

# ‘Ethiopia’ in Selected Lyrics of Tilahun Gessesse and Tewodros Kassahun Songs: A Critical Discourse Analysis

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## Abstract

The purpose of this study was to make a critical discourse analysis on the theme ‘Ethiopia’. Lyrics of selected songs of two prominent artists (Tilahun Gessesse and Tewodros Kassahun) were used as corpus for the study. Classical compare and contrast method was employed for analysis; point-by-point and text-by-text organizational schemes were used to compare texts. The results of the study revealed that both artists have shown a remarkably similar approach in their music philosophy. Both singers firmly voiced ‘Ethiopia’ as ‘mother land’ for its people. Both artists discoursed on historical and natural heritages of the country as well as the patriotism sacrificed to preserve these heritages. Finally, the study also disclosed that both singers advocate for unity and love of ‘mother land’ to assure its sovereignty.

**Keywords:** Ethiopia, Discourse analysis, classical, music, lyrics, patriotism, solidarity, motherland, sovereignty

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## 1. Introduction

The contemporary music of Ethiopia has been known as *zemenawi muzika*, or "modern music of the new era," which emerged since the end of the Italo- Ethiopian war in 1941. The Amharic term *zemenawi* refers to elements in the culture that are new and borrowed; American and European influences are indicated. The solo vocalist usually attempts to mix traditional melodies and performance styles with an accompaniment provided by a Western-styled band and instruments (Ashenafi Kebede, 2014). Ethiopia has been isolated and dormant for the past two and half decades not only because of natural forces (drought), but because of political repression by the evolutionary democracy government as well. Hence, the general climate in Ethiopia was not conducive to social, artistic, and economic development. The most famous artist of *zemenawi muzika* is Tilahun Gessesse; He was an Ethiopian singer regarded as one of the most popular of his country's "Golden Age" in the 1960s. During the 1960s, he became famous throughout the country, nicknamed "The Voice".

Tilahun was first hired by the then Hager Fikir Association, which is now known as Hager Fikir Theater. After a few years at the Hager Fikir Theater, he joined the Imperial Bodyguard Band where he became a leading star singer. During his time with the band, Gessesse ran afoul of the government after the attempted coup d'état of 1960 by the Imperial Bodyguard. He was arrested and put in prison for a time. Tilahun moved to the National Theater where his success continued. He was so famous that he appeared three times in front of Emperor Haile Selassie I. During a visit, the Emperor advised him not to abuse his talent. Tilahun's recordings are in Amharic and Oromo languages. He received an Honorary Doctorate Degree from Addis Ababa University, in appreciation of his contribution to Ethiopian music. He has also received an award for his lifetime achievements from the Ethiopian Fine Art and Mass Media Prize Trust.

Now a day Teddy Afro is a prominent contemporary artist, who is also very well-known and quite patriot. Teddy Afro debut in 2001 with the album *Abugida*, quickly establishing himself as a prominent voice in his native country 2005's *Yastesereyal*, yielded a major hit in its controversial title track, which criticized corruption and a politics of ‘Woyani’ in the country's government.

Four of the album's songs were subsequently banned from media outlets, though *Yastesereyal's* sales and influence remained strong. The following year, 2012 saw the greatly anticipated release of Afro's fourth album, *Tikur Sew*, a powerful, historically inspired album celebrating the battle of Adwa in which Ethiopia fought off Italy to remain the only un-colonized state. The album was a major success at home and significantly raised his profile internationally. In 2017, he re-released critically lauded *Ethiopia*, debuted at number one on Billboard's World Music chart.

Both Tilahun Gessesse and Tewodros Kassahun (Teddy Afro) are prominent contemporary Ethiopian musicians. Although almost a generation apart in age, both men display a remarkable similarity in the music world. Each has highly praise and sing for their country and they express their felling how much they be loved their home land. Though they share similar background, each has a unique style which gives us, the admirer, audience, the gift of their exquisite humanity, with all of its timbre, and take the selective lyric song.

Each of in their work song lyric they give glory and honour, praise and thanks for Ethiopia. They reselected similar in the title of lyric song is known as “Ethiopia”, and they associated it with Holy Bible. The name ‘Ethiopia’ in the Bible is Greek for the Hebrew name Nubia. In ancient times the name Ethiopia was primarily

used to refer to the modern day nation of Sudan based in the upper Nile valley south of Egypt, the country south of Egypt, which was pretty much the southernmost border of the known world in Biblical times.

Both Tilahun and Teddy song lyric used in Amharic language and praise their country. Besides, they had taken creoles language which is called ‘Geez and Amharic language’. For instance, ድሩክምግባብ፣ሰባህ፣ግብ፣ህ፣ክ፣ረ፣ደ፣...are Geez words.

In this study, the researchers were focusing is to select among their music song lyric the name in titled ‘Ethiopia’. ‘Ethiopia’ song’s lyric; unique feature as a medium is its pleasure giving experience, and its conciseness. Its power to patriotic profound formation and effect it has on people’s attitudes and beliefs. ‘Ethiopia’ representations in song lyric, as a literary texts have in its own philosophy.

## 2. Objectives of the study

The main objective of this study is to examine the characteristics of these two genres of song lyric and literary meanings.

### 2.1. The specific objectives of this study are:

- ❖ Identifying the major themes raised in song lyric Tilahun’s and Tewodros’s song lyric in the title of ‘Ethiopia’.
- ❖ Comparing and contrasting Tilahun’s and Tewodros’ song lyric in terms of how their express ‘Ethiopia’

## 3. Review Literature

Different scholars define the term comparative literature in different ways. Some of them are quoted in Kumer Dass (2000).According to Max Muller comparative literature is defined as “All higher knowledge is gained by comparison and rests on comparison”. Bijay Kumer Dass also state that The simple way to define comparative literature is to say that it is a comparison between the two literatures. Comparative literature analyses the similarities and dissimilarities and parallels between two literatures. It further studies themes, modes, conventions, and use of folk tales myths in two different literatures or even more.

The ultimate truth in comparison is the process of examining two or more things in order to establish their similarities and differences. Any relationship between two or more things will involve some degree of similarity, as well as some degree of difference. Comparisons can be found in any kind of writing: magazine articles, advertising, essays, news articles, letters, editorials, textbooks, scientific writing, reports, political speeches, and pamphlets. We make comparisons when we have to choose between two or more things: careers, products, political candidates, goals, etc. Comparisons underlie everything we do. As a literary people use comparison to compare different literary works, scientists also use comparisons in their experiments. Logicians use them to draw conclusions. Politicians use them to formulate policies. Judges use them to render decisions. Ministers teach and admonish us with comparisons (School Curriculum Specialist, LLC, n.d).

According to Kerry Walk 1998, here are the five elements required to write an excellent compare and contrast analysis (paper). These are:

### A. Frame of Reference

Here, you place the two things you plan to compare and contrast within this context (theme of hate). You have grouped them under the umbrella. The frame of reference may consist of an idea, theme, question, problem, or theory; a group of similar things from which you extract two for special attention; biographical or historical information.

### B. Grounds for Comparison

Imagine, you are writing a paper on global food distribution, and you have chosen to compare apples and oranges. Why these particular fruits? Why not mangos and bananas? The rationale behind your choice, the grounds for comparison, lets your reader know why your choice is deliberate and meaningful, not random.

### C. Thesis

The grounds for comparison anticipate the comparative nature of your thesis. As in any argumentative paper, your thesis statement will convey the gist (main point) of your argument, which necessarily follows from your frame of reference. In the most common compare and contrast paper, focusing on differences you can indicate the precise relationship between A and B by using the word "whereas" in your thesis:

### D. Organizational Scheme

Your introduction will include your frame of reference, grounds for comparison, and thesis. Then, there are two basic ways of organizing the body of your analysis paper.

**In Text-by-Text, you discuss all of A, then all of B.**

**In Point-by-Point, you alternate points about A with comparable points about B.**

If you think that B extends A, you will probably use a text-by-text scheme; if you see A Vs B engaged in debate, a point-by-point scheme will draw attention to the conflict.

You can organize a classic compare-and-contrast paper either text-by-text or point-by-point. However, in a "lens" comparison, in which you spend significantly less time on A (the lens) than on B (the focal text), you usually organize text-by-text. That's because A and B are not strictly comparable: A is merely a tool for helping you discover whether or not B's nature is actually what expectations have led you to believe it is.

#### Linking of A and B

In a compare-and contrast, you also need to make links between A and B in the body of your essay if you want your paper to hold together. To make these links, use transitional expressions of compare and contrast such as similarly, moreover, likewise, on the contrary, conversely, on the other hand).

### 4. Analysis and Discussion

The comparison of the texts is made from classic compare and contrast method. Moreover, the writers of this paper select in *point-by-point organizational scheme and Text-by-Text*, you discuss all of A, then all of B. In this type of compare and contrast paper, the comparison is made by weighting both texts equally. The comparison may be from their similarities that they have in common or the crucial differences.

Common Themes of the two prominent musicians in the titled 'Ethiopia' Song The major theme in the former and early periods of king of Ethiopian pop musician whose Tilahun Gessese and Tewodros Kassahun 'Ethiopia' songs are praise. Under this major work there are two aspects of song lyrics, which develop the major theme. Some of the poems praise Ethiopia as a whole. This is to mean the poems praise the country in general. The other group lyrics express their feeling for the country through specific references of the country's attractions mainly focusing on nature.

#### 4.1. Songs that Praise Ethiopia as a Whole

They praise Ethiopia how much it is the most beautiful and beloved country as well as they express the gift of nature praise Ethiopia in general. Twice of the song lyrics that praise Ethiopia is Tilahun and Teddy's composer "Ethiopia". This composer gives the country a faithful and divine nature. The poem reads like this:

<b>Tilahun:</b>	‘ኢትዮጵያ’ ‘የኛ መመኪያ’ ‘እናት ሃገር ኢትዮጵያ’ ‘የኛ መመኪያ’	<b>“Ethiopia”</b> She [remains] is our proud motherland [Ethiopia] She [remains] is our proud
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<b>Teddy</b>	‘ኢትዮጵያ’ ‘ባልፍም ኖሬ’ ‘ስለ እናት ምድሬ’ ‘እሷ ናት ክብሬ’ ‘እረ እኔስ ሃገሬ’	<b>“Ethiopia”</b> though I pass [die] away for my motherland [Ethiopia] She [remains] is my honor Indeed, [she is] my [motherland]
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This is shown with the expression that Ethiopia is symbolised as mother; mothers are the heart of the family and deserve much respect from their family because of they are the honors and protectors of their child. Mothers always have fabulous love towards their children. They have a great ambition to see their baby's happiness and success. It indicates that mothers have a deep and incomparable love to their children. It tells us how much mothers are caregivers even after death. They give everything what they have. They will be what no body to be for their children. The song lyrics tell us that mothers or Ethiopian love is endless and how much the role of Ethiopia's is very strong honourable in her society or how much Ethiopia is necessary for the entire life of citizens. Ethiopia is our honour because which has given us everything. In addition, the second legendary artist in his lyrics states that human beings are mortal. But, love, loyalty and patriotism to their country must be eternal because the existence of the country continues for generation. In this case, the artist claims that he can give his soul for his country, To sum up, both of the lyrics magnify Ethiopia as proud, honour, and personified by mother; solidarity, love, and loyalty are mainly manifested in these lyrics.

#### 4.2. Theme of Patriotism

As cited the Oxford English Dictionary (1989:349) Patriotism is a self scarifying act that someone exerts to defend his country's freedom, or to promote the well-being of his country. Or in another way it is a "love of or zealous devotion to one's country."

According to Tilahun's and Teddy's songs are expressed on the heroic verse as preserver of history, and that of many foreign invaders had made attempts to conquer Ethiopia in the past but our Patriots who had sacrifices to preserve this real Ethiopia. They expressed how people have fought so bravely and courageously to defend it and how much love for their country. Let us consider the following examples for the purpose of our analysis here:

**Tilahun:**

‘የጥቁር ሀዝብ ክብር የማእዘን ድንጋይ’ a corner stone for blacks’ pride  
‘የተጋድሎት መረሀ የደም ፍሳሽ ክፋይ’ a principle for a patriotic bloodshed

**Teddy:**

‘ስንት የሞቱልሽ’ for whom many died  
‘አልፈው ሲነኩሽ’ when they conquered you  
‘ባህርሽን ተሸግረው’ crossing your seas

These lines acknowledge and glorify the brevity of patriots who lost their life for Ethiopia. They denote that Ethiopia is a country of steeping stone, a symbol of African liberty, a land of various patriots and warriors.

According to the singers, Ethiopia is considered as the steeping stone of the whole of Africa. It is also indicated that the country has never experienced colonial power like other countries. Rather the history of colonial struggle made Ethiopia a symbol of black freedom and black identity. In other words they intoned by saying that Ethiopia is a, ‘land of warriors’ and the symbol of ‘liberty’. Indeed, grandparents had cost overwhelming blood and lost their precious life for the sake of independence, sovereignty and existence the mother land of Ethiopia. Here, we can also demonstrate other evidences how love of the country and patriotism can be expressed through songs.

**Tilahun:**

“ኢትዮጵያ”	<b>Ethiopia</b>
የኛመመኪያ	She [remains] is our proud
እናትሃገርኢትዮጵያ	My motherland [Ethiopia]
የኛመመኪያ	She [remains] is our proud

From Tilahun song lyric these lines we understand he taken possessive pronoun ‘our’ which is because this song lyric release during Ethio-Eritera war in 1991 E.C. This song lyric is highly inspired the youth and the entire majority joined the military camp, and it created strong sense of national feeling for Ethiopians irrespective of their internal differences in terms political ideology, religion, race, sex. In this case, the entire population of the country from the different corners including those who live abroad were united and coordinated which proved that Ethiopia won the decisive war. In fact, so many lost their lives during the useless and unwanted war. .

**4.3. Songs that Praise the Unique Features of Ethiopia**

This section presents song lyrics which have a major theme on different natural, cultural and historical heritage attractions of Ethiopia. It has been continually indicated that the country has long been described for its richness in human made and natural heritages. It has been mentioned as a cradle of human kind, thirteen months sunshine, a water tower of north east Africa, a mosaic of languages and cultures etc. These features of the country has been acknowledged and appreciated by the two contemporary artists as follows:

**Tilahun:**

‘አጎ..... የባህል ቅርስ ቀንቋ ስገነት’ Ahh<sup>1</sup> ... A balcony of languages and cultres      ‘አጎ.....ኢትዮጵያ የሀገር  
ገነት’ Ahh... Ethiopian land of paradise

**Teddy Afro:**

‘የተራሮች እናት ዘብ የቆሙልሽ ቤት’ mountain peaks guard over you  
‘የአክሶሟ ራስ ጦቢያ’ which is citadel of Axum, Ethiopia

According to these poems Ethiopia is honoured and prized for its beautiful spiritual art, attractive and high landscape, conducive, weather and rich natural resources. Has a balcony of culture, heritage, peaks mountain so the lyric song uses metaphor and says “you are the mountain mom” to glorify the greatness of the country like a mountain which stands high and the source of hugeness.

The first singer also asserts that Ethiopia is known as a country with diversified nationalities, ethnic groups, languages, heritage, peak mountains etc.; each has its own unique culture and heritage. This is indicated in the first line of the couplet. In deed, the country has nine total sites inscribed on the UNESCO list of tangible cultural heritages. Of these, one site, Semien National Park, is of natural type, and the others are cultural sites those are Axum, Fasil Ghenebbi, Harer Jiggol, Konso cultural landscape, Rock-hewn church, Lalibela, Semine National park etc.

Teddy in the line ‘that citadel of Axum, Ethiopia’ attempted to show mostly the lyrics demonstrate Ethiopia as a land with beautiful natural attractions and old historical civilizations; the song lyric also talk about the whole nature of Ethiopia. Also political perception is there because of the citadel was an ancient kingdom located in present-day Eritrea and the Tigray Region.

<sup>1</sup> Emphatic Interjection in Amharic

#### 4.4. Poems that Praise a divine appearance

This section studies lyrics, which have a theme on divine attractions of Ethiopia. The song lyric that gives as country has a faithful and divine nature. Here is the poem:

In this section, comparison of the two artists lyrics is presented based on the theme which focuses on the divine attraction of Ethiopia. In the lyrics Ethiopia has given a divine nature. Let us demonstrate the following:

##### Tihaun:

‘የሰዎች ትስስር ሉዑል ሃብት መፍጠሪያው’

‘የእግዚያብሄር ብሩክ ምድር ቅድስት ኢትዮጵያ’

May lord [highnesses’] has been created wealth and the land of gregariousness

Behold, God has graven the up on the palm of his hand and holy land, Ethiopia,

##### Teddy:

‘የጀግኖች ሀገር የአዳም እግር አሻራ’

‘ፈለገ ጊወን ያንቺ ስም ሲጠራ’

‘እንኳን ሰማይ ላይ ባንዲራሽን አይቶ’

[Land] Where Adam left his footprints

The fountainhead of Ghion<sup>1</sup> when your name is called

Not only those who see your flag waving in the sky

According to Tilahun’s song lyric Line 2 which is express May lord [highnesses’] has been created wealth and the land of gregariousness which mean lord that gives the power to get the wealth for the Ethiopia because of the lord, our God, doth give us fruit of land. Ethiopia is the origin of human being and archaeological record, Homo sapiens probably originated somewhere around modern Ethiopia. In the line Behold, God has graven the up on the palm of his hand and holy land, Ethiopia and The fountainhead of Ghion. Taddy’s express Ghion river currently known as Abbay or the Blue Nile; the river Gihon compasses the whole land of Ethiopia”. To some up this point, Ethiopia is well known by the crater of the universe and unto the holy land for the Lord.

##### Other examples:

##### Tilahun:

የጥቁር ፈርጥ አርማ ሰንደቅሽን ያመነ

ሀብረት ያገመደው በእምነት የጀገነ::

The one who believed in your symbolic flag

Is brave in his faith for unity

##### Teddy:

‘በቀስተ ዳምና ሰማይ መቀጥን’

‘ባንዲራሽን ታጥቆ’

‘አርማሽ የታተመ እንኳን በአለም’

‘ወደ ላይ በአርያምታዉቆ’

With your rainbow [shining]

The sky is draped with your flag

Your symbol is imprinted on the palm of the world

And known [even] to Aryam.

In the above song lyrics some terms indicate that Ethiopia is well known by creator and in black people. Tilahun expresses the country flag as an emblem of the black jewel (in the words ‘የጥቁር አርማ’ or ‘symbolic flag’), which means Ethiopia is a proud for the other countries because almost all African countries were colonized by European colonizers but the only one is Ethiopia never forgive her hand for the colonizers. It is also stated that the country has never experienced colonial power like the other countries. Rather the history of colonial struggle made Ethiopia a symbol of black freedom which is in fact stated in the poem. This is in other words intoned by saying that Ethiopia is a, “symbolic flag”. The statement that says Ethiopia is a land of freedom and the flag is symbolized as a jewel of blacks’. . Whereas, Teddy expresses the mysterious nature of the flag.

We believe that the Ethiopian flag with Green, Yellow and Red is the oldest flag in the world and are presenting the wonderful and majestic story here. The earliest flag used by humankind is probably the colours of the rainbow (‘Keste Damena’ in Amharic, basically the Green, Yellow and Red. The flag has an ancient root and has many interpretations. The flag colour signifies such doctrines as Faith, Hope and Charity, Father Son and Holy Spirit and Wealth Blood and Fertile Land.

Ethiopians, however, believe it was given to them by God and its sanctity is beheld. As the Bible (Genesis

<sup>1</sup> River mentioned in bible (Genesis 1-15). According to the bible, rivers went out of Eden to water garden and it was parted and became four. The first is Pision, the second Ghion, the third Hiddaekel and the Fourth Euphrates.

9:14-16) says: “and the bow shall be in the cloud; and I will look up it, that I may remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flash that is upon the earth”.

**Tilahun:**

በቃል ቀደምት ቋንቋሽ ዜጋሽ የገነነ  
ያንድነት ክብሮት ያትንኩኝ ባይነት  
የጠቋሚት መዝገብ ምንጭነሽ አብነት  
ኢትዮጵያ እናት ሃገር ኢትዮጵያ ነሽ እዉነት  
In the word of primeval, and citadel of language and citizen  
the sign of union, icon for liberty  
You are the record pointer, the source of instance  
Ethiopia ... My motherland [Ethiopia] is truth log

**Teddy:**

የመጭዉ ዘመን ናት መሪ  
ዛሬ አለም ቢላት ኋላ ቀሪ  
ተዉኝ ይዉጣልኝ ልጥራት ደጋግጫ  
ኢትዮጵያ ማለት ለእኔ አይደልወይ ክብሪ  
Even though the world calls her backward today  
She will be the front runner of the coming age  
Just let me repeat her name over and over  
isn't Ethiopia my own name?

In the above poem Tilahun magnifies the glorious ancient Ethiopian history; her independencies, her unities, her religious heritages, and the source of archaeological sites. According to Tilahun, the ancient history of Ethiopia; as we know Ethiopia is the cradle of humankind where the fossil remains of early humans, namely Lucy and Selam, were discovered. Ethiopia has its own ancient calendar and unique alphabet. A rugged country of tall mountains and arid deserts, Ethiopia has a diverse population with more than 80 distinct ethnic and linguistic groups. However, the reverse is true in Teddy's song lyric that shows; Ethiopia has lost her civilization, power and well histories. Even though the world calls her backward today because of many reasons in country such as drought, political instabilities, the economic inflation, migration and the country by itself not accompany with the developing. The sign which indicates that; collapsed her own culture, diversity, unity etc. specially, the current government highly recitalist and doesn't want to preserve her former civilizations rather keep their own regional civilization. But, Teddy has a dream she will be the front runner of the coming age. The Holy Bible also says that in Psalms chapter 68 number 31; Ethiopia shall soon stretched out her hands unto God. It also express from the coming season the Ethiopian civilizations must be prominent.

**Teddy;**

ሳይወሰንዝናሽ	Without any limitation to your glory
በቅርሶችሽ ድርሳን	In the corpus of your heritage
ባድባራትታሪኩ	and the history of monasteries
ነብይ አይተው ከሩቅ ያሉልሽ በመጽሐፍ	even the prophet in Quran says
ኢትዮጵያን አትንኩ	“Don't touch Ethiopia!”

On the other hand, Teddy expresses the glory of Ethiopia was even confessed by the prophet, Mohammed, who wrote =: “Don't touch Ethiopia!”. In addition, Teddy tries to justify how Ethiopia's legitimacy and sovereignty has been kept by its people. The sovereignty of the country has been well saved from her enemy but currently her sovereignty is disfavoured by internal and external forces . For instance the year before money innocence child and man were killed in Oromia region and by Oromo extremists. All in a sudden, the Brutality continues until today where many were murdered, slautered and massacred due to their either religious or ethnic identities. This greatly threatens the sovereignty and legitimacy of the country on the one hand and unity of its nations on the other.

## 5. Conclusion

Both Tilahun Gessesse and Teddy Afro are prominent contemporary Ethiopian musicians. Although almost an age grade generation gap exists between these two renowned artists, both of them display a remarkable similarity in their music philosophy. Both of them apparently stick firmly on writing and singing about the ‘mother land’ Ethiopia. These artists have produced songs on the name ‘Ethiopia’ which focussed on different themes.

They remarkably addressed that Ethiopia is the greatest land in Africa for its divinity, attractive landscape, beautiful natural appearance and natural treasure. Ethiopia is a land of ancient history with various records, and a land of high mountains. The songs praise glorifying its natural appearance, and as a whole.

Moreover, these prominent artists have underscored in their songs that Ethiopia is an icon in the black

history of struggle for independence; in fact it is. That is why the numerical majority of the African nations adapt the Green, Yellow, Red Ethiopian flag.

However, both singers are also compared and have shown a slight difference in their approach. Tilahun's lyrics highly focus on that the ancient history of Ethiopia and witness how much Ethiopia has a wealth and civilization's whereas from Teddy's song proved that how much Ethiopia is beloved and she has lost her civilization, power and histories. In addition, Teddy expresses its hope that Ethiopia shall restore its ancient civilizations, wisdoms and powers though the world calls her or Ethiopia backward today.

To sum up, Both Tilahun and Teddy have posed a great message for Ethiopian people to love their mother land, respect each other, preserve on historical heritage. Finally, it can be said that both prominent singers seek unity and coordination among its people to restore Ethiopia's glorious history. Both singers preach that Ethiopian citizens shall become proud defenders of their country to promote its unity, to preserve its languages and heritages, and to guarantee its sovereignty.

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