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Overview paper

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IDEOLOGICAL VIOLENCE TOWARDS THE ETHIOPIAN ORTHODOX TEWAHIDO CHURCH IN THE POST-1960s

Abstract

The Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahido Church (EOTC) is one of the religious institutions in Ethiopia. The EOTC has encountered many challenges that caused physical and epistemic violence. This study explores the two historical trends that the EOTC and its believers faced with epistemic and physical violence. The two trends are Marxism and ethnicism. This article argues that Ethiopian political elites have orchestrated Marxism and ethnic ideology inappropriately to analyze Ethiopian contexts in the post-1960s. These trends have caused violence on the EOTC. Investigating these two historical trends is very important as the EOTC is still facing violence. This study concludes that considering the EOTC as the past feudal regimes' tool of oppressing non-Christians and viewing the EOTC as an Amhara's institution are still the perspectives of some radical Ethiopian elites. The study synthesizes the elite's inappropriate use of these ideologies for analyzing some contexts in Ethiopia with the violence caused on the EOTC and its worshipers.

Keywords: EOTC, ethnicization, contexts, ideology, marxism, violence

Introduction

Investigating the violence that targeted the EOTC in different historical trends is essential for a variety of reasons. The first and foremost is the physical and epistemic violence that caused on the EOTC and its worshipers. The EOTC has gone through many challenges. This article discusses the challenges of the two historical trends, Marxism and ethnicization. It analyzes how the so-called 'the 1960s Ethiopian Marxist generation' and the Derg regime's inappropriate use of Marxism to analyze Ethiopian contexts caused violence on the EOTC and its worshipers. It also explores how the ethnic extremists and the TPLF/EPRDF regime's inappropriate understanding of the Ethiopian contexts by ethnic ideology caused violence on the EOTC and its worshipers.

For some writers, in the century-old life of the nation state-building project

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in Ethiopia, the latest phase (post-1991) has been the most ambitious.² It was expected to solve the earlier riddle who is the Ethiopian?³ But this expectation has only been in the two seducing enigmas: the mere promise of the rebel elites who clung to power in 1991 and their commitments to democracy with all their trimmings.⁴ The post-1991 regime has not implemented such expectations. Indeed, excluding political and economic issues, these unexamined hopes have resulted in what Vestal calls 'the politicizing of the patriarch of the EOTC' soon after the TPLF/EPRDF regime clung to power in 1991.⁵ The post-1991 violence that targeted the EOTC and its believers was primarily related to the Ethiopian Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF)/ Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) regime's ideology. Ancel and Ficquet explored the challenges of modernity to the EOTC and the influence of the EOTC in Ethiopian politics.⁶ The EOTC's power on the state is dubious, but this is not the scope of this article. Instead, I argue that due to the perspectives of the post-1960s ideologists, the EOTC has encountered epistemic and physical violence.

Following the Oromo, Gurage, and Amhara protests, the TPLF, one of the main fronts of the EPRDF coalition, has been excluded from the central politics in 2018. EPRDF was composed of four organizations: the TPLF (the main front), the Amhara National Democratic Movement (ANDM), the Oromo People's Democratic Organization (OPDO), and the Southern Ethiopian People's Democratic Movement (SEPDM). Abiy Ahmed, who came from the Oromo People's Democratic Organization (OPDO), took Ethiopian premiership in 2018 and made many political reforms.⁷ In the second year of the overthrow of the Derg regime, the former patriarch (father Merkorios) of the EOTC had left his position. The TPLF/EPRDF elites were behind this case.⁸ Some months later, father Paulos sat in place of father Merkorios. This act divided the EOTC synod into two synods for 27 years. Having done some political changes, Abiy Ahmed mediated these divided synods that were antagonistic for 27 years. These synods are the synod established by the former patriarch-Merkorios (supported by Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahido Christian diasporas in the western world) and the Ethiopian synod formed by patriarch Paulos upon the support of the post-1991 regime. The reconciliation of the two synods after 27 years gave great hope for the EOTC and its worshippers.

2 John Markakis, *Ethiopia: The Last Two Frontiers*, James Currey, United Kingdom, 2011, p. 229.

3 Ibidem.

4 Ibidem.

5 Theodore Vestal, *Ethiopia: A Post-Cold War African State*, Greenwood, London, 1999, p. 158.

6 Stéphane Ancel and Éloi Ficquet, "The Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahido Church and the Challenge of Modernity", in: *Understanding Contemporary Ethiopia: Monarchy, Revolution and the Legacy of Meles Zenawi*, Gérard Prunier and Éloi Ficquet (eds.), Oxford University Press, London, 2015, pp. 63-92.

7 Jon Temin and Yoseph Badwaza, Aspirations and Realities in Africa: VI. Ethiopia's Quit Revolution, *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 30, No. 3, 2019, pp. 139-153.

8 Layne Tamrat, "TPLF and Oromo Democratic Parties are not different in practice", available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7iglgB4Sh_4 (accessed February 26, 2021).

As John Markakis pointed out, EPRDF policy since 1991 was to encourage every splinter group.⁹ Indeed, the reconciliation of the antagonists is an anomaly in the political ideology of TPLF/EPRDF. Strengthening splinter groups, at least to the EOTC synod, have been discarded by the new leadership. However, the recent killing of Orthodox Christians in the Oromia region has challenged the new hope that the EOTC and its believers put on the post-2018 regime.¹⁰

Out of many studies that deal with the EOTC, most have rarely focused on the consequences of the elite's inappropriate interpretation of ideologies. In other words, there is no existing study that analyses how the use of political ideologies to analyze contexts caused violence on the EOTC and its worshippers.

Excluding the introduction and conclusion parts, this paper has three parts. The first part discusses the conceptual insights and the research method. The second part deals with the general overview of the EOTC. The third part analyzes the two trends that cause epistemic and physical violence on the EOTC.

Conceptual and Methodological Notes

Religion is one of the social aspects of a society that could be subjected to violence by the political elites (ideologists). The violence could range from epistemic to physical. Gerring recognizes the plurality of attributes to ideology: it may be the dogmatic perspective of the elites; it may connote political sophistication, or it may be the dominant mode of thought.¹¹ Michael Freeden, having argued the ubiquitous nature of ideology, defines that it is the idea of high abstraction that is far from the experience of ordinary people.¹² For him, ideology is not dogmatic; it is the flexible perspective of ideologists.¹³ Ideology refers primarily to those alienated by the statuesque such as revolutionary movements.¹⁴ Acknowledging the persuasive picture of the concept of ideology derived from the Marxist approach, Freeden indicates that ideology is the product of many fundamental unhealthy causes.¹⁵ As Freeden pointed out, the Marxist approach questions the existence of contexts for ideology to be born.¹⁶ The presence of contexts may be the womb of revolutionary movements. This study acknowledges Michael Mann's understanding of violence (mass murder, ethnic cleansing, and other forms), which argues the essentiality of 'contexts' for the violence

9 John Markakis, *Ethiopia: The Last Two Frontiers...* p. 240.

10 "Ethiopia Justice Needed for Deadly October Violence", Human Rights Watch (HRW). Available at: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/04/01/ethiopia-justice-needed-deadly-october-violence> (accessed February 19, 2021).

11 John Gerring, Ideology: A Definitional Analysis, *Political Research Quarterly*, Vol. 50. No. 4, 1997, pp. 957-994.

12 Micheal Freeden, Ideology and Political Theory, *Journal of Political Ideologies*, Vol. 11, No. 1, 2006, pp. 3-22.

13 Micheal Freeden, *Ideology: A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2003, p. 33.

14 John Gerring, Ideology: A Definitional Analysis... p. 957.

15 Micheal Freeden, *Ideology: A Very Short Introduction*... p. 7.

16 Ibidem.

to happen.¹⁷ In this article, context is a term this paper used to refer to critical contexts in which the EOTC can be criticized or condemned by ideologists. Focusing on the implementers of ideology (ideologists), Bell argues that ideologists are 'terrible simplifiers'.¹⁸ For Bell, ideologists make it unnecessary for people to confront individual issues on their merits.¹⁹ One turns to the ideological vending machine, and out comes the prepared formulae; and when these beliefs suffused with apocalyptic fervor, ideas become weapons, and with dreadful results.²⁰ Bell put his view as follows: "For among the 'new left,' there is an alarming readiness to create a tabula rasa, to accept the word 'revolution' as absolution for outrages, to justify the suppression of civil rights and opposition-in short, to erase the lessons of the last forty years with an emotional alacrity that is astounding. However, the revolution which these elites whisper could not guarantee their future imperialist tendency"²¹.

Most of the time, when ideology comes down to society, it is accompanied by costs. Ideology is not a theater of utopianist dreams in cost-free exercises.²² For ideologists (such as Stalin, Mao, and Pol Pot), certain social groups, social values, and classes had no part in the new society they tried to create.²³ These identified groups, norms, and individuals may be destroyed or killed to bring ideological uniformity within the people.²⁴ Ideologists may 'tabula rasa' the preexisting knowledge to make their new creed effective.²⁵ Ideology can cause physical and epistemic violence on the values or norms of the people. As Yirga Gelaw pointed out, epistemic violence is the suppression of local worldviews, values, customs, authorities, and practices by the new system of knowledge imposed on it.²⁶ And physical violence is the consequence of epistemic violence, or it is the last resort of ideologists to quell dissents.²⁷ Physical violence is physical harm to the targeted institutions or individuals. Physical and epistemic violence may be what Bauman calls 'the results of elite's inappropriate' employment of ideologies or paradigms to communities.²⁸

This article used secondary and primary sources of data. Secondary sources include journals and books. The primary sources used in this study include politi-

17 Michael Mann, *The Dark Side of Democracy: Explaining Ethnic Cleansing*, Cambridge University Press, 2005, p. 6.

18 Daniel Bell, *The End of Ideology: On the Exhaustion of Political Ideas in the Fifties*, Free Press, New York, 1988, p. 405.

19 Ibidem.

20 Ibidem.

21 Ibidem, pp. 405-406.

22 Ibidem, p. 405.

23 Benjamin Valentino, *Final Solutions*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 2004, p. 144.

24 Ibidem, pp. 109, 125, 133.

25 Daniel Bell, *The End of Ideology: On the Exhaustion of Political Ideas in the Fifties...* p. 405.

26 Yirga Gelaw, *Native Colonialism: Education and the Economy of Violence Against Tradition in Ethiopia*, Red Sea Press, New Jersey, 2017, p. 96.

27 Ibidem.

28 John Brohman, Universalism, Eurocentrism, and Ideological Bias in Development Studies: from Modernization to Neoliberalism, *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 16, No. 1, 1995, pp.121-157.

cal memoirs, reports, and interviews. This article has used semi-structured interviews. Participants were selected based on their relevance in collecting the data needed for the two historical trends-Marxism and ethnicization. Then, two participants from the Philology department in Addis Ababa University (AAU), one participant from public scholars in Addis Ababa, two participants from political science department in Addis Ababa University, two participants from Holy Trinity Theological University (HTTU) in Addis Ababa, and two participants from Mahibere Kidusan in Addis Ababa have been interviewed. The study also used other sources (including video sources) to synthesize the perspectives of ideologists and intellectuals. Nine participants have been interviewed in collecting the data. The researcher collected the data between 2019 and 2020.

The Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahido Church (EOTC)

Narrating the history of the EOTC is not the objective of this paper. However, it is important to put an overview about the EOTC in few words. Christianity was introduced into Ethiopia in the 4th century AD. King Ezana accepted Christianity as a state religion in the same century. Indeed, the beginning of Christianity date back to the time of the Apostles, i.e., there were few believers.²⁹ Most Ethiopian historians argued that the history of the EOTC was initiated in the fourth century AD. It was a state religion for more than 1,600 years.

The EOTC is the advocator of Ethiopian unity and the owner of the Geez civilization. It was the preserver of Ethiopia's independence. For example, during colonialism, the Italian government had portrayed the EOTC as an enemy to their colonial ambition; and killed many church scholars and monks.³⁰ The cause of the massacre was its strong resistance against the Italian occupation of Ethiopia. Geez literature (civilization) is the main feature of the EOTC. According to Teshale, Geez civilization is the non-assimilating assimilator.³¹ It repressed the Southern culture (such as the Oromo culture). But this had not made the southerners to be the assimilated owners of Geez civilization. Through Geez civilization, the church established the Ethiopian polity. Although Geez's civilization was the Amhara, Tigre, and Agaw triplet (the three orthodox Christians), it was later dominated jointly by the Amhara and Tigre couplet. The EOTC had been influencing the government. At times, it even went so far as to dethrone the kings. In terms of its influence, it had no less authority than the government. For example, Teshale explained that the EOTC had both repression and hegemony over the Ethiopian people.³²

Scholars who have written about the EOTC describe the EOTC in the follow-

29 Sergew Hable Sellassie, *Ancient and Medieval History*, United Printers, Addis Ababa, 1972, p. 97.

30 Ian Campbell, *The Massacre of Debre Libanos Ethiopia 1937: The Story of Fascism's Most Shocking Atrocities*, Addis Ababa University Press, Addis Ababa, 2014, pp. 92-108.

31 Teshale Tibebu, *The Making of Modern Ethiopia*, Red Sea Press, Asmara, 1995, p. 81.

32 Ibidem, p. 13.

ing expressions. The EOTC is not a copy of either the Coptic (Egyptian) or any other church in the world, but original, i.e. the EOTC³³. Tabot Christianity is the unique feature of the EOTC.³⁴ It interpreted Christianity in Ethiopian expression without losing its universal characteristics.³⁵ The EOTC is not against the norms of the Ethiopians. The church integrated the Christian values into Ethiopians. It also accepted and appropriated traditions with Christian values.³⁶ It makes the EOTC one of the African institution developed through indigenous values. The EOTC serves as a one standard that made Ethiopia as one of Oriental Christian others in the eyes of Europeans³⁷; it is Ethiopian³⁸; and it was the dominant and state religion for centuries. Some of these explanations are significant points that going to do with the two historical trends, which this paper discussed in detail.

Marxism's Destruction

Ethiopia is a non-colonized country. But its elites and intellectuals have been invaded by the ideals of colonial consciousness probably more than any other colonized state.³⁹ One of the things that show it is the ideologies of these elites, which they employed to analyze the EOTC and its believers. As Quijano argued, the intellectual development of one world system model is the post-colonial tactic of the Western-colonialists to create the peripheries (inferior-in Eurocentric perception) once again.⁴⁰ Eurocentrism has developed cognitive issues in a system that the Orient is inferior to the Occident. Such a perspective puts modernity and rationality as exclusively European products and experiences.⁴¹ As a result, African elites and intellectuals have been employing Eurocentric standards (experiences) and paradigms to analyze their African problems and contexts. Among the African elites who have come up with Western approaches or experiences to interpret the context of their country, post-1960s Ethiopian elites are the pioneers. Due to the Ethiopian elite's inappropriate application of western ideals/experiences to Ethiopian contexts, the EOTC, since the 1960s, is facing challenges from Ethiopian elites. Some challenges have caused violence on the EOTC and its worshipers. One of the challenges that came from the post-1960s Ethiopian

33 Getnet Tamene, Feature of the EOTC and clergy, *Asian and African Studies*, Vol. 7, No. 1, 1998, p. 90.

34 Teshale Tibebu, *The Making of Modern Ethiopia...* p. 7.

35 Maimire Mennasemay, Ethiopian Political Theory, Democracy, and Surplus History, *International Journal of Ethiopian Studies*, Vol. 2, No. 1, 2005, p. 22.

36 Donald Levine, *Wax and Gold, Tradition & Innovation in Ethiopian Culture*, The University of Chicago Press, 1972.

37 Matteo Salvatore, "The Jesuit Mission to Ethiopia (1555–1634) and the Death of Prester John", in: *World-Building and the Early Modern Imagination*, Allison Kavey (ed.), Palgrave Macmillan, 2010, p. 142; Teshale Tibebu, "ESAT Ethiopia Nege Gizaw With Prof. Teshale Tibebu Part 1", available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_t3FkpWVX0k (accessed January 21, 2021).

38 Stéphane Ancel and Éloi Ficquet, "The Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahido Church and the Challenge of Modernity"... p. 65.

39 Yirga Gelaw, *Native Colonialism: Education and the Economy of Violence Against Tradition in Ethiopia...* p. 17.

40 Quijano Anibal, Coloniality of power and Eurocentrism in Latin America, *International Sociology*, Vol. 15, No. 2, 2000, pp. 533–580.

41 Ibidem, p. 542.

elites, the ideology that these elites used to analyze the Ethiopian contexts is the most infamous one. They (Ethiopian elites) were emotionally supporting and propagandizing Marxism as the solution for solving the various problems of the Ethiopian people.

As Teshale pointed out, Marxism is a Eurocentric paradigm, which follows Hegel's Eurocentrism.⁴² Teshale also argues that Marxism became the official mantra of many elites for those whose aim was 'catching up with the west'.⁴³ Indeed, 'catching up with the west' is one of the examples that nullify what Teshale calls 'polycentric humanism'.⁴⁴ Taking Immanuel Wallerstein's (1999a, p.168) argument, Teshale argues that social science had emerged in response to European problems at a point in history when Europe dominated the whole world system.⁴⁵ Here Teshale wants to assert the Eurocentric tendency of the contemporary paradigms. According to Dirlik, Eurocentrism is the one (western) centrism that historically dominated the world.⁴⁶

Most contemporary ideologies were founded based on European experiences. For example, many argue that Marxism is the result of European standards. Indeed, even Karl Marx, an icon for most non-European leaders, used Eurocentric standards/experiences to analyze non-European communities (Asia and Africa).⁴⁷ Most writers such as Marx saw the Orient as a locale requiring Western attention, reconstruction, even redemption.⁴⁸ Or, some others like Walter Mignolo noted that Marxism is an internal Eurocentric critique of modernity.⁴⁹ The Ethiopian Student Movement (ESM) of the 1960s, who read and heard the revolutions of other countries, headed for change as others did. For example, students were the main progressive forces that supported the coup d'état of 1960 against the imperial regime and the 1974 revolution. The ESM was a pioneer in propagating Marxism in Ethiopia. It was one of the most radical student movements of Africa influenced by Marxist ideology.⁵⁰ As Christopher Clapham pointed out, for the so-called post-1960s Ethiopian generation, Marxism was the appropriate formula for resolving the Ethiopian problem.⁵¹ In other words, during the post-1970s, in

42 Teshale Tibebe, *Hegel and the Third World: The Making of Eurocentrism in World History*, Syracuse University Press, New York, 2011, p. xxii.

43 Ibidem.

44 Ibidem, p.xix.

45 Ibidem, p. xxi.

46 Arif Dirlik, Is there History after Eurocentrism? Globalism, Postcolonialism, and the Disavowal of History, *Cultural Critique*, Vol. 42, 1999, pp. 1-34.

47 Lindner Kolja, Marx's Eurocentrism: Postcolonial Studies and Marx scholarship, *Radical Philosophy*, Vol. 161, 2010, pp. 27-41.

48 Edward Said, *Orientalism*, Penguin Books, New York, 2003, p. 206.

49 Walter Mignolo, *The Darker Side of Western Modernity: Global Futures, Decolonial Options*, Duke University Press, Durham and London, 2011, p. xi.

50 Teshale Tibebe, Modernity, Eurocentrism, and Radical Politics in Ethiopia, 1961–1991, *African Identities*, Vol. 6, No. 4, 2008, pp. 345-371.

51 Clapham Christopher, The Socialist Experience in Ethiopia and its Demise, *The Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics*, Vol. 8, No. 2, 1992, pp.105-125.

the eyes of Ethiopian elites including, the intelligentsias, governing elites, and opposition parties, Marxism and Leninism would solve the various problems of Ethiopia.⁵² Some contexts seemed to make Marxism a timely and popular ideology to these Ethiopian elites. For example, there were contexts or what Freeden calls unhealthy contexts⁵³, which made Marxism-Leninism significant by the post-1960s Ethiopian elites in analyzing the EOTC and its parishioners. The problem is these elites were interpreting Marxism in a way that could harm the EOTC. Or, by Bell's words, these elites were interpreting contexts through emotional alacrity.⁵⁴

The then generation put the 1960s and 1970s situation in Ethiopia in the following ways. To take the evidence from Mengistu Hailemariam, the former president of Ethiopia: "In the 1970s, Karl Marx's lifelong work *Capital* was translated from English into Amharic, and then presented to Ethiopians. In addition to what had been seen and heard, new thinking, new perspectives, new dialects, and new words started to come by the masses and the so-called educated class"⁵⁵. Gebru Asrat, a former TPLF fighter and student of AAU in the 1970s, notes, during the 1960s and 1970s, most students of AAU were reading and debating on the book of Marx.⁵⁶ By entirely supporting Gebru's idea, one of the radical Marxists of the time and an important man in the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party (EPRP), Worku put the 1960s generation's biography as: "We discussed and read books such as the communist manifesto written by Marx, the state and revolution, and the October revolution written by Isaac Deutscher. We also read a book on revolt about China written by Edgar Snow, the Fanshen written by an American historian about the land reform in China, the Marxism written by Stalin, the national and colonial question, and Walelign's article, and ended up with a similar conclusion"⁵⁷.

As noted by these former Marxists, Marxism was a popular ideology in the then time. Their destination was what Bell calls the revolution.⁵⁸ They also argue that this ideology was very suited in analyzing the feudal system of the time. For some scholars, the ESM of the 1960s and 1970s started the oppressor-oppressed discourse. But it is not to deny the historicity of oppressor-oppressed discourse. Indeed, Italy initiated such narration in Ethiopia in the 1930s. It created the parochial identity and feeling of victimhood, especially on the southern Ethiopian people such as the Oromos.⁵⁹ The main goal of this discourse was to divide and weaken Ethiopians by depicting one part as the oppressor ethnic

52 Ibidem, p.105.

53 Micheal Freeden, *Ideology: A Very...* p.7.

54 Daniel Bell, *The End of Ideology: On the Exhaustion of Political Ideas in the Fifties...* p. 405.

55 Mengistu Hailemariam, *Tiglachin*, Volume 1, Tsehay Publishers, Los Angeles, 2012, p. 3.

56 Gebru Asrat, *Lualawinetina democracy beytopia*, 5th edition, Addis Ababa, 2016, pp. 31-34.

57 Worku Gebeyew, *Empire and Revolution in Ethiopia: A New Perspective*, Addis Ababa, 2018, p. 135.

58 Daniel Bell, *The End of Ideology: On the Exhaustion of Political Ideas in the Fifties...* p. 405.

59 See, for example: Ezekiel Gebissa, *The Italian invasion, the Ethiopian empire, and Oromo nationalism: The Significance of the Western Oromo Confederation of 1936*, *Northeast African Studies*, Vol. 9, No. 3, 2002, pp.75-96.

group(Amharas and its institution) and others as the oppressed ethnic groups (southern Ethiopians),⁶⁰ then to colonize Ethiopia.⁶¹ Even after Italy controlled Ethiopia, it proclaimed pro-Muslim and southern policy to undermine EOTC's and state resistance.⁶²

However, the post-1960s intelligentsias' excessive reliance on Marxism with its trimmings seemed to be the source of the sense of ethnic victimhood in Ethiopia. Such feelings of victimhood were ranging from religion and culture to politics. Herbert, who explored the Oromos' political consciousness from 1959 to 1994, showed how the Oromos developed the sense of victimhood incrementally as they were aware of their misery due to the influence of the Christian kings.⁶³ In short, this generation (the so-called 1960s generation) has opened a new chapter in the Ethiopian people. Ethiopian intelligentsias developed new words, new ideologies, and new perspectives. As Mekuria put it, Marxists may attempt to bypass ethnic identity, where Ethiopian Marxists did not do in their political understandings.⁶⁴ Indeed, most Ethiopian Marxists (call themselves Marxists) were ethnic-oriented elites.⁶⁵ In any case, in Ethiopia, a sense of oppressed-oppressor discourse became extreme with the intrusion of Marxism within the intellectual and political elites. But this rhetoric was intensified by the existed contexts.

The context of the then time encouraged the so-called 1960's generation to present the Ethiopian situation in Marxism ideology. According to Markakis and Nega, for the first time, Walleigne Mekonnen boldly wrote the question of nationalism that many Ethiopian elites are afraid to write.⁶⁶ Walleigne, one of the radical Marxists of that generation, illustrated the existed context of Ethiopia of his age as: "To be a genuine Ethiopian, one has to speak Amharic, listen to Amharic music, accept the Amhara-Tigre religion (Orthodox Christianity), and wear the Amhara-Tigre Shamma in international conferences"⁶⁷.

As he put the context of his generation, Orthodox Christianity was essential to be true Ethiopian. Teshale noted that Amharic and Christianity were the official seals of Ethiopianness.⁶⁸ Indeed, the modern Ethiopian polity is created during

60 See, for example: Adolf Parlesák, *Yehabesha Jebdu*, (translated by Techane Jobire), Addis Ababa University Press, Addis Ababa, 2003.

61 Christine Sandford, *Ethiopia under Haile Selassie*, JM Dent & Sons, London, 1946, p. 9.

62 Hussein Ahmed, Coexistence and/or confrontation? Towards a Reappraisal of Christian-Muslim Encounter in Contemporary Ethiopia, *Journal of Religion in Africa*, Vol. 36, No. 1, 2006, pp. 4-22.

63 Herbert Lewis, "The Development of Oromo Political consciousness from 1958-1994", in: *Being and Becoming Oromo: Historical and Anthropological Enquiries*, Paul Baxter, Jan Hultin and Alessandro Triulzi (eds.), Nordic Africa Institute, Uppsala, 1996, pp. 37-47.

64 Mekuria Bulcha, "The survival, and Reconstruction Oromo Identity", in: *Being and Becoming Oromo: Historical and Anthropological Enquiries*, Paul Baxter, Jan Hultin and Alessandro Triulzi (eds.), Nordic Africa Institute, Uppsala, 1996, pp. 48-66.

65 See: Tefera Negash, Ideology and Power in TPLF's Ethiopia: A Historical Reversal in the Making?, *African Affairs*, Vol. 118, No. 472, 2019, pp. 463-484.

66 John Markakis and Nega Ayele, *Class and Revolution in Ethiopia*, Read Sea Press, New Jersey, 1986.

67 Walleigne Mekonnen, On the Question of Nationalities in Ethiopia, *Struggle*, November 19, 1969, p. 2.

68 Teshale Tibebe, *The Making of Modern Ethiopia...* p. 49.

the last quarter of the 19th century by the Christian feudal society of the northern highlands (Amharas and Tigray) through the conquest of the southern half of the present state.⁶⁹ The northerners took most of the good land in the south as the rewards for victory. The leaders reduced the Muslim and pagan inhabitants of this region to the status of vassals.⁷⁰ These leaders consider the Oromos as the destroyers of Christianity and civilization.⁷¹ They also view Ethiopian Muslims only as the people who live in Ethiopia.⁷² The Northerners were superior in many aspects of Ethiopia. Northerners are dominantly Orthodox Christians. The northerners were not only the people who live in Ethiopia, but they were also the citizen of Ethiopia. Most Southerners and Muslims had rarely got such privileges. As the northerners were Christians, their kings had used the EOTC as an instrument for the state-building process.

Since 1855, the EOTC was one of the main actors in the formation of the Ethiopian state.⁷³ Changing traditional moral norms into Christian values⁷⁴, threatening rebellion with ex-communication⁷⁵, and building a centralized state based on one Christian ethos⁷⁶ were the reasons for its involvement in the state formation process. Its Geez civilization had also made the EOTC preferable to the state centralization process. As a result, some, especially Oromo and Muslim scholars argue that the EOTC with the help of the state, had forcibly converted others (such as Oromos and other southern pagans) to Orthodox Christianity.⁷⁷ Indeed, other scholars argue that this was not done by the EOTC but by the leaders (kings).⁷⁸ However, these scholars (the latter) have not rejected the EOTC's role during the conquest of the southern parts of Ethiopia. Indeed, this EOTC's participation in the state-building process and its historical superiority served as the critical contexts for Ethiopian elites (primarily the so-called Marxists) to blame EOTC and its parishioners. But such a view seems to be an oversimplification of the historical truth. Indeed, the EOTC had not gone far enough to convert others.⁷⁹ The pre-

69 John Markakis, *The Military State and Ethiopia's Path to 'Socialism'*, *Review of African Political Economy*, Vol. 8, No. 21, 1981, pp. 7-25.

70 Ibidem, p. 8.

71 Teshale Tibebe, *The Making of Modern Ethiopia...* p. 16.

72 Ibidem, p. 89.

73 Stéphane Ancel and Éloi Ficquet, "The Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahido Church and the Challenge of Modernity"... p. 67.

74 Serawit Debele, *Marriage and Empire: Consolidation in post-Liberation Ethiopia (1941-1974)*, *The Journal of African History*, Vol. 61, No. 2, 2020, pp. 201-217.

75 Haile Lerebo, *The Orthodox Church and the State in the Ethiopian Revolution, 1974–84*, *Religion in Communist Lands*, Vol. 14, No. 2, 1986, pp. 148-159.

76 Stéphane Ancel and Éloi Ficquet, "The Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahido Church and the Challenge of Modernity"... p. 70.

77 See, for example: Mekuria Bulcha, "The survival, and Reconstruction Oromo Identity"... p. 55; and: Hussein Ahmed, *Coexistence and/or confrontation?: Towards a Reappraisal of Christian-Muslim Encounter in Contemporary Ethiopia* ... pp. 5, 9.

78 Jon Abbink, *Religion in Public Spaces: Emerging Muslim-Christian Polemics in Ethiopia*, *African Affairs*, Vol. 110, No. 439, 2011, pp. 253-274; Haile Lerebo, *The Orthodox Church and the State in the Ethiopian Revolution, 1974–84...* p. 149.

79 Interviewee 1 from HTTU, March 23, 2020, Addis Ababa.

sent situation of the South and Muslim Ethiopians could prove its action.⁸⁰ The Ethiopian south is still predominantly Protestants and Muslims. However, some contexts created the popularity of Marxism in analyzing the EOTC, especially in the Southern parts of Ethiopia. Worku Gebeyew, who is from the northern part of Ethiopia (Amhara in ethnic identity), described his observations in a visit to the southern part of Ethiopia during his time with the Central Statistics Agency (CSA) of the Haile Selassie I regime as follows: "When the Northern people followed emperor Menelik II's imperial expansion to the south, they subdued the southern people. They also confiscated the lands of the natives. They gave over their lands to the Northern people. As an officer of the central government, I met the local church (EOTC) head, parish administrator, and the biggest landlord. When I met with him, I saw that he was wearing a pistol, which I had never seen an armed priest in Ethiopia before. I had seen him while the head hits the locals with his gun, which I had never seen in Ethiopia. The next day, it was Sunday, and I got up at six o'clock to go to church. I walked for about half an hour and found the church, and the priest was still wearing his shoes. I was shocked by such a priest's behavior. Fasting, respecting the church, and taking off their shoes are the daily traits of the priests of the North"⁸¹.

This observation is significant to understand the context of the time. It was clear that the northern priests and the priests of the South were entirely different. The Southern priests had quasi-state apparatus. These southern priests, who were involved in, what Merera Gudina calls the pacification (*Makinat*) process⁸², could never be characterized in the same character like the pious (poor) priests in the north.⁸³ But this credible difference had not stopped Marxism from being a timely mantra for the so-called post-1960s ideologists (Ethiopian elites, and later to the Derg leaders). The abusive engagement of the southern priests was a critical point for the Marxists in analyzing the EOTC. Its quasi-state apparatus over the natives developed deep grievances against the church. Indeed, the Marxists have got a broad loophole to blame the EOTC and its believers as an oppressive imperial institution, though the northern EOTC heads and priests were poor, kind, and pious. Undeniably, the origin of these southern priests is the Northern part of Ethiopia (mostly Amharas and Tigray). It created a favourable condition for the Marxists to blame the EOTC as a whole, which later caused what Bell calls the 'dreadful results' on the EOTC and its believers.⁸⁴

Though contexts were clear to negate the practices of the EOTC, Marxists (ideologists) caused destruction when we see their actions from the result it

80 Interviewee 2 from HTTU, April 7, 2020, Addis Ababa.

81 Worku Gebeyew, *Empire and Revolution in Ethiopia: A New Perspective*... p. 99.

82 Pacifying (*Makinat*) refers civilizing. See: Merera Gudina, *The Elite and the Quest for Peace, Democracy, and Development in Ethiopia: Lessons to be Learnt*, *Northeast African Studies*, Vol. 10, No. 2, 2003, pp. 141-164.

83 Christine Stanford, *Ethiopia under Hailesilasie*, J.M. Dent and Sons, London, 1946, pp.77-78.

84 Daniel Bell, *The End of Ideology: On the Exhaustion of Political Ideas in the Fifties*... p. 405.

brought to Ethiopians and the EOTC. In 1974, mainly due to the immense role of the ESM, the imperial regime had lost its power. After this, Derg clung to power in the same year and then proclaimed the new regime's strong demand to implement the dictums of Marxism. Derg took this ideology from the offspring of the ESMs (EPRP and The All Ethiopia Socialist Movement (MEISON)). It was clear that MEISON was the tutor of Marxism ideology to the Derg leaders.⁸⁵ Due to the contexts stated above, the new Marxist regime, like its tutors, portrayed the EOTC as an instrument of the Christian rulers to oppress the Ethiopian people. The post-1974 leadership, which came from the military of the pre-1974 regime, attempted to reshape the political, economic, cultural, and social aspects of Ethiopia by the dictums of Marxism. Most of the Derg leaders came from the lower echelons of the military. Mengistu (the president of the Derg) noted that all Derg members were from the poor Ethiopian community and the lower levels of the military.⁸⁶ He says that the fall of the Haile Selassie regime did not hurt the ordinary members of the military as they came from poor Ethiopian people.⁸⁷ From the very beginning, the Derg members had promised to fight for the oppressed and poor Ethiopians.

According to Derg elites, one of the methods of fighting for the poor Ethiopians was to destroy the tools of oppression. In the views of these elites, the EOTC was a tool of oppression. The regime officially declared the separation of state and religion. Then, the Marxist government caused both epistemic and physical violence on the EOTC. The Derg chairman, Mengistu, has made it clear that the clergy from among the leaders of the past Ethiopian elites are anti-changes or modernity.⁸⁸ In this book, Mengistu repeatedly accuses the EOTC as the one that made Ethiopia backward.

Though this regime did great at some issues, such as land reform, it caused violence on the EOTC, which was dreadful in case of consequences.⁸⁹ Indeed, some of the actions of the Marxist regime were the results of the inappropriate use of Marxism dictums in the Ethiopian context, which was different from the origins of Marxism critique. This regime undermined what Maimire Mennasemay calls the Surplus history of Ethiopia.⁹⁰ Mengistu, for example, boldly states that Ethiopia, despite its rich cultural literature, is weak in modern literature.⁹¹ Indeed, such a view is what Ali Mazrui calls disparagement of indigenous contribution.⁹²

85 Patrick Gilkes, Building Ethiopia's Revolutionary Party, *MERIP Reports, Horn of Africa: The Coming Storm*, Vol. 106, 1982, pp. 22-27.

86 Mengistu Hailemariam, *Tiglachin*. . . p.161.

87 Ibidem.

88 Ibidem, pp.77-78.

89 Interviewee 2 from Mahibere Kidusan, February 2, 2019.

90 Maimire Mennasemay, Ethiopian Political Theory, Democracy, and Surplus History. . . p. 1.

91 Mengistu Hailemariam, *Tiglachin*. . . pp. 1-3.

92 Ali Mazrui, "The Seven Biases of Eurocentrism: A Diagnostic Introduction", in: *The Challenge of Eurocentrism*, Rajani Kanth(ed.), Palgrave, Macmillan, New York, 2009, pp. xi-xix.

Having orchestrated Marxism, the Derg regime started Marxist Ethiopia, which are compatible with the 'tabula rasa'⁹³ of the mind. Some call such way an act of extremism. However, for others, it is a means of achieving ideological goals.

As Patrick Wolfe put the Manifesto of Theodor Herzl (founding father of Zionism) manifesto: Herzl said, if I wish to substitute a new building for an old one, I must demolish the old before I construct the new.⁹⁴ Derg seemed to follow this way against the EOTC. Some others still call this destructive measurement the result of native colonialism.⁹⁵ It is the colonization of Ethiopian scholars and elites by colonial consciousness. The native colonialism is indeed clearly seen in what Achille Mbembe calls the three sorts of violence.⁹⁶ The first is the founding violence, which creates a space for the violence to be practical.⁹⁷ The second level is the Hegelian one-sided supreme right that gives the right to destroy others (non-European episteme).⁹⁸ And the third level is the rationalization of using force to maintain the second level.⁹⁹ Indeed, Ethiopians saw what Mbembe calls the three sorts of violence committed against the EOTC due to Marxism.

The Marxist government, having confiscated the property of the EOTC, the regime was causing physical destruction on the EOTC. Indeed, despite few church closings and few arrests of priests, the Marxist government did not directly attack the EOTC and its believers.¹⁰⁰ It co-opted the EOTC. But it is not to deny Derg's destructive action of the main features of the EOTC, which continued for centuries. Covertly, Mikael Doulos noted what he calls the top-secret, which was issued by September 1982: "Big and famous Orthodox churches (cathedrals) were made into an exhibition hall as a historical emblem for the oppressed people by the regime. Traditional Ethiopian books, what the Derg regime calls the tools of exploitation of feudalists leaders, were ordered to be taken away from the churches. All liturgical objects, except a few, should be gathered up and deposited in a friendly country or, if necessary, burnt. There was a plan for Christians and Muslims to be set against each other. The directive also ordered the press and media to repeat frequently that the church (EOTC) and its system hindered the freedom of the Ethiopian people"¹⁰¹.

Some of the books of the EOTC that the Marxist regime ordered to be collected and burnt were Ethiopian (indigenous books) that could not be published or replicated in their original forms. From the burnt materials, the book of the

93 In this study, the word *tabula rasa* means starting everything from zero by deleting the old episteme.

94 Patrick Wolfe, Settler colonialism and the elimination of the native, *Journal of Genocide Research*, Vol. 8, No. 4, 2006, pp. 387-409.

95 Yirga Gelaw, *Native Colonialism: Education and the Economy of Violence Against Tradition in Ethiopia*. . . p. 10.

96 Achille Mbembe, *On the Postcolony*, University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 2001, p. 25.

97 Ibidem.

98 Ibidem.

99 Ibidem.

100 James Brooke, "Under Marxism, Ethiopia's Christians Abide", *The New York Times*, March 9, 1987, p. 1.

101 Mikael Doulos, Christians in Marxist Ethiopia, *Religion in Communist Lands*, Vol. 14, No. 2, 1986, pp. 134-147.

glory of kings (Kibre-negest), book of the law of kings (metshafe-negest), the book of healing (Metshafe-Sirah), the book of songs of Yared (Zimare Yared), Ethiopian Synaxarium (Sinksar), and poem of duga (Lisane-duga) were the most known books.¹⁰² According to the view of this regime, the reason for burning and collecting the books of the EOTC was the books were being used to exploit and oppress the other Ethiopian people during the past feudal regime.¹⁰³ But most of these books can only spread wisdom, which can never be used as a tool of oppression.¹⁰⁴ Rather, the regime's act was what Rebecca Knuth calls *libercide*.¹⁰⁵ As Knuth noted *libercide* is regime-sponsored destruction of books, which is a rationalized action for those who burnt/destroyed books as a way for achieving their utopian goals.¹⁰⁶ This is what the Derg did. To put it in other words by using Mbembe's illustration, the Marxist regime was expecting that by destroying the EOTC's books, it could spread Marxist ideology within the Christian community. It was indeed, the search for one-sided ideology and episteme (which is Eurocentric) that forced the Marxist regime to implement ruthless orders against EOTC's priceless books.

The Ethiopian Marxist elites have also caused epistemic violence against the EOTC and the Ethiopian people for establishing a communist Ethiopia. They denounced Ethiopian history as the history of Debtaras.¹⁰⁷ Indeed, the EOTC scholars were the writers of Ethiopian history.¹⁰⁸ The Marxist government portrayed Ethiopian history as a history of oppression due to what Teshale Tibebe calls the piecemeal (*Tiraznataq*) understanding of contexts.¹⁰⁹ Some southern Ethiopian elites (such as the Oromo elites who supported the colonial perspective have gone so far as to say that Ethiopian history is colonial history¹¹⁰, though Merera Gudina (an Oromo scholar) refuted this thesis.¹¹¹ Taking the phrase from Triulizi, Maimire calls their perspective (colonial thesis) historiographical simplification.¹¹² For the Marxist generation, Ethiopian history was a history of the Amharas and the EOTC.¹¹³ But this was the denial of the common history of Ethiopians.¹¹⁴ Ethio-

102 Mary Dines, The cancer of religion, *Index on Censorship*, Vol. 12, No. 5, 1986, pp. 23-24.

103 Ibidem, p. 25.

104 Interviewee 1 from HTTU, March 23, 2020, Addis Ababa.

105 Rebecca Knuth, *Libricide: The Regime-Sponsored Destruction of Books and Libraries in the Twentieth Century*, Praeger, London, 2003, p. viii.

106 Ibidem.

107 Debtaras are highly educated scholars in the EOTC.

108 Interviewee 1 from Mahibere Kidusan, March 12, 2019, Addis Ababa.

109 Teshale Tibebe, Modernity, Eurocentrism, and Radical Politics in Ethiopia, 1961–1991... p. 363.

110 For those who uphold the colonial perspective, the present (modern Ethiopia) is created by Abyssinian Amhara-Tigre rulers by forcefully colonizing the southern parts of Ethiopia (Oromia and others).

111 Merera Gudina, "Contradictory interpretation of Ethiopian history: The need for a new Consensus", in: *Ethnic federalism: the Ethiopian experience in comparative Perspective*, David Turton (ed.), Addis Ababa University Press, 2006, pp. 119-130.

112 Maimire Mennasemay, Ethiopian Political Theory, Democracy, and Surplus History... p. 2.

113 Interviewee from Public scholar, September 11, 2020, Addis Ababa.

114 Interviewee 1 from AAU political science professor, March 3, 2019, AAU.

pians (the Oromos, Gurages, Amharas, Tigrians, Agaws, and others) had built the Ethiopian history. But Amharic and orthodox Christianity were the standards of civilization. An Oromo, Tigran, Gurage, Agaw and others who spoke Amharic language and followed Orthodox Christianity were equally civilized as an Amharas. Teshale noted that the distinction between civilized and uncivilized was primarily a social class than an ethnic origin.¹¹⁵ Thus, there was cultural oppression; Amharic and Orthodox Christianity were superior. However, such cases are not necessarily lead to arguing that Ethiopians had no a common history.¹¹⁶ Sadly, the EOTC's reaction to this epistemic and physical violence was insignificant as the Marxist regime structurally suppressed it and systematically co-opted with the church officials.

The Tragedy of Ethnicization

This trend covers the period since the TPLF/EPRDF regime came to power in 1991. In the century-old life of the nation-state-building project of Ethiopia, the post-1991 phase was the most promising for bringing equality and democracy.¹¹⁷ As the textual promises of ethnic elites, the regime seemed to reshape post-1991 Ethiopia in a way that could be advantageous to the oppressed people. This regime believed that the past Ethiopian governments built a state that the Amharas had dominated other ethnic groups. However, to use Mkandawire's words¹¹⁸, no sooner had the TPLF/EPRDF regime come to power than they found a reason to forget the oppressive political system that it had fought against and which had eventually brought them to political power. The TPLF/EPRDF's unshakeable perspective initiated from a Marxist upbringing since it had been at the bush¹¹⁹ influenced to label a group (Amhara ethnic group) as an oppressor of other ethnic groups. Thus, the post-1991 regime opened their attempt of rebuilding the state based on such an unshakeable perspective.

The TPLF/EPRDF elites considered the EOTC and the Amhara people as the same. In other words, using the contexts of the time and timely ideology, the TPLF/EPRDF elites covertly narrated just as the EOTC was serving as a tool used for the Amhara ethnic group to oppress other Ethiopian ethnic groups. As clearly explained above, during the period of Marxists in Ethiopia, Marxists portrayed the EOTC as the tool of the imperial regimes in controlling the southern Ethiopian people. As a result, the EOTC seemed to be the victim of both trends. The TPLF/EPRDF accusation of the EOTC was another trend that caused violence in

115 Teshale Tibebe, *The Making*, p. 17.

116 Interviewee 2 from AAU political science professor, April 1, 2019, AAU.

117 John Markakis, *Ethiopia: The Last Two Frontiers...* pp. 229-230.

118 Mkandawire Thandika (ed.), *African Intellectuals*, CODESRIA, Dakar, 2005, p. 16.

119 John Markakis, *Ethiopia: The Last Two Frontiers...* p. 243.

the church. Or, it is what Edward Said says 'blaming the victims'.¹²⁰ The blame was not without spaces or contexts. There were contexts to accuse the EOTC by considering it like the religion of one ethnic group, i.e., the Amharas. Indeed, such practices are what Santhosh and Paler call ethnicizing religion for political purposes.¹²¹ The ethnicization of EOTC is not without violence. Instead, it is causing both physical and epistemic destruction on the EOTC and its believers.

As Siniša Malešević noted, as used in its contemporary parlance, ethnicity is undoubtedly Western creations.¹²² He goes on to state that ethnicity is the fashion of the post-enlightenment era. Colonialism brought race into the center of the African national project as the race had been the criterion for inclusion and exclusion into colonial forms of citizenship rights.¹²³ Some such as Chabal portrayed ethnicity as the language of the colonial masters.¹²⁴ Indeed, ethnicity is a colonial divide and rule (manipulation of a group against group) tactic, which even the French colonies that favored politics on a regional basis had not escaped.¹²⁵ Or in the words of Messay Kebede, the rise of ethnicity in Africa is African integrity grappling with the model of the nation-state imposed by the West.¹²⁶ Ethnicity is what African elites inherited from the colonial powers. In post-colonial Africa, especially in the 1990s, ethnicity and ethnic division became the fashion for African elites.¹²⁷ Some say such ethnic politics were part of the democratization that swept Africa during the 1990s. As Messay Kebede pointed out, ethnic politics is simply the continuation and the conclusion of the decolonization of Africa.¹²⁸ Messay states that ethnic politics seemed to create modern and viable nations in place of the self-destroying amalgams.¹²⁹ Messay further argues that: "Ethnonationalism turns ethnicity and ethnicization into a condition of good government. Just as for Plato, the qualities of the philosopher guarantee the best regime, so too do ethnic homogeneity and rule for ethnonationalism: in providing concern and solidarity, they bring about the best government"¹³⁰.

It was this messianic perspective that put most post-colonial African governments in one basket. However, ethnic elites were mobilizing their people in

120 Edward Said, "Introduction", in: *Blaming the Victims: Spurious Scholarship and the Palestinian Question*, Edward Said and Christopher Hitchens (eds.), Verso, New York, 1988, pp.1-20.

121 R Santhosh and Dayal Paler, Ethnicization of religion in practice? Recasting competing for communal mobilizations in coastal Karnataka, South India, *Ethnicities*, Vol. 21, No. 3, 2021, pp. 563-588.

122 Siniša Malešević, *Identity as ideology: Understanding ethnicity and nationalism*, Springer, London, 2006, p. 25.

123 Sabelo Ndlovu-Gatsheni, *Coloniality of power in postcolonial Africa*, CODESRIA, Dakar, 2013, p. 194.

124 Patrick Chabal, *Africa: The Politics of Suffering and Smiling*, Zed Books, London, 2009, p. 33.

125 Ibidem.

126 Messay Kebede, *Africa's Quest for a Philosophy of Decolonization*, Brill, Amsterdam and New York, 2004, p. 182.

127 Patrick Chabal, *Africa: The Politics of Suffering and Smiling*... p. 33; Mohamed Salih and John Markakis, "Introduction", in: *Ethnicity and the state in eastern Africa*, Mohamed Salih and John Markakis (eds.), Nordiska Afrika institutet, Uppsala, 1998, pp. 7-16.

128 Messay Kebede, *Africa's Quest for a Philosophy of Decolonization*... p. 194.

129 Ibidem.

130 Ibidem, p. 193.

ethnic sirens for controlling political power. It was true for the post-1991 Ethiopian political elites. As noted above, during the so-called post-1960s generation, Marxism was the best ideology assumed to solve Ethiopian problems. But to use Hussein Ahmed's words¹³¹, the radical, ruthless, and godless regime failed to solve the Ethiopian manifold problems through worshipping Marxism and Leninism.

The rebel groups defeated the Marxist regime in 1991. These rebel groups (TPLF/EPRDF) were radical Marxists in the 1970s and 1980s. When the TPLF/EPRDF ideologists clung to power in 1991, ethnicity became the state structure. It was the time that these elites viewed Marxism from an ethnic point of view. In other words, the 'national question' became the political perspective of most of these Ethiopian ethnic elites. Classical Marxism was inadequate to understand the national question. However, ethnic Marxists solved this inadequacy by just rethinking the significance of the national question in light of Marxism.¹³² In the Ethiopian case, Marxists who analyzed Ethiopian politics from class-based oppressions has changed their view into ethnic oppressions, which understand Ethiopian politics from the point of view of ethnic oppression.

The post-1991 elites not only accused the Amhara ethnic group as an oppressor of other Ethiopians in pre-1991, but it also blamed the EOTC as an Amharas tool to oppress the other Ethiopians. In post-1991, declaring oneself Ethiopian was not acceptable.¹³³ It is the main point for understanding the ethnicization of the EOTC in post-1991 Ethiopia. It was the point where the Amhara ethnic group and the EOTC hammered in the same name. It was to create a space for blaming the EOTC. As to the view of the ethnic regime, identifying oneself as Ethiopian was not only the sign of chauvinism, but it was also the nostalgia of the past feudal oppressive regimes.¹³⁴ Both Amharas and the EOTC were pan-Ethiopianists, which the TPLF/EPRDF elites hate the most.¹³⁵ Indeed, this pan-Ethiopianism was not suitable for the TPLF/EPRDF divide and rule system. The regime, therefore, covertly merged one ethnic group (the Amharas) with the EOTC to undermine their pan-Ethiopianist perspective. As a result, the EOTC, which the Marxist ideologists call the bastion of feudal regimes¹³⁶, was forced to be perceived as the Amhara's religion. This post-1991 regime's engagement is what Bell calls the ac-

131 Hussein Ahmed, *Coexistence and/or confrontation? Towards a Reappraisal of Christian-Muslim Encounter in Contemporary Ethiopia...* p. 11.

132 Trevor Purvis, "Marxism & Nationalism", in: *Marxism and Social Science*, Andrew Gamble, David Marsh and Tony Tant (eds.), University of Illinois Press, Urbana and Chicago, 1999, pp. 216-238

133 John Markakis, *Ethiopia: The Last Two Frontiers...* p. 250.

134 Moses Khisa, *Politics of Exclusion and Institutional Transformation in Ethiopia*, *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 40, No. 3, 2019, pp. 542-557.

135 Tegegne Tekla, "Amhara Ethnicity in the Making", in: *Ethnicity and the state in eastern Africa*, Mohamed Salih and John Markakis (eds.), Nordiska Afrika institutet, Uppsala, 1998, pp. 116-126.

136 Jon Abbink, *Religion in Public Spaces: Emerging Muslim-Christian polemics in Ethiopia*, *African Affairs*, Vol. 110, No. 439, 2011, p. 260.

tion of terrible simplifiers.¹³⁷ In fact, without exaggeration, most Amharas are Orthodox believers. It does not mean, however, that there are no other ethnic groups that are Orthodox Christians. The Amharas are both dominant and one of the early Orthodox Christian Ethiopians. However, though Tigrayans are few (6%) of the Ethiopian population, nearly all are orthodox Christians like Amharas. It is what makes the Tigrayan dominated EPRDF elites the terrible simplifiers.

But it was not in empty rhetoric when the TPLF/EPRDF elites had branded the EOTC as a tool that oppresses other ethnic groups since the Amhara rulers conquered the southern Ethiopians in the 19th century. Undeniably, the feudal leaders of Ethiopia used the EOTC to culturally pacify the Southern ethnic groups such as Oromos and others.¹³⁸ The EOTC was the institution that justified the subjugation of the peripheral societies (Muslims and other pagans) to the Christian rulers.¹³⁹ As noted by Miroljub, religions could give legitimacy to rulers, which was indeed a historical truth to the EOTC.¹⁴⁰ With the invasion of Italy and the Eritrean radical ethnic movements¹⁴¹, Southern Ethiopian elites developed grievances against the EOTC. Many of these elites perceived the EOTC as an Amhara institution. According to these elites, Ethiopia is an Amhara colony.¹⁴² So for such ethnic elites, deconstructing the history of Ethiopia by negating its past is the way they protest the statuesque. For example, Lencho Leta (one of the eminent Oromo nationalists) made it clear that their (Oromo nationalist's) goal was to deconstruct the past Abyssinia's history, which they believe that discriminatory¹⁴³; or which they believe the dismissive judgments of the colonialists or Ethiopians.¹⁴⁴ For him, Abyssinia is the Orthodox Christian society of Africa composed of Tigrigna and Amharic speakers.¹⁴⁵ For Oromo nationalists, Ethiopian nationalism is the tool of oppression and subjugation.¹⁴⁶ Such elites did not only want to deconstruct Ethiopian history. But they also started to revitalize their past by negating the past Ethiopian history. Indeed, such protest is what most African elites share in deconstructing the colonial past. Teshale, writing on behalf of the

137 Daniel Bell, *The End of Ideology: On the Exhaustion of Political Ideas in the Fifties*. . . p. 405.

138 Merera Gudina, *The Elite and the Quest for Peace, Democracy, and Development in Ethiopia: Lessons to be Learnt*. . . p. 145.

139 Stéphane Ancel and Éloi Ficquet, "The Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahido Church and the Challenge of Modernity" . . . p. 18.

140 Miroljub Jevtic, *Political Science and Religion*, *Politics and Religion Journal*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 2007, pp. 59-69.

141 Messay Kebede, "From Marxism-Leninism to Ethnicity: the Sideslips of Ethiopian From Marxism-Leninism to Ethnicity: the Sideslips of Ethiopian Elitism", available at: https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/africancenter_icad_archive/12/ (accessed February 15, 2021).

142 Ibidem.

143 Lencho Leta, "Lencho Leta and Lencho Bati on Sidama", available at: <https://www.gurshatube.app/watch.php?vid=6d640f8a4> (Accessed February 25, 2019).

144 For Baxter, Colonialists are pan-Ethiopianists, Or Oromo was colonized by the pan-Ethiopianists. See: Paul Baxter, "Towards Identifying Some of the Moral Components of an Oromo National Identity", in: *Ethnicity and the state in eastern Africa*, Mohamed Salih and John Markakis (eds.), Nordiska Afrika institutet, Uppsala, 1998, pp. 50-63.

145 Lencho Leta, *The horn of Africa as common homeland: The State and Self-Determination in the Era of Heightened Globalization*, Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2004, p. 117.

146 Mekuria Bulcha, "The survival, and Reconstruction Oromo Identity" . . . p. 72.

colonized world, argues: "Indeed, in their struggle for freedom, the colonized need to "return to the source" to draw strength from their colonially suppressed past, to recover their history, and to gain a new consciousness of themselves. In doing so, they must start negatively; that is, they must"¹⁴⁷.

For Ethiopian ethnic elites, negating the past was not only satisfying the suppressed people. But violence has been included in their struggle to change what these ethnic elites call the colonial past. One of the victims in such a struggle is the EOTC and its believers. Some ethnic nationalists see the EOTC as the enemy of their ethnic group. For example, Oromo nationalists built Oromo nationalism against these features: the Orthodox Christians, Amharic language, and Amhara culture. In this regard, Gemechu Megersa says: Christianity means Amhara or Amhara means Christianity.¹⁴⁸ He goes on to state that the EOTC was baptizing the Oromos to make them Amharas.¹⁴⁹ It is not only oversimplifying the definition of Christianity; instead, but it is also, to borrow Olúfémi Táíwò's words¹⁵⁰, a generalized hostility to Christianity which could hinder a scholar from judging a fact by rational standards. To see the Church as Amhara's institution is to deny the Church's two thousand years of history.¹⁵¹ Tribal identity has not even a century years old history in Ethiopian politics. Nonetheless, such a view grew high in post-1991 Ethiopia as the country officially announced ethnicity as the standard of the state structure.

Sadly, the existed context of the Ethiopian religious worshipers in ethnic proportion opened the popularity of ethnicization in post-1991 Ethiopia. As Jörg Hausteine and Terje Østebø clearly put: "Even religiously heterogeneous regions, such as Oromia are made up in part of fairly homogenous zones. Furthermore, in all regions, religious majorities are amplified in rural areas, which shows that religious plurality in Ethiopia is first of all an urban phenomenon. The religious distribution in Ethiopia therefore largely correlates with regional and ethnic boundaries, making it compatible with the EPRDF's political philosophy of ethno-regional federalism."¹⁵²

This opportunity has opened the popularity and exacerbation of the ethnicization of religion in Ethiopia. This relative religious and ethnic homogeneity also exacerbated the oppressed-oppressor rhetoric, which was the political perspective of the TPLF/EPRDF regime. As to the TPLF/EPRDF regime, the Amhara ethnic group was an oppressor of other ethnic groups during the past Ethiopian

147 Teshale Tibebe, *Hegel and the Third World: The Making of Eurocentrism in World...* p. xviii.

148 Gemechu Megersa, "LTV WORLD: LTV Show: It is a Myth to Believe that the TPLF Has Divided us", available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sAsOwq3RxOM> (accessed March 6, 2021).

149 Ibidem.

150 Olúfémi Táíwò, *How Colonialism: Preempted Modernity in Africa*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington and Indianapolis, 2010, p. 53.

151 Interviewee 1 from HTTU, March 23, 2020, Addis Ababa.

152 Jörg Hausteine and Terje Østebø, EPRDF's Revolutionary Democracy and Religious Plurality: Islam and Christianity in post-Derg Ethiopia, *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, Vol. 5, No. 4, 2011, pp. 755-772.

regimes. When ethnicity became the state structure, the Amharas and the EOTC became the blame takers of past mistakes. Undeniably, during the TPLF/EPRDF regime, most ethnic elites became mad at their past. As to the perspective of most ethnic nationalists, the super most enemy was the Amharas and the EOTC. The EOTC's school system had promoted 'Amharaization' by suppressing the development of other literature such as the Oromo literature.¹⁵³ Indeed, this view is the one that many post-colonial scholars used to see Christian missionaries in colonial Africa.¹⁵⁴ As a result, this radical ethnicization brought physical and epistemic violence to the EOTC and its worshipers.

The EOTC had been interrupted from being a state religion since 1974. However, controlling the EOTC is still viewed as controlling Ethiopian politics. Indeed, in the long history of Ethiopian politics, the EOTC is an influential institution in many ways. Though the post-1991 regime legitimized religious freedom, it tightly regulated religion in both co-optation and repression tactics.¹⁵⁵ Its strategy of controlling the EOTC was primarily repression. The tragedy of ethnicization started to cause violence on the EOTC since TPLF/EPRDF elites came to power. Expelling the former patriarch (a patriarch of the EOTC during the Derg regime) was the leading. In this regard, the then Prime Minister (Ethiopian Transitional Government-TGE prime minister), Tamrat Layne, confessed that he had written a letter to expel the patriarch Markoriwos.¹⁵⁶ It was an anomaly in the history of EOTC. It divided the EOTC into two patriarchal systems: the dissident group that supported patriarch Markoriwos and the newly appointed patriarch supporters. Patriarch Markoriwos is from the Amhara identity. Patriarch Paulos is from the ethnic identity of Tigray. Patriarch Paulos came to a patriarchal position with the support of the government in power. As a result, the ousted patriarch emigrated to North America and established another synod by condemning the appointment process of patriarch Paulos. The Eritrean synod had also been declared in 1993 after it seceded from its mother land-Ethiopia. Ethnicization, therefore, clearly challenged the unity of the EOTC by dividing the EOTC in light of ethnicity and nationality.

Some criticized the Ethiopian Synod for its affiliation with the ethnic regime. Indeed, the appointment of a patriarch that best fits the state is nothing new in Ethiopian long history. Instead, appointing based on ethnic identity seemed uncommon in the EOTC history. Thus, two things make the TPLF/EPRDF regime an anomaly. The first is that the regime ethnicized the appointment process. And the second is that the appointment of the new patriarch was out of the canon

153 Asafa Jalata, *Fighting Against the Injustice of the State and Globalization Comparing the African American and Oromo Movements*, Palgrave, London, 2001, p. 70.

154 See, for example: Valentin-Yves Mudimbe, *The Invention of Africa*, Indiana University Press, London, 1988, p. 58.

155 Serawit Bekele, Religion and Politics in Post-1991 Ethiopia: Making Sense of Bryan S. Turner's 'Managing Religions', *Religion, State and Society*, Vol. 46, No. 1, 2018, pp. 26-42.

156 Tamrat Layne, "TPLF and Oromo Democratic Parties are not different in practice", available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7iglgB4Sh_4 (accessed February 26, 2021).

of the EOTC. The latter case is the result of the former. Other patriarchs cannot be appointed as long as the patriarch is alive. But in the post-1991 regime, it was breached during the appointment of patriarch Paulos. As a result, the most respected position (patriarchy) in Ethiopian Christian history lost its religious value of mediation, love, and benediction. As Jon Abbink pointed out, worshippers were going out of a church when Patriarch Paulos entered to lead the Church service.¹⁵⁷ It was one indication of epistemic violence. Another epistemic violence was the case of Geez Alphabets. Excluding in Tigray and Amhara region, the post-1991 regime discarded the Geez alphabet in other parts of Ethiopia (Oromia, Somali, and Afar, etc.). Instead, the government declared the Latin alphabets to such regions (peoples). Indeed, some Oromo scholars such as Mekuria Bulcha argue that this Latin alphabet is the beginning of psychological freedom.¹⁵⁸ As a result of ethnicization, alphabetical oneness has been rejected and substituted by new scripts. Indeed, those who say they were using the colonizer's language could not bring the evidence that refutes the use of Latin script is not the use of the colonial language.¹⁵⁹ Irrespective of such a vague, the ethnic regime banned the Geez alphabet from being the language of all Ethiopians. Indeed, it is still astounding the Ethiopian philologists negatively.

As a result of such epistemic destruction and discordance, ethnic groups created boundaries of difference. They started to see the minorities as others that should be removed from their area to make ethnic homogeneity. It is what Benjamin Valentino calls the final solution.¹⁶⁰ The view of the radical ethnic elites that portrays the EOTC as a tool of oppression by the Amhara ethnic group mobilized other ethnic groups to be hostile to the EOTC and its worshipers. As a result, there is physical violence on the EOTC and its believers. For example, in Oromia and other regional states, several EOTC churches have been changed into ashes. Extremists have killed innocent orthodox Christians in Somali¹⁶¹, Oromia¹⁶², and southern regions (Sidama and other parts)¹⁶³. Such revenge for the past wrongs results from the inappropriate interpretation of ethnic ideology for some contexts. To use Bell's words¹⁶⁴, this inappropriate interpretation of ethnic ideology seems to become a sin to EOTC and its worshipers so far. Surprisingly, the EOTC

157 Jon Abbink, *A Decade of Ethiopia*, Brill, Boston, 2016, p. 42.

158 Mekuria Bulcha, "The survival, and Reconstruction Oromo Identity" . . . p. 66.

159 Interviewee 1 from AAU philology department, October 12, 2019, Addis Ababa; Interviewee 2 from AAU philology department, March 21, 2020, Addis Ababa.

160 Benjamin Valentino calls such political elites' action 'the Final solutions.'

161 Jeffrey James, "Uptick in Church Burnings Raises Alarm in Ethiopia", available at: <https://www.pri.org/stories/2019-09-16/uptick-church-burnings-raises-alarm-ethiopia> (accessed February 26, 2021); Morris Kiruga, "In Ethiopia, Religious Extremism Fans the Flames of Ethnic Division", available at: <https://www.theafricareport.com/17355/in-ethiopia-religious-extremism-fans-the-flames-of-ethnic-division/> (accessed February 26, 2021).

162 James Jeffrey, "Why are Ethiopia's churches under attack?". available at: <https://newafricanmagazine.com/20840/> (accessed February 26, 2021).

163 Ibidem.

164 Daniel Bell, *The End of Ideology: On the Exhaustion of Political Ideas in the Fifties* . . . p. 447.

was not reacting to these acts of violence. It shows how the church leaders were co-opting with the ethnic regime. The establishment of Mahibere Kidusan in 1993 was related to such a hopeless reaction of the EOTC to such violence. This association is one of the largest religious organizations in Ethiopia and teaches Ethiopians the history and the works of the EOTC. This association has many sections from research to evangelism and is a body that works more than any institution of the EOTC in church matters.

Conclusion

By investigating the inappropriate employment of some political ideologies or experiences in analyzing contexts, this paper has focused on the epistemic and the physical violence that Ethiopian elites caused on the EOTC and its worshipers. It concludes that the inappropriate application of those political ideologies for understanding these contexts caused physical and epistemic violence on the EOTC. This study showed that the elites in these two historical trends caused violence on the EOTC. In these historical periods, the way Ethiopian elites viewed the EOTC in these political ideologies or experiences has led to violence rather than a solution to the problems they had observed. Seeing the EOTC as an uncivilized institution and the tool of feudal leaders to oppression and considering it as an Amhara institution is still ongoing. Such views are becoming threats to EOTC and its believers.

Situations may be changed. With the exclusion of TPLF elites from Ethiopian politics, the new leadership is mobilizing the Ethiopian people to promote national unity. Such mobilization may save the EOTC and its worshipers from violence. But this is not the time to say that the new leadership is effectively stopping the violence on the EOTC and its worshipers.

The radical generations of the post-1960s used Marxist ideology for analyzing the then Ethiopian context. As a result, they declared the EOTC as just a tool of Ethiopian imperial kings, which oppressed Ethiopians. And the TPLF/EPRDF elites who clung to power in 1991 considered the EOTC just as the Amhara institution. However, both regimes did not achieve the goal they had been established (for equality and justice). In these two historical trends, betrayals, emotional alacrity, racism, and oversimplifying history were the surplus actions. The new leadership may stop the practice of misinterpreting contexts.

In current Ethiopia, two things seem to be emerging. The first is that extremist groups are attacking the EOTC and its members in some places. This physical attack is the result of the narration of considering the EOTC just as an Amhara institution. Some extremists are also attempting to disintegrate the EOTC. For example, in Philadelphia, some Tigrian diasporas have named their church the Tigrian Orthodox Tewahido Church. It shows the continuation of the ethnicization of the EOTC with dreadful results. The second point is the new leadership's

involvement within the affairs of the EOTC. Although the separation of state and religion became constitutional in 1974, in practice, the influences of the political elites on the EOTC are much longer so far. It, directly or indirectly, probably causes violence on the EOTC and its worshippers. For example, to control the EOTC, patriarch Teoflos has been killed by the Derg regime. Patriarch Merkorios has been ousted from patriarchy by the EPRDF regime. Free from such action may examine the neutrality of the new leadership. So far, some argue that the present elites seem to co-opt the EOTC. If the new elites are not to overcome such issues, further violence may come on the EOTC.

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ИДЕОЛОШКО НАСИЉЕ ПРЕМА ЕТИОПСКОЈ ПРАВОСЛАВНОЈ ЦРКВИ НАКОН 1960. ГОДИНЕ

Сажетак

Етиопска православна Техавидо црква (ЕПТЦ) је једна од верских институција у Етиопији. Ова заједница суочавала се са великим бројем изазова. Овај чланак истражује два историјска тренда у суочавању ЕПТЦ са насиљем: то су марксизам и етницизам. У чланку се тврди да су етиопске политичке елите користиле марксизам и етницитет на погрешан начин да објасне друштвене промене након 1960. године. Услед таквог приступа, ЕПТЦ била је објект насиља. Истраживање ових феномена веома је важно јер је ЕПТЦ и даље под притисцима. Као закључак овог чланка истиче се да радикалне политичке елите ЕПТЦ и даље види као реликт феудалног режима, инструмент опресије према не-хришћанима али и институција која представља Амхарце.

Кључне речи: Етиопска православна Тевахидо црква, етницизације, контекст, идеологија, марксизам, насиље