ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Ethno-nationalists Anachronistic Tendencies in deconstructing the Ethiopian Past and the Role of the Past in Unifying the People

Tsegaye Ebabey Demissie[1]

Abstract

This paper assesses the persistent backache and intransigent ethnicization of the Ethiopian past and shows the role of heritagizing the past as a common heritage for unity. Formerly introduced by colonial agents, ethnicization and abusing the past was practiced since the 1960s Students' Movement. The movement against the imperial regime assumed consolidation in subsequent rise of ethno-nationalist armed fronts of the 1970s and 1980s. Thus, 1991 only marked the capture of state power by few ethno-political coalitions led by TPLF. Anachronistically, Ethiopians' interactions and coexistence, state formation process, epidemic diseases and the EOTC have been subjected for ambitious ethno-political or secessionism intrigues. The country's past is distorted and devaluated as a mythical construction. Injustices are primarily advocated, causing ethnic conflicts. However, our past is a resource that can be valorized as a shared heritage to bring better harmonious relationship and mutual development for its burgeoning population. In regard to this, Ethiopia is best placed to improve the life and unity of its people than battling over it. The empire formation process, which many ethno-nationalist writers propagate as all too-negative, cannot be seen in the "scramble for Africa" perspective. The process took three main phases. Being well flourished as a result of continuous agricultural and commercial activities and settlement process of its preceding periods, the Aksumite period took the first phase and the second continued following the shift of the Ethiopian state into Lasta and Shewa since the 10th century A.D. The rise of Emperor Tewodros II in 1855 marked the beginning of the last phase and completed under Menelik II. The foundation of Addis Ababa as the empire's center in 1886 was mainly linked with its role during the medieval period. Its cultural legacies needs valorization, the opening of Menelik's palace as "Unity Park" for tourists is a worthy instance to heritagize and communalizes the Ethiopian past.

Keywords: *Ethiopia; Ethnic politics; secessionists; the Ethiopian past, heritagizing the past*

---

1   *Assistannt Professor of Archaeology, Department of Anthropology, Hawassa University. Corresponding author's email: tsegayearchae12@gmail.com*

1. Introduction

Endowed with much unexplored past and nature, Ethiopia is a country with diverse past legacies– ranging from human ancestral hominid relics to great monumental heritage and living cultural complexities as well as physical topography– ranging from the Afar Danakil depression to the Semen mountains. Unfortunately, however, this historically great and naturally gifted country is being challenged by the intrigues of intransigent and conflict provocative ethnic nationalism and political and socio-economic crises that create inauspicious situation and denigration to the country. Being rooted back to the Italian conquest between 1936 and 1941, ethnic based politics became openly practiced following the downfall of the "Derg" regime. It became the official policy of the regime of Tigray Peoples Liberation Front (TPLF) that drastically incarcerated Ethiopians in an ethnic based administrative palisade.

Ethnic conflicts and tensions have flared up quite frequently and the regime is less effective in managing these crises or at best profiting from the crises. Conflicts and displacements of peoples are the major news of the country where millions of peoples are being displaced even today (Abbink, 2006, pp. 389-413; Lubo, 2012, pp. 62-69; Bekalu Atnafu, 2018, pp. 77-104; Yigzaw Gedifew et al., 2019, pp. 32-41). Displacements and persecutions of peoples in the country is mainly related with oppression narrations and ethnic and religious backgrounds. Past grievances are intentionally fabricated and retold to create a yawing chasm between different societies (Bekalu Atnafu, 2018, pp. 77-104). The past is being misused and employed as political instrument. More specifically, the country's 19th century history is used as a weapon to address political interests of some individuals and groups or ethno-political entities which benefited from provoked conflicts between different peoples.

The post-1991 government and ethno-history writers have a squinted view and misconception on the history of Ethiopia. In this sense, politics in Ethiopia is characterized by "battling with the past" in a scholarship of deconstructing the country's past in line with ethnicity and interest of few political groups. In this regard, since 1980s, extreme ethno-writers both in and abroad have long been engaged to invalidate the Ethiopian past through the scholarship of politically and ethnically motivated construction of fragmented ethnic history using oral narration as the only valid source to write history (Triulzi, 2002, pp. 276-288). The ethnic politics is increasingly tautening the country in this Corona (Covid-19) world and the country is now vividly in a civil war since December 2020. This paper seeks its discussion by clicking a question: Which one is constructive for Ethiopians? Battling with or heritagizing the past? It reviews the intention of ethno-politicians and secessionists battling (by abusing and misusing) with the Ethiopian past (particularly its 19th century) and how this trend is aggravating ethnic tensions in the country. Apart this, it shows the importance of heritagizing the Ethiopian past for mutual development and unity of Ethiopians. To this end, both published and unpublished sources and reliable websites have been consulted and reviewed.

2. The Use of the Past and its Legacy

The past that we endowed in the form of history is everywhere and around us. Attachment to the past is inescapable and it has uses and affects the present and the future in one or another way. It is a route one can realize himself/herself and familiarize to make sense, reaffirm and validate the present. It is integral with our identity and it guides and teaches

us and enriches our world. The past also extends, enriches, confirms and corrects memory through records (both oral and written) and relics (Marwick, 1989, p. 379; Lowenthal, 2015, pp. 80-110, 334).

The past also teaches lessons to accumulate knowledge that help to avoid mistakes, challenge tyrants and create better conditions for human beings. The past by itself is objective but interpreting this fact is not usually objective. Thus, historians select and interpret the past by creating frameworks and scientific tools help to get meaningful and impartial historical reconstructions about the past. It is a forum to debate on the tyrants and dictators in order to take lessons from them (Wiersma, 2009, pp. 15-27). The past is a collective memory of societies as once the American philosopher and novelist, George Santayana, stated, "a country without a memory is a country of madmen" (Goh, 1989, p. 78).
The past is usually manifested in its legacies including material, written and oral types. These can be seen as historical and archaeological evidences of human past. All these legacies are created, used, owned and transferred by humans. Legacy of the past which we bequest is heritage, the most important perspective to understand the use of the past. The past as cultural heritage resource is what we select in the present for contemporary purpose economically, culturally and politically, and to transfer to the future (Ashworth, 2007, pp. 3, 35, 39-40).

The past has constituted diverse features that communities or individuals own and preserve to utilize and take lessons from misdeeds. It can be taken as a cultural heritage that has dimensional significances if it is possessed and preserved carefully. Thoroughly, the values of cultural heritage can be seen in terms of architectural and technological, economic, historical, associational, archaeological, educational, recreational, artistic, socio-cultural, commemorative, symbolic, spiritual, inspirational, ecological, environmental significances, and so on (Worthing & Bond, 2008, pp. 63-64). For the appearance of a country as a sovereign political society or state, the presence of its past in the form of history or heritage is essential (Hassner, 2009, p. 72). If we give a credit for this, the past and its legacy need preservation so as to use it for current and future purposes "...that the past informs the present; that its relics are crucial to our identity" (Lowenthal, 2015, p. 413). In addition to this, heritages have shared and universal values that positively promote peoples' understanding and unity (Avrami, 2000, p. 69).

3. Abuse of the Past and Its Legacy: The Experience of European Imperialism and Colonialism

Despite political, religious or ethnic influences, works on human past have contribution to bring positive changes in democracy, freedom, political debate, socio-cultural enrichment, and so on. However, in the anarchy environment, the past can be abused or misused as it was witnessed during European imperialism and colonialism. The past can be used to justify political claims to address political consumption of few individuals or groups at the cost of the mass. According to Galaty and Watkinson (2004, p. 1), dictators are long informed to use the past in the light of disciplines such as archaeology as a tool to advocate their ideology. This can be made in collaboration between historians, archaeologists and politicians under circumstances in which the writing of history is influenced by contemporary interests and engaged in ethno-centric discourses (Wiersma, 2009, pp. 15, 17). In this sense, historians and archaeologists are useful for dictatorship politicians due to their role in the identification and interpretation of the past in line with their interest (Galaty & Watkinson, 2004, p. 3). This is related with purposeful exploitation and manipulation of history by one political faction against others. Accompanying this, past narrations are subjective to accredit claims, for instance claim for territory or any political

interest (Hassner, 2009, pp. 71-72). The past can be misused by interested individuals. This can also be run by projects like the German Pre-Historic Research supported by the German National Socialists since 1930s (Arnold, 1990, pp. 499-553).

The employment of the past as a political propaganda was implemented to address the political and economic interests European imperialists from the 19th century onwards. The part and parcel of this imperialism at the end was colonialism (Ocheni & Nwankwo, 2012, pp. 12-15). The abuse and misuse of the past as a political propaganda can be best understood through the case of German experience. The political changes appeared in Germany were supported with historical and archaeological paradigms and mainly pre-historic archaeological evidences selected and explained in order to support the establishment of Greater Germany (Arnold, 1990, pp. 552-553; Härke, 2000, pp. 12-15).

Nazism in Germany was developed out of the discourse of racial faction from which the white race was taken as superior of all races, just based on the predominant categorization of peoples as creative and uncreative. In the racial "Nazification" process, history in texts and teachings was falsified. For this purpose, "racial sciences" was taught as part of German education. Racism as a science was supported with Darwinian social evolution that envisages less civilized people as less developed intellectually and emotionally. Racist culture-historians and archaeologists such as Arthur de Gobineau (1816-1882) and Gustaf Kossinna (1858-1931) were misinterpreting historical and archaeological sources correlated with ancient Aryans. By these writers, the Aryans were pictured as "pure races of Germans," "master race," "illustrious human family," "jewel," "noblest," "creative" and "pinnacle of human creativity (Shirer, 1990, pp. 93-94, 221; Trigger, 1996, pp. 168, 170; Fetten, 2000, pp. 151-152).

Gustaf Kossinna, the founder of "German Society for Prehistory," explicated that the center of cultural creativity of the world was Germany, as he believed, from where civilization diffused to Europe and others. The most striking view of Kossinna is that he understood the Germans as "racially purest," "most talented," "creative of all" peoples and the only "capable of carrying out the historical responsibility of creating civilization and imposing it on inferior peoples." Kossinna's racially abused archaeological interpretation became a political weapon for the Nazi that seized power in 1933 (Trigger, 1996, pp. 238, 240). Considering "victorious conquerors" as the "fittest race" was one character of the German imperialists (Fetten, 2000, p. 146).

Africa badly suffered from greedy European imperialism from which only Ethiopia and Liberia escaped (Ocheni & Nwankwo, 2012, p. 46). European colonization of Africa was beguiled by a "civilizing mission" that was designated to attain the then self-imperial aggrandizement (Sharkey, 2013, p. 153). Ideology was developed to caste the African people as "backward race" or 'primitive population" to legitimize themselves as "master race." For this purpose, a culture-historical approach with its diffusionism character was introduced. This approach insisted on the diffusion of culture from the "civilized" to the "primitive" people. In relation to this, Protestantism and Catholicism, as segments of European civilization, were used as important weapons to facilitate colonialism just by creating European sense of superiority as a justification for their colonial practices. This was made by Christian missionaries who carefully entered into different heartlands of Africa (Halett, 1976, pp. 488-492; Uzoigwe, 1985, p 22; Trigger, 1996, pp. 202-203). The German case is here reflected just as instance, and there are several cases where history has been misused and abused for grand selfish interests of different individuals and groups.

4. Ethno-nationalists Intrigues of Abusing the Ethiopian Past: a Destructive Way

The scholarship of disdaining the long existed Ethiopian statehood and the intrigue of ethnicization on the basis of past events can be rooted back to the time when Europeans showed colonial interest in Ethiopia and the Horn. According to Haile Larebo (2017, p.11), the orchestration of ethnic oppression in the past is related with the victory of Ethiopians over white colonialism at the decisive battle of Adwa in 1896. Following this, numbers of colonizer agents who were unhappy with the pioneering black's victory were engaged in a scholarship of producing hatred views on Ethiopian monarchical state and the people (Newman, 1935; Prochazka, 1935; Waugh, 1936). To weaken Ethiopia's role in supporting the worldwide blacks movement against white racism and its endurance to secure it from colonialists, such agents were active in instigating ethnic-based hostility by categorizing its people as "native" and "migrant." For instance, in his "warning" book, "Abyssinia: the Powder of Barrel," Porchazka (1935, 4-5, 54) states that the Abyssinians forbade other Ethiopians benefit from the "progressive" European colonialism. He called on self determination of Ethiopians to get out of the "Abyssinian yolk" which clearly aspired to enervate the Ethiopian government and plant colonialism. He also opined that "Abyssinians are just as much foreigners as are the Italians" who "had just as much right to the rulership of Ethiopia as Abyssinians." The collaboration of Ethiopians with their government against the Italian colonial ambition is defined as hatred against the white race. The result of such prejudice dispatched in Europe was accompanied with revenge that inflicted huge losses of lives and materials on Ethiopians.

Since 1960s, the scholarship of ethnic politics and opposition against the Ethiopian statehood began to have been exercised by Ethiopians (initially by Students' Movement) who in one or another way were influenced by the scholarship of their mentors who had colonial affiliation and prejudice to the country (Messay Kebede, 2003, pp. 11-14; Haile Larebo, 2017, p. 14). According to Messay Kebede (2001, pp. 11-14), this movement of Ethiopian "elitism" on the basis of Marxism-Leninism was evolved into ethnicity that internally contributed for ravages of ethnic-based disorders, witnessing to the extent of secession. The demand for change of the earliest elite might have been an expected issue but their demand was misdirected because of unguided emotion and imported ideology that was not harmonized with the socio-cultural and economic context of the country.

Accompanied with the socio-economic and political crises of the "Derg" regime and similar contemporary disorders among Africans, ethnic nationalism in Ethiopia has severely challenged the solidarity of Ethiopians and Ethiopianism, the generic concept of Pan Africanism (Paulos Milkias & Getachew Metaferia, 2005, p. 213). Since 1960s, the Ethiopian politics was changing ideologically from monarchism to socialism directing against the old age Ethiopian monarchy. Since the early developments and through the age of "Derg," the problem was mainly related with the squinting view of the elites and the authorities towards the past in general and the monarchical system in particular. Despite of its Ethiopian orientation and non-ethnic-based political discourse, the "Derg" regime was ambivalent for the past of the country and advocated it as full of ignorance. According to Bahru Zewude (2002, p. 235), on September 12, 1974, the disposition of Emperor Haile Sellasie I ended the remarkable and longest monarchy of Ethiopia. This event also opened a new chapter in celebrating the disposition of old regime or ideology. September 12 was celebrated as a national day (Revolution Day). Above all, the revolution jockeyed on socialism had failed to bring practical change in the context of the socio-cultural fabric. It resulted

with huge human and material destruction (Messay Kebede, 2011, 2-3).

The need for change did not merely end with the coming into power of a militaristic regime. Gradually, it assumed evolution into the formation of anti-Ethiopian oriented and secessionist movements which later deposed the "Derg" regime and coalesced to create ethnic based government in 1991. Since this period, ethnic-politics continued to be openly practiced (Mackonen Michael, 2008, p. 393). It is agreeable to say that TPLF is an architect of ethnicization in Ethiopia (Biniam Weldegebreil, 2004, pp. 49-50). Emerging to secede Tigray from Ethiopia, its movement since the very beginning has no an Ethiopian orientation (Paulos Milkias, 2001, p. 1). Escorting with some ethno-political fronts, it fractured the state into administrative areas on the basis of ethnicity. However, the commencing of ethnic federalism under TPLF's Ethiopian Peoples Revolutionary Democratic Fronts (EPRDF) did not offered Ethiopians with the expected development. Rather, its ruling period is manacled with unpleasant ethnicization and politicization movements that are the main persistent backache for the coexistence of Ethiopians.

Misinterpreting the past is the main track of ethno-nationalist historians, politicians and activists whose views has shrunk the solidarity of Ethiopians and provoked conflicts in different areas. The views fueled radical ethnic movements circulating interests of few groups or individuals. These groups attempt to deconstruct the country's past as a mere mythical and artificial construction (Henze, 2000, p. xiii). In relation to this, a number of ethno-nationalist views, particularly of the Oromo and Tigrean nationalist claimants, have been produced (Gebru Tareke, 1991; Asafa Jalata, 1993; 2001a, 2001b; 2010; 2020; Mohammed Hassen, 2002; Begna Dugassa, 2003; Mekuria Bulcha, 2005; Alemayehu Kumsa, 2013; Abbas H. Gnamo, 2002, 2014; Zelalem T. Sirna, 2018, to mention few). There are also provocative speeches made publicly by political authorities.

In these literatures, one can find out that everything is politicized and ethnicized. Local conflicts and civil wars, wars against foreign enemies, power struggles, movements of peoples, socio-cultural interactions, religious processes, territorial incorporation processes, foreign relations, epidemic disease and so on are all subjected for politicization and ethnicization among the Oromo and Tigrian ethno-writers. Some scholars placed their observations on some of these views showing the ethno-nationalist works as merely written for the consumption of political claims. Exaggeration of past faults, placing factual errors, propagating oppressions, subjectivity and lack of comparative contexts are the main features of such writers (McCann, 1995; Campbell, 1999; Triulzi, 2002; Messay Kebede 2001; 2003; Záhořík, 2014). Here, I explain some of politicized and ethnicized cases and creeds thematically.

Firstly, most of the works of ethno-politicians including the secessionist groups intend to degrade the long coexistence solidarity of Ethiopians either by disdaining history of peoples such as Amhara and sanctifying history of others such as Oromos. Ethnic categorization (class structure) and propagation of past ethnic oppression are instrumentalized against the Ethiopian past and some part of the communities (such as the Amharas or "Habashas") who are identified as oppressors of others (such as the Oromos). To win the Oromos' feeling of previous oppression, Asafa Jalata (2001a, p. 392) made his postulation on class structure putting the Oromos as the "second class citizens." According to Triulzi (2002, p. 284), such generalizations are formed from personal histories and are generalized for all Oromo peoples as past oppression.

In relation to this, what is most surprising is that the degree made to exaggerate and convince the past oppression of the Oromos in comparison with the case of the African Americans who profoundly undignified, humiliated and exploited by Western colonizers since

the Triangular Slave Trade (Asafa Jalata, 2001b, pp. 1-3). In such a way, anti-Amhara views are installed in the areas (out side the EPRDF's Amhara region) where the Amhara community lives. The "Habashas" who are considered as people who "had nothing" and whose empire is of a "prison house of nations" are charged for genocide (Asafa Jalata, 2001a, pp. 392-398; Abbas H. Gnamo, 2014, pp. 111-136).

The degradation of peaceful coexistence is also fostered by legal issues that deny economic, political and social rights of "other" peoples who live outside of their ethnic region. Following the seize of power, on the debate to restructure the country's administration ethnically, Meles Zenawi and Endrias Eshete argued against the right of Ethiopians to live anywhere in the country. This ethnic politics has been accompanied by different ethno-politicians and it has caused ethnic and religious conflicts in the country (Pausewang, 2005, p. 275). The exclusion of others is made systematically by issuing a race identification card for residents until it has been partly abandoned under Abiy Ahmed (Paulos & Getachew, 2005, pp. 214-215).

The day to day persecution of the Amharas who live in different areas is associated with the ethnic-based administrative regions that deny their right. Taking the "native" and "migrant" discourse as grant, by corrupting and exaggerating sources, there is even denial of the blackness of the "Habashas" (Asafa Jalata, 1993, p. 31; 2001b, p. 4; 2020, pp. 154-155). The interaction and integration of Ethiopians in the past is seen as a "cultural racism" that denies the nature of cultural exchange through different channels (Asafa Jalata, 2001b, pp. 3, 149, 96; 2020, p. 11). Some others like Gebru Tareke (1991, pp. 71-72) also attempted to fabricate past intrigues specifically on Shewa-Amhara to be seen suspiciously by other Ethiopians including the Amhara themselves. Of course the intention of Gebru seems to disvalue the contribution of Shewa-Amhara in the past and to diminish their role in the current political trek.

There is a tendency to eradicate the role of the Oromos in the affair of Ethiopia's past. This seems made intentionally to destroy the Oromos' feeling of Ethiopianism (Asafa Jalata, 2020, p. 37). The statement "We are Oromians not Ethiopians" under Asafa Jalata (1993, p. 6) vividly shows the intrigue to dismantle Ethiopians coexistence. The Oromos who took part in the process of Ethiopian empire formation are charged as "de-Oromized," "Ethiopianized," "Oromo intermediaries" and "abusive to their people." The interaction and integration that Ethiopians experienced in the course of the past is seen as a "cultural racism" that denies the nature of cultural exchange through different channels (Asafa Jalata, 2001b, pp. 3, 149, 96; 2020, p. 11). The statement of Asafa Jalata (2001b, p. 149), "Habashas and Oromos cannot coexist peacefully within a single state system" is an indication of the disunionit step and critical stage of ethnicization and secessionism that endangered coexistence of Ethiopians.

To break down the long established coexistence, ethno-politicians or secessionists have used not only disdaining and distorting the history of the Amhara but also antithetically developing history of the Oromo against their oppressor (the Amhara). Population movement and wars (of the Oromos) against other peoples in the 16th and 17th centuries are considered as normal historical discourse and non-destructive (characteristically peaceful movement and their contact with others as harmonious due to the "flexibility and adaptability of their [Oromos] social structure." They confidentially state the Oromo Gada system is flawlessly composed of "democratic," "justice" and "elaborated egalitarian" elements (Abbas H. Gnamo, 2014, pp. 84-85, 120-124).

The second main intention of the ethno-nationalists (secessionists, too) is to cast Ethiopia as a 19th century "colonial empire." The empire formation process of this period is considered as part of the "scramble for Africa." For these writers, modern Ethiopia is formed by colonizing and exploiting Oromos in collaboration between Abyssinians or Habashas (sometimes they used Ethiopians to mean Amharas and Tigrians) and foreign powers such as Britain, USA and USSR (Asafa Jalata, 1993, p. 382; 2001a, p. 393; 2001b, p. 97; Abbas H. Gnamo, 2014, p. 113). The coincidence of Emperor Menelik's territorial expansion was merely coincidence with the "scramble of Africa." However, it is imagined as a colonial activity. The expedition and peacemaking processes and the relationship between the incorporated areas and the central government are understood with "racist policies" in line with the exploitative Europeans colonization activity in Africa (Abbas H. Gnamo, 2014, pp. 116-117, 317; Asafa Jalata, 2020, p. 1). The sacrification made to secure the sovereignty of Ethiopia is also disvalued (Asafa Jalata, 2001b, p. 4).

The empire formation process is polarized with politicized and ethnicized provocative terminologies such as "genocide," "colonialism," "terrorism" and "ethnic cleansing" assumed reached upon the Oromo people since the reign of Tewodros. Emperor Menelik (the architect of Adwa victory) who was casted by colonial agents as "black imperialist" and domestic "colonialist" (Paulos Milkias and Getachew Metaferia, 2005, pp. 170) is commonly condemned as Oromo's "colonizer" and "enemy" (Mohammad Hassen, 2002, pp. 18-19; Mekuria Bulcha, 2005, pp. 9-24; Asafa Jalata, 2020, pp. 54-58). In any area where a previous presence of fragmented Oromo community is assumed, the incorporation into the empire is nattered as "genocide." For instance, the foundation of Addis Ababa (part of the center of Solomonic Empire before the war of Imam Ahmad "Gragn" and the Oromo population movement) as a capital of Ethiopia is interpreted in terms of "biological and cultural genocide" of the Oromo (Zelalem T. Sirna, 2018, p. 87). To validate this view, they provided unproved numerical deaths of the Oromo as a result of Emperor Menelik's expedition (Mohammad Hassen, 2002, p. 18).

In relation to the Menelik's expedition, ethno-nationalists publicize less constructive, little evidenced and paradoxical past events as common facts. For instance, the expedition towards the Arsi people is clearly subjected for misinterpreted (Abbas H. Gnamo, 2003, pp. 276-277, 2014, pp. 1, 157-164). Since it was a protracted conflict, the loss of human and material resources is expected on both sides. This loss was appeared at Azule. However, the causality is politicized and new story is created linking with a place called Anole (in Arsi). The politicization of this an imagined event (including cutting of hands and breasts) was taken as a grant as a common symbol of Oromos' oppression in the 1990s. In this time, demonstration demanding the demolition of Menelik's commemoration statue at Addis Ababa was led by Oromo radicals. However, after few days, a huge counter demonstration was made by Addis Ababa residents who saved this African symbol from cultural elimination practice of the then ethnic radicalism (Biniam Weldegebreil, 2004, pp. 52-54). Currently, there is a statue of a hand holding a mutilated breast built following the after the polarized ethnic politics. This is the first memorial statue in Ethiopia erected for unexamined internal clash sponsored by Oromia National Regional State with exaggerated cost of 20 million Ethiopian Birr (Mulualem Daba, 2017, p. 44). However, the monument is erected for intentionally fabricated past of ethnically coerced political discourse of the time and it does not indicate any moral and cultural values of the Amhara that they portrait as "neftegna" (Ayele Tariku, 2018, pp. 16-17).

In addition to erecting statue, national days and public events are used as platforms to propagate past mistakes. Like its predecessor, EPRDF/ TPLF, has a national day to celebrate the downfall of the "Derg" regime (Biniam Weldegebreil, 2004, pp. 35-36). Cele-

brating such days is bad tradition of recent Ethiopian governingship. In such days, celebration is made for victory in war of brothers who fought each other mainly as a result of ideological difference and power interest. "Ginbot 20" (May 28) is used as a main platform of the government's propaganda to boast its ideology and retell past oppressions felt to be committed by previous emperors or communities.

Until recently, public cultural events (festivals) are used by ethno-governmental officials as platform of political propaganda to retell fabricated and little evidenced narrations against the country's past mainly its recent empire formation process. A public speech made by Shimels Abdisa, president of Oromia Region, on the day of "Erecha"[2] (which was celebrated for the first time in Addis Ababa on October 4, 2019 because of political motivations) was provocative and mistakenly retold Oromo youths as they were humiliated and broken in Addis Ababa before "150" years. [3] Apart this, elimination of medieval or early modern cultural legacies (including names of places) is one important practice of the Oromo elites. Such practices are politically initiated to postulate their claims of being a "native" to an area that they need. In order to dictate their ambition of controlling the political and economic hub of Addis Ababa, they also attempt to rename Addis Ababa with a new name, "Finfinne," [4]an imagined former name of Oromo nationalists for "Fil Wuha," the hot spring place near the great palace. In line with this, in order to validate their claim over the city, they narrate the establishment of Addis Ababa through Menelik's colonial activity and confiscation of land from the "native" Oromo (Fekadu Nigusa 2014, pp. 23-61; Zelalem T. Sirna, 2018, pp. 83-103). Unlike the Amharas who preserved the cultural affinities of the Oromos particularly in Wollo, various places now in Oromia region are subjected for elimination of cultural legacies assumed to be affiliated with the Amhara. Places like Nazret, Debre Zeit, Zway, etc. are renamed as Adama, Bishoftu and Batu respectively. Thirdly, ethno-politicians and authorities have intention to destruct the shared nature of cultural values of Ethiopia by orienting cultural exclusion that dwarfed Ethiopians thinking of the past as their common history. This way is a mechanism to diminish the sense of belongingness of Ethiopians as a citizen of single country. In a speech during the return of Aksumite obelisk from Rome, the former Prime Minister, Meles Zenawi, spoke that the Aksumite obelisk (a legacy of an early African civilization) is not the affairs of Ethiopians other than the Tigrians (Finneran, 2013, p. 52). Moreover, the government encouraged various Ethiopians to substitute Ethiopic alphabet by the Roman/Latin alphabet (Paulos & Getachew, 2005, pp. 214-215).

The fighting with the past is actually neither to argue for the enrichment of history nor for the improvement of policies and ideologies that would and will be relevant for the current and future development endeavor of the country. The movements are embarked on the opposition of deeds of past emperors that are not contemporary to this generation. The main reason to glean and natter such useless practice is to seek political and economic

---

2   "Erecha" is a traditional religious festivity of the Oromo and it has
         close relationship with their traditional "Gada" administration system.
         This religious festivity is celebrated in different parts of Oromia mainly at
         Hora Arsedi in Debre Zeyt.
3   https://ethiopianege.com/archives/10444 (Accessed on February 7/2020).
4   However, this word has no any origin of "Oromiffa." Rather, it is an Amharic
         word derived from "fin fin," which means squirt spoken to show the nature of
         the "Fil Wuha." Similarly, for "Sheger," another name that some people prefer
         to call Addis Ababa is derived from "shega ager," literary beautiful country, a
         word given to the area which was found naturally beautiful. The contrastive
         claim has no any viable historical and cultural evidence for
         assertion (Habtamu Mengiste, 2012 A.M., pp. 427-436).

profits. For this purpose, the government was engaged in disvaluing major historic events and frequently advocating past mistakes. On the contrary, it blesses its ruling period.

Fourthly, Ethno-nationalist writers have also intention to ethnically define factors of epidemic diseases transmision. As it is known, HIV/AIDS, a world wide epidemic disease, was widely expanded throughout the country and it seriously affected the lives of many Ethiopians. However, the expansion of this global epidemic disease in Oromia region is found surprisingly to be caused by the presence of Amhara communities in the region. One of the factors for the expansion of this disease, commercial sex work[5] is stated to be "widely popular and deeply rooted in the Abyssinian culture," where as it is "unthinkable business" among the Oromo. Precisely, this "culture" of the Amhara is defined as the main factor for the expansion of HIV/AIDS in Oromia (Begna Dugassa, 2003, pp. 54-55).

Moreover, ethno-nationalist writers are also contested with Ethiopian Orthodox Church (EOC) which is one of the playrooms for their movement. There is a wish to see the church under a status of "disestablishment." The church is usually blamed as instrument of previous oppression, approval of massacre and imperialist. It is also speculated as "opposing" with cultures of Oromo, bad religion to the Oromo, reduced the Oromo into serfdom, blessed the massacre of the Oromo and that had bad relation with the Oromo (Mekuria Bulcha, 1994, pp. 8-11; Asafa Jalata, 2001, p. 394, 2020, pp. 34, 81; Abbas H. Gnamo, 2002, pp. 102-106, 180). Accordingly, its presence among the Oromo is "irrelevant" (Tadesse Beriso, 2004, pp. 22). For Gebru Tareke (1991, p.15) overlordship was the church's central code of morality. He also made the church responsible for the poverty of the country by affecting every aspects of the society. Here, historical accounts are mistakenly presented by generalizing the church as enemy of peoples except the Amhara. The result of such hatred views of ethno-nationalists is that Orthodox Christians are frequently killed and churches and Christian properties are burnt down in different parts of Oromia, Somali, Sidama and Benishangul Gumuz in the last thirty years. In addition to this, the agenda of weakening the church was also circulated by a group of Oromo clergies who have close contact with Oromo ethno-political segments. Such activities are aimed to establish an independent "Oromia Clergy Office" that would be clearly an attempt of creation of an ethnic based religious administration in the old-age church.[6]

At the turn of this topic, it is important to mention one important practical case how the abuse of the Ethiopian past is continuing as a backache. This case is a "History of Ethiopia and the Horn" module which was prepared as one of the higher education courses designed to be delivered for fresh higher education learners. This module, which I became part of its review process on behalf of Hawassa University, is an important practical indication for the instrumentalization of the past to validate certain individual and group interests. The draft of the module was unfortunately circulated in social media and it faced serious opposition from different individuals, groups and institutions including the EOC. Here I have summarized the criticisms arose from Dr. Mengistu Gobezie, an archaeologist and academic member of Addis Ababa University, and Professor Getachew Haile, a philologist at St. John's University, Minnesota. Mengistu's criticisms are publicized on "Addis

---

5   It has to be noted here that commercial sex work or prostitution is not part of the culture of Amhara
     people or other Ethiopians. This practice has assumed expansion in main towns as a result of the disproportion
     between the Italian males and females during the Italian rule (1936-1941)
     (Bahru Zewde, 2002, p. 164). Such misleading views have intentions to disregard
     the socio-cultural fabric of the communities of Amhara.

6   https://borkena.com/2019/08/31/radical-ethnic-nationalists-move-to-break-up-ethiopian-church--in-
     pursuit-of-forming-oromia-orthodx-church-ethiopian-church-holy-synod-responds-to-it/ (Accessed on
     February 7/2020).

Admas," a popular Amharic magazine.[7] Accordingly, the module paid little attention to the main narration of the Ethiopian past and the state formation process. It disregarded well known historical facts but extolled local and little evidenced or sometimes fabricated stories. It also condemned the EOC and emphasized on "native" and "migrant" discourse of colonial views, and so on. Professor Getachew Haile also questioned the intention of the module's preparation.[8] According to him, one of its serious problems was that the writers used it "to justify grievances of the Oromo (and other ethnic groups)." Nevertheless, after a rigorous review made following the opposition it faced, it was validated at a workshop of Ministry of Science and Higher Education (MoSHE) in early 2020. Despite, its deliberation is being hold by MoSHE due to a reason clearly unknown to historians.

5. Heritagizing the Ethiopian Past: a Constructive Way

Politicizing and ethnicizing the past has brought nothing for Ethiopians other than ethnic conflicts. From optimistic point of view, dealing with common histories, academic debate on controversial and trauma issues, understanding the past in context, debating on the politicization and ethnicization of the past, etc. are relevant to constructively use the past. In relation to this, heritagization of the Ethiopian past whether it be glory or victory and failure or defeat shall be taken as good opportunity that the Ethiopians possessed from their past. Utilizing the past legacies ontologically benefits Ethiopians to maintain better common understand, harmonious relationship and sustainable development. It is important to note here that previous socio-cultural and economic interactions have not to be taken as entirely as deliberate practices of destroying ones identity or completely full of atrocities. The legacy of the past is also not a fate of single ethnic group construction. The complex socio-cultural fabrics, whatever the means of interaction, characterize the country with mosaic culture that we bestow today. Its past legacies are witnesses of creativities of human kind by which all Ethiopians had engagement. Demonstrating past legacies and its features can better be seen from this perspective than making historical interpretations in ethnic line fences or narrower perceptions. The locally and globally known cultural and natural heritages are legacies of all Ethiopians' shiny past. In a nut shell, this section seeks to reflect on the blessings of the past as a shared value–ranging from the early human and technological evolutions to the living cultural practices–either known globally or locally. The country possesses earliest hominids and human technologies as well ass old-age farming activities, monumental works, state and empire formations, Christian and Islamic culture, international trade links, great social memory, and etc (Finneran, 2013, p. 47). Naturally, it is a country with a spectacular and varied geodynamic and geomorphic landscape, climatic variations and biodiversity that created source of fascination for foreign travelers since centuries ago (Billi, 2015). In this section, some points of significance in relation to the past are presented.

Firstly, the Ethiopian soil is the cradle of human evolution. It provided the oldest hominid fossils that have far reaching contribution for global understanding of human history. A new chapter in human evolution has appeared following the most informative discovery of hominid fossils such as "Lucy" (Australopithecus "afarensis" dated back to 3.1 million years) in 1974 and Ardipithecus "ramidus" (dated back to 5.2-5.8 million years ago) between 1997 and 1999 (Yohannes Haile-Selassie, 2001, p. 178). Technologically, the oldest human material culture of the world is discovered in the Middle Awash of Ethiopia- 2.6

---

7   Addis Admas (Amharic Megazine), 20, 1042, (Addis Ababa, Tahisas 25/2012 A.M.), 3, 22 & 27.

8   https://www.zehabesha.com/module-for-history-of-ethiopia-and-the-horn-of-africa-for-higher-learnings/ (Accessed on June 2/2020).

million years ago at Gona (Phillipson, 2009a, p. 34) and 3.39 million years ago at Dikika (McPherron, 2007, p. 858). Ethiopia is also a center of early human settlement and do-mestication of plants and animals. Plants such as "teff," "enset," "noog," coffee and finger millet were domesticated here (Finneran, 2007, p. 67-76; Phillipson, 2009a, p. 203). In addition to the archaeological evidences (like rock arts), the existing agricultural practice attests early farming practices in the region (Harlan, 1969, p. 313; Finneran, 2007, p. 68; Phillipson, 2009a, pp. 203-206). The fact that Ethiopia is cradle of human evolution and center of plant domestication; it is now coined by a tourism brand, "Land of origins" (Vertriest et al., 2019, p. 74).

Secondly, Ethiopia is a country of diverse form of culture of tangible and intangible kinds. It is home for mosaic societies whose history and cultural practices have been intertwined and intermingled in the course of time through state formations, migrations (movements), commercial relationships and social and religious interactions. It is endowed with mosaic form of cultural practices including local administration and arbitration systems, medi-cation traditions, sheltering and wearing styles, marriage and mourning activities, music and dancing, farming and food processing, astronomical and calendar systems, alphabet and numerical systems and diverse religions such as traditional beliefs, Judaism, Chris-tianity and Islam. Thanks to the sacrification made by the past heroes, Ethiopia is coined with a land of "museum of peoples" (Teshome 1999; Metasebia Bekele, 2016; Howard, 2021). As a country of long built history, Ethiopia is a land of great cultural antiquities including thousands of churches and monasteries, royal palaces, unique burial mono-liths, mosques, precious movable treasures and continuous human settlement areas, with impressive architecture, art, literature and various cultural constitutes with a con-tinuity of special character to produce extraordinary legacy and technological wonder of the past (Alvarez, 1881; Buxton, 1947; Berry, 1989; Henze, 2000; Finneran, 2007; Phil-lipson, 2009b, Jousaume, 2010). All these have bonded Ethiopians with shared identities through various interaction mediums in the past. It is, thus, not surprising for Ethiopia to become the first country in Africa that registered about 14 cultural and natural heritages [9]under UNESCO.

Considering its vast cultural resources, as Finneran (2007, p. 266) states, "Ethiopia is best placed to play upon its heritage" to improve the relationship and living standard of its societies socially, culturally and economically and to build a shared identity. Moreover, as its landscape reflects, the country is "where history is always alive" (Henze, 2000, p. xiii). With the exception of confusions reflected from ethnicization and secessionist tendencies, all Ethiopian societies, regardless of their present habitation, have responsibility and sense of belongingness to their past legacies found across the country. This understand-ing is significant in order to develop solidarity among Ethiopians through the glory of their past. The aesthetic and mysterious technology of Aksumite Obelisks, the Christian archi-tectural wonders of Lalibela's Rock Hewn Churches, the giant royal palaces of Gondar, the Islamic cultural testimony of Harer, the symbolic megalithic stones of Tiya, the conflation beauty of culture and nature at Konso, the natural exotic of Semen Mountains, the living traditional administration system of "Gada," the various colorful festivities (such as "Fiche Chembelala," "Meskel," "Timket," "Eid") and so on are legacies of past glories of all Ethio-pians. In the sense, the long existed social cohesion and Ethiopianist perspective is has to be supported through the ownership of such practices as a common and shared values.

---

9   The Rock Hewn Churches of Lalibela, Aksumite Obelisks, Gondar Castles, Tiya Megalithic Stones, Harer Wall, Konso Cultural Landscape, Meskel Festival, Gada System, Fiche Chambalala, Timket Ceremony, Semen Mountains, The Middle Awash Valley and The Lower Awash Valley.

Thirdly, Ethiopians have common heritage of victories and atrocities in which all peoples took part directly or indirectly. Victories are symbol of courage and peace-loving of Ethiopians as well as icon of anti-imperialism movements. Among these are the victories of Gundet (1875) and Gura (1876) against the then Egyptian imperialism, the victories of Dogali (1887) and Adwa (1896) and the patriotic resistance (1931-1941) against western imperialism, and the victory of Karamara (1977) over western backed Somalian imperialism (Bahru Zewde, 2002, pp. 52-53, 254-255). The victory of Adwa over Italians, among others, is a giant historical event of all Ethiopians who brutally humiliated white imperialism. Adwa is more than victory in a battle field. It has brought far reaching influences both nationally and globally. Nationally, it was a platform to show Ethiopia's deep awareness on the value of sovereignty to which its heroes paid a lot sacrification (Paulos Milkias & Getachew Metaferia, 2005, p. 35). It ensured Ethiopia's sovereignty and peer foreign diplomacy with the then powers of the world as the only country in colonial Africa (Marcus, 1966, pp. 117-122). Adwa also has revealed the wisdom of Ethiopians on humanitarian values by the treatment of their enemy failed under their hand (Paulos Milkias & Getachew Metaferia, 2005, pp. 172-173).

Globally, Adwa is a betimes light of anti-colonialism and anti-racism struggle across Africa and the world. It was a symbol of victory of blacks for the popular Pan-Africanists like Edward L. Blyden and Marcus Garvey in the time of white dominated world. It reflected an indigenous African civilization and it became inspirational wave of Pan-Africanism politically and culturally. "Ethiopianism" was part and parcel of this movement (Akpan, 1985, p. 243; Grierson, 1993, p. 162). It is pride that Ethiopia "became a symbol of African redemption, political and religious ideology that continues as light of inspiration through generations" (Kalu, 2005, p. 267). It is monumentally "a living symbol, an incarnation of African independence" (Paulos Milkias & Getachew Metaferia, 2005, p. 190).

Adwa became a beacon of dignity for blacks for their movement against racism and to establish Christian churches free from colonizers. It initiated voices of justice among the public in home land of the colonizers acknowledging Ethiopia's victory with slogans such as "Viva Menelik" and demanding the withdrawal of all Italians from Africa. It is a milestone of the march to establish African Unity (Bahru Zewde, 2002, pp. 81-82). Moreover, Adwa is Africans' light that demolished the "dark continent" perception of Europeans towards Africa. As George F. H. Berkeley, a pro-Italian British historian witnesses, Adwa "*heralds a rise of new power in Africa- we are reminded that the native of the continent may yet become a military factor worth of our closest attention*" (Berkeley, 1902, cited in Bahru Zewde, 2002, p. 81).

It is important to note here the contribution of EOTC nationally and globally. The church is the mainstay of great cultural values including architecture, art, literature and local important living traditions. The biggest touristic sites of the country are affiliated with it. Apart this, it played a great role for the battle of Adwa to become effective (Paulos Milkias & Getachew Metaferia, 2005, p. 186). On the other hand, the church was a core element of Pan-Africanism. It was a symbol of early African Christianity. In relation to this, it is recognized as it has founded the modern form of African ecclesiastical realm and vernacularisation of African theology that possesses a new form of indigenized Christianity. It was also inspirational force of the blacks' movement in their struggle against white domination (Kalu, 2005, p. 264).

It is also equally important to note here that Ethiopians have shared histories of atrocities faced due to external and internal challenges. Externally, the massacre that the Ethiopians faced during Italians revenge between 1936 and 1941 is a good instance of a shared

history of atrocity. The life and material losses that reached during internal conflicts are also common histories. In this case, effects of the conflicts and military expeditions are common history in which all Ethiopians paid costs. Despite of some variations in its degree, military expeditions for territorial incorporation and consolidation reasons were common both in the southern and northern parts of the country. These military expeditions and conflicts were not a deliberate ethnic cleansing and colonization. For instance, the first aircraft in the history of Ethiopia was employed during the civil war between "Nigus" Teferi (later Emperor Haile Sellaise) and "Ras" Gugsa Wole of Beggemdir. The battle of Anchim (1930) is an important memory of this huge loss in the north (Henze, 2000, pp. 135-136). Taking this as example, ethnicization and politicization of the military expeditions made towards the southern part of the country is kindly misuse of history. Recognition to the consequences of previous internal conflicts should be seen from the context of that history. It is also important to understand that the current and future generations are not responsible for the consequences of past conflicts. Above all, history, whether it was bad or good, has shaped modern Ethiopia and it is a shared memory of all societies lived in the soil. Apart this, as Haile Larebo (2017, p. 19) states, except mal-administrative problems, ethnic based oppression and subjugation in the history of Ethiopia did not actually exist.

Recognition to past local injustices can be constructive if the intention is far from ethnicization. Erecting statue for victories and defeats as a result of internal conflict has little importance. There is no a distinguished Ethiopian hero who defeated or conquered the other either to seize power or build an empire. All of them who died either expanding the empire or defending their local territory have paid a lot for the formation of modern Ethiopia. All of them are our hero. If Ethiopians have intention to erect memory for past atrocities, there is much more common atrocity such as the massacre of the Ethiopians by globally prohibited mustard gas employed by Italians. Above all, Ethiopia is complicated with diverse forms of socio-economic and political problems that should be tackled now. Advocating past injuries and erecting statue (like that of Anole in Oromia) with huge cost has nothing role to improve the living standards of the local communities, rather, the politicians make a capital out of it. Regardless of this, the commemoration made for different emperors (such as Tewodross, Yohannes, Menelik, Haile Selassie) and patriots (such as Balcha Abba Nefso, Belay Zeleke, Abebe Aregay, Abdisa Aga, Shewareged Gedle and many other still untold) is for their role in fighting a foreign enemy.

Fourthly, the Ethiopian empire formation is the most contested area and, at the same time, an important aspect of the country's history, to which this section seeks to discuss much. It has to be given credit for it has safely protected the survival of multi-cultural communities. As a result of many centuries' evolution of economical and cultural relationships among different communities, Ethiopia could appear as a unified country of multi-cultural peoples (Levine, 1974, 26-30, 40-64). The polarized interpretation of ethno-politicians on modern Ethiopia and the preceding periods is a reflection of European colonial perspective and the objection is groundless. It is because that the (re)unification of Ethiopia did merely coincided in time with the "scramble of Africa." It is also because that the state formation process was not a recent phenomenon. Ethiopia and the Horn is one of the centers where early African polities and states took evolution. State formation in this region shows a tradition of continuity which is evidenced with legacies of successive states and empire formations with strong power, international recognition and relationships with their contemporary oversea states (Munro-Hay, 1991; 3; Henze, 2000, pp. 28 & 37). Its development was linked with continuous settlement process that grew since the late Pleistocene or early Holocene periods. Gradually, the settlement process kept its permanency and expansion up by the commencing of agricultural and commercial ac-

tivities that had long-term social, political and economic consequences across the region (Phillipson, 2009, pp. 147,169). These changes were the bases of sprout and growth of polities, kingdoms and states which were evolved and have left their legacies in Ethiopia and the Horn. As Finneran (2007, p. 139) states, the evolution of kingdoms and states in Ethiopia and the Horn is appeared as a result of continuous cultural antecedents and economically and socially larger urban formations.

The state formation process can be roughly seen into three phases of which the last phase was made to rebuild the empire that evolved through the first and the second phases and weakened in the subsequent crises since 1520s. The earliest phase of state formation and expansion took place in the Pre-Aksumite period and well flourished throughout the Aksumite period. The Aksumite Empire was one of the world's four great powers (Persia, Rome, Aksum and China) as Mani, a Persian prophet wrote in the third century A.D (Henze, 2000, p. 22). The second phase of empire formation took place following the shift of the center of the state into Lasta (Lalibela) and Shewa, south of Aksum. In the medieval period, when the center was in Shewa, extensive territorial incorporation was made as far as the southern part of Ethiopia (Henze, 2000, p. 44). The most effective territorial expansion and integration was made since the 14th century mainly during the reign of King Amde Tsion (r. 1314-1344) and Shewa got its prominence as centers of the medieval Solomonic kings. This process and its subsequent events brought socio-cultural and political integration and intermingling of peoples with different socio-cultural backgrounds into the empire (Taddesse, 1972, p. 297).

One important mention must be made about the daughter of a king of Hadya, Queen Eleni, who became wife of Emperor Zer'a Ya'eqob (r. 1434-1468) and one of the most influential women in the history of Ethiopia (Henze, 2000, p. 72). The empire formation process that took place until the outbreak of Ahmad "Gragn"s war enabled Ethiopia to build its "magnificent kingdom" and ensured it both practically and ideologically as an important coalitionist of western Christian powers (Levine 1974, 6-7). Regrettably, this empire building was later weakened as a result of the conquest of Ahmad "Gragn" and the Oromo population movement in the 16th century. Dominantly, the jihad of "Gragn" had dwarfed Ethiopia's rally of Europe, commercial, industrially, politically and diplomatically (Marcus, 1994, p. 34). With the consequent shambles of the post war, Shewa left its importance and the center of the empire retreated to and consolidated at Gondar until it was fragmented into different polities and kingdoms during the "Zemene Mesafinit" (1769-1855). Since or before this period, numbers of new polities, kingdoms and sheikdoms were emerged in the southern part. Later on, the unification of these polities and kingdoms become unified to create modern Ethiopia (Bahru Zewde, 2002, p. 16).

The end of the "Zemene Mesafint" and the rise of Emperor Tewodros marked the beginning of the third phase of empire formation and revival of strong centralized form of government in Ethiopia. This stage of empire formation was challenging due to internal pressures and external threats (British, Egypt, Sudan, Italy and Somalia). Despite of the death of the energetic Emperor, Tewodros, the process was sustained by Emperor Yohannes IV who completely eliminated the nightmare of Egyptian imperialism from Ethiopia. It was during the reign of Emperor Menelik in the late 19th century that the process was partly completed. At this time, while the rest of Africa was partitioned among European colonizers, Ethiopia appeared as the only free nation in the circle of colonial villains (Henze, 2000, pp. 119-167; Bahru Zewde, 2002, pp. 12-21, 27-71). The reunification of modern Ethiopia made during the three giant emperors was through peaceful and forceful mechanisms or the combination of these two ways (Ayele Tariku, 2018, pp. 1-22).

These phases of empire formation process show that modern Ethiopia is not merely the outcome of territorial integrity and reunification of the 19th century. In other way, it is not the outcome of any colonial influence. It was just a revival and extension of the glorious empire that weakened during the war of "Gragn" and the subsequent shambles (Henze, 2002, p. 135). The three great emperors worked on the basis of their predecessors who strived to create a potent empire in east Africa. The completion of modern Ethiopia under Menelik II was what Tewodros had already dreamed since the 1840s, 40 years before the Berlin Conference (1884-45). The incorporation of different areas into the central governance was only concomitant in time with the partition of Africa. It had no similar intention, aim and process with European colonization that subjected most Africans under the yolk of their racist rule.

The use of military to incorporate areas under their local lords can not be seen as completely as oppression if we take the context of the time into account. Revolution, civil war and the march to incorporate territories for unification became a very common trend across the world. The misperception towards the Ethiopian case rises from denial of this context. The fault is clearly associated with the anti-Ethiopian and anti-Pan African view of European colonizers most of whom were created through civil war or revolution. The defeat of a white European superior power by Ethiopians was a surprising event that resulted, in one hand, to the advocacy of the glory of Ethiopia and its emperor by the blacks and whites who had ambivalence on colonization, and, on the other hand, to the misrepresentation of Ethiopia and its emperors among European colonization agents. As it has been pointed out under Ayele Tariku (2018, pp. 1-2), the ethno-nationalists' view of modern Ethiopia as a colonial outcome is the result of their misconception that they adopted from their mentors or their ignorance to understand the right motives of the Ethiopian emperors in the rebuilding process of modern Ethiopia.

In relation to the rebuilding of modern Ethiopia, one of the most abused historical areas is Shewa. Menelik's selection of the capital of the empire in the heart of Shewa was initiated because of the areas attachment with the periods before the war of "Gragn" and the Oromos' movement. This area was the main economic, political and cultural hub of the great Ethiopian Empire mainly between the 14th and 16th centuries. Shewa was one of the most devastated areas of the medieval culture during the war (Taddesse, 1972, p. 302). Unlike the northern part of the country where rock hewn-oriented tradition was more frequent and still preserved, the central and southern parts of the country's cultural construction, with some exceptions such as Yeka Michael and Adadi Maryam, was characterized by masonry (conventional) buildings of palaces, churches, and villages. These types of buildings were brutally devastated during the war and the subsequent re-settlement and urbanization processes (Phillipson, 2009b, p. 25). However, several archaeological, written (both foreign and local sources) and oral sources reveal that political, cultural, religious and economic activities were flourished in this area before the war. Places like Debre Berhan, Entoto, Sululta, Yerer, Menagesha, Berara, Badeke, Sirre, etc were main centers of that development (Pankhurst, 1961; Foucher, 1987; Stenhouse, 2003; Breternitz & Pankhurst, 2009; Habtamu Mengiste, 2012 A.M.).

The history of Addis Ababa should be understood from the context of the state formation process and the history of Shewa before and after the 16th century. Successive states in Ethiopia had their own permanent capital founded in different places. Vividly, Ethiopia had four main consecutive permanent capitals: Aksum, Lalibela, Gondar and Addis Ababa. There were also several short lived capitals particularly found in Shewa until the establishment of Gondar as a permanent in 1636. Later on, after Gondar lost its importance during the Zemene Mesafint, the center of the empire began to have been shifted

again towards Shewa. Some people may think of the natural resources of the area as a main reason for the selection of Entoto and then Addis Ababa as a center of the revived empire. However, the discovery of many early and medieval empire legacies (including palaces, camps and churches) in and around the area is the main reason for the foundation of Addis Ababa as Ethiopia's future permanent capital. One of the impressive evidences discovered near Fil Wuha (in the heart of Addis Ababa) was ruin of a medieval church. By the excavation made on this site (led by French Catholic missionaries in the late 19th century), a square church building was recovered. On this place, a catholic church was constructed. Later on, through negotiation with missionaries, the current church of Arada Giyorgis has been constructed (Pankhurst, 1961, pp. 104-105; Foucher, 1987, pp. 35-36; Mersha Alehegn, 2005, p. 693; Breternitz & Pankhurst, 2009, pp. 210-249).

*F*igure 1. Arial view of Unity Park [1]   Figure 2. The palace of Menelik II [2]

Addis Ababa (literary New Flower), being founded by Empress Taytu in 1887, is grown outside of colonial influence. Unlike other African capitals, the city is an attempt of Africans to create a town within modern and traditional contexts (Pankhurst, 1961, p. 103). The growth of the town was made by the efforts of different peoples (such as the Amharas, Oromos, Gurages, Wolaytas, Tigrians, Gumuz, Somalis, foreigners, to mention few) who were gathered to the city through different ways (Pankhurst, 1961, pp. 113-117). The city belongs to all Ethiopians as well as Africans who have put and are putting their own footprints of shared generational heritage of yesterday, today and tomorrow. Not only the Oromos, the Amharas or the Gurages but also all other Ethiopians in general and the residents of the city in particular have equal stake, love and sense of belongingness over it. Struggles should be made to bring equal benefits for all Ethiopians regardless of the "who came first" discourse. It is little significant to assume current benefits on the basis of this discourse and past injustices. Understanding has to be taken that Addis Ababa cannot be a bilateral city for the Ormos on one hand and the others on the other hand since all Ethiopians have invested their knowledge and wealth for its development. If the claim is based on evidence, it is the Amharas who can substantiate their claim based on

---

1   https://borkena.com/2019/10/10/unity-park-ethiopia-emperor-meneliks-
         palace-tourist-attraction/ (Accessed on April 17/2020.
2   https://www.worqambatour.com/National%20Palace%20of%20Ethiopia.
         html (Accessed on April 17/2020).

numerously available historical, archaeological and oral sources. Therefore, the ambition of Oromo ethno-nationalists (based on their imagination as the area was first occupied by the Oromos) to rename the city as "Finfinnee" and to take hegemony over it is contradictory with the historical background and current status of the city. The historical and cultural environment of the city before the war of Ahmad "Gragn," the mass penetration of the Oromos into the area and the subsequent history following its foundation has to be taken into consideration to whom people does Addis Ababa belong (Habtamu Mengiste, 2012 A.M.). If the Oromo nationalists continue to assault as their land was taken by the Amhara in the 19th century, it is thus very likely that the Amhara (even the Gurage) can claim that their land was first taken by the Oromo following their northward movement at the end of the war of Ahmad "Gragn" in the 16th century.

"Finfinnee" is already fraudulently mentioned and narrated among Oromo ethno-nationalists in order to abuse the history of Addis Ababa. Despite of this, it is important to note here that heritagizing the past of Addis Ababa is constructive rather than attempting to abuse and destruct its past legacies including its amiable historical name. It is important to conclude this topic by mentioning an impressive instance of rehabilitation and heritagization of the Imperial palaces of Menelik II and Haile Selassie I at Arat Killo, Addis Ababa (see Figure 1 &2). The neglected grand palace is currently rehabilitated being furnished with other newly constructed touristic sites, with a name "Unity Park." It is now opened to the public and is served as one of the main tourist destinations in Addis Ababa. Despite the opposition from persons who have unreasonable prejudice with the Ethiopian past, this is a good example of using the past for constructive purpose that has positive impact upon the country.

Conclusion

Ethiopia is being challenged with intransigent and conflict provocative ethnic nationalism and secessionist crises that reach to the extent of the current civil war. During and after the down fall of the "Derg" regime, the politics of the country is characterized by "battling with the past" that severely challenged the solidarity of Ethiopians. The project of ethno-politicians intends disvaluing the country's past as a mere mythical and artificial construction, fate of oppressive kings and full of failures, degrading the long stayed harmonious relationships of Ethiopians. Arguments are made neither to enrich and use the country's history nor to improve usable policies, strategies and ideologies relevant for development. This paper attempted to show the importance of heritagizing the past than battling with the past. Dealing with common histories, academic debating on controversial and problematic issues, understanding past contexts, challenging the politicization and ethnicization of the past, and etc. have to be taken into consideration to constructively use the past. In relation to this, the Ethiopian past whether it is glory or victory and failure or defeat has is a resource that can maintain better common understanding, harmonious relationship and development for all Ethiopians.
The polarized interpretation about the (re)unification of modern Ethiopia cannot be seen from European colonial perspective. The empire formation process of the country was not a new phenomenon of the 19th century. The process evolved through three phases since the early Aksumite period to the down of the 19th century. Menelik's project to create a unified Ethiopia was the extension of previous developments and what Tewodros dreamed since 1840s. Shewa as center of the revived empire was selected because of its role in the medieval period. It is one of the most devastated areas of the Christian culture during the war as evidences attribute to this. The history of Addis Ababa should be understood from this context. It is an example of an indigenous African city and it belongs to all Ethiopians as well as Africans. Therefore heritagizing the country's past, by taking the opening of

"Unity Park" as a good instance, can contribute for overall developments of Ethiopians. This is the legacy of our forefathers that we granted as a shared heritage. Since 2011, Ethiopians are striving to erect another legacy, i.e. the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam being constructed at Abbay River. It will be one of the shared projects of present Ethiopians and shared histories of future generations, hoping it will be completed in the near future. This is the trend of generation building in the course of time.

References

Abbas H. Gnamo (2002). Islam, the Orthodox Church and Oromo Nationalism) L'islam, l'Église Orthodoxe et le nationalisme Oromo en Éthiopie. *Cahiers d'Études Africaines*, 42(165), 99-120.

_____ (2003). Anole. In S. *Uhlig, Encyclopedia Aethiopica*, 1 (pp. 276-277). Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag.

_____ (2014). *Conquest and Resistance in the Ethiopian Empire, 1880–1974: The Case of Arsi Oromo.* Leiden: Brill.

Abbink, J. (2006). Ethnicity and Conflict Generation in Ethiopia: Some Problems and Prospects of Ethno-regional Federalism. *Journal of Contemporary African Studies,* 24(3), 389-413.

Abebaw Adamu (2013). Diversity in Ethiopia: A Historical Overview of Political Changes. *The International Journal of Community Diversity, 12*(3), 17-27.

Akpan, M. B. (1985). *Liberia and Ethiopia, 1880-1914: The Survival of two African States. In A. Adu Boahen, General History of Africa: Africa under Colonial Domination 1880-1839,* VII(pp. 249-282). Paris: UNESCO.

Alemayehu Kumsa (2013). *The Conflict between the Ethiopian State and the Oromo.* 5th European Conference on African Studies, 1112-1145.

Alvarez, F. (1881). *Narrative of the Portuguese Embassy: During the Years* 1520-1527 (trans. Lord Stanley of Alderley) London: The Hakluyt Society.

Arnold, Bettina (1990). *The Past as Propaganda: Totalitarian Archaeology in Nazi Germany. Antiquity*, 64(244), 449-569.

Asafa Jalata (2010). *Contending Nationalisms of Oromia and Ethiopia: Struggling for Statehood, Sovereignty, and Multinational Democracy*. New York: Binghamton.

_____ (1993). *Ethiopia and Oromia: State Formation and Ethnonational Conflict, 1868-1992. Boulder and London*: Lynne Rienner.

_____ (2001a). *Ethio- Nationalism and the Global "modernizing" Project. Nations and Nationalism,* 7(3), 385-405.

_____ (2001b). *Fighting Against the Injustice of the Sate and Globalization: Comparing the African American and Oromo Movements*. New York: Palgrave.

_____ (2020). *The Oromo Movement and Imperial Politics: Culture and Ideology in Oromia and Ethiopia.* Lanham: Lexington Books.

Ashworth, G. J., Graham, B. and Tunbridge, J. E. (2007). *Pluralising Pasts: Heritage, Identity and Place in Multicultural Societies.* London: Pluto Press.

Avrami, Erica, Mason, R. & Toree, M. de la (2000). *Values and Heritage Conservation. Los Angeles:* The J. Paul Getty Trust.

Ayele Tariku (2018). The Annole Monument and Negus Menelik's Expedition Towards Arsi: A Bibliographic Essay. E*thiopian Journal of Social Sciences,* 4(1), 1-22.

Bahru Zewde (2002). *A History of Modern Ethiopia, 1855-1991.* Second Edition. Addis Ababa: Addis Ababa University Press.

Begna Dugassa (2003). Powerlessness and the HIV/AIDS Epidemics in the Ethiopian Empire. *Journal of Oromo Studies,* 10(1&2), 31-66.

Bekalu Atnafu (2018). Ethnic Cleansing in Ethiopia. *The Canadian Journal of Peace and Conflict Studies,* 50(1), 77-104.

Berry, L. (1989). Gondar-style architecture and its royal patrons. In: Royal Asiatic Society (ed.), *Proceedings of the First International Conference on the History of Ethiopian Art.* London: Pindar Press.

Billi, P. (Ed.). (2015). *Landscapes and Landforms in Ethiopia.* New York and London: Springer.

Biniam Weldegebreil (2004). *Memories the Victory of Adwa: A Focus on Its Commemoration, 1941-1999.* MA Thesis. Addis Ababa: Addis Ababa University Press.

Breternitz, H. & Pankhurst, R. (2009). Barara, the Royal City of 15th and Early 16th Century (Ethiopia): Medieval and other Early Settlements Between Wechecha Range and Mt Yerer –Results from a Recent Survey. A*nnales d'Éthiopie, XXIV*, 209-249.

Buxton, D. (1947). The Christian Antiquities of Northern Ethiopia. *Archaeologia*, 92, 1-42.

Campbell, P. J. (1999). Asafa Jalata, ed. Oromo Nationalism and the Ethiopian Discourse: *The Search for Freedom and Democracy,* Lawrenceville, NJ: The Red Sea Press, 1998.vii +301 pp. Bibliography. Index. $21.95. Paper. African Studies Review, 42(3), 236-237.

Clapham, C. (2004). Ethiopia and the Challenge of Diversity. Africa Insight, 34(1), 50-55.

Fekadu Nigussa (2014). State of Oromia's Interest in Addis Ababa (Finfinnee): Undelivered Constitutional Promises. *Journal of Oromo Studies,* 21(1&2), 23-62.

Fetten, F. (2000). Archaeology and Anthropology in German before 1945. In H. Härke (Ed.), *Archaeology, Ideology and Society: the German Experience,* (pp. 140-179). Germany: Peter Lang GmbH.

Finneran, N. (2007). *The Archaeology of Ethiopia.* London and New York: Routledge

_____ (2013). Lucy to Lalibela: heritage and identity in Ethiopia in the twenty-first century. *International Journal of Heritage Studies,* 19(1), 41-61.

Foucher, E. (1987). Birbirsa, 1868-1869. In Ahmed Zekaria, Bahru Zewude and Taddesse Beyen (Eds.), *Proceedings of the International Symposium on the Centenary of Addis Ababa* (pp. 31-34). Addis Ababa.

Galaty, M. L. & Watkinson, C. (2004). The Practice of Archaeology under Dictatorship. In M. L. Galaty and C. Watkinson (Eds.), *Archaeology under Dictatorship* (pp. 1-18). USA: Springer.

Gebru Tareke (1991). *Ethiopia, Power and Protest: Peasant Revolts in the Twentieth Century.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Goh, C. B. (1989). The Relevance of History to our lives today. T*eaching and Learning,* 10(1), 75-82.

Grierson, R. (Ed.). (1993). *African Zion: the Sacred Art of Ethiopia, 1-4.* New haven and London: Yale University Press.

Habtamu Mengiste (2012 A.M.). *Berara- Qedamit Addis Abeba (1400-1887 A.M.): Ediget, Wudmet ena Dagim Lidet* (in Amharic). The Red Sea Press.

Haile Larebo (2017). Lemehonu Yebiher Bihereseb Chikona BeEthiopia Neber Woy? (in Amharic). *International Journal of Ethiopian Studies,* 11(1&2), 1-44.

Halett, R. (1976). *Changing European Attitudes to Africa. In J. E. Flint (Ed.), The Cambridge History of Africa,* 5(pp. 458-496). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Härke, H. (2000). The German Experience. In H. Härke (Ed.), *Archaeology, Ideology and Society: the German Experience* (pp. 12-39). Germany: Peter Lang GmbH.

Harlan, J. R. (1969). Ethiopia: A Center of Diversity. *Economic Botany*, 23(4), 309-314.

Hassner, P. (2009). Beyond Politics and History: The Need for Conceptual and Ethical Dialogue. In H. Swoboda & J. Marinus Wiersma (Eds.), *Politics of the Past: The Use and Abuse of History* (pp. 15-28). The Socialist Group in European Parliament.

Henze, P. B. (2000). *Layers of Time: A History of Ethiopia.* New York: Palgrave.

Howard, Sarah. 2021. *Ethiopia: The Essential Guide to Customs and Culture.* Britain: Kuperard.

Joireman, S. F. (1997). Opposition Politics and Ethnicity in Ethiopia: We Will All Go down Together. T*he Journal of Modern African Studies,* 35(3), 387-407.

Jousaume, R. (2010). Tǝya. In S. Uhlig (Ed.), *Encyclopedia Aethiopica, 2* (pp. 939-940). Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag.

Kalu, U. O. (2005). *African Christianity: An African Story. Pretoria:* University of Pretoria Press.

Levine, D. N. (1974). *Greater Ethiopia: The Evolution of a Multiethnic Society.* London: The University of Chicago Press.

Lowenthal, D. (2015). *The Past is a Foreign Country:* Revisited. UK: Cambridge University Press.

Lubo Teferi (2012). The Post 1991 'Inter-ethnic' Conflicts in Ethiopia: An Investigation. *Journal of Law and Conflict Resolution,* 4(4), 62-69.

Mackonen Michael (2008). Who is Amhara? *African Identities,* 6(4), 393-4-4.

Marcus, H. G. (1966). The Foreign Policy of Emperor Menelik, 1896-1898. A Rejoinder: Journal of African Studies History, 1, 117-122.

_____. (1994). *A History of Ethiopia.* USA: University of California Press.

Marwick, A. (1989). *The Nature of History.* Third Edition. London: Macmillan.

McCann, J. C. (1995). Oromia & Ethiopia: State Formation and Ethnonational Conflict- 1868-1992. By Asafa Jalata (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1993). 233 pp. $45. *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History,* 26(2), 359-361.

McPherron, S. P., Zeresenay Alemseged, Marean, C. W., Wynn, J. G. & et al. (2010). Evidence for Stone-tool-assisted Consumption of Animal Tissues before 3.39 Mil lion Years ago at Dikika, Ethiopia. *Nature,* 466(12), 857-860.

Mekuria Bulcha (2005). Genocidal Violence in the Making of Nation and State in Ethiopia. *African Sociological Review,* 9(2), 1-54.

Mersha Alehegn (2005). *Gänätä Ṣǝge Giyorgis. In S. Uhlig (Ed.), Encyclopedia Aethiopica, Volume 2 (pp. 693-695). Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag.*

Messay Kebede (2001). From Marxism-Leninism to Ethnicity: the Sideslips of Ethiopian Elitism. I*nternational Conference on African Development Archives.* Paper 12, pp. 1-16.

_____. (2003). Eurocentrism and Ethiopian Historiography: Deconstructing Semitization. *International Journal of Ethiopian Studies,* 1(1), pp. 1-19.

_____. (2011). Ideology and Elite Conflicts; Autopsy of the Ethiopian Revolution. Philosophy Faculty Publications. *Paper* 36, pp. 1-13.

Metasebia Bekele (2016). The Memory of Heroes: the Konso Experience/ La mémoire des héros: l'expérience konso. *Annales d'Éthiopie,* 31, 161-177.

Mohammed Hassen (2002). *Conquest, Tyranny, and Ethnocide against the Oromo*: A Historical Assessment of Human Rights Conditions in Ethiopia, ca. 1880s–2002. Northeast African Studies, 9(3), 15-49.

Mulualem Daba (2017). The Pro and Counter Narratives of Anoole Memorial Monument in the Ethiopian Polit*y. Advances in Sciences and Humanities, 3(5), 43-49.*

Munro-Hay, S. (1991). A*ksum: An African Civilization of Late Antiquity.* Edinburgh University Press.

Newman, E.W. P. (1935). Abyssinia, Royal United Services Institution. *Journal,* 80(520), 842-849.

Ocheni, S. & Nwankwo, B. C. (2012). Analysis of Colonialism and Its Impact in Africa. *Cross Cultural Communication,* 8(3), 46-54.

Pankhurst, R. (1999). Ethiopia, the Aksum Obelisk, and the return of Africa's Cultural Heritage. *African Affairs,* 98, 229-239.

_____ (1961). Menelik and the Foundation of Addis Ababa: *The Journal of African History,* 2(1), 103-117.

Paulos Milkias and Getachew Metaferia (Eds.) (2005). *The Battle of Adwa: Reflections on Ethiopia's Historic Victory against European Colonialism. New York: Algora Publishing.*

Paulos Milkias (2001). Ethiopia, TPLF and Roots of the 2001 Political Tremor. International Conference on African Development. *Archives paper* 4.

Pausewang, S. (2005). *The Two-Faced Amhara Identity.* Scrinium, I, 273-286.

Phillipson, D. W. (2009a). *African Archaeology.* Third Edition. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

_____ (2009b). *Ancient Churches of Ethiopia: Fourth-fourteenth Centuries.* New Haven and London: Yale University Press.

Prochazka, B. R. (1935). *Abyssinia: The Powder Barrel.* London: British International News Agency.

Sabrow, M. (2009). The Use of History to Legitimise Political Power: The Case of Germany. In H. Swoboda & J. Marinus Wiersma (Eds.), *Politics of the Past: The Use and Abuse of History* (pp. 97-103). The Socialist Group in European Parliament.

Sharkey, H. J. (2013). African Colonial States. In J. Parker & R. Reid (Eds.), *The Oxford handbook of modern African history* (pp. 151-170). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Shirer, W. L. (1990). *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reick: A History of Nazi Germany.*

Sow, A. I., Balogun, O., Haguessy, H. and Diage, P. (1979). *Introduction to African Culture: General Aspects.* Paris: UNESCO.

Stenhouse, P. L. (trans.) (2003). *Futuh Al-Habasha: The Conquest of Abyssinia: by Sihab ad-Din Ahmad bin Abd al-Qader.* USA: Tsehai Publishers.

Taddesse Tamrat 1972). *Church and State in Ethiopia*, 1270-1527. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Tadesse Beriso (2004). The Pride of the Guji-Oromo: An essay on cultural contact and self-esteem. *Journal of Oromo Studies, 11*(1&2), pp. 13-27.

Teshome G. Wagaw (1999). Conflict of Ethnic Identity and the Language of Education Policy in Contemporary Ethiopia. *Northeast African Studies,* 6(3), 75-88

Triulzi, A. (2002). Battling with the Past: New Frameworks for Ethiopian Historiography. In W. James, D. L. Donham, E. Kurimato & A. Triulzi (Eds.), R*emapping Ethiopia: Socialism and After* (pp. 276-288). Oxford: James Currey.

Uzoigwe, G. N. (1985). European Partition and Conquest of Africa: Overview. In A. Adu Boahen (Ed.), *General History of Africa: Africa under Colonial Domination 1880-1945*, VII (pp. 19-44). Paris: UNESCO.

Vertriest, W., Daniel Girma, Wongrawang, P., Atikarnsakul, U. and Schumacher, K. (2019). Land of Origins: *A Gemological Expedition to Ethiopia. Gems and Gemology*, 55(1), 72- 88.

Waugh, E. (1936). *Waugh in Abyssinia.* London, New York, and Toronto: Longmans.

Wiersma, J. M. (2009). The Politics of the Past: The Use and Abuse of History. In H. Swoboda & J. Marinus Wiersma (Eds.), *Politics of the Past: The Use and Abuse of History* (pp. 15-28). The Socialist Group in European Parliament.

Worthing, D. & Bond, S. (2008). *Managing Built Heritage: The Role of Cultural Significance.* London: Blackwell Publishing.

Yigzaw Gedifew and Abitew Endalsasa (2019). Causes and Impacts of Internal Displacement in Ethiopia. *African Journal of Social Work,* 9(2), 32-41.

Yohannes Haile-Selassie (2001). Late Miocene Hominids from Middle Awash. Ethiopia. *Nature,* 412 (12), 178-181.

Záhořík, J. (2014). Colonial Perspective and Nationalism(s) in Ethiopia in the Context of African Decolonization. *wbhr*, 01, 149-174.

Zelalem T. Sirna (2018). Addis Ababa/Finfinee: A Blueprint towards Twin-city Administration. *Ethiopian Journal of the Social Sciences and Humanities, XIV(*1), 83-103.