

Notes from the Underground

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THE HISTORICAL UNDERGROUND

The Ogaden Nightmare: Chaos & Civil War Grip the Horn of Africa

By: Abdinasir Ibrahim, Student

The Ethio-Somali war, also known as the Ogaden War (1977-78), was a war between Ethiopia and Somalia over the semi-arid Ogaden region, which comprises most of southeastern Ethiopia. The vast majority of Ogaden's population are ethnic Somalis and associated with the Ogaden tribe of the Darod Clan, which is one of the four major Somali clans.

Initially, when Europeans began colonizing the Horn of Africa, they divided Somalis into five territories: French Somaliland (Djibouti), British Somaliland, Italian Somaliland, Northern Frontier District (Northeastern Kenya) and Ogaden (Southeastern Ethiopia). In 1960, after decades of struggle, British Somaliland and Italian Somaliland gained their independence. Djibouti, a French colony, eventually secured its independence in 1977. According to historian Raphael Chijioko Njoku, the immediate period following independence was one of optimism as well as unrealized dreams for most African countries, including Somalia. Soon after independence, the infant Somali state considered building a united country, but this endeavor resulted in an undesired enemy for the Somali people since Ogaden was part of Ethiopia.

On October 21, 1969, Mohamed Siyad Barre took power in Somalia through a bloodless coup d'état. In 1977, President Barre waged a large-scale war on neighboring Ethiopia to liberate the Ogaden region. According to Njoku, in the early years of his rule, President Barre's intentions were genuine, and he was simply a nationalistic and patriotic Somali whose main ambition was to build a united

Somali nation. Initially, Somali forces successfully liberated the Ogaden region. This victory, however, did not last long. Ethiopia received significant support from the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union declared full support for Ethiopia, and Cuban and Yemeni soldiers were deployed to the region armed with modern Soviet weaponry. Since this was in the middle of the Cold War, the U.S. provided Somalia with small arms, ammunition, air defense equipment, transport and communication supplies. The Soviet's support, however, surpassed the Americans, and U.S. support failed to help Barre. For one, Barre faced internal rebellion from the northern region of Somalia. Moreover, his harsh counter-insurgency campaign in the north angered many Somalis, who eventually joined anti-Barre rebels.

Following the Somali military's withdrawal from Ogaden, Ethiopia's Communist dictator, Mengistu Hailemariam, deemed the Ogadenis to be an internal enemy. Many Ogadenis fled to Somalia to escape retaliatory acts from Ethiopian communists. In fact, the Somali government extended a generous hand to the Ogaden refugees. According to scholar Harry Ododa, not all Ogadenis were so fortunate, and many were forced to remain in the region and were subjected to systematic state-sponsored terror. Indeed, Ethiopia launched a massive campaign of extrajudicial killings, buried village water sources like ponds and boreholes, and burnt countless homes and communities to the ground.

After losing this conflict, President Siyad Barre of Somalia faced internal rebellion. One Somali historian described Barre as "a human serpent, subtle in approach, cruel and vicious in attack." The Ethiopian government supported several rebel groups who felt that Barre's regime had alienated them.

Similarly, Barre tried to destabilize the Ethiopian government by supporting marginalized ethnic groups like the Oromo, Tigray, and Eritreans. In 1991, both regimes, Barre's in Somalia and Mengistu in Ethiopia, collapsed. One could make a plausible case that Barre and Mengistu caused each other's demise.

This dual collapse had a massive impact on the entire region. Somalia entered a period of chaos and civil war that it has never truly emerged from, and in neighboring Ethiopia,

Ethiopian rebel groups, formerly based in Somalia, took power in Ethiopia. The rebel groups formed a coalition party known as Ethiopian Peoples' Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF). The EPRDF introduced drastic changes into the Ethiopian political system. For instance, The EPRDF changed the constitution and adapted an ethnic-based federalism. Today, the Ogaden region has been recognized as one of Ethiopia's nine ethnic-based states. In addition to this, the Somali language has been recognized as one of Ethiopia's languages.

Still, the Ogaden nightmare is far from over. Many Ogadenis still perceive the Ethiopians as a colonial power. To this day, although the Somali people in Ogaden are the third largest ethnic group in Ethiopia, there is still no substantial representation in the Ethiopian Federal government. Unfortunately, dissidents continue to be jailed and journalists are not allowed to go to the region. There is a small-scale military conflict as well, as fighting persists between the rebel group Ogaden National Front (ONLF) and the Ethiopian government. Lastly, the current Ethiopian government jails Ogadenis just like its predecessors. If one is an Ogadeni, they are assumed to be a potential threat to the Ethiopian government. In 2007, the Ethiopian parliament categorized the ONLF as a terrorist organization. Meanwhile, human rights organizations, such as Human Rights Watch, criticized Ethiopia's human rights violations. The current Ethiopian government, however, is a close ally of the West. In fact, in 2015, President Obama visited Ethiopia and praised the Ethiopian regime. Many Ethiopians found Obama's remarks outrageous. To top all this off, in 2015 elections, the Ethiopian ruling party won 100% of the parliament seats.

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Blood and Chocolate: The History of Valentine's Day

By: Caroline Ocampo, Student

On Valentine's Day, couples send each other cards to help them say "I Love You." Although we still have a while before the season of this time honored tradition comes around, it's never a bad time to reflect on the origins of our cultural practices.

Some historians have asked who started the holiday, and the answer points to the ancient Romans, who had a festival that featured activities for men and women to pair up with each other. In 496 CE, Pope Gelasius I named February 14 as the holiday we now know as Valentine's Day in honor of Saint Valentine. While these are the very basic facts about Valentine's Day, there is a lot more to this story, which involves Saint Valentine, Cupid, and a bloody festival called Lupercalia.

Claudius II was a Roman general who forbade his soldiers to marry since he thought that love made soldiers "weak." Saint Valentine was a Catholic priest who married the Roman soldiers to their loved ones in secret, for he thought that the law Claudius II made was unjust. When the general discovered this plot, he arrested Saint Valentine, severely beating him before eventually beheading him on February 14, 296 CE.

Perhaps a more familiar association with the holiday is that of Cupid, the ubiquitous figure who comes from the ancient Greek symbol of sex: Eros. Eros was the Greek god of love and had two arrows: gold for love and lead for hate. In fact, the Romans called Eros "Cupid" and later, during the Renaissance, artists painted Cupid as an infant angel named Putti. Soon thereafter, during the 1700s, couples started sending Valentines to each other with the symbol of Putti attached.

The bloodiest and most fascinating piece of Valentine's history, though, began in ancient Rome one year on February 15 with a celebration called Lupercalia; also known as the wolf festival. This festival was in honor of Lupa, the she-wolf who suckled the infant orphans Romulus and Remus, who were the legendary founders of Rome. During the festival, men sacrificed dogs and goats while women would line up to be whipped by the hide of the slayed animals.

Apparently, Romans believed the ritual of being whipped would make them fertile. Likewise, women would be matched with a man by having their names picked out of a jar so the couple could make love during the festival, or for a longer period of time.

In brief, the history of Valentine's Day helps all of us to understand why lovers, families, and friends celebrate the holiday, and how much it has evolved with our culture and scientific understanding of reproduction. It also demonstrates the character of Saint Valentine, who had enormous courage to stand against Claudius II, and this explains why he had a holiday named in honor of him. In a larger sense, Saint Valentine's story teaches us that such courage and sacrifice are often necessary to make changes in any society. If students want to learn more about the history of St. Valentine's Day, they can go to their local library or see videos from the History Channel and the Smithsonian Channel.



CONVERSATIONS FROM THE UNDERGROUND

A Historical Underground Interview with Bradley J. Borougerdi

THU: Thanks for agreeing to sit down with us today. We wanted to start by asking what classes you teach and what your specializations are in the discipline?

BJB: I teach the two U.S. history and World History classes, along with African American history. I am hoping to develop some "learning community" classes with faculty members from other disciplines so that we can have more focused and specialized offerings for students to choose from. I am a cultural historian, and my research interests revolve around investigating how societies construct meanings for and about the things they use. I like to ask questions about why and how cultures develop the way that they do.

THU: Your dissertation and current research project revolve around

hemp and its various utilities throughout history. One of the areas that you delve into is what historians call "Drug History." Tell us a bit about that, and do you think this sub-field has an agenda?

BJB: Drug history is an excellent subject of study for cultural historians because the way societies develop their understandings of drugs has more to do with social perceptions of drugs and drug users than they do with the drugs themselves. In other words, ever since the Industrial Revolution, drugs have served as an excellent scapegoat for social problems. Studying how and why societies develop their perceptions about them gives us a window into a deeper meaning of how culture functions. So I would say no, that "drug histories" are not out to promote any particular agenda, but rather are efforts to understand human behavior. It's.... *CONTINUE ON PAGE 3*

Conversations From the Underground, cont.

important to note that historians are not activists. Activists can be historians, but history is about trying to get to the bottom of understanding the human experience and articulating the legacies humanity has left behind.

THU: Why do you think people have a difficult time understanding what drug historians and, in general, what cultural historians do?

BJB: I think the difficulty lies in just how powerful the myths about drugs and drug users have been over the last 150 years. Ever since the rise of what historians call the Age of the Laboratory - when pharmacology and drug markets flourished during a worldwide increased focus on science - people across the United States (among other countries) started to firmly believe that the effect a drug has on the person who takes it is purely the result of the chemical substance within the drug; i.e., its pharmacology. However, research over the past 70 years or so has seriously undermined these assumptions with hard evidence suggesting one's psychological state and the surrounding environment within which a drug is taken, are both just as important as pharmacology when it comes to determining the type of effect that a particular substance will have on one person or another. And yet, in my experience, people simply reject this idea outright, often never bothering to look into the research for themselves. Without hesitation, they assert with conviction that the real problem, the true problem, is the crack itself, or the heroin, or marijuana, or meth; and so on. However, if you look hard enough at the evidence with an open mind, and put in the time to read and think ... and then read and think some more, then you will see it. History shows us that it is really easy to make a false correlation between someone's drug use and

their actions by isolating the drug use from other factors in the person's life. And with propaganda campaigns out there going back, uninterrupted, to the 1980s aimed at invoking fear and scaring people about drugs instead of educating them, it is no wonder there is such difficulty. As for the problems with cultural history, I think people generally are uncomfortable questioning the underlying assumptions behind their behaviors and worldviews. Examining the origins of perceptions, ideas, customs, and experiences, and investigating why we believe what we believe about reality, can be difficult to deal with.

THU: You are on Faculty Development Leave this academic year. Please explain what that means to our readers and tell us a bit about your plans.

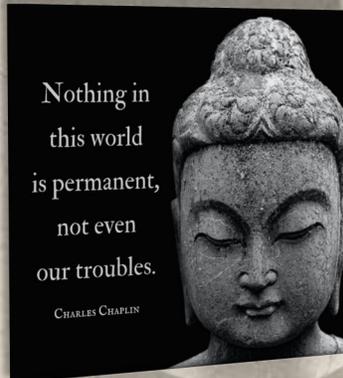
BJB: Faculty Development Leave is a sabbatical program that TCC offers to faculty who have been with the college for a long enough period and have contributed in a variety of ways to the college's mission. Interested and qualified faculty fill out an application that states what they plan to do for the next academic calendar year, and a committee reviews the applications and makes their selection. My application was selected, so I will not be teaching classes this Fall or Spring. Instead, I will be traveling along the Colorado Trail and the Appalachian Trail for several weeks, stopping at some important historical sites to research for material to include in a textbook I am writing for my students in the US History survey courses. I will also stay in D.C. for a few weeks to research at the National Archives, and have a couple of conference presentations to give, but most of the year will

be spent reading, writing, and working on the new aquaponics system we got set up on campus out there by the little lake.



Beyond his passion for cultural history, Dr. Borougerdi enjoys long walks to nowhere in particular, imprecision take-downs in jiu-jitsu, and being a lefty.

Historical Expressions From the Underground





Notes from the Underground

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"HISTORY IS OUR WEAPON OF CHOICE"



Join Us: Fridays/1:00pm/ESEE 1334

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Letter from the Editors

Dear Readers,

Another academic year is upon us, and as always we are looking forward to creating meaningful opportunities to engage with all our students, members, and all manner of passersby. We invite all our readers to join us for our spirited and wide-ranging weekly meetings in ESEE 1334. We are disappointed to say that we have not produced an Underground Communiqué (yes, we are still struggling with what to call this thing exactly, because newsletter just doesn't cut it. Suggestions are welcomed!!), in over a year. However, we are also proud to say that we have finally produced another pamphlet (that doesn't really work either, so you see our predicament?) created by members of the Underground, and this time it's fresher than ever. And if last year's meetings are any indication, this organization is stronger than its ever been. We had people coming to our meetings from all over the Metroplex last semester, and hope to get busy building even stronger networks to come. Yes, the future of the underground is promising!

As far as the content of our meetings over the past year, it simply could not get any better than it has been with our fresh new officers who worked so hard to run the show and build discussion. Indeed, we covered a variety of American and global issues. Due to the crucial nature of the last presidential election and how much it has been on our students' minds, though, many of our discussions revolved around political history and related issues. Max Krochmal delivered a fascinating public lecture on his new book *Blue Texas*, which revolves around the interracial coalitions in Texas during the Civil Rights Era. Krochmal stressed how imperfect and disjointed some of these relationships were, but he also pointed out how these groups were able to affect positive change by working together. One thing history always teaches us is that long lasting, meaningful and productive change is rarely immediate, swift, or revolutionary, but rather plodding and something that necessitates intergenerational effort. Another key issue in the last presidential election was immigration, and our club hosted Kenyon Zimmer from UTA's history department to address it head on. He is an expert migration and immigration historian of the 19th and 20th century who delivered an in-depth look at the history of immigration and immigration legislation in this country. The talk (which he did for free on his own time, by the way) was so riveting that it extended well beyond the allotted meeting schedule, with students lined up afterwards to speak to him. It wasn't until he actually got into his car and started to drive off that the conversation ended! Come to the Underground and ask more about it if you are interested in learning more.

So, in the end, we want to welcome you back and leave you with this: yes, as we reluctantly mentioned in the first paragraph, we have taken a bit of a hiatus with this "publication," but we are looking forward to getting back into the groove this year and putting in the extra effort to continue publishing our students' work. Publishing an article is an invaluable experience that will remain with you forever and serve you well on any resume, whether it be a job, scholarship, or University application. We want to encourage those interested to join our BlackBoard page (The Historical Underground) in order to review our guides on writing historically-themed articles and book reviews. Often times the hardest part is convincing yourself you can do it. We are here to guide you if you are interested in writing, and will give all our attention to helping you produce a strong article of value. It all begins with you! Take care, and good luck with the start of the school year!

~ Editors from the Underground