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▫ by **Dejach Aklilu** » 02 Jan 2013, 19:11

In terms of influence, Walleligne Mekonnen is one of the least under-estimated and under-credited Ethiopian individuals. He is the second most influential person who has influenced modern Ethiopia while not having held any official political position of the state. The other being Abune Petros who is the most influential person with no political positions in his CV.

Walleligne was born in Debre Sina, Wollo although some sources say he was born in Amara Sayint. After finishing his high school studies, he enrolled into Addis Ababa University where he became active in student activism which at the time subscribed to radical socialist ideology. He eventually rose to be a very well-known figure among the students and managed to write, arguably the most important, the most controversial and the most debatable article concerning modern Ethiopia. It was called "On the question of nationalities in Ethiopia". He paid a heavy price for his outspoken views even to the extent of being imprisoned but was later freed due to the emperor's pardon.

Walleligne political outlook in short characterized Ethiopian nationalism as non-existent. It was a simple

tool the monarchy used to preach unity and protect their feudal rule. He viewed Ethiopianwinet as just being an Amara. Viewing the ruling class of the Negede-Amara and their junior partners the Tigres as subjugators of other ethnic groups within the state called Ethiopia. He acknowledged that Ethiopia wasn't a nation but rather was a state with many imprisoned nationalities. Therefore Walleligne's influence is clearly evident on EPRDF's constitution which starts as "We the nations, nationalities and peoples of Ethiopia..." as well as guaranteeing secession for any nationality within the state (Article 39). If any one person who could've single headedly written the woyanne's constituion, it would have been Walleligne Mekonnen. The operation by EPRDF to capture the city of Desse, Wollo in the civil war was named "Operation Walleligne" in honour of him.

Walleligne's critics hold him and the student movement of the 1960s primarily responsible for the downward spiral Ethiopia has gone through ever since the fall of the monarchy. They also say that the type of ethnic politics Walleligne has preached has been practiced by woyanne, and the only thing the country has gained is more ethnic tensions, hatred and possibly ethnic based warfare.

On the other hand Walleligne's supporters say that Woyanne's model of politics in Ethiopia should not be equated with Walleligne's ideology. Because woyanne practices ethnic politics not for the well-being of the ethnicities in the country but as a divide and rule tactic.

Hence, they think that Walleign's ideology has not been properly tried and tested in Ethiopia and will in time be the right ideology for the future. Whether you disagree with Wallelign's veiws or agree with them, there is one fact that both his critics and supporters seem to agree on, It is that he was one of the most influential people to have ever come out of modern Ethiopia and deserves to be named as the 13th most influential person. Wallelign was buried in Desse after he was killed when participating in a failed attempt to hijack an Ethiopian airplane.