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AGRARIAN QUESTION AND ITS IMPACT ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF ETHIOPIA*

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Abstract. Ethiopia was created by the Abyssinian King Menelik II in the late XIX century; he was the only African monarch to participate in the fight for Africa with the European states. He expanded his territory to the southern neighboring countries and colonized them. According to the historical facts, compared to other colonial conquests the Abyssinian colonization was the most brutal occupation in terms of number of people killed and sold in slavery. After the occupation, the land and the peoples of the new territory were divided among the Abyssinians. The new colonial landless subjects were forced to farm the land of the new landlords, to handover up to 75% of their agricultural products to the landlords. That is why the people struggled to regain their stolen land for decades. The slogan “Land to the tillers” of the student movement was secretly introduced by the Oromo President on the paper stamp of Haile Sellasie’s Parliament and the Oromo Chairman of the University Students Union Baro Tumsa. As D. Horowitz wrote about the 1974 Revolution “in Ethiopia, a major effect of a land reform was to take land from Amhara and distribute it to the Galla, and for a time the revolution is suspected of being a Galla plot” [19. P. 8]. The revolution was gradually highjacked from the colonized nations by the Abyssinian military elite. The revolution led to the land reform of 1975 that destroyed the colonial landlords; the military government nationalized the land but refused to redistribute it among the landless people. The state became the only landlord in the country, and the military government tried to destroy the Oromo national movement by resettling seven million Abyssinians on the Oromo territory and by moving the Oromo people to new villages to control them. The collective struggle of oppressed peoples overthrew the military government in 1991. The contemporary government formed and led by the Tigrean Liberation Front (TPLF) monopolized the military, political, ideological and economic power in the country. This group collaborates with a new ‘super-class’ of the world by selling the land of the colonized peoples. The author considers the land ownership under three regimes of the Ethiopian government to answer the question “Why Ethiopia is one of the poorest countries in the world though it possesses large water resources, fertile land and hardworking people?”.

Key words: Abyssinia; Ethiopia colonialism; slavery; land tenure; land grabbing; gabbars; poverty

THE CREATION OF THE ETHIOPIAN STATE IN THE LATE XIX CENTURY

In the history of colonialism, the strong states first expanded their territories by wars of conquest to the neighboring states, and then proceeded with the colonization of overseas countries. “The state, completely in its genesis essentially and almost completely during the first stages of its existence, is a social institution forced by a victorious group of men on a defeated group, with the sole purpose of regulating dominion of the victo-

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rious group over the vanquished and securing itself against revolt from within and attacks from abroad” [34. P. 8]. The states arise by conquest and plunder and survive by massive exploitation.

Colonialism existed in the history of the humankind for a very long time. M. Mann in his four-volume *The Sources of Social Power* declares the creation of the first empire by colonization: Sargon of Akkad (also known as Sargon the Great) created the first multinational empire in the recorded history. Sargon conquered city-states of Sumer and reigned from 2334 to 2279 BC as an emperor of the Mesopotamian Empire. His Akkadian dynasty ruled and enlarged the Mesopotamian Empire for almost two centuries.

The researcher of colonialism R. Horvath, who taught in Ethiopia at the Haile Sellasie I University in Finfine (Addis Ababa) and conducted a field research in the Empire, added theoretical bases for the existence of colonialism in all civilizations. He criticized the scholars of Humanity Studies for the lack of a general definition of colonialism in the cross-cultural perspective and provides his own definition based on historical facts from different parts of the world. He argued that colonialism was not only a feature of the particular civilization (Western), for such a statement “simply ignores the full range of reality... every major and minor civilization has sought to extend its borders and its influence, and colonialism is not to be equated by only with the civilized (cultures having cities and literate population); pre-civilized people too have colonized” [20. P. 3]. Colonialism is a form of domination, i.e. of control by individuals or groups over territory and/or behavior of other individuals or groups. There are two types of domination: inter-group domination refers to the process in culturally heterogeneous society, when the people of one culture dominate over the people(s) of other cultures; intra-group domination describes the situation when one group dominates over another within the same culture (for example, class political domination). Thus, after the establishment of the Ethiopian Imperial state, there were both types of domination. The domination of the Abyssinian government over the colonized peoples like Oromo, Afar, Somali, Sidama and other was the inter-group domination. At the same time, within the Abyssinian society there existed the intra-domination of the ruling political elite over the defeated groups (Amhara and Tigray elite).

Before we proceed to the Ethiopian state formation let us take an advice of A. de Tocqueville: “Without comparisons to make, the mind does not know how to proceed” [2. P. 3]. Comparison is fundamental for the thought and is the methodological core of science. S. Lipset also emphasized the importance of comparison: “An observer who knows only one country knows no countries. Without comparison, there is no way of knowing whether particular practice or behavior is unique to the society in question or common to many” [14. P. 18]. My argument is that colonialism is very old in the human history for it predates capitalism playing an important role in the imperial expansion during antiquity. Colonialism is the direct and formal political acquisition of states or territories in the periphery; it is a form of imperialism [13]. Colonization establishes a hierarchal organization, in which colonizers have monopolistic privileges over peripheral land, labor, production or trade; it destroys competition in export and import. “Colonialism is a relationship of domination between an indigenous (or forcibly imported)

majority and a minority of foreign invaders. The fundamental decisions affecting the lives of the colonized people are made and implemented by the colonial rulers in pursuit of interests that are often defined in a distant metropolis. Rejecting cultural compromises with the colonized population, the colonizers are convinced of their own superiority and their ordained mandate to rule” [35. P. 16—17].

To prove that colonialism is a global phenomenon that existed in many parts of the world to let different nations dominate over other nations, I will provide a few examples from Africa, Asia and Europe of how the first states colonized their neighbors. Thus, the first colonization in the modern history happened in West Africa when the Moroccan Sultan won a tremendous victory in the battle of Al-Ksar al-Kabir against the oversea invading Portuguese army in 1578, which the historians called “one of the decisive battles of the world” [11. P. 81]. The defeat of the Portuguese army by Morocco put an end for many years for the idea of the European conquest of North Africa. The victory encouraged Morocco to turn to the south areas of Western Africa to capture the source of its wealth. The sultan of Morocco sent his army to where “half of these arquebus-carriers were Spanish Muslims and the other half Christian renegades — Portuguese and Spanish prisoners who had agreed to serve in the Moroccan armies and accept Islam rather than suffer death or long imprisonment” [11. P. 81]. The army with cannons, horsemen armed with arquebus and cavalry equipped with long spears conquered the famous Songhay Empire in 1591. The army devastated the center of commerce and education of West African cities — Timbuktu and Gao. From these cities and other parts of the kingdom they looted wealth and took it to Marrakesh to build palaces on the profits of the war. The army of Morocco destroyed one of the richest states in West Africa in the late XVI century.

In Europe, Ireland is a good example for the expansion of England started in the XI century and ended with O. Cromwell occupation that made Ireland practically the first English colony [18. P. 119]; the Irish did not accept being a colony and fought a very long struggle for independence. During the brutal war of conquest up to a third of Ireland’s pre-war population was dead or exiled; almost all lands owned by the Irish Catholics were confiscated and given to the British settlers [21. P. 131]. After almost three hundred years of colonial rule, the Irish won independence in 1921.

The Asians also colonized their neighbors: for example, Korea was under the Japanese colonial rule from 1910 to the end of World War II, when with the help of the USA the colonial power was expelled and Korea gained its independence [12. P. 20].

The first European colony established outside the continent was Ceuta colonized by Portugal in 1415. The colonial process of West-European states took many centuries to conquest numerous parts of the world, finally at the Berlin conference held from November 15, 1884 to January 31, 1885 it was agreed to divide Africa. These negotiations are known as “scramble for Africa” [33. P. 111]; all African territories became the colonies of Portugal, France, Britain, Italy, Spain, Belgium and Germany except for two independent states (Abyssinia and Liberia). I consider Liberia a colony of American-Africans who occupied and ruled the territory in 1847—1980. “Liberia was never constitutionally a colony, but it owed its inception and maintenance to Americans and has remained an American neo-colonial state. Jehudi Ashmun, a white American who can

be termed the founder of Liberia, gave it a government and a frame of laws and initiated commerce overseas” [4. P. 384]. Thus, colonialism is not a feature of some exceptional civilizations, it existed in all civilizations.

Let us turn to the words of the Jamaican-born British poet B. Zephaniah, who received a letter from the office of the then Prime Minister Tony Blair in November 2003 recommending his appointment as an officer of the Order of the British Empire (OBE). Zephaniah declined the offer and made his response public: “Me? I thought, OBE me? Up yours, I thought. I get angry when I hear the word ‘empire’; it reminds me of slavery, it reminds me of thousands of years of brutality, it reminds me of how my foremothers were raped and my forefathers brutalized. It is because of this concept of empire that my British education led me to believe that the history of the black people started with slavery and that we were born slaves and should therefore be grateful that we were given freedom by our caring white masters. It is because of this idea of empire that black people like myself don’t even know our true names or our true historical culture. I am not one of those who are obsessed with their roots, and I’m certainly not suffering from a crisis of identity; my obsession is about the future and the political rights of all people. Benjamin Zephaniah OBE — no way Mr. Blair, no way Mrs. Queen. I am proudly anti-empire” [9. P. 1].

The Horn of Africa is a course of discord between the Abyssinian expansionist kingdom and different nations of the Cushitic language family for many centuries. There are no documents to identify when this conflict started; however, the central Cushitic kingdom of Agaw people of Zagwe, which constructed eleven monolithic churches in Lalibala, was overthrown by a war lord Yekunno Amlak in 1270 — he was “a chieftain of one of the subject peoples, the Amhara (then inhabiting the Wallo region)” [47. P. 8]. The usurpers of Zagwe kingdom reached the Oromo territory at the end of the XIII century; there was a violent fight between the expansionist Abyssinian kingdom and a group of Muslims and the Oromo people. Under the Widim Asferre (1299—1314), the political elite of Abyssinia decided to make peace with the Muslims of Wallo and [Yifat] Ifat to fight the Oromo people. G. Haile, who translated documents from Ge’eez and published in Amharic and English, believes that the king, officials and clergy of Abyssinia formed an alliance with different groups to defeat the Oromo people: “During the second year of his reign, when the Galla on the one hand and Muslims on the other rose up and wrecked-havoc on them, the king, the officials, and the clergy got together and counseled in unity to make peace with these Muslims of Yifat and Wello[Wallo] in order to combat only the Galla. They not only counseled, but indeed made peace with the Muslims” [16. P. 187]. This expansionist Abyssinian kingdom policy was evident a century later in the war between this kingdom and the Somali people.

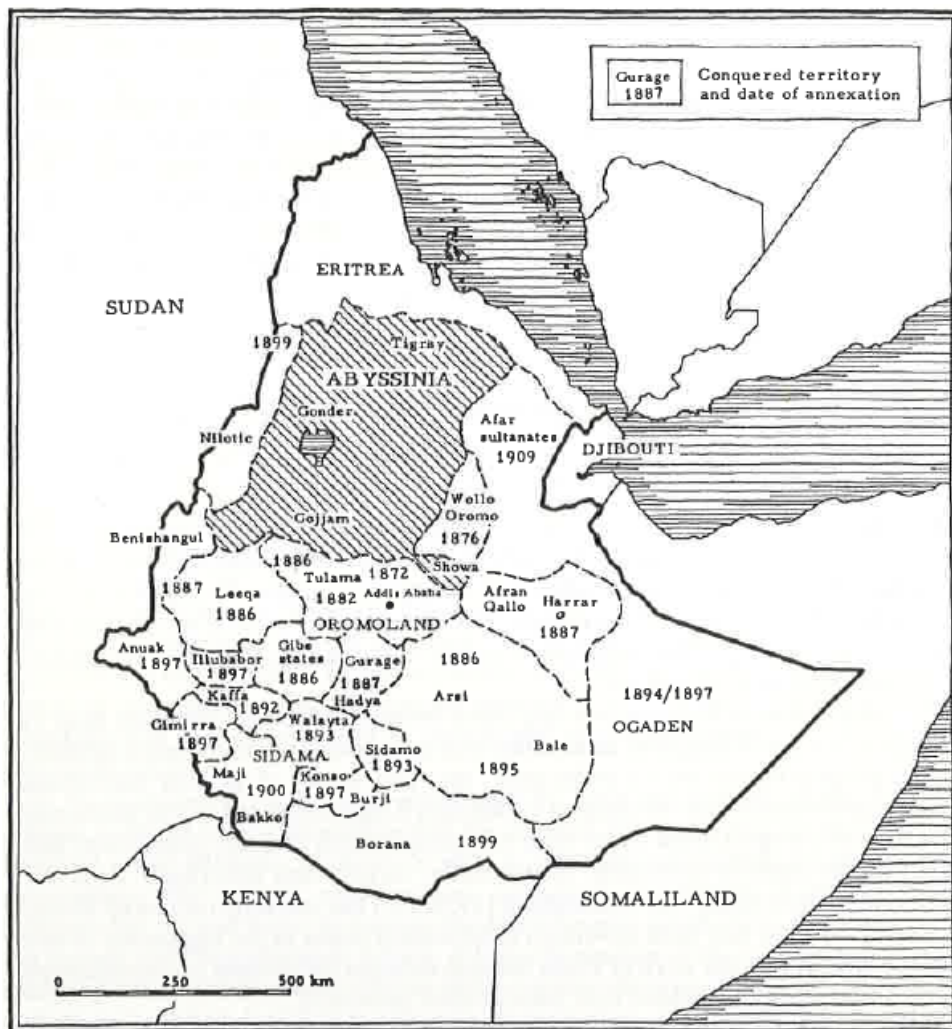
There was a violent conflict between the Abyssinians and the Somali nation at the beginning of the XV century; the name “Somali” appeared in an Abyssinian hymn celebrating the victories of the king Negus Yeshaq (1414—1429) over the state of Ifat (later became Adal) [27. P. 13]. There are many historical books on the conflict between Abyssinia and two main nations of the Cushitic people (Oromo and Somali). The great violent conflict between the Abyssinian kingdom and the Adal state (in the ancient city of Harar)

broke out in the XVI century after the repeated devastating wars of the Abyssinian army in the lowlands of different subgroups of the Somali people [17. P. 83—86]. The war was led by the Sultan of Adal Imam Ahmad bin Ibrahim al-Gazi between 1529 and 1543.

The interference of the European state, Portugal, in the Horn of Africa's conflict became evident in this conflict. From 1493, the Portuguese King's Joao II messenger Pero da Covilhão was an influential advisor of the Abyssinian imperial household. King Lebna Dengel asked the Portuguese government for military support, and received modern armament and soldiers from Portugal, a major sea power of that time in the Indian Ocean. "400 Portuguese, well-armed musketeers under Christovão da Gama, vasco, landed in Massawa on 10 February 1541. They brought great quantities of arms, including canons, gunpowder, and other supplies and were accompanied by nearly 150 craftsmen, gunsmiths and slaves" [17. P. 88]. The foreign power participation forced the Adal Sultan to look for help from the Ottoman Turk representative in Yemen: he received 900 well armed reinforcements. The conflict between the Somali nation and Abyssinia (from the first half of the XV century to the early XXI century) did not end with the victory of any group. In the late XIX century Menelik II in the worst brutal conquest and colonization in the African colonial history seized a part of the Somali land and made it a new colonial territory [1. P. 21—24], and, consequently, the Somalis — the third largest group in Ethiopia after the Oromo and Amhara.

Various Ethiopian governments went to war with the Somali state for Ogaden Somali. The known wars took place under the Haile Sellasie reign in 1964 and the Mengistu military government in 1977—1978; the contemporary government led by the Tigrian power elite gradually helping one faction against other Somali power groups in 2006—2009 sent 40,000 soldiers that killed 16,000 Somalis. There are many studies of the Ethiopian war criminal acts in Somalia by international organizations and individual experts. One of the organizations working in the region is the Human Rights Watch: "Ethiopian forces failed to take all feasible precautions to avoid incidental loss of civilian life and property, such as by failing to verify that targets were military objectives. Ethiopian commanders and troops used both means of warfare (firing inherently indiscriminate 'Katyusha' rockets in urban areas) and methods of warfare (using mortars and other indirect weapons without guidance in urban areas) that violated International humanitarian law. They routinely and repeatedly fired rockets, mortars, and artillery in a manner that did not discriminate between civilians and military objectives or that caused civilian loss that exceeded the expected military gain. The use of area bombardments in populated areas and failure to cancel attacks once the harm to civilians became known is evidence of criminal intent necessary to demonstrate the commission of war crimes. The Ethiopian forces also appeared to conduct deliberate attacks on civilians, particularly attacks on hospitals. They committed pillages and looking for civilian property, including medical equipments from hospitals" [40. P. 9]. More than 40% of the population of south-central Somalia faced this humanitarian catastrophe and did not receive necessary help due to the brutal conflict in the region. "But the one thing that is certain are the casualty rates among the aid providers which currently earn Somalia as the most dangerous place in the world for humanitarian workers" [32. P. 5]. The endless violent conflict in Somalia made Kenya the host for the largest number of refugees in the world.

The longest bloody conquest war was against the Oromo in 1872—1899 [6. P. 34]; it reduced the Oromo from 10 to 5 million people; half of the people [5. P. 12] were killed, captured and sold to slavery by the King Menelik — the ‘Butcher of Oromo’. Other neighboring nations also faced holocaust from the Menelik predatory army such as Kaficho kingdom that lost 67% of its people, before 1897 (the colonization war of Menelik II — see Map 1) the population of Kaffa was about 1 million, now it is about 800 thousand [46. P. 15] (otherwise the Kaffa would be about 6 million); 80% of the Gimira and 90% of the Maji were killed or sold to slavery [17. P. 72; 36. P. 111].



Map 1. The conquests of Menelik II

There was a conflict between the Abyssinian expansionists and the Oromo people at the beginning of the XVI century: the parties had similar armaments, but the Oromo protected their territory from the enemy that described them as a group known for their readiness to kill people, and brutality of their manner. This description is typical for contemporary Abyssinian writers [15] and their European collaborators [45. P. 76]. However,

“owing to the republican system ...an Oromo is well off in the world, and has a sufficient of food, clothing, meat and other luxuries, ploughs his own ground, reaps his own corn, guards his own cattle at pasture, and cleaves his own trees for firewood ...slaves are never sold, and are treated as ordinary servants” [31. P. 65; 38. P. 173]. Indigenous society’s political system is the reflection of the cultural development. Oromo people’s Gadaa system was democratic: political leaders of all levels were elected according to the male suffrage since the ancient times until the colonial ruler prohibited it when the Oromo lost their sovereignty [26]. Some researchers saw slaves in the trade center of Horn of Africa, but it was very rare to have slaves as servants especially in the eastern and southern Oromo country. “In Harar province as a whole the Galla (Oromo) population was not slave owners” [37. P. 222]. Later, when the Abyssinians colonized the region, the Amhara soldiers on behalf of the colonial government owned many slaves, and even after the prohibition of slavery a certain slave-traffic still supplied their needs.

The people under the Abyssinian colonial rule faced many harsh actions, mainly the Maji and Kaffa — southern neighbors of the Oromo. Slave raiding and lucrative slave trade brought a great wealth. From the Amhara colonization to the invasion of Italy (1936—1941) slave trade was depopulating the region. “Eye-witnesses at Maji and at other places near Sudan border stated that whole areas of the country had been completely devastated and that the remains of villages overgrown with bush could still be seen” [37. P. 220].

The chances of the Oromo people did not differ from the neighboring nations under the Abyssinian rule: they were sold as slaves, given as a wedding gift at royal marriages, used as domestic slaves and as eunuchs. At one time Menelik and Taitu (king and queen) owned 70,000 slaves. The Oromo tried all alternatives to protect themselves from this barbaric actions. Some fled to the forest, whereas some took refuge in British Sudan, Kenya and British Somalia to escape slavery. “The first refugees fled Oromo land in the late 1880’s following the incorporation of Oromia into the Abyssinian Empire. The able bodied men left their wives and children opting to live under the British colonialism in neighboring countries rather than fall victims to nihilistic policies of land-hungry Emperor” [6. P. 41]. The remaining Oromo in different parts of the Oromo country organized an armed resistance.

Slavery, the famine (in Amhara — the Tigre people to the south in 1888—1892), gabbar system, and anti-colonial war against invaders reduced the population of Oromo to half compared to pre-colonial period. The Russian officer A. Bulatovich who was in Illu Abba Bora in 1896 as a guest of Menelik wrote: “Ten to twelve years ago this countryside was completely settled, and of course, there wasn’t a piece of good land left uncultivated. But cattle disease led to famine and destruction of the population during the subjugation of the region has half depopulated it. Riding through, every minute you come across straight lines of ...cactus among the overgrowth indicating former property boundaries of the former fence of a farmstead. Now the territory all around is completely overgrown with bushes ...Rarely you can come upon a Galla (Oromo) settlement ...On November 16 we ...spent the night at the home of a Galla. The family consisted of the host (the father of whom was killed by the Abyssinians during the subjugation), his mother and two wives. One of the wives was exceptionally beautiful. The host himself apparently reconciled with his fate, but his mother looked at the Abyssinians with fear and anger and sat by fire all night long” [5. P. 12].

The population of the Oromo between 1850 and 1870 was about ten million people, in 1900 it reduced to five million [31. P. 66] though could be doubled. Depopulation of the colonized peoples was common in the neighboring countries, for example, the Abyssinians reduced the population of Kaffa from 1.5 million to 20,000, of Burgi — from 200,000 to 15,000, of Gimira — from 110,000 to 10,000. In Maji in 1920, the number of taxpayers was about 30,000; it was reduced by 1935 to 780 taxpayers representing the population of 3,000 or 4,000 [37. P. 220].

The Kaffa kingdom was a strong state from the XIV century [22. P. 104; 28. P. 58]; many historians argue that the kingdom has roots in the medieval period [46. P. 107]. Under the Menelik conquest war and raidings, the people were sold as slaves, and “raidings led to the decline of the population, it was almost exterminated” [36. P. 111]. In 1938, the population of Bonga, the capital of the Kaffa kingdom, was 3,000 with only 200 being Kaffa [22. P. 105]. Cushitic and Nilotic peoples became goods that was exported, and their numbers reduced dramatically. When the European ‘big powers’ divided the African continent one of their official slogans was to abolish slavery, but their local partner Abyssinia in some area introduced slavery and in others expanded it as well as the slave trade like Portuguese at the opposite side of the continent. When Ethiopia applied for membership to the League of Nations in 1919, the application was rejected due to the inability to fulfill the obligations of a member-state such as to abolish slavery. Three years later “when the British Minister asked the Regent if he would accept aid from the League of Nations in suppressing slavery he was given a negative reply” [37. P. 225].

When in 1932 the British anti-slavery society sent an envoy to Ethiopia, Haile Sellasie joked that “he would abolish slavery altogether within a period of fifteen or at most twenty years” [37. P. 227]. In the colonized regions slave traders were Amhara armed settlers and the governors appointed by Haile Sellasie, mainly his kin relatives. For example, in Maji and the neighboring provinces, Gimira and Gurafarda, under Dejazmach Taye, Emperor’s kinsman, there were centers for slave trade. In the 1930’s, until the Italian invasion, Haile Sellasie was unclear on the slavery: if he destroyed this barbaric system by the demand of the League of Nations, his Amhara kinsmen and his right hand, the Orthodox Church, would be losers. “The Church, in which priests and monks were considerable slave-owners, appears to be against changes in this direction” [37. P. 229]. The League of Nations sent a delegation to check if the basic principles of the abolition of slave trade were fulfilled in Ethiopia as a member-state. When the delegation returned from Ethiopia and presented a report at the meeting of the heads of the states, they accused Haile Sellasie of the barbaric treatment of peoples in his Empire: “The inhabitants of the conquered country are registered in families by the Abyssinian chiefs, and in every family of the Abyssinians settled in the country there is assigned one or more families of conquered as gabbars. The gabbar family is obliged to support the Abyssinian family; it gives that family its own lands, build and maintain the hut in which he lives, cultivates the fields, grazes the cattle, and carries out every kind of work and performs all possible services of the Abyssinian family. All this is done without any remuneration, merely in token of the perpetual servitude resulting from the defeat sustained thirty years ago”.

The situation in the 1930's did not improve; it was the worst period in the colonial era for the Oromo and other peoples. In the 1920's and 1930's there was perhaps the most oppressive gabbar system in the Ethiopian Empire. The individual gabbar was initially similar in a very general way to the serf in Eastern Europe, but by the 1930's some districts reduced the number of slaves, though only after the World War II the tenant system changed. The slave system was abolished when Italy colonized Ethiopia in 1936—1941 and freed all slaves; the Amhara armed settlers became equal to their former slaves and gabbars. During the Italian colonial period the backbone of the Amhara armed settlers system was destroyed, all languages became equal; the peoples learned that there was a more powerful state that defeated the Amhara colonial state very fast.

The war of colonization brought the Oromo and other southern peoples under the Abyssinian imperial rule; king Menelik moved his capital from the mountainous rocky area of Menz to the center of the Oromo country, Finfine, in 1887, and changed its name to Amharic Addis Ababa. The land of the Oromo and other colonized nations was measured in gasha (40 hectares) and divided among the Naftanya (armed settlers), Amhara, who came as soldiers, priests, colonial governors, irregular fighters, etc. In 1888—1892, Abyssinia suffered a great famine and cholera, its inhabitants fled to the south — ‘a basket of bread’ of the Horn of Africa. The distribution of land depended on the position and role in the conquest or services for the colonial government. The confiscation of the land and its redistribution among the Amhara is known as a gabbar system.

GABBAR SYSTEM

The gabbar system was based on the extensive confiscation of land from indigenous peoples and its redistribution among the Abyssinian royal families, the state, nobility, Orthodox Church, officers and soldiers who participated in the conquest and settled in the annexed territories [6. P. 42]. Moreover, the policy of state was to motivate the Amhara to migrate to the south so as to have a strong control over the colonized areas. The Orthodox clergy built churches in the place of the Oromo ritual shrines and destroyed mosques (e.g., in Harar city) by the forced labor of subjugated peoples including traditional believers and Muslims. The colonial government introduced the Balabbat system, in which the land was divided into three parts: “Immediately after the conquest, the northern rulers divided the southern lands into three theoretically equal parts according to the traditional principle known as *sisso*, meaning one third. They confiscated two thirds outright, leaving the last third to the indigenous population” [29. P. 33]. This two thirds of the land was divided among the Naftanya according to their position in the government. A governor received 1,000 gasha, a fitawrari (commander of the front) — 300 gasha, a qanyazmach (commander of the right) — 150 gasha [30. P. 48], and soldiers — according to their ranks: “an ordinary soldier, depending on the length of service, received from one to three gasha; a captain of fifty men was granted up to five gasha; a commander of a hundred received up to twenty gasha of land” [28. P. 113].

The peoples of the colonized countries were divided among the Abyssinian armed settlers and obliged to pay the major part of their products — up to 75% of the harvest — as a tribute to the new landlords [6. P. 42]. Each gabbar (pays taxes or tributes) conducted different kinds of works for his new master. The gabbar's obligations were not

limited; all necessary works were ordered by the Naftanya. The gabbar worked (plough, weeding, harvesting) in the field, built fences, looked after the cattle; gabbars' wives and children also had many duties for wives of Naftanya such as fetching water, grinding grains, collecting fire wood, washing clothes, in general all household duties. "Three times in a year he (gabbar) surrenders 15 quna (baskets) of ground flour to the Melkegna (Abyssinian governor) tribute in honey, and a tenth of his produce to the state. No sooner the peasant had unloaded the tribute due to the Melkegna that the latter 'congratulates' the peasant for having come just at the right time to be sent to the Melkegna's qelad (land) somewhere in the Awash river from where the peasant is supposed to bring a load of tef (grain). The toil-torn peasant supplicates, pleads and laments; 'oh, sire! It is harvest time in our area and if I don't do the harvesting now, before the approaching rains, sire, I will be finished, evicted, uprooted!' No heeding to this pleadings and lamentations. He must go to the Qelad and collect the load of tef as the Melkegna ordered! The peasant has no choice and he submits. Cursing, like the Biblical Eyob, his birthplace, i.e., his very existence, he takes to his heels in the direction of Awash. At the qelad the inevitable happens; the Mislene (the governor's representative) engaged the peasant in the renovation of the Melkegna house on the qelad. That takes a good whole week's work. Only then does the peasant reach Addis Ababa with the load of tef. At Addis, another task, another order! Endless! The peasant now collects the whole lot of grain — the one from the Awash qelad, which he would have had grounded into flour, and the one he himself had brought in earlier — and stored them properly. While he does this he runs out of his own provisions and in the hope of keeping his belly gorgeously moves after feast places and comes back exhausted, sick and diseased. Like a sick old dog with his head resting on a heap of animal dung the peasant passes his last torturing and agonizing days below the fence of the Melkegna's compound. When at last he dies, the Melkegna's household servants carry the body on a stick and after few scratching digs they 'bury' him in a ditch. Oh, the donkey! No problem, somebody has helped himself to it as the peasant lay dying below the fence. A lady living nearby asks a lady of the Melkegna's household: 'Sister, I saw a dead body leaving your household for burial today. Who could he possibly be?' 'Don't mind him, sister... he is not of human born, he is only Gabbar' [11; 43. P. 120—121].

The Naftanya used all means of exploitation to extract the labor of gabbars as his property. When the Naftanya sold his land or gave it as a gift for somebody the gabbars were given to the new master too. When the colonial governor was moved by the government from one province to another he could choose from 'his' gabbars and take them to another part of the Empire: "When Getachew's soldiers left Maji in 1933 they took over 1,000 Maji natives with them" [37. P. 332]. The colonialists made the colonized peoples do whatever they liked with the help of fire-arms and under the protection of the imperial government.

The remaining one-third of the confiscated land was given to indigenous people who proved to be intermediaries between the northern governors and the southern masses, later known as Balabbats [28. P. 107]. They became agonizing agents of the colonialists who fulfilled all orders of this alien group. The Balabbat system, in which one-third of the land was given to individual mediators, was not universally applied: for example, in Arsi-Bale region all land was divided among Naftanya, "the demand of one-third

of the land to indigenous people and a redistribution of administrative power were adamantly opposed by the settler” [42. P. 136]; the colonialists were among the causes of Bale liberation movement that started in 1960. On the eve of 1974 revolution, the Oromo elders in Chercher compared the situation with other African colonized peoples. “Like the colonized (peoples) of Rhodesia, we rented small plots of our own lands from those who disowned us in the first place, we labored hard only to give away what we produced, the amount always determined on the basis of their personal whim; and delivered at no cost” [42. P. 112].

The dehumanization of life of the colonized peoples in the hands of the settlers and their government activated a political volcano — in 1974 the Ethiopian revolution broke out. The motto of the Ethiopian students’ struggle ‘Land to the tillers!’ in February 1965 was secretly introduced by two Oromo political leaders, one of them was Obbo Tesema Negeri, a president of the Haile Sellasie’s rubber stamp parliament, which at that time debated a land reform bill (blocked by most deputies, who were landlords). When the bill was opposed by the landlords of the colonized territory, the president of the parliament had a talk with the University Students Union chairman, Obbo Baro Tumsa, his fellow Oromo. Both political leaders secretly arranged the first ‘Land to the tiller!’ demonstration. In nine years, the students struggle under this slogan and with the support of many groups of the society eradicated the hated Haile Sellasie government. The revolution destroyed two of three pillars of the Amhara — the gabbar system and monarchy, while the third pillar — Amharic language — *lisane nigus* (‘the king’s language’) — of 20% of the population tried to remain the official language of the Ethiopian Empire.

The Ethiopian revolution was a result of almost a century conflict between the Abyssinian ruling class and the colonized peoples, who became the landless serfs under the colonial rule. The first demand of the students and some groups in the army was to return the land to its former owners. Landownership in the mainland of Abyssinia was kinship holding known as *rist* in the Amhara area and *risti* in the Tigrian region. Such forms “are found mainly in the northern provinces of Eritrea, Tigre, Begemder, Gojjam, and some parts of Shoa and Wollo. These regions comprise the heartland of the Amhara and the wellspring of their culture. Still, not more than 20 or 25% of the Ethiopian population live under the Amhara kinship tenure” [19. P. 31]. Because of such ownership in the mainland of Abyssinia, there is no demand of ‘Land to the tiller!’: “in Ethiopia, a major effect of a land reform was to take land from Amhara and distribute it to the Galla [Oromo], and for a time the revolution is suspected of being a Galla plot” [19. P. 8].

Under the Haile Sellasie authoritarian government political parties were forbidden according to the Constitution [10]; thus, there was no political organization to lead the peoples’ revolt against the oppressive regime. In this political vacuum, the army headed the revolution: representatives of military divisions formed the Provisional Military Government of Ethiopia and officially took the state power in 1974. Haile Sellasie was taken under the house arrest, and the colonized peoples started to return their land. The father of the Oromo national movement general Tadesse Biru and his colleagues redistributed the land among the peasants. The military government was shocked by the situation at the colonial territory and formed a land reform committee, in which the leading Oromo young intellectuals in the Ministry of Land Reform like Obbo Zagaye Asfaw and Obbo Abiyu Galata played a key role. The land reform was accepted by the radical

wing of the Dergue (Committee) of Military Government that declared the reform in the Proclamation No.31 published on 4 May 1975.

The reasons for nationalization and the goals of the reform were as follows:

— “Whereas in countries like Ethiopia with agricultural economy a person’s right, honor, status and standard of living is determined by his relation to the land;

— whereas several thousands of gasha of land were grabbed from the masses by an insignificant number of feudal lords and their families, which made the Ethiopian masses to live as serfs;

— whereas it is essential to fundamentally alter the existing agrarian relations so that the Ethiopian peasants ...are liberated from the century feudal oppression, injustice, poverty, disease, and to lay the basis for all Ethiopians to live in equality, freedom, and fraternity;

— whereas the development of Ethiopia in the future can be ensured not by permitting the exploitation of many by the few as is now the case, but only by basically changing the agrarian relations that would lay the basis to work in cooperation and so that the development of one becomes the development of all” [3].

If this decree was fully implemented, it would have transformed the land tenure relations to grant all rights to peasants, to establish a society based on equality, liberty and fraternity, and to lay the foundations for the development of the country. The land reform declaration was “a measure, which, far more than any other, established the revolutionary credentials of the Ethiopian regime, rather than the nationalization of rural land, which followed in March 1975” [8. P. 47]. The land reform proclamation declared that ‘all rural land shall be collective property of the Ethiopian people’, but the military government refused to distribute the land among the tillers, and the state became the only landowner. The military government gradually changed its face and planned to grab the land of the colonized peoples to settle millions of the Abyssinians from the north, mainly on the Oromo land: “under the famine crisis in Ethiopia the military government settled between 1.5 and 2 million of the Ethiopians in Oromia” [23. P. 142]. The other government’s plan was to remove the colonized peoples from their original hamlets and forcibly settle them in villages on both sides of highways to prevent national liberation movements.

LAND TENURE UNDER THE TIGRAI PEOPLE’S LIBERATION FRONT (1991—2011)

Under the military government rule (1974—1991) many national movements fought to overthrow it. The main liberation fronts were the Eritrean People’s Liberation Front (EPLF) with a political program of liberating the territory from Ethiopia, the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) that aimed to create an Oromia Republic, and the Tigray People’s Liberation Front (TPLF) with the program of establishing Tigray Republic to rule Ethiopia.

The collapse of the socialist system in the Eastern Europe ended military, financial and diplomatic support of the military government of Ethiopia. Different nations increased their support of national liberation fronts, and the Western countries selectively supported EPLF and TPLF. The military government finally collapsed in May 1991. The EPLF, which fought from 1961 to May 1991 to expel the Ethiopian army from the Eritrean territory, reached its goal and became the government of the territory. TPLF

captured the capital Finfinnee (Addis Ababa), the center of the Oromo land, and ruled the Empire from May 28, 1991 to July 5, 1991 as the organization of the Tigray (6.1% of the population of Ethiopia). The conference organized by TPLF was held on 1—5 of July, 1991, in which many political organizations participated to solve peacefully the chronic violent political conflict in the Empire. At the end of the conference, the TPLF government went through cosmetic changes taking some political organizations into the government and giving them some technical ministerial posts. The TPLF government ended within a year after in July 1992 forced OLF and other political organizations to resign. Since 1992, Ethiopia is a one-party state ruled by the power elite from the nation that makes up only 6% of 82 million peoples [44. P. 121—136].

The contemporary land grabbing in Oromia, Gambela and Benishangul Gumuz represent the Abyssinian colonial policy attempts to control the peoples of the regions. Meles Zenawi, the authoritarian ruler of the Empire, said that the lands given to the foreign companies were tribal lands in the lowland areas, not in the highlands. Everybody, who knows the Ethiopian politics, understands that the highlands are the Abyssinian homeland, where the Amhara and Tigrians live [28. P. 74]. The sales of farmlands of the colonized peoples will bring more humiliation and will make a great number of people refugees, which will become a source of the regional instability.

Land grabbing is a new term that became popular after the Cold War, especially under the international food crisis of 2008. “Global land grabbing refers to the rush for commercial land in Africa and elsewhere by private and sovereign investors for the production and export of food crops as well as bio-fuel, in which the land deals ensure the benefits for the investors at the expense of the host country and its population” [39. P. 1]. Land tenure in Ethiopia differs due to the creation of the Empire by the Abyssinians and reflects the duality of the Ethiopian identity. The Abyssinian land system is a kinship tenure for the land belongs to communities; the second type of the land is colonial territory that turned into private tenure after the crown confiscated the land and granted it to a wide range of people and institutions.

One of the main causes of the 1974 Ethiopian revolution was the land ownership of the colonized peoples (non-Abyssinians). The military junta that ruled the empire in 1974—1991 nationalized rural and urban lands but refused to distribute it among the indigenous people it confiscated the land from under the occupation. After TPLF got the political power by the military force in May 1991, it introduced its own version of the Constitution in 1995. According to the Article 40(3), the right of ownership for rural and urban land as well as natural resources belongs exclusively to the state and the people of Ethiopia. Land is a common property of the peoples of Ethiopia and not a subject to sale or other means of exchange. The Article 40(4) grants the Ethiopian peasants a right to obtain land without payment and protects it from evictions. The Article 40(6) grants the right to own land to all Ethiopian nationalities and peoples; the government shall ensure the right of private investors to use the land based on payments established by the law.

The Constitution is the pillar of all laws of the country and must be written in a clear manner and be very short. If we examine these three sub-articles, there are many unclear ideas. The first sub-article says that the ownership of land exclusively belongs to the state and the people of Ethiopia. So who owns the land? The federal state? The fed-

eration or local community? The same article states that land is a common property of nationalities and peoples of Ethiopia and shall not be a subject of sale or other means of exchange. The next sub-article grants peasants the right to remain on their land as ‘protected against evictions’. Finally, it declares that the government shall ensure the right of private investors to use the land based on payments established the by law. But what if peasants refuse to move from their ancestral land? In fact the land is controlled by the state and the government leased millions of the best fertile land with uncontrollable use of water resources for domestic and foreign ‘investors’ (new cruel vultures of profits by all costs). Thus, Ethiopia became a symbol of starvation from 1974 to the present, which was one of the causes of the demise of Haile Selassie regime [25. P. 44—45]. The next regime also exacerbated the poverty and mismanaged the development of the economy, and finally famine of 1985—1986 was the beginning of the end of the military government of Ethiopia. The contemporary government of Ethiopia (in power since May 1991) also is not interested in solving the fundamental problem of the people — the agrarian question, i.e. the issue of land ownership. The famine in Ethiopia is always caused by political conflicts, for example under Haile Selassie and the military government there was a war in Eritrea, Tigray and Wallo. After the northerners became the rulers of the Ethiopia, wealth moved to the north, while starvation, diseases and social problems — to the south, in particular to Somali (Ogaden), Oromia and Gambella for they are in the political conflict with the TPLF led Government. “In 2002—2003 there was a widespread starvation in many parts of the country affecting more than 13 million rural people; it required large inflows of internal food aid. ...In 2009, over 22% of the rural population depended on a combination of emergency food aid and safety net program financed by Western donor countries and international agencies. While the number of people seeking food assistance decreased, nearly eight millions of rural people are still supported by safety net programs” [39]. Eight to thirteen million people rely in their existence on foreign governments for the Ethiopian government expelled them from their ancestral land and leased millions of hectares of the land (Table 1).

Table 1

Investment land of the Federal Land Bank [39. P. 11]

Regions	Land in hectares
Oromia	1,057,866
Gambella	829,199
Benishangul	691,984
Amhara	420,000
Afar	409,678
SNNP	180,678
Total	3,589,678

Thus, the article examines the land tenure under three regimes of Ethiopia: the absolute monarchy until 1974, the military government (1974—1991), and the current government of TPLF. Three regimes used different ideological ‘umbrellas’ respectively: Haile Selassie’s parliament, Mengistu Haile Mariam’s scientific socialism, and the developmental democracy were only to deceive the foreign sponsors and to obtain an external legitimacy, they did not gain internal legitimacy. From the ‘southern perspective’ the contemporary government is worst due to the human rights violations, expelling of peas-

ants from their ancestral lands to provide the space for agricultural commercial business of land grabbers, poverty and starvation, in which eight million people live, the growing number of political prisoners (the government estimates them as 26,000, the Human Rights Organizations report about 70,000) and people killed at the Oromia city streets while peacefully demanding their constitutional rights, etc. These facts prove that the current government led by the TPLF (mainly of the Tigray) representing only 6.1% of the Ethiopian population is the worst government in the history of the country after the death of king Menelik II in 1913.

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АГРАРНЫЙ ВОПРОС И ЕГО ВЛИЯНИЕ НА РАЗВИТИЕ ЭФИОПИИ¹

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Автор рассматривает влияние аграрного вопроса на историю Эфиопии, начиная с того момента, как она была создана абиссинским королем Менеликом II в конце XIX в. Фактически он стал единственным африканским монархом, который принял участие в борьбе за африканские территории наравне с европейскими державами: расширил границы своей империи, захватив и колонизировав территории южных соседей. По сравнению с прочими колониальными завоеваниями предпринятая абиссинским правителем колонизация была самой жестокой с точки зрения количества людей, которые были убиты или проданы в рабство. После поглощения соседних территорий они вместе с населявшими их народностями были поделены между представителями абиссинской знати. Будучи лишены земельных наделов, жители колоний были вынуждены работать в поместьях новых земле-

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владельцев, отдавая им до 75% своей сельскохозяйственной продукции в качестве уплаты разнообразных повинностей, что породило мощное народное сопротивление. Лозунг «Землю — земледельцам!» был предложен студенческому движению главой народности оромо в парламенте Хайле Селассие и руководителем Союза студентов, выходцем из оромо. Как отметил Д. Горовиц, описывая революцию 1974 г., «в Эфиопии основным результатом земельной реформы стало перераспределение земли — она была отобрана у амхара и передана галла, поэтому некоторое время революцию подозревали в приверженности интересам галла» [19. С. 8]. Постепенно достижения революции были присвоены военной элитой. Революция позволила провести в 1975 г. земельную реформу, которая уничтожила колониальное землевладение; но правительство национализировало землю, отказавшись передать ее безземельному населению. Государство стало единственным землевладельцем и пыталось уничтожить национальное движение оромо посредством переселения 7 млн абиссинцев на территории оромо, а оромо — в новые деревни. Массовое национальное движение свергло военное правительство в 1991 г., однако нынешнее правительство, сформированное и возглавляемое Народным фронтом освобождения тиграй (НФОТ), монополизировало военную, политическую, идеологическую и экономическую власть в стране и продает земли новому мировому «супер-классу». Автор рассматривает формы земельной собственности в Эфиопии при трех разных политических режимах, чтобы ответить на вопрос: почему Эфиопия — одна из беднейших стран мира, хотя располагает огромными водными ресурсами, плодородными землями и трудолюбивым населением?

Ключевые слова: Абиссиния; Эфиопия; колониализм; рабство; землевладение; захват земли; габары; бедность