

Dr. Behailu Mintesinot, President
Mekelle University
Mekelle, Ethiopia

May 9, 2006

Dear Dr. Mintesinot:

The Oromo Studies Association (OSA) is a scholarly organization established by Oromo and non-Oromo scholars to promote studies on and relevant to the Oromo people (<http://www.oromostudies.org>). OSA promotes serious discourse on the history, engineering, economy, culture, health, education, politics, law, and social welfare of the Oromo people. It advocates for critical thinking and well-rounded intellectual communication among scholars of the Oromo studies. It also facilitates the opportunity and mechanisms for non-Oromo scholars to actively participate in the development of scholarship about the Oromo. This year's OSA annual conference which marks OSA's 20th anniversary will host reputed international scholars such as Prof Levine, Prof Keller, and Ambassador David Shinn.

Dear Dr. Mintesinot:

I am writing this letter to bring to your attention a distressful event, that a history instructor at Mekelle University (MU), named Sintayehu Kassaye has gone amiss.

You may not be aware that Mr. Kassaye wrote a textbook for Hist 102 class of freshman students at MU. The textbook, which apparently received a generous support from the University administration to be published in 2005, is a mockery of the missions of education and academia for one important reason: driven by extreme tribal fanaticism and hateful politics with which we are very familiar from the gloomy past of the country, the author resorted to outright insult of a people - unbecoming of member of an academic institute.

We hold evidence that in the name of dissemination of knowledge about people, the history instructor has deliberately and shamefully taught deceit about the same people demonstrating his abhorrence towards Oromo students, the Oromo and other people of the region, and also the Moslem religion. As a result, the book and the lectures of Mr. Kassaye have caused distress among OSA members and widespread anger among Oromo students of MU and elsewhere. As a scholarly institute whose mission includes dissemination of knowledge and whose members consist of internationally recognized scholars of Oromo and non-Oromo origin, OSA is seriously troubled by such reproachful development at your university. It is indeed deeply troubling that even

university level instructors continue to spread religious intolerance, tribal animosity, and racial supremacy so openly and blatantly, even at a risk of reinforcing the looming danger of war and ethnic conflict that have kept the country so immensely impoverished. This irresponsible and callous act has invited bad name to your university and tainted its scholarly image. It is in the interest of the country, including the tribe Mr. Kassaye paints as a superior race by superlatives, that his discord is removed from playing any role in academia or elsewhere by denying Mr. Kassaye societal responsibility that exceeds his reasoning capacity. For your benefit, I am quoting some of Kassaye's writings below:

Considered uncivilized and inferior, even compared to the plateau's Muslims ... Inevitably, the pagan Galla heroes ...when they began their great migration to the plateau seemed even more inferior in the eyes of semetized Christian elites than the Somalis and Danakils (page 145 par 2 line 1-5).

...of the kings mistaken sequence of priorities and distorted perception of the Galla migration and the contempt in which he and Ethiopian society in general held these 'uncouth and wild' pastoralists (Page 153, par 1, lines 3-7).

... Writing his monograph about 1593 the monk Bahrey already found it difficult to comprehend how the numerically and culturally inferior Galla were able to overcome the numerous Ethiopians (Page 166-167, par 4, line 4).

..., lacking a sense of mission and generally uninterested in proselyting together with the ruling class, rejected the "uncouth galla" and despised them (Page 169, par 2, line 11).

These are just a few of the quotes from the book which page after page delivers insults and derogatory diatribe to the Oromo and other people and religion of the region.

On behalf of OSA and myself, I hereby ask MU to distance itself from racially and religiously biased teachings of Mr. Sintayehu Kassaye and disallow the use of MU and his classrooms as a vehicle to spread his malicious and chauvinist views. I also ask the University to exclude Mr. Kassaye's bigoted writings from use as a textbook.

Asfaw Beyene, Ph.D.

A. Beyene

OSA President