

Power and Powerlessness in Contemporary Ethiopia

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Ethiopia as a state was created at the end of nineteenth century by Abyssinian King Menilik II conquering his neighboring nations south of his kingdom, expanding his territory three times more than his own territory (Levine 1965). During the scramble for Africa three colonial powers were the worst brutal and cruel killers compared to all colonial powers who divided Africa between themselves. King Leopold II of Belgium in colonial history of Africa captured largest central part of Africa as his own private property in which during his agonizing rule the population of the territory as a whole, reduced by half (Young 1965:27). Slashed the area's population by ten million (Hochschild 1999), and from 1999 to 2003 deadly conflicts according to United Nations' expert committee report 5.4million people of Democratic Republic Cong (former Zaire) were killed, which Gerard Prunier called Continental War (Prunier 2009).

The second long war is in the Sudan in which the Mahdist war against British colonialism considered as nationalist movement, but in reality it was Arab-Islamic colonialism in which "the population of Sudan fell from around 7 million before the Mahdist revolt to somewhere between 2and 3 million after the fall of the Mahdist state" (Deng 2010).

The third colonial power is Ethiopian Empire. During the conquest and colonization Menilik II killed or sold to slavery and brutal rule the peoples of Cushitic, Omotic and Nilotic origin than any other colonial rulers in Africa. The Population of Oromo reduced by half (Bulatovich 2000:12) Or from 10 million to 5 million people (de Salviac 1901/2005), Kaficho kingdom people were reduced to a third of their pre-war number Bieber (1897), The Maji people reduced from about 45,000 to 3,000 (Hodson 1898, Pankhurst 1968, Bulcha 2002:72). These nations and others who came under the yoke of Abyssinia became powerless subjects of colonial rule of Abyssinia, which Emperor Haile Sellasie I changed the name of his domain in his new Constitution of 1931 to Ethiopian Empire. This Empire was ruled to 1991 by Amhara ruling elite, and from May 1991 the ruling elite changed to Tigrian guerrilla fighters called Tigrian people's Liberation Front (TPLF). The paper elucidates military, economic and political power of this ruling group based on theories of social power.