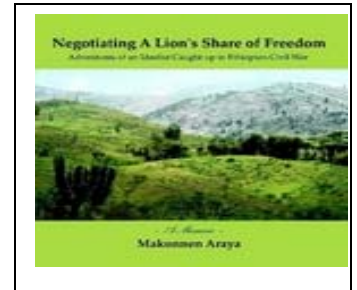


## A New Book: MUST READ

**Title: Negotiating A Lion's Share of Freedom:  
Adventure of an Idealist Caught up in Ethiopian Civil War,  
A Memoir** ISBN 978-0-557-73352-1

**Author:** Makonnen Araya

**Available at:** <http://www.lulu.com/>



This is a must read book written by an idealist who has been a rank and file soldier of Ethiopian People Revolutionary Army (EPRA) the military wing of the commonly known political party, EPRP. My intent is not to give formal critical review of the book. Since I have not seen it advertised or any commentary in Ethiopian webistes, I want to introduce it to Ethiopian readers as I found it very informative.

As for me, once I casually started reading it, I couldn't help but traded my two important engagements for the purpose of completing reading this book. The first day, I literally pegged myself on a seat for over 8 hours without a break or coffee all the way until I retired for bed. The second day, I finished reading with a lot of emotion. I highly recommend this book, not only for the thrill of the personal adventure of the writer but also for the moving portray of the livelihood of peasants of Ethiopia. The story is fantastic from beginning to end, really breathtaking!!

This simplistic and dazzling personal story of Makonnen embodies the rank and file soldiers of EPRA. I am sure his stories represent many other former EPRP members. His excruciating life as a fugitive in Addis until his final escape to Assimba is a fascinating story brilliantly presented in the book.

This book is both interesting and informative to become acquainted with the richness of rural communities included throughout the story. The author cleverly wove together the threads of gorilla fighters of EPRA with peasants' life to tell a colorful and fascinating piece of history. Most of all, what happened to Makonnan's life is something that many families during red terror relate to and the descriptions of the events during the time period will bring alive some mesmerizing and some terrifying memories not only for EPRP members but also for many other innocent Ethiopians.

What makes the book exceptional, though, is the anthropological perspective describing peasants' life in the remote region of Ethiopia. Beside the battle field, he has studied the communities very closely when he operated as community organizer for EPRA. The reader will find a very detailed account of the local culture, what communities do in wedding, funeral, even accounts of wild plants the peasants eat in time of food shortage; both good and bad traditional customs related to women, children; the communities attitude to various authorities, government appointees, priests, chiefs, and even for local bandits. As

you read the book, you will realize more about rituals that seriously cause physical injuries and customs that are holding back the peasants from improving their lot.

The author of this book Ato Makonnen and I live in the same city. My acquaintance with him runs for over 10 years. Although we do not meet that frequently, our conversations were always pleasant and engaging, when we meet on occasions or events. I like him most for his quiet demeanor and humbleness. He neither brag nor display any sign of his patriotic sacrifice on him in his discussion or demeanor. An exemplary of a true patriotic Ethiopian!!!

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