

Woldeab *Woldemariam*

Woldeab Woldemariam (ወልደአብ ወልደሚርያዎ), also spelled **Weldeab Weldemariam**, (April 27, 1905 – May 15, 1995) was one of the original proponents of the [Eritrean](#) Independence movement and an uncompromising-advocate of freedom considered by many Eritreans as fathers of Eritrea nationalism. He worked

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closely with Ibrahim Sultan Ali after the
Federation with Ethiopia to secure Eritrean
Independence.

Woldeab Woldemariam

Personal details

Born	April 27, 1905 <u>Adi Zarna</u> , <u>Seraye</u> , <u>Eritrea</u> ^[1]
Died	May 15, 1995 <u>Asmara</u> , <u>Eritrea</u>
Nationality	Eritrean

Woldeab Woldemariam was one of the original proponents of the Eritrean Independence movement. Woldeab Woldemariam (aka WelWel) was teacher, journalist, radical revolutionary, a great debater and an uncompromising advocate of freedom. His commitment to individual freedom, democracy and justice was as unshakable as his commitment to the unity of Eritrea and the dignity of its people. The clarity of his thinking, which was expressed in his newspaper articles of the 1940s, is now available to a new generation, compiled in a book (Mirutsat

Anqetsat Ato Woldeab, 1941–1991). The book was edited by Tikabo Aresi'e and published in 1995.

Woldeab Woldemariam was a devout Christian of the Protestant congregation. He was born in the Eritrean village of Adi Zarna.

Teaching

In 1931 he was assigned by his then employer, the Swedish Evangelical Mission (SEM) school, to teach in a village called Suzana. This was his first exposure to the

Kunama people. He was a teacher in this school through 1935 until he was moved to Asmara.

In Asmara he was promoted to direct the entire SEM school system, which he continued to do until 1942. During this time he popularized the use of Tigrinya and published two textbooks which would remain standard texts for over twenty years.

Political career

In 1942 he left the SEM and at the behest of the British Military Administration, became an editor for the Tigrinya language newspaper. After a trip to Addis Ababa, he became a chief opponent of unification with Ethiopia. Chief among his fears of uniting Eritrea with Ethiopia beside his love of his Eritrean people and country was the corruption and poverty that he saw when he visited Addis Ababa.^[2] In 1946 he brought together Christian and Muslim nationalists to advocate for the independence of Eritrea from Ethiopia.

Between 1947 and 1953 he was subjected to seven assassination attempts.^[2] After the federation with Ethiopia by the United Nations he continued to advocate Eritrean independence by creating mass organizations, particularly with the help of labor organizations.

In 1953 another attempt was made on his life, suffering injuries which left him hospitalized for five months.^[2] While in the hospital he was elected to the National Assembly, however, his election was annulled by [Tedla Bairu](#). After the

annulment of the election he was forced to seek asylum in Egypt.

Struggle for Independence

During the Eritrean War of Independence, he was not able to affect authority over political or military forces in Eritrea. It was not until 1987 and the Unity Congress of the Eritrean People's Liberation Front that he reentered Eritrea. He was finally reunited with his family in Asmara at the close of the Eritrean war of Independence.

Quotes

- "Up to now, I have never served nor become a messenger for any foreign power or interest. I am an enemy to any kind of slavery, in all its shapes and colors. No man, be he European or African, can force me into the yoke of any kind of bondage. If there be some one who dares to attempt my assassination in order to force me to submit to doing things contrary to my feeling and will, then I also have in me the courage to die for my political beliefs, for the cause of liberty of my

country, and for the genuine interest of my brothers and sisters."^[3]

- "I always said, 'I am not a Christian, I am not a highlander. I am an Eritrean.'"^[2]

References

1. *Saulsberry, Nicole (2004). "Woldeab Woldemariam in the Context of African Nationalism". Journal of Eritrean Studies. Red Sea Press. 4 (1): 15.*
2. *Killion, Tom (1998). Historical Dictionary of Eritrea. The Scarecrow Press. ISBN 0-8108-3437-5.*

3. *Hanti Eritrea (88). 1951-08-22. Missing or empty `|title=` (help)*

Relevant literature

- Saulsberry, Nicole Denise. "The life and times of Woldeab Woldemariam, 1905-1995." (2003). Doctoral dissertation, Stanford University.

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