

RENOVATING AFRICAN ANTIQUITY: THE GIFT OF WOLAITA CIVILIZATION TO THE NEAR EAST

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ABSTRACT

This article explores socio-political innovation of Omotic speaking people of Wolaita and its resemblance with ancient Egyptian civilization. The article examines the origin of pre-dynastic Egypt in relation to Wolaita's Omo River Valley Civilization and its northwestern dominion to discover the epicenter where indigenous African values had been defused to the Near East. The major purpose of this article is to disprove the pro-Christian historical discourse which suggests that all ancient civilizations of Ethiopia belongs to Semitic immigrants of Arabia who came to Africa with a superior culture. As antithesis of pro-Christian historical rhetoric, this article argued that pre-Sabeian civilizations of Ethiopia such as Wolaita, with its shared socio-political values to pre-dynastic Egyptian civilization, have antecedence to the Near Eastern civilizations. To rationalize the actuality of Wolaita's precedence in the ancient civilization, archaeological evidences, linguistic facts, clan structure, oral traditions and living culture of the people have been consulted through interview and field work. Finally, the primary and secondary sources have been analyzed systematically and interpreted through the historical data analysis method to declare that the indigenous people of Wolaita were an architects of the most sophisticated institutions such as the belief in subprime god (Monotheism), ancient system of administration (Divine kingship) and early form of art of writing (Wolaitic Petroglyphs) before it had been defused to the Near Eastern societies including Semitic Arabia before 13,000BP.

Keywords: Omotic, Wolaita, Egypt, Near East , enset, , monotheism, divine king, art of writing.

INTRODUCTION

The people of Wolaita, southwestern Ethiopia, constitute one of the indigenous societies of Africa (Adejumobi,2007) The original homeland of Wolaitias, Wolaita Zone, which is located in between 6.4⁰-7⁰ N and 37.4⁰- 38.2⁰ E, has an estimated area of 44511.7 km² (Abesha,2016). The people of Wolaita possess a sovereign political tradition that was established by native clans (*malla*) of the land since ancient times. Originally, the clans that found the state of Wolaita were twelve in number, but they gradually increased to more than two hundred clans who managed to establish their dominion over the western half of Ethiopia before the 14th century (Fancho and Eyob,2006). On the other hand, some clans of Wolaita were also absorbed in to the evolving culture of the neighboring societies without changing their identifiable clan names (Tesfaye,2016).

The present Wolaita land, with 664 people per square kilometer, symbolizes the most densely populated regions of Ethiopia owed to its historical factors (Abbink,2006).When Wolaita's history has been scientifically explored, it becomes clear how the past events influenced the present-day size of Wolaita's territory leading to higher population density. After the conquest of Sabeian forces and Oromo pressure, Wolaita's ancient dominions were gradually hemmed to

southwestern location (Abesha,2016). Although the people had invented a civilization that could be applicable in every aspects of socio-political and economic life, but yet its full flagged contribution was not accredited except Wolaita's melodious African music and dances that dominating the modern musical preference of most Ethiopian fans. In the contrary, the pro-Christian thinkers had portrayed Wolaitians as if they adopted the idea of divine kingship from the Semitic north for the simple reason they have no written history before its subjugation by the forces of Shawa in 1894(Haberland,1975).

The review of literature reveals an arguable reputation that Ethiopian historiography deserved for Wolaita civilization and other Omotic speakers in general. Some pro-Christian intellectuals, like Getachew (1997) and Haberland(1975) viewed all achievements of the ancient and medieval Ethiopian civilization in relation to the advent of early Sabeian immigration that possess superior culture than indigenous Africans referring only church documents. According to the collected works of pro-Christian scholars, the land which stretches from southern Egypt to the Indian Ocean, including Wolaita, was a territory of mythical Ethiopia; a sovereign territory of a legendary king Menilik I, the son of Solomon of Israel and Queen Sheba at about the 10th century BC (Habtemariam, 1986).However, the proponents of this idea has failed to discuss about ancient Damota whose list of kings were inscribed on archaeological findings. The notion of these scholars has been also contradicts with conclusions UNESCO General History of Africa series (UNESCO,1981).

Contemporary European, who supports the idea of pro- Christian scholars, had appeared while proposing some insignificant assumptions about indigenous peoples of southwestern Ethiopia. The article of Donham (2000) stated that the long term history of Omotic speakers, including Wolaita, was less studied when compared with the Christian north due to the absence of written language. As a matter of such prejudiced hypotheses the study of Wolaita history and culture remained marginalized from national historical discourse (Bisrat,2016). Nevertheless this assumption could not be true as far as Wolaita had established contact with Christian and Muslim who had written script due to its historic location in central, western and the south at least since the 6th century AD(Kirwan,1972; Abesha,2016). The travel accounts of ancient Greeks and Egyptian bishop as well as hagiographical woks composed by the Ethiopian orthodox churches could be the best example to disprove the claim of pro-Christian writers.

The statement of pro- Christian scholars, which insist Wolaitians as people without history, has no justification when the works of some Europeans have been analyzed. As pioneers of Wolaita history Europeans had proposed historical hypothesis which insist that Wolaita and Egyptians have some sort of relation in pre-Roman times (Gavrilove,1930). Early European writers had reached at this conclusion based on the noticeable similarities in traditional values of both Wolaita and Egyptian societies. Local writers like Aysha(2010), who pursued the footsteps of Europeans, had proposed that the language type spoken by ancient Meroe and the present day inhabitants of Wolaita has 80% similarity of vocabularies. In spite of the broad-spectrum of opinions, which points out the common origin of Wolaita as well as the ancient Egyptian and Meroetic civilizations, they failed to answer how it could be happen among the societies that positioned at opposing geographical co-ordinates. Therefore, the research had attempted to indicate the epicenter of cultural diffusion among Wolaita and Egypt based on relevant local and external archaeological sources.

In Ethiopia, there is no doubt concerning the evolution of an organized form of state in the Horn of Africa since the second millennium BC(Marko,2010; Fattovich,1977). Nonetheless, the identity of the people who founded the oldest civilization in the Horn of Africa has been the

major line of departure among scholars. Some Africanist thinkers, who favored archeological findings, Coptic Egypt, Muslim Arabs and European travel accounts, had argued that pre-Sabean civilization of Ethiopia was totally African in its features (Berger, et al., 2017). The Africanists had also argued that Egyptian civilization was adopted from the indigenous people of the Horn of Africa. However, pro- African thinkers were unsuccessful in specifying names of an indigenous people who found ancient civilizations of Ethiopia. As stated by Bogdandy and Wolfrum(2008) indigenous people denote people who inhabited in a specific country at the time of the conquest. In this context, the native inhabitants of the western half of Ethiopia during the Sabean conquest were decedents of the present day Omotic speaking group (UNESCO,1981). Therefore, conducting historical analysis of ancient civilization of native inhabitants such as Wolaita could be the major tasks of this research.

METHOD

Research Design, sampling and types of sources

The study explores about the early history of the people of Wolaita who settled in twelve districts and three city administration of Wolaita Zone. As a result, purposive sampling design had been chosen to get 15 knowledgeable informants. Besides, Egyptian and local archaeological sources, living culture of the Wolaita people, and archival materials have been consulted to get primary data. The researcher also referred secondary data such as books, journals, magazines, MA thesis/ dissertations, internet websites, which are available in libraries. Data collection tools such as field work and in-depth interview were used to visit archaeological sites, archives and museums; and to obtain information from knowledgeable person. All the data gathered are interpreted and analyzed using historical data analysis techniques such as such as content analysis and descriptive analysis methods.

Objectives of the Study

The major objective this study is to reconstruct the early history of Wolaita. Specific objectives are to:

- ✓ Examine indigenous African civilizations of the Horn of Africa in relation to late arrival of Sabean immigrants
- ✓ Explore an epicenter of Egypt-Wolaita relationship where socio- political and religious values of Wolaita defused to Egypt in ancient time.
- ✓ Identify elements of Wolaita's socio-cultural and economic values adopted by the Near Eastern societies via Egypt

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Omotic speaking people, also referred as Sidamo group in colonial literature, were indigenous inhabitants of western half of Ethiopia before their conquest by the Sabeans and the subsequent expansion of the Oromo people in the 1st Millennial BC and the 16th century AD respectively (UNESCO,1981). The people of Wolaita, the largest among Omotic speakers, had invented exceptional Omo River Valley civilization, which could be characterized by *enset* complex agriculture, monotheist belief, theocratic state structure, and petroglyphic writing system. Archaeological sources from Harurona and Mochena Borago cave shelters together with those from Naqada, Egypt, had confirmed that agrarian civilization of Wolaita was dated back to 8th -5th Millennial BP(Bachechi,2005; Medhanit,2015).

Origin of the People of Wolaita: A Historical Analysis

Almost all scholars had agreed that the origin of Wolaita and other Omotic speakers was around River Omo Valley. Meanwhile, there is a slight difference among scholars in locating the exact

place of Wolaita's origin due to the variant assumptions that based who consulted oral tradition and archaeological sources. According to the oral tradition of the local people, the founders of ancient Wolaita were from Kindo Didaye; a place where more than 53 pre-historic caves found (Geta,2018;Zelege,2007; Fancho and Eyob,2006). However, this assumption has doubts as the age of the cave shelters that discovered at Kindo Didaye are younger than other pre-historic sites.

On the other hand, the discovery of abundant archaeological evidences at Mochena Borago cave had convinced scholars that the ancestors of the present day Wolaita people who had knowledge of plant domestication were evolved first around mount Damota before they migrated westwards where they manage to invent the first Omo River Valley Civilization. The major evidence, which justify mount Damota instead of Kindo Didaye to be the original home place of the people of Wolaita, is attributed to the ages of archaeological sites. As one travels from mount Damota to the west, the age of pre-historic sites decreases' leading to the conclusion Mochena Borago was the oldest center of human settlement before their gradual move to Kindo Didaye area. The age of pre- historic caves that discovered in Harurona and Akrisa (around Kindo Didaye) is respectively 12, 000 BP and 27 000 BP years whereas Mochena Borago cave dated back to 70, 000 years BP (Fancho and Eyob,2006; Zebdiwos,2018).

The second evidence about Damota origin of Wolaita could be attributed to its communality with globally recognized center of *Genus Homo* or modern human's migration. The cave shelter of Mochena Borago, which is located on bottom of mount Damota has a spectacular significance in elaborating the pre-historic settlement and departure of modern humankind including Omotic speaking people of Wolaita to other parts of Ethiopia and the world at large (Brandit, et al.,2012). If modern humans migrated out of Mochena Borago cave shelter, analogically, the same could be true for Wolaita's dispersion. The dispersal pattern of Wolaita and other Omotic group was not only confined along the river valley of Omo, but also fissured in to southern, western and northern directions as well. Although the time of their dispersal remain obscure, quite a lot group of ancient Omotic speakers such as Hima and Ganda were relocated in to the Great Lake Region where as others like Ganza was directed towards the west in to eastern Sudan in the time immemorial (Odhiambo,1977; Asela,2004).

It was at this time that some Wolaita clans such as Damota(Damot), Angotia (Angot), Fatigra (Fatar), and Walaqa, clans were moved out and settled in northwest, central, south east and western parts of Ethiopia respectively(Merid,1971). More specifically, the discovery of *enset* fossil and dominance of politico-religious institutions in northwestern Ethiopia had convinced scholars that the people Wolaita constitute the major components of pre- Sabean society. This could be evident by the establishment of ancient kingdom of DM'T or Damota in the region identified with its Walia Ibex fauna. According to Finneran *et al.*(2005), botanical fossils from the ancient site of Damota kingdom has confirmed that the Wolaita settlement and the practice of *enset* culture extends up to the northwestern Ethiopia. This is because, the term Damota itself denotes a Wolaita clan, which pressurized southwards by Sabean immigrants. Later on, the same Damota clan was reported while moving to Gojjam in the 6th century, western Shawa before the 13th century and finally retreated to its original home land after the 14th century. The Damota domain of the northwest, whose authority of its king had been sealed with stamp made of Walia Ibex, was original home place for both ancient Egyptians and Beja people of Meroe (Hayes and Hanscom,1983;Houston,2002 ;Getachew,1997).

Having established their settlement on vast tracts of land in the present northwestern Ethiopian region, the people of Wolaita were managed to evolve the earliest civilization of the Horn of Africa known as DM'T or Damota. In those days, the political center of the Damota kingdom was at *Awa*, which means father in Wolaita language (Sergew,1972). The town of Awa, with its total population of 10,000, was also the first urban center in the Horn of Africa. Later on, the name of the town was converted in to Yeha after the Sabeen conquest of the land at about 1st century BC. This reality was well described by Wood (Wood,2005) as follows: “Yeha was ... the ancient city of Awa, capital of the kingdom of Damaat between the 8th and 5th CBC. It covered 8 hectares and had a population of perhaps 10, 000.” (p.176). However, the pre- Sabeen inhabitants of Damota were pushed southwards and remained the major challenging force until they got an opportunity to kill king Hadani and dismantled his kingdom (Abir,1980).

After careful examination of the secondary sources, I was unable to understand the political status of these northern most clans and their relation with the Wolaita proper. The only account about Wolaita king's authority over its northwestern regions came from the 6th century Christian Topography of Cosmas Indicopleuste. When the traveller Cosmos Indicopleuste visited the Aksumite court, the region beyond the snow mountain was controlled by a king whose name was Sassu/Sasso. King Sassu, which identified as king of Damota later on, had managed to expand Wolaita's territory in north western direction in order to control major sources of gold and the old age inland trade route to Adulis. In those days, the land along the Ethio-Sudanese borderland known as the land of Tumul/Tumat(Kirwal,1972) was also under the control of king Sassu. Therefore, the kingdom of Wolaita proper consisted of western half of Ethiopian highlands which stretched from the Lake Abaya to western Tigray in older times. Various clans based smaller kingdoms such as Damota and others were tributary to the kingdom of Wolaita proper.

***Enset* Complex Agriculture: Economic Background of the People of Wolaita**

The best archaeological evidence which justifies pre-dynastic Egyptian relationship with the Horn of African societies was their adoption of *enset* culture; a typical food plant among the Omotic speakers. Omotic speaking region of Ethiopia represents one of the three centers of Africa's independent invention of agriculture next from southern Egypt and West Africa. The Omotic speaking people of Ethiopia had domesticated a distinctive and unique plant known as *Enset* or false banana. Archeological discoveries from Moche Borago cave shelter had confirmed *enset* was grown in the Omotic realm of Ethiopia since 8th – 5th Millennial BP (Medhanit,2015). It was believed that the natural environment of Southwestern highlands; the original home place of Omotic speakers, had influenced them to develop similar socio-economic and cultural system such as *Enset* complex agriculture.

Enset plant was cultivated not only for its nutritious significance, but also has cultural, social and religious worth among the local people. As a native plant to the Omotic realm, *enset* has also implication in reconstructing the historical discourse of the Omotic people beyond its nutritional importance. *Enset* related archaeological evidence that has been discovered in Egypt could be helpful for historian to study the relationship between ancient Egypt and indigenous Omotic inhabitants of Ethiopia such as Wolaita. The Egyptian called *enset* the plant of the south, which means southwestern Ethiopia. Remains of pottery works that had been found at Naqada in Upper Egypt reveals the ancient Egyptian grow *enset* for food at about 3500-3100 BC. According to the research findings of Fage and Oliver (1970); “The people (of Egypt) had knowledge of the plant. It may be that they had contact with *enset* areas of Ethiopia directly”(p.122). *Enset* related discoveries that have been made at Mochena Borago cave, and western Tigray as well as the 17th century travel accounts of James Bruce had confirmed *enset*

cultivation was not only confined in the south, but also cultivated in central and northwestern parts of Ethiopian highlands. Indirectly it also confirmed the fact that the area between southwestern Ethiopia and Western Tigray had been settled by Omotic speakers who practices *enset* complex agriculture(Freeman,et al.,2005; Zerihun,2006).

The above point of discussion is about Egypt's adoption of the *Enset* culture from the inhabitants of the western half of Ethiopia known as Omotic speakers. The most visible inquiry that followed this discussion could be which Omotic group was associated with transformation of *enset* complex agriculture to Egypt? In order to answer this and other questions that might be posed by the readers of this work and to/ rationalize the above presented civilization belongs to Wolaita people, deep investigation of the southward movement of the ancient Damota be very essential.

The study about the identity of the ancient Damota, who able to extend their position in the north and managed to establish the kingdom of D'MT or Damota at about the 10th century BC, holds a vital position in the history of Wolaita. The research findings of Deressa (1999) had ascertained the fact that the founders of Damot civilization were the present natives of Wolaita. The article of Abesha (2016) had made known that the Wolaita version of the ancient kingdom of Damot, was Damota. Hence, the southward regression of the Damota kingdom of Wolaita leaving behind the remnants of *enset* flora had a profound significance in elaborating Wolaita's northern limit and its vital position in harnessing Wolaita-Egypt relation. As depicted on early map known as *Carte del Egypt de la Nubie del Abissine*, Damota's position, which had been in western Tigray, was moved to the Lake Tana area after Sabea colonization of the region (Ministry of Information,1989). Likewise Kirwan(1972) had placed the location of the ancient kingdom of Damota north of river Abay or Gojjam in the 6th century AD. Besides, a botanical fact which could support the archaeological findings of Naqada(Egypt) and Wolaita's practice of *enset* led agriculture, was the discovery of feral *enset* (false banana) plant in area of ancient dominion of Damota and abode of pre-dynastic Egypt (Zerihun , 2006). Where ever they settled, the Damota clan of Wolaita had never stopped planting *enset* as their staple food.

To conclude my idea, it could be too easy to infer the identity of the people of north western Ethiopia based on their unique economic activity and the settlement pattern of each clan no matter how its name was not mentioned. Analogy is a form of reasoning in which the identity of unknown items or relations may be inferred from those that are known. Analogically, if someone has no reservation to northwestern position of Damota clan and Mochena Borago's antecedence in domestication of *Enset* culture in the Horn of Africa, it could be very easy to conclude that the people of Wolaita constitute the major inhabitants of western half of Ethiopia and Damota kingdom of Wolaita denotes a place where indigenous civilization of African had been defused to the near east via Egypt. In addition, as pre-dynastic Egypt's origin point out to the inhabitation of *Walia Ibex*, the Damota kings were also appear while making the seal of their government from the major fauna of the kingdom, which is *Walia Ibex*.

Religious Knowledge of the People of Wolaita

The Second evidence, which justify ancient Wolaita civilization was the oldest in the Horn of Africa, had been its exceptional indigenous religious values embraced by Near Eastern societies. In the traditional religion of Wolaita the belief in *Tossa* or God holds the central position. *Tossa*, which was believed to be above of everything, was also a creator of all things on this planet and the heavenly domain. God *Tossa* was also known as *Salwa Tossa*(the sky God) based on its living place. However, the belief in the Supreme Being or the Sky God was the result of gradual social transformation which necessitated submission to national loyalty

instead of faithfulness to the clan identity only. The religious history of Wolaita tells us that they practice henotheism; a kind of religion where each clan had its own unique deity and clan leader acts as a priest during the religious observance. Later on, each clan members were submitted to the *ayana* of the king leading to the rise of monotheism in Wolaita. In traditional Wolaita, “clans... had their own *ayana* and worshiped it for every purpose in their life...But these clans also believe that their *ayana* was subordinate to Tossa- the superior being of all the ethnic group”(Elias,1987,,pp.9-10). Based on the ancient Egyptian sources, Ehret had proposed that such kind of monotheism comes with them while they were in the Horn of Africa, presumably among the Omotic speaking people who practices the process till the 20th century. According to Ehret as cited by Lachias (2009);

“Anciently, each local group had its own Supreme deity. This is called henotheism. In this kind of religion, you have your own god to whom you show your allegiance. But you realize that other groups have their own deities....This kind of belief still exists. It is fading, may be on its last legs in southwestern Ethiopia among people of the Omotic group...we see the same kind of thing in ancient Egypt. If we go to there, we discover that the Egyptian gods began as local gods ...To unify Egypt, after all you have to co-opt the loyalty of local groups and recognize their gods (pp.8-9).

Houston (2002) presented strong argument which insists that the founders of Egyptian civilization were originally from the civilized south as Egypt was part of Mediterranean Sea in the distant past. The pre-dynastic Egyptian themselves attributed their religion, king making system and art of writing to the south. In addition, there was strong belief among ancient Egyptians that they share common origin with Beja; which means Beja Meder or Bege Mider (Getachew, 1997). In support of their oral tradition, the pottery works of ancient Egyptians, which depicted on the book of Hayes and Hanscom (1983), reveals the ancestors of Egyptians were originally from a place where Walya Ibex found; that means the ancient Damota dominion of north western Ethiopia. Ancient Egyptian traditions and archeological sources have been also verified by the research finding of European scholars. According to Conti- Rossini (1928) ancient Damota, to which Egyptian prefer to call it “the civilized south” was located next to Bege Mider in early times.

The above presented oral traditions and archaeology of ancient Egypt has confirmed that Omotic realm was the birth place of the ancient civilizations. In addition, there is a strong belief among scholars like Ehret that the idea of modern monotheism was first evolved among the Omotic language speakers. According to linguistic sources, the idea of monotheism together with king making system and art of writing was defused first from Omotic speaking Africans to Egypt and then to the Near eastern countries including Israel (Laichas, 2009). However, both Egyptian and linguistic sources has failed to mention which group of Omotic people to play direct role in transferring monotheism, divine king or theocratic state system and writing skill. Therefore, besides archaeological and linguistic sources, the clan structures of each Omotic speaking group have a profound significance to substantiate Wolaita’s long established contact with pre-dynastic Egypt.

The article of Lachias (2009) states that the ancient societies of the Near East such as Hebrew were adopted not only monotheism, but also the twelve clan arrangement of Omotic group whereas their clan organization remains thirteen in number. When the clan arrangement of some Omotic groups such as Gamo, Gofa Dawuro and Kore has been investigated, it was respectively 42, 100, 150, 7 in number (YSOZBITO,1991; GGZICO,2004). In the contrary, the research work of Deressa,(1999) and Asela(2004) had make known the founding clans(*malla*) of Wolaita were twelve in number; namely Boroda *malla*, Ele *malla*, Gamo

malla, Gezo *malla*, Golo *malla*, Hayu *malla*, Lonto *malla*, Misha *malla*, Qogo *malla*, Tigre *malla*, Wolaita *malla* and Zirgo *malla*. Amongst the Omotic group, it is only the people of Wolaita who have the tradition of counting the twelve clan numbers in distant past. The Wolaita clans, which exceed 200 at present, were only twelve in number when Egyptians had been departing from the Horn of Africa (Zebdiwos,2018; Laichas,2009).

Socio-Political Experience of the People of Wolaita

Wolaita has three well documented dynasties; namely Wolaita *malla* dynasty, Aruja dynasty and Tigre *malla* dynasty. On the other hand there is no agreement on the origin of early state in Wolaita. The evolutionary theory or traditional state specified that ancient state of Wolaita was evolved from the twelve original settlers of the land such as Wolaita *malla*(clan). The sources at our disposal reveals that there were five committees of elders (*chima*) in the traditional state administration (Eyasu,2018).At about 15, 000 years BP the Wolaita *malla*(clan) had transformed the traditional state in to royal institution of sacral kingship; a system where a hierarchy of spirits and a related hierarchy of authority; the kings highest authority is related to the highest spirit, which is God.

The divine kings of Wolaita *malla* dynasty and the latter Tigre *malla* dynasty often associated with *Tosa Kawa* or God Kings (Chiatti,1984). In the divine king system, kings had the representation of both political and religious power which was exercised through the *ayana* intuition. According to the Chiatti(1984) “wellbeing of the monarch could be interoperated by the commoners as the wellbeing of the kingdom, ... the king was as much as worshiped because he was God because he was worshiped”(p.541).Therefore, the political authority of a divine king could be demonstrated through the loyalty of the people to *ayana* of the king(Elias,1987; Budge,1906). The divine kingship, which was invented by the founding fathers, characterizes the kingdom of Wolaita up to 1896 (Deresse,1999). The ancient Egyptian divine kingship system was similar with the practices among the Wolaita. As Egyptian themselves resides in Bejamidir/Begemidir region between 15,000 BP and 13,000 BP, there might be the possibility of adopting divine king ship system from the indigenous African population of the region (Laichas,2009).

The rulers and conquerors of ancient kingdom of Wolaita had preferred to record and transfer their triumphs and heroic deeds for generations to come. This can be proved through eyewitness accounts of Egyptians which argued that they brought hieroglyphic from the Horn of Africa together with the belief in god and divine kingship. The discovery of Wolaita Petroglyphs at Harurona cave, which dated back to 12,000 BP, could furnished a good reason to conclude that the ancient civilization of Wolaita had precedence to that of Egypt in developing the art of writing(Fage and Oliver,1970) In addition to Petroglyphs of Harurona cave, recent discoveries of northern Ethiopia reveals the use of script was not confined to the Harurona cave of the south, but also widespread all over the Wolaita’s realm in the northwest. According to Drewes and Schneider as cited by Lapiso (2003), the people of Damat(Damota) had their own script. The ancient Damota civilization of western Tigray, which Abir(1980) recognized as antecedence of Medieval Damota kingdom of king Motolomi, had well-developed art of writing. The term Petroglyphs, which literally stand for property symbols, represents Wolaita’s equivalent of Egyptian hieroglyphics and Sumerian Cuneiforms. Logically, the discovery Petroglyphs in several parts of the kingdom authenticates the argument Wolaita was one of the centers in Africa where art of writing evolved.

CONCLUSION

In ancient times, the western half of the Ethiopian highlands had been settled by indigenous African people known as Omotic speakers alongside with ancient Egyptians and Beja(Meroe), who associate their origin with a place of Walya Ibex's fauna of the northwest. The people of Wolaita, which currently inhabit in Wolaita Zone, constitute the largest among Omotic speakers. In those days, the territory of Wolaita was not confined to its present hemmed position of the south west, but also includes a wider area of Ethiopia's western half which stretches from Lake Abaya to western Tigray. During Sabean conquest of the Horn of Africa, the western half of Ethiopia was settled by several Wolaita clans such as Damota, Angotia, Wolaqa, Fatigra and others who had smaller kingdoms subordinate to the kingdom of Wolaita proper. Among these, the Damota clan of Wolaita, whose authority had been identified with a stamp made of Walia Ibex, was the most notable of all.

Omo River Valley Civilization of Wolaita represents one of the three centers in Africa where an independent agriculture invented. Archeological discoveries from Mochena Borago site, which dated back to 8th – 5th Millennial BP, had confirmed *enset* or false banana was domesticated in Wolaita earlier than any other Omotic speakers. The discovery of *enset* plant related pottery work in Naqada, a typical plant to Omotic speakers, has also insightful significance to justify pre-dynastic Egyptian relation been with the ancient people of Wolaita instead of others. Moreover, the archaeological source of Naqada and *enset* flora in Egypt and Wolaita's dominion respectively rationalize the fact that western half of Ethiopia to be the center where indigenous civilization of Wolaita defused to pre-dynastic Egypt and then to the Near Eastern societies. Although the Damota clan of Wolaita and others were retreated back to their original homeland after the 14th -16th centuries, but one could realize the apparent false banana flora that had been left behind in Gondar, Gojjam and west Shawa as well as *enset* plant fossils in western Tigray or the center of ancient kingdom of Damota.

Wolaita's God *Tossa* which identified as the *Salwa Tossa*(sky God), was a creator of the entire celestial sphere and the world. The belief in the Supreme Being or God *Tossa* was not something the people of Wolaita achieved overnight, it was the result of gradual transformation of the society from worshiping of several gods to monotheism; submission to national loyalty instead of ones clan identity only. Like ancient Egyptians, each clan members of Wolaita were submitted to the spirit (*ayana*) of the king understanding their spirit (*ayana*) was subordinate to the superior being, God *Tosa*. As a result, ancient Wolaita deserves the birth place of monotheism before it defused to the Near East via Egypt due to their existence in the Horn of Africa during the pre-dynastic period. The ancient societies of the Near East such as Hebrew, had adopted not only Wolaita's system of monotheism, but also embraced the system of twelve clan organization instead of their thirteen clan arrangement. In the Horn of Africa, it is only among the people of Wolaita where one can find the tradition of twelve founding clans (*malla*).

At about 15, 000 years BP, the people of Wolaita had invented royal institution known as sacral kingship; a system where a hierarchy of sprits(*ayana*) and a related hierarchy of authority; the kings highest authority is related to the highest spirit(*ayana*), which is god. The idea of divine kingship was associated with *Tosa Kawa* or God Kings. The ancient Egyptian divine kingship system had similarities with practices among the people of Wolaita due to the Egyptian presence in the Horn of Africa before the 13,000 BP. Besides, the discovery of Petroglyphs at Harurona cave reveals that the divine rulers of Wolaita developed some kind of art of writing to record their triumphs and heroic deeds. The use of script was also well-known among

Wolaita's dominion of the northwest. Based on information obtained from European and local scholars had made known that ancient Damota had a well-developed art of writing. Literally, the term Petroglyphs stand for property symbols Wolaita. Analogically, the discovery of Petroglyphs authenticates the argument that Wolaita was one of the centers in Africa where art of writing had been evolved. Therefore, ancient Egyptian hieroglyphic had been adopted from the indigenous people of Wolaita together with the belief in Supreme Being or God and divine kingship

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