.

Anyhow, in reply he went through his government's performance in the area of promoting Harari language in the elementary schools although no mention of making it a working or government language, reducing population density or liquor shops inside jugal by relocating households, laying out of cobble stones and sewage outlets, and promoting service associations to enhance household income. But he could not produce any evidence that could prove that the welfare of Hararis in Harar is improving but rather deteriorating. We agreed to disagree.

Suddenly, his telephone rang and consequently informed that he is being expected for lunch with the graduates. Thus, we departed while he was actually promising me to catch up with me at the ifatar party and Bercha ihe is will be inviting me in the holy month of Ramadan after checking his Presidential schedules. I was sure that he would not do so; and, in fact, he did not nor did I expect. It was my feeling that he said to himself "Hazza Firaqu Beynee

Webeynack” ya Salah and departed in the way Mussa and Khadir did through his presidential exit.

Luckily, I was cordially invited by the Vice President Oromia and a wonderful friend of mine, Mr Abdulaziz Mohammed who also invited Shaikh Omar Al-Tiganie to accompany us on his iftar party arranged for us at his residence. I am quiet grateful ifor his nsights on Harar and its people, and appreciate him and his family for the level of respect and affection they have shown us. May Allah honour and reward them with the hest.

Belema mequesha is item 5 in the lists of 87 weaknesses of Harari youth by Awe Basha Birign. The Harari President was not an exception in Belema mequesha (breaking promises). Generally and strangely, in Harar it has become a tradition not to honour both private and public appointments and promises. Your friends invite you to come to their house or office at a certain time of the day but they will not be present when you get there. Or they would give you an appointment to wait for them at a certain place at a certain time but they won’t turn up or let you know that they would run late or don't come. They would promise you to do some thing in at a certain time but won’t even remember it saying it. How many broken promises does the Harari public should entertain and for how long?

While I was talking to Awe Basha Birigh at his office one morning at about 10:10 AM a Harari man turned up who had an appointment to see the Shaikh at 9:30 AM. Shaikh Yusuf Abduraham asked him why he is so late? He laid down his many excuses that were not accepted but received a command “please go now I will catch up with you some other time because I am talking to Salahadin now”. "see this is what I have been telling you" just now said the Shaikh when the man left.

"Belema yeqehrumelu and Hanal khuluq taqabata!"

We sat down around an old table and chair after he ordered a cup of tea and bowl of peanuts for me. I straight away asked;

Why do professor Haggai Elrich and Mutafa Kabha, in their article published in the journal of middle east studies believe that you are promoting an extremist Islamic fundamentalist ideas of “Wahabya” but consider the Ahbashi of Shaikh Abdulhi Alharari as moderate Islam ideals that is suitable to Ethiopia to promote a peaceful co-existence of Muslims and Christians ?

‘Did you read the article?” he asked;

“yes, I did” replied I;

“What is your opinion?” he asked again.

Can see how clever he is? he is trying to get my opinion so that he prepares his strategies and tactics to answer.

Awe Haji, “Why are you throwing the ball at me while this paper is referring about you and Shaikh Abdulahi Al - Harari” I said; while telling him that i have the hard copy of the journal which i did download it from the following link

http://journals.cambridge.org/download.php?file=%2FMES%2FMES38_04%2FS0020743806412459a.pdf&code=1bf996329bbfa4c1a22b52fd9ff5084a

In the first instance of my encounter with him on fermegalla and asked him to give me appointment to see him, he refused to take specific appointments to visit him unless we meet by coincidence telling me that he is very busy. That day i went to his office in the morning and got him by surprise. He did not want to push me around this time but give me opportunity to listen to why i am looking for him. Having introduced myself well and answered some personal questions, i straight away asked him the question which also caught him by surprise.

He reclined on his chair a bit not knowing how to address my problem; but ordered his attendant to bring "the news paper". In the mean time an Oromo elder arrived apparently from Kombolcha, which is a small country town in Oromia and about 22 km South of Harar. The Shaikh instructed him to sit next to him; and then introduced me to him as to who I am, where I come from and what was my question before inviting him to reply. And then said ";

"Watte Akhakh Tefachzakh Sualle Jewab Yashlekhzaluw Allahu Adegelekhwa teteneba", meaning Allah has brought for you someone who will answer the question that you have been looking for and so listen to him."

The Oromo elder's confessions and responses were startling. In a nutshell, he told me that he is well aware of the fact such misconceptions about the Islamic belief and character of Shaikh Yusuf have been going on for a longtime. We had believed in them at the first instance. But now we have realised that the works of Shaikh Yusuf are not different from the Islamic tradition that we have inherited from our fathers and grandfathers. He has renovated our Masjids, our shrines, supports our undertakings and even funds our mauleed celebrations. Upon which Awe Basha supported his responses by adding "Watte Yeeta Ashazakh"; while showing me a number of individual applications he has been inspecting his future project funding..

A while later, the arrival of br Mohammed Abduraham and his subsequent approval of me that I am not a biased person nor affiliated to either side politics or religious beliefs helped the Shaikh to move a little bit forward in answering my question instead of referring them to others. Instantly, I thanked brother Mohammed and got back to the Awe Basha whom I wished I had seen and talked to him alive for he has been so popular in the many worldly and religious affairs pertaining to Ethiopia and Harar.

His appearance is quiet different to the way I originally though he is. He is short with quiet slim body wearing Arabic garb,

a coat on and a scarf on his head, with sharp, brown and busy eyes moving deep their sockets. Very alert, responsive and consistent person who does not miss an issue or an event unattended and is unquestionably generous in supporting individuals and groups and funding a wide variety of charitable projects including the renovation of masjids and shrines in and around Harar.

“You see, in this news paper you will find your answers to your question” said, while handing me the news papers his attendant fetched from one of his stores or libraries at his office. The article was entitled something “There is only one Islam but countries” by Yusuf Abdurahman (aka, Basha Birigin). The article is was written in response to an article written by an author who described the Shaikh Abdurahman Al-harari and Shaikh Abdullahi Al-harari as leaders of two opposite brands of Islam practiced in Ethiopia based on the information he obtained from the presentation of Prof. Haggai at AAU.

In response, Awe Basha provided a review of some of the political and religious issues pertaining in the 60s in Ethiopia, argued that there is no difference in Islamic beliefs but countries and consequently invited Prof Haggai and Shaikh Abdulahi Al-harari for a public debate if there is otherwise. It is very unfortunate that the debate did not take place. If the debate was conducted, it would have been an epic and historic one that would have left us flooded with real knowledge.

Awe Basha spoke for about an hour and half mostly dictating the discussion. He went through his personal relationships with Emperor HaileSelasie and his roles in translating the Amharic Quran, the Kulub movement and so and so forth. I did not interrupt him a lot except where I needed some clarifications. They were new and first hand information that one would never want to miss out talking and debating.

I found them all interesting and enlightening and made me ask where did he get this name Birigin from? Birigin means the enlighten one and I indeed found him not only so but also enlightening. I have never come across an individual in Harar who have met Awe Basha and proved to the contrary. I guess that must be the reason Emperor HaileSelasie chose him to be his friend.

Is there any young Basha Birign at the moment?

If the answer is no.

Please pray to Allah, to raise few young ones in our midst .

My sister Rabia (Geykahate),

Asselamu alaikum and amanteshi?

Dear gentle readers, this message is particularly addressed to my sister Rabia, and i will continue to address her other questions in the following days. Individuals who are interested to read may read to if they are interested. But again remember it is meant to her because I am well aware of her concerns.

Thanks for welcoming me and appreciate your kind words. I hope that everything is well with you. As you have indicated I "may not have all the answers" to your questions and may not "fully understand" the complexities of all socioeconomic changes in Harar but I can assure you that your beloved State city is changing in many ways and perhaps growing in economic terms.

However, I can say this: In my opinion I believe that the socioeconomic situation of Hararis in Harar, it is generally going down the drain, their hopes those who have none have been forgotten or neglected. Perhaps most of them are slowly getting impoverished except a handful of them struggling to survive from subsistence income they earn from different sources including overseas.

You see, your questions have been mine as well and the questions of many Hararis whether they in overseas or at home. The fact that I have been requested to answer your questions from a number of Hararis through my private emails, telephone calls and in publicly show they are important questions to them too. So I thank you for raising them and yet they are not simple to answer.

You see, when I arrived to Harar I straight away went to see brother Ahmed Abdosh Tahir, who leads the Bureau of Finance and Planning to get a brief overview on the socioeconomic situations and changes in Harar and Hararis. He is one of the most thrust worthy and respectful public servants you could ever get in our administration and remember that his Department is the backbone and engine of the economy. He is a good friend mine whom I respect and trust too.

When I went to his office, he took me out for a cuppa because he knows I would ask him too many questions, argue with him and don't let things go easily. This is not our private matter but a common issue which affects us all whether it is good or bad. It does not matter whether I live here or there.

I tell you if you happen to be in Harar, I advice you to go and see him or his deputy, Mr Muhyedin Ahmed, because they are the first persons who can give detailed explanations and updates on every issue you may have a concern. They are both diligent and hardworking Hararis, who have transformed this department, which was actually the most corrupt of all and ruined, into a dignified government institution functioning properly for the first time in the last 18 years.

Have you ever heard of the corruptions regarding the Khat check points or Kellas?

These guys are very cooperative, respectful and disciplined hararis. Unlike many others you don't see them using public cars for private and personal uses and show off in the public. I wonder how many of you are aware even their existence and heard their name mentioned anywhere?

I have to appreciate the Harari President for bringing such individuals to run our affairs on key positions and postings instead of individuals who see nothing but self interests, personal adorations and glorifications. Whether we like it or not the time has come in which individuals will be assigned to positions based on their merits, experiences and achievements rather than group politics and interests which had served no one and no purpose..

Please excuse for straying away from your issues and questions.

During our conversation, br.Ahmed Abdosh, presented me with 2 documents which is quiet unusual practice at any office in Harar and pulled up his note book to write down the key issues that we will be discussing. No office provide you with the types of things they have been doing but a hug, a cup of tea or coffee and send you off.

Don't ever accept that but demand a doc and ask them questions.

Any how, the docs were

(1) a 16 pp document he personally authored outlying and discussing the production, consumption and socioeconomic implication of qat in Ethiopia and

(2) a booklet published by his Bureau presenting the economic performance of the Harari State over the last 10 or so years.

And later he gave me a detailed overview on wide ranges of issues pertaining to the agricultural, industrial, mining and services sectors in Harar and answered my of my questions with diligence, honesty and articulation. I just love to listen to this man, Ahmed Abdosh. He is great.

Harari State economy consists of 22.5% agricultural, 53.9% Services and 23.6% industrial and is generally growing at the rate of between 3.5 and 13% per annum.

That is called economic growth.

But what percentages of these sectors do Hararies control in Harar? Agriculture is controlled by our Oromo brothers and the services and industrial sectors are controlled by the rest of the population. What is left for ethnic Hararis enjoy less than 1% of the State economy and partial power of administration? Some of them live of the meagre income they earn from these sources while those who do not have any access to such sources of income languish in poverty and tragically their government has forgotten or neglected them for they have no power of influence but they are actually people to ride up on for election and ascension to power.

This is called impoverishment

This is what really upsets the opposition party leaders I have met in Addis Ababa . The lack of clear policy that would protect the interest of these individuals in the very state established on affirmative grounds.

Sister Rabia,

What I did not hear from you is, about the people of Harari?

i think i did address this one on my previous posting. I will give you some practical and real examples.

Did you visit different house holds and observed their living situation? Yes, there are many that I know off.

Case studies. Miss A.

Miss A is a very old Harari lady who lives alone in one of the Harari houses she inherited from her deceased sister some years ago. She never got married in her life and so had no children. Apparently, she and her sister lived together in that house for some years out of the inadequate income they used to earn from selling vegetables on the market basically purchased from a near by town called Haromaya..

Her older sister and other brother passed away one after another; and now lives alone in that little old house mostly leaking water from the roof. She struggled a bit to continue with her usual life for awhile but old age and subsequent illnesses restricted her from working any more and apparently run out of provisions. As far as I know she does not have anyone to help her. She is a Harari and lives out of charity and is waiting for her last earthly days to come. .

She does not even remember whether the Harari government exists or relevant to her anyway but she had been persuaded many times to go and vote for HNL when there is an election.

Who remembers her? Only Allah.

Any form of help or sponsorship will be appreciated.

Case Study B

Grandpa B is a 90 years old man who has been stranded in his old mattress for many years. His wife passed away a long time ago leaving a number of children with him. As he never had a permanent income he made the struggle of his life to support and bring his kids to maturity. Unfortunately, his kids are not in a position to support him. As he reached the old age he lost his eye sight and his ability of walking and consequently stranded at home..

When I visited him at his residence, there was no one at home except himself. I greeted him with "Asselamu Alaikum" and sat down for a chat with him.

Grandp B: "Waalaiku Asselam Man eeli abbow with a smile oh his face";

I : "Don't you remember this voice";

Grandpa B; "I am now 90 years old and it seems that this voice is very remote to me and I don't remember it."

I; "I am Salah";

Grandpa B; stretches his hands out and said "please come and hug me; I always ask about you, do you know that?";

I: Yes, I do know that";

Grandpa: "Ya Salah it looks like I have had enough this life; and I am just waiting for the Mercy of Allah";

I: "please make duaa for us" and he makes Duaa and then we depart

Actually, this man is one of the strong supporters of HNL. What services did such people get from the HNL or the Harari government in return? They got practically nothing. He lives on the good will of others and a little of support he gets from a son overseas. Does it really matter for this old man whether the Harari government is in power or not? Of course, not.

Just before i left his residence, i gazed around the house and found that it was empty.

Does the Harari government know even the existance of this old man? Of course, not.

Who knows the situation of this Harari except Allah?

Any support and sponsorship is appreciated.

The power dynamics, which is exhibited in the surrounding areas of the office of Awe Basha Birign are quiet interesting to examine. The office and residence of Awe Haji Birign lie about 50 -60 strides south but to the left side of the main street called "Andegna Meged" from Duke Berr. The entrance to his office is in a recess and is adjacent to Awe Berqa Mosque which is frequented and administered by the advocates and relatives of Shaikh Abdulahi Al-Harari in particular Shaikh Abduraham Tebalali, his supporters and students.

Opposite to the mosque is a huge building owned by Shaikh Yusuf Abdurahman which he uses in part as his office and in part as a commercial centre. Actually, that building used to be called “Demesse Asfaw Hotel” which was named after the owner, Ato Demesse Asfaw. I assume of that the hotel must be one of the first Hotels in Harar which furnished many rooms, food, liquors and prostitutes inside Jugal and so one of the first hotels meant to disrupt and corrupt our Islamic moral values and ethics.

Further more, Ato Demesse, was rich and industrious man but disliked Islam and muslims and if he had a chance he would have evicted us one after the other from that street. To some degrees he did succeed but could not complete his ambition for Allah had another plan for him and so he passed away leaving his assets and legacy to his only son.

Unfortunately, the son was unworthy. He could not pursue his father’s wish simply because he was chronic berchoholic, alcoholic, and smokoholic. Consequently, qat, alcohol and smoking sapped everything out his body, soul and sprit to achieve his fathe’s dream. It was then, I suppose, sold it off to the highest bidder, Awe Baha Birign and disappeared with shame for not honoring the legacy of his farther.

Awe Basha knocked of the old sigh and replaced it with a new sign on to the front side of the building reading some thing like “Aftel Garad Forestry, Tourism and Recreation Pty ltd” in Arabic, Amharic and English; parked his latest 4 wheel drive Toyota Land Cruiser behind the building, hired a number of attendants and easily walks to and fro from his house which is a stone throw away. AftelGerad has always been closed when I was in Harar.

Interestingly, opposite to the AftelGerad and across the main street is a well known stationary store owned by Awe Alewi Bahrun and his associates including Shaikh Abduraham Tebalali and Shaikh Abdulkarim, a long time deceased brother of Shaikh Abdullahi Alharari. To the right and left of this stationary are few number of shops owned and frequented by supporters of Shaikh Abdulahi Alharari as well.

What makes it more interesting to examine the impacts of the presence of Shaikh Yusuf Al-harari exactly opposite to the most enthusiastic supporters and sympathizers of Shakikh Abdulahi Al-harari who has had bitter historical rivalry and oppositions the former one. The rivalry and competition between the two great Shaikh Al-hararis started off in this holy city of Harar, run for some 70-80 years and now seems to have come back not only to the city of Harar but a spot in Andegna Meged..

Shaikh Abdulahi is now passed away but he left a legacy of many years of Islamic learning, practice and teaching. The advocates to his teaching are widely seen in Harar and function under the leadership of Shaikh Abdurahman Teballali who narrates interesting stories about the greatness of Shaikh Abdullahi Alharari. I studied “Safinatul Najja” (the boat of salvation), a small little book of Fiqh for beginners, under the guidance of Shaikh Abduraham Teballahi for sometime when I was pretty young. I quitted half way to completion and moved to sheikh Abdulkarim who was rather more flamboyant and involving than Awe Teballali who speaks really fast, very serious and whom I had difficulties understanding his words. However, he has quiet appealing: tall and slender, very tidy and mostly wearing flashy and neat clothes and devote Muslim. He is quiet gentle but some believe that he could be quiet cunning.

Unfortunately, the approaches of Islamic teachings and understands that Awe Basha and the advocates of Shaikh Abdulahi Al-harari are hostile and intolerant to the existence of the other. As a result, the spot has become a battle filed. As a result, it is not uncommon to hear some stories of malicious harassments, threats and intimidations against each other between the generals, lieutenants and soldiers of the two parties both in civilized and traditional manners but mainly expressed in show of wealth, knowledge and wisdom, influence and fame and politics as exemplified in the following interesting case studies.

Pending court case A.

To be continued