

**THE PLIGHT OF MIXED ETHNIC PEOPLE IN ETHIOPIA:
Exclusion, Fragmentation, and Double Consciousness**

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Abstract

Several millions of mixed ethnic people live in Ethiopia. They have been living there for centuries. Their presence benefited the country by creating conducive socio-political and spatial environments for an interethnic relationship among the 80 plus ethnic groups of Ethiopia. However, in the early part of the 1990s, the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) led regime reorganized people and space along a single ethnolinguistic line by treating mixed ethnic identity as an erasable category. This was done using patrilineal affiliation as the only relational system via the 1995 Constitution and the Kilil system. Subsequently, people with mixed ethnic identity suffered greatly when the EPRDF's patriarchally oriented institutional arrangements excluded them from its ethnic-based relational system. I would like to bring into focus the plight of mixed ethnic people using lived experience as an analytical tool to create awareness and to effect change. My findings show that the EPRDF's relational system has been negatively impacting mixed ethnic people for the past three decades, by fragmenting their family unit, and by excluding mothers from their family unit. Also, this discriminatory relational system exposes mixed ethnic people to double consciousness by forcing them to investigate their own identity via a single ethnic lens. In other words, mixed ethnic people were pressured to adopt an inadequate ethnolinguistic criterion as the basis of their identity. This unrelatable socio-political system adds further harm against mixed ethnic people by denying them spatial representation, which makes them vulnerable to internal displacement and violence. In this view, the thesis calls for an inclusive socio-political and spatial system to liberate mixed ethnic people and women from ethnic and gender-based violence, discrimination, and constitutional and spatial biases.

Key words: Ethiopia, Mixed Ethnicity, Constitution, Spatiality, Wuhid Manenet, Netela Manenet, Horizontal Affiliation, Vertical Affiliation, Patriarchy, the EPRDF, Erasure.

Dedication

To my Wuhid immediate and extended families.

To Wuhid (mixed) People in Ethiopia and beyond

To Samuel Felke's family (Mesert Melkamu, Tisonawit Samuel, and Yohanes Samuel). Samuel and others founded the first Mixed Ethnic Party in Ethiopia in 1994 but their effort was aborted by the political machination of the EPRDF.

To Mixed National, Nationality- One Ethiopia Democratic Party

To The Great Ethiopian Mixed National Conservative Party

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The problem of post-1991 Ethiopia is the problem of the erasure¹

In the 1960s, Ethiopia's landmass was divided along 14 administrative units with no emphasis on ethnicity. From 1974 onward, those administrative units were called *Kifle (part) Hager (country)*² in Amharic. In this context, the movement of people from one administrative unit to the next was done without verification of one's ethnic identity (Mehretu, 2019; Dagnachew, 2020). This was so because *Kifle Hager*, by virtue of its very name, puts emphasis on a given land mass being part of the whole and, thereby, making it possible for the people to reside and move around the country without relying on their ethnic identity (Asfaw, 2018). The *Kifle Hager* system, however, ended with the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front's (hereafter EPRDF³) ascension to power in 1991. The EPRDF discarded the historical spatial arrangement of Ethiopia. The party produced the *Kilil* system⁴ by dividing the country into nine ethnic enclosures. Seven⁵ of these administratively fenced where language is used as a boundary to fence people in or out of the space. In the south, by amalgamating over fifty language groups, one Kilil was created under the name of Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples' Region. In the western part of the country, nine ethnic groups were put together to form one Kilil called Gambela. It should be noted that not

¹ This phrasing is inspired by W. E. B. DuBois' explanation of America's racial problem. For DuBois, as discussed in the souls of black folk, the colour-line was identified as the problem of America's relational system (DuBois, 2004). Correspondingly, I identified the EPRDF's one-language-one-identity policy as posing serious existential threat to the people with mixed ethnic identity due to the EPRDF's insensitivity to a mother's lineage. Hence, the erasure presents itself as the problem of post-1991 Ethiopia on accounts of the EPRDF's bias against two-mixed -parents ethnic identity relational system. Please see the conclusion section for a discussion on DuBois' usage of such phrasing within the context of America's relational system.

² See appendix 3

³ The ruling political party in Ethiopia which consists of three ethnically based political groups (Oromo, Amhara, Tigrayan and multi-ethnic group under the name of Southern Ethiopia People's Democratic Movement) and five other junior partners with very limited political power (individuals from these won't have a chance to lead the front): Afar National Democratic Party, Argoba People's Democratic Organization, Hareri National League, Gambela People's Democratic Movement, Ethiopian Somali People's Democratic Party and Benishangul-Gumuz People's Democratic Unit Front.

⁴ See appendix 4

⁵ Tigray, Afar, Amhara, Oromia, Benishangul-Gumuz, Somali and Harari.

only Southern nations and Gambela, but also six of the seven Kilils⁶, contain significant minority groups within their newly enclosed landmass via one-language-one-identity ethnic policy. Moreover, this newly produced ethnic enclosure failed to account for the existence and multifaceted interests of mixed ethnic people in the country. Mixed ethnic people have lived as one of the ethnic groups of the country for centuries. Despite this historically grounded empirical fact, the EPRDF arbitrarily reorganized people and space using its one-language-one-identity ethnic policy. Hence, people with mixed ethnic identity⁷ were denied the same institutional and spatial attention as people with a single ethnic identity due to the party's one-sided discriminatory ethnic policy. Consequently, the problem of post-1991 Ethiopia presented itself as the problem of the erasure, since EPRDF's inspired socio-political and spatial system⁸ was structured locally, regionally, and federally by way of the one-language-one-identity ethnic policy. The chapters that follow examine this dire situation and propose a remedy to the problem of the erasure.

After the EPRDF assumed political power with violent means, the party crafted the 1995 Constitution using a 'one-language-one-identity-one-territory' ethnic policy as the guiding principle of this public document. Thereafter, the government restructured various institutions at the federal, regional, and local levels, in line with its constitutionally sanctioned ethnic policy. For example, municipal, regional, and federal government offices were reorganized using EPRDF's ethnic policy as a guideline. In other words, the EPRDF concretized the Kilil system by making it coincide with a single ethno-linguistic identity

⁶ Tigray, Amhara, Oromia, Benishangul-Gumuz, Somali, and Harari.

⁷ Since "identities are narratives, stories people tell themselves and others about who they are (and who they are not)" (Yuval-Davis, 2006, p.202), its loss is certain to alienate people from themselves and others. Moreover, once a given system denied people an institutional access to present their own identity, such a discriminatory system is certain to make them vulnerable an official target for all types of marginalization and dislocation: socio-political, economic, and spatial.

⁸ A human being, as Sabine (1964) informs us, "has no leathery armor like a turtle or spine like a porcupine, but *it*⁸ does have the social life and the capacity to organize it effectively for survival purposes" (p.3). With that view in mind, this thesis examines the EPRDF's relational system by evaluating its adequacy using Sabine's sense.

system. Thereafter, people with mixed ethnic identity were given a single socio-political and spatial choice: ethnic affiliation via the father's ethnic lineage only. In practice, the EPRDF's discriminatory scheme terminated mixed ethnicity as an official category of ethnic identity by depriving mothers and their offspring of agency in ethnicity⁹. The present study examines the impact of one-language-one-identity-one-territory ethnic policy on the people with mixed ethnic identity using multiple themes: ethnicity, spatiality, family unit, constitution, lived experience and autoethnography. With the assemblage of these themes, the thesis will analyze the impact of EPRDF's inspired relational world from multiple angles: household, workplace, school, marketplace, neighborhood, city, and government offices. This will be done by tracing the impact of this patriarchal relational system at individual, family and group level using the lived experience as an analytical tool.

The socio-political picture of Ethiopia in the last 50 years, provides observers with two distinct state sanctioned systems: a class-system and an ethnic-based system. In the case of the class-based system, after the 1974 revolution, the military regime of Ethiopia implemented a socialist vision across the country. Through cooperative efforts, they treated everyone as an equal citizen, regardless of their gender and ethnic affiliation. By contrast, the EPRDF divided Ethiopians along ethnic lines by imposing its one-language-one-identity ethnic policy across the country. The alleged goal of such a system was to empower ethnic groups by making socio-political and spatial matters in the country subservient to the interests of specific ethnic groups. On the surface, the EPRDF's alleged goal seems to suggest equality between ethnic groups. However, upon closer examination, the EPRDF's ethnic policy, far from facilitating equality, reveals itself as a discriminatory socio-political and spatial system. It favored the father's ethnic lineage over the mother's and, thereby,

⁹ As manifested itself socially as the organizing element of the family unit, and politically as the organizing element of the constitution and forms of government thereof. Also, ethnicity manifests itself as the organizing element of space.

erased mixed ethnic identity as one of the ethnic categories of Ethiopia¹⁰. In sum, the EPRDF's ethnic policy was set to produce space and socio-political representations along patriarchal lines by fracturing mixed ethnic identities and by delegitimizing women as a basis for ethnic identity formation. While women and mixed ethnic people constitute a significant percentage of the population, the EPRDF's inspired relational approaches compromised their position within the socio-political arena and administrative map of the country by rendering to an invisible status. For this reason, this thesis provides an alternative interpretation to this three-decade old mono-ethnic administrative injustice using data from in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, and autoethnography.

1.1.Objectives of the Study

Ethiopia's over two-millennial long history has led the people in the country to assume a common national identity (Sanceau, 1944; Perham, 1969; Levin, 1974; Pankhurst, 1998; Phillipson, 1998; Zewde, 2001; Marcus, 2002). This assumption, in turn, facilitated frequent interactions between ethnic groups and fostered the birth of millions of people with mixed ethnic identity over the years. In fact, the Solomonic dynasty of Ethiopia officially proclaimed its origin from the offspring of the biblical King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba (Selassie, 1972; Tamrat, 1972). As such, mixed ethnicity became part and parcel of Ethiopian history for millennia. By contrast, the 1974 revolution introduced Ethiopia to a socialist orientation under the tutelage of the military regime (Zewde, 2008). Hence, the socio-political, and economic life of the people was organized using social classes (proletariat/bourgeoisie). The military regime created class-based hyphens between people by keeping the previous regime's Kifle Hager¹¹ system as the new regime administrative unit.

¹⁰ In the house of People's Representatives, in the House of Federation, the Kilil system, so forth.

¹¹ Since this spatial system puts zero emphasis on ethnicity, it was believed to be a suitable spatial and socio-political system for mothers and their offspring with mixed ethnic identities.

Unlike the military regime, the EPRDF imposed ethnic identity as a hyphen to divide¹² people and space. Hence, the constitution made single ethno-linguistic affiliation the only possible hyphen between people and space in the country. With such a draconian method, the EPRDF erased by law mixed ethnic identity as one of the ethnic categories in the country. Upon the imposition of one-language-one-identity ethnic policy by the EPRDF, mothers were also deprived officially of their agency in ethnicity.

In this view, the objectives of this thesis are fourfold: 1) To understand the historical and contemporary relationship between the two types of identities (i.e. single and mixed ethnic identity); 2) To compare and examine the role and impact of the Kifle Hager and the Kilil spatial systems on citizens ; 3) To explore the negative impacts of the erasure of mixed-ethnic identities in relation to the people with mixed ethnic identity¹³ and their mothers; 4) To suggest policy prescriptions. To accomplish these objectives, the study addresses these specific questions.

1.2. Research Questions

- 1) What was the EPRDF's rationale for using the 1995 Constitution to erase people with mixed identity by instituting the Kilil system and using one-language-one-identity-one territory ethnic policy?
- 2) Why did the EPRDF reorganize people and space using patrilineality only while erasing the mother's lineage as a legitimate source of ethnic identity?
- 3) How do the people with mixed ethnic identity and people with single ethnic identity perceive the spatial and ethnically based spatial administrative systems?
- 4) What does the study of the two systems reveal about ethnic harmony in Ethiopia?

Illusion rules our lives when “we mistake our socially given images of reality for reality itself” (Collins & Makowsky, p.115). Freeing oneself from such an illusion arises only, as critical ethnography Thomas, (1993) informs us, when people begin to question what was presented to them as the right way to see the world. In accordance with this wisdom, the

¹² Just as this usage expresses to us, I recognize the function of a hyphen in the following two senses: division between people and creating categories by dividing people.

¹³ A city called Nazareth, 100 km southeast of the capital city¹³ of Ethiopia, will be utilized to collect data from a lived experience of people from a mixed ethnic heritage.

goal of this thesis is to study and document the socio-political and spatial arrangements using mixed ethnic people and their mothers. This will make it possible for me to provide a research material on the plight of those groups and to offer policy prescriptions for the working of the ethnic hyphens between single and mixed ethnic groups. In view of that, let me briefly make a statement on the contribution of this thesis to different fields: political geography, feminist studies, critical race theory and ethnic studies. Regarding political geography, the thesis contribution arises from a comparative study between different socio-political and spatial arrangements. Similar contribution also will be made by comparing state sanctioned spatial arrangements with non-state one: *nu buna tetu*.¹⁴ As Fluri (2015) informs us, “feminist political geographers ... explored women’s participation and agency within the mechanisms of statecraft...highlighted the “textual invisibility” of women’s historical political labor and influence. Other forms of critical scholarship examine the use of gender as a political tool... in an attempt to marginalize and situate the distant “other” as inferior” (p. 236). In line with that, the contribution of the thesis emerges from studying Ethiopia’s past and current socio-political and spatial arrangements in relation to woman. Since a particular attention is given to the situation of mothers within a mixed family unit. As far as the EPRDF’s relational system is concerned, a family unit is the basis of one’s ethnic identity. In the 1995 Constitution, this assumption was integrated as its fundamental feature. As such, the thesis examines the connection between the supreme law of the land and mixed ethnic people. By such a method, the thesis contributes to a critical race theory and gender studies owing to the focus of this discipline on the intersectionality of ethnicity, gender, spatial marginalization, and political oppression (Delgado, Stefancic & Harris, 2017).

Several millions mixed ethnic people and mothers call Ethiopia their country for many centuries. While this is the empirical reality of the country, the EPRDF’s crafted the

¹⁴ Amharic: come and drink coffee with us.

1995 Constitution by excluding mixed ethnic people and their mothers. However, the exclusion of both groups sadly escaped the much-needed attention of scholars, human rights organizations, and intergovernmental organizations. In view of that, the contribution of this thesis to ethnic studies comes from conducting groundbreaking research on socio-political and spatial life of mixed ethnic people and their mothers. Moreover, the plight of mixed ethnic people and their mothers, hitherto unknown to the scholarly world, will be known to different studies due to the contribution of this thesis.

1.3. Outline of the Thesis

This thesis is divided into eight chapters. Chapter two gives a brief overview of Ethiopia's historical, socio-political, and spatial system from a historical-comparative perspective. The objective is to bring into critical focus the conceptual and empirical foundations of Ethiopia in the thesis. Accordingly, the first part of the section provides a historical account of the role of pluralistic unity and collective identity as essential instruments in working multiple hyphens between the people. The chapter then compares the historical, socio-political, and spatial relationships with the contemporary ethnic based one. The last part of the chapter sharpens the discussion by comparing the mid-18th century to mid-19th century *Zemene Mesafint*¹⁵ era with the Kilil and Kifle Hager systems. In doing so, the thesis receives benefit from the addition of a third dimensional angle as an analytical tool.

Chapter three provides the theoretical foundations of the thesis. Firstly, the chapter briefly analyzes the nature of the relationship between a person and its society. In this analytical inquiry, ethnicity is recognized as one of the interaction points between humans. Accordingly, the chapter examines multiple types of ethnic identity formation, i.e., objective attributes, subjective feelings and behavioral affiliation as argued by (Isajiw, 1993; Jones, 1997; Umaña-Taylor et al, 2007; Phinney and Ong, 2007; and Schwartz, 2014). Ethnicity as

¹⁵ Amharic: the era of princes. During this era, Ethiopians were divided among warmongering princes for nearly a hundred years: from mid-18th to mid-19th centuries.

and institutional marker is also discussed using EPRDF's ethnic policy as a contrasting point. Secondly, mixed ethnicity and single ethnicity are discussed using horizontal and vertical affiliation through a conceptual lens. Thirdly, working the hyphens is introduced as the overall analytical lens of the thesis. Fourthly, using Henri Lefebvre's (1991) spatial triad (conceived-perceived-lived spaces), the chapter discusses the trialectical relationship producing space to analyze the two spatial systems: Kilil and Kifle Hager.

Chapter four is an outline of the thesis research design and methodology for the conduct of a fieldwork study. The chapter conducts extensive discussion on the chosen multiple methods. The first part briefly outlines the core problems. The second part discusses the effectiveness of critical ethnography as a research tool within the research tradition of qualitative methodology. Finally, it discusses the notion of representation as conceptualized by Stuart Hall's (1997) writing. Following that, I present the three methods used for collecting data: in-depth interviews, focus group discussions and auto-ethnography. This is followed by a discussion on working the hyphens as data organizing and analyzing the methodological approach. The last part of the chapter discusses the relationship between my positionality and my research project. Throughout the chapter, I reflect on my fieldwork experience which included interviewing and observation.

Chapters five, six and seven present the empirical findings of the study. These three chapters examine the situation of mixed ethnic people from multiple vantage points. In chapter five, the relationship between the family unit and the 1995 Constitution is discussed. The aim is to systematically analyze the spirit of Article 34 (3) of the 1995 Constitution. Following that, the relative values of the constitutionally framed article¹⁶ on the family unit are investigated using the lived experience of people with mixed and single ethnic identity as a variable. This discussion proceeds from multiple vantage points: gender, age, occupation,

¹⁶ This article defines the family unit in the following manner: "the natural and fundamental unit of society and is entitled to protection by the society and the state" (https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Ethiopia_1994.pdf?lang=en).

language, city life, history, and so forth. Following that, the chapter examines the ethnic based violence and tension in the city of Adama using the October 23, 2019, riots as a context. Since this riot took place while I was in the midst of my fieldwork study, it made it possible for me to critically examine the emotional, psychological, physical, social, and financial costs of ethnic-based violence on the family unit and its individual members. The chapter ends with a discussion of the relationship between the family unit, and the EPRDF's ethnic policy, and its constitution.

Chapter six examines the merits and demerits of the 1995 Constitution from the standpoint of multiple groups: politicians, historians, academics, and ordinary people. The goal is to bring into focus the differences and similarities between peoples' opinions as they are situated in their respective socio-political standing. This investigation is extended by systematically analyzing the relative value of the EPRDF's one-language-one-identity ethnic policy for a country like Ethiopia and her multiple ethnic inhabitants. Since the basis and the spirit of the Constitution operates in the service of the EPRDF's one-sided ethnic policy, harmful consequences are certain to affect people with mixed ethnic identity. The last part of the chapter discusses the impacts of one-sided socio-political and spatial relational system on a horizontally affiliated relational system of mixed ethnicity. Such a comparative method, chapter reveals the negative impacts of the EPRDF's inspired relational system on mixed ethnic people by using multiple cases.

Chapter seven discusses spatiality using Jean-Jacques Rousseau's (1964) spatial insight as a point of departure and, thereafter, shows the negative impact of the one-sided spatial approach. After discussing the Kifle Hager and the Kilil systems, this chapter presents a comparative spatial analysis using the *nu buna tetu*¹⁷ as a bottom-up spatial insight. The chapter ends by providing culturally and historically infused spatial insights as necessary

¹⁷ Amharic: *Nu* means come, *buna* means coffee and *tetu* means drink. Its literal meaning is as follows: "let's drink coffee together" or "come and drink coffee with us".

tools for the production of an inclusive space. Chapter eight, as the conclusion chapter of this thesis, summarizes the major findings of the research and provides recommendations, along with Assefa Mehretu's (2019) spatial framework. The chapter ends by articulating the contributions and limitations of this thesis and it suggests some avenues for future research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This section offers an historical and contemporary discussion on Ethiopia's people and different government approaches in working the socio-political and spatial hyphens¹⁸ between the people using the Kifle Hager and the Kilil spatial systems as a context. The objective is to show how the two spatial systems facilitate or inhibit the working of the socio-political and ethnic hyphens between the people. To this end, historical and contemporary accounts of the country in general, and its provincial spaces in particular, have been utilized as a context.

“The modern Ethiopian state emerged in the second half the nineteenth century” (Kefale, ,2013, p.23) when Emperor Tewodros II proclaimed the throne in 1855¹⁹. “This heralded the emergence of the country out of two centuries of decline and endless squabble among provisional rulers” (ibid, p. 23-24). The reign of Emperor Yohannes IV (1872-1889) and Emperor Menelik II²⁰ (1889-1913) followed the death of Emperor Tewodros II at the battle of Magdala in 1868 (Zewde, 1975; Marcus, 2002). With a brief reign of Prince Iyasu (1911-1916), Emperor Haile Selassie I²¹ “has dominated much of the twentieth-century

¹⁸ Historical and contemporary accounts of Ethiopia give us a society with multiple hyphens, i.e., ethnic identity, gender, religion and so forth. In situations such as that, working the hyphens, as discussed by Fine's (1994) piece, help us to understand the type of relationship (harmony or tension) between the people. This centres the relationship between them using their respective hyphens, say ethnicity or gender. See section 4.5 in the methodology chapter for extensive discussion on the utility of working the hyphens as an analytical and methodological lens.

¹⁹ This emperor introduced “major administrative reforms that included the strengthening of the central government, the building of a salaried military, the replacement of hereditary lords with appointed governors and administrators responsible directly to him, the appropriation of church lands by the crown, and the strict observance and application of imperial proclamations (p.108).” (Wubneh, 2017, p.108).

²⁰ This emperor introduced “new administrative divisions of awraja gizat (provinces), and woreda gizat (sub-provinces) ... Following his campaigns to reintegrate the south and southwestern parts of the country (circa 1875–1900), the administrative structure was grouped into two: yemehal ager (the centre or core area under his control) and yedar ager (the periphery-newly incorporated areas). Newly appointed loyal administrators from the centre were sent to the newly incorporated areas as governors, often with their personal militia and followers to establish garrison towns and market centres...They were also granted land in the form of gult and gebbars (tenants who till the land and/or pay tributes to the soldieradministrators) in lieu of salary from the central treasury. Local notables (balabat) in the new provinces were granted a third of the land so long as they remained loyal to the imperial centre” (Wubneh,2017, p.108-109).

²¹ Under him “Ethiopia was divided into thirty-two Gizat-administrative units” (Wubneh,2017, p.109) ...during Italian occupation (1935-41) the emperor was in exile and Fascists Italy introduced “a new administrative

history of the country...as Regent²² for 14 years (1916-1930) and later as Emperor for 44 years (1930-1974)” (Kefale, 2013, p.24). “Conveniently located at the crossroads between Africa and Asia”, Tamrat (1988) notes, *Ethiopia*²³ “was perhaps one of the major cradles for the evolution of the Afro-Asiatic Family of Languages of which not less than half - Cushitic, Semitic and Omotic - have their homes in this country. Each of these three language groups are today represented by a number of highly diversified languages... south-western borderlands of the country are speakers of the other major African Family of Languages, Nilo-Saharan²⁴ ...” (p.121). Ethiopia is “one of the very few places that managed to sustain an unbroken chain of historical civilization ... Unlike Egypt, Mesopotamia, India, and others that were later overrun by alien and destructive forces, Ethiopia maintained its brand of African civilization intact” (Tibebu, 1996, p.414). While remaining free from foreign influence, the people of Ethiopia were very active in interacting among themselves (Marcus & Crummy, 1970; Tamrat, 1988). Hence, their historical encounter offered them a pluralistic unity while permitting them simultaneously to be in a possession of their own respective subcultures (Pankhurst, 1998; Zewde, 2001; Marcus, 2002). However, “to see Ethiopia as a

structure that incorporated Ethiopia into Italy’s new and ambitious empire in East Africa—Africa Orientale Italian— incorporating Eritrea, Ethiopia, and Somalia into one territory. Ethiopia and Eritrea were divided into six administrative zones largely based on ethnic distribution. The zones included Eritrea, Amhara, Oromo (Galla) and Sidama, Somalia, Addis Ababa (Shewa), and Harar” ... The emperor returned from exile in 1942 and issued a decree for new administrative units: “12 awraja, 60 woreda, 339 Meslene, and 1,176 Meketel Meslene... In 1946, by Decree No. 6, the awraja were converted to provinces (Teklay Gizat), woreda became awraja, Meslene became woreda and meketel meslene were folded into meketel woreda. There were 12 provinces, 87 awraja, 387 woreda, and 1,086 meketel woreda... Following the reunification of Eritrea in 1955 and the splitting of Harar province into Bale and Harar in 1952, the number of provinces reached 14. In 1955 (EC) , meketel woreda were abolished, reducing the administrative structure to three layers— Teklay Gizat (provinces—14) , awraja (102) , and woreda (577) —to streamline the bureaucratic layer” (ibid, p.109-110). During the military regime (1974-1987), Kifle Hager became the new name for the administrative units by replacing Teklay Gizat but the regime kept the fourteenth provincial system and its bureaucratic layers. Although, he did not proclaim his mixed ethnic background, this emperor was the offspring of mixed ethnic group: Gurage, Amhara, and Oromo.

²² Empress Zewditu was in possession of the throne from 1916 to 1930. The aristocracy played a very destructive role to limit her influence, including by sending her husband, Ras Gugsa Welle, as governor to a faraway province and eventually by declaring war against him. Ras Gugsa died while fighting against the central government. When the death of her husband reached the empress, she was deeply affected by it (Zewde, 2001).

²³ Italics added for emphasis.

²⁴ These are four families of languages “living side by side for many centuries, they have undergone continuous relations of 'give and take' of which the imprint is to be found, among other things, in the lexicons, sound systems, grammatical forms and other features of the languages they speak...” (Tamrat, 1988, p. 121)

mosaic of distinct peoples is to overlook the many features they have in common” (Levine, 1974, p.21) via interethnic marriage, customs, norms and so forth. As movement of people within the country took place by following ‘fully bidirectional’ orientation (Mehretu, 2010), ethnic groups became more familiar with one another and developed common culture over the years under the influence of their numerous forms of interaction and relationship.

Donald Levine (1974) noted on the effect of fully bidirectional orientation in the following manner:

The peoples of Greater Ethiopia did not live as discrete isolated units. For the last two millennia, at least, they have been in more or less constant interaction through trade, warfare, religious activities, migration, intermarriage, and exchange of special services” (p.40)...the diverse peoples of Grater Ethiopia had come to constitute a loose inter-societal system by virtue of sharing similar cultural traditions and engaging in many kinds of interactions....many of these peoples became integrated into a single polyethinc imperial system through the efforts of the Aksumites and later the Amhara who established a single political authority over vast territories. ...this process was disrupted but then revitalized by the Galla²⁵ (Oromo), who both stimulated and participated in the national resurgence and provided a certain amount of social cement to connect the many peoples at the periphery of the empire” (p.87)

By crisscrossing the territory for many centuries, the people of Ethiopia worked the multiple hyphens between their respective ethnic groups, economic interests, social affairs, and religious orientations. Thus, they formed an understanding by establishing relationship with each other (Asfaw, 2016). In other words, their millennia long interaction and integration helped them reduce various socio-cultural gaps between them (Getahun, 2020). As a noted historian, by the name of Tadesse Tamrat, puts it, the “process of integration in Ethiopian history is... an eloquent example of how, given ample time, human societies have endless possibilities for positive development of mutual enrichment” (Tamrat, 1988, p.144). For instance, in the central part of Ethiopia (geographically speaking), where the Shawa

²⁵ After the 1974 Ethiopian Revolution, the military government began officially to use Oromo as a term for an ethnic group that used to be called Galla. Since this ethnic group preference lies in using Oromo as the name of their ethnic group, the military regime must be praised for obeying the wishes of the people.

province is located²⁶, one can easily observe people working the hyphens along ethnic, religious and spatial matters harmoniously. As Yates (2010) informed us, a mountain top called Mt. Zeqwala in the province of Shawa,

...has religious significance for many ethnic and religious groups ...There are biannual rituals celebrating St. Gäbrä-Mänfäs-Qeddus and Dalaga (an Oromo religious festival). These ceremonies occur at the same time and all groups participate in the various rituals. The Christian ceremony occurs during the afternoon and the Oromo festival, Dalaga, occurs during the evening” (p.97).

In a similar manner, Jenkins (1997) notes how people worked the language and religious hyphens between them in this way: “during Dalaga, you can hear people speak or sing in Oromo, Amharic, and Arabic. God is called upon in all three languages: the Oromo Waqa; the Amharic Egziabeher, and Islam's [the Arabic] Allah” (p.97²⁷). These cultural practices can only happen when a given spatial political organization facilitates a continuous interaction between people generation after generation. Peoples’ understanding of each other help them to embrace ‘pluralistic unity and collective identity’ as the writing from those multiple thinkers informed us. Another culturally binding practice is *t'oot lej* (literally means, breast child) “...a brief ceremony in which the would-be son would suck the right-hand thumb of the would-be parent dipped in honeycomb” (Yates, 2010, p.102). Ethiopia’s ethnic groups have also worked their respective ethnic hyphens between them through “dynastic marriage by which political leaders formed alliance with leaders of other ethnic groups” (Yates, 2010, p.102). With that view in mind, let us discuss potential alternatives to the *Mt. Zeqwala* situation to gain more understanding from its actual story²⁸. For example, the working of religious, ethnic, and spatial hyphens by the people led to the utilization of the place equally and peacefully. However, when we interrogate this outcome by using its potential

²⁶ Please see appendix 1

²⁷ Sources form page 97 of Yates, B (2010) publication.

²⁸ Here, a counterfactual thinking was entertained since such an exercise function as “an analytical tool to unearth causal relations or compare a situation against potential alternatives when a rerun of the process is not possible” (Wenzlhuemer, 2009, p.30). Moreover, “a situation or action can only have a clear meaning in contrast to other potential course of action” (ibid, p.30).

alternatives, a different potential situation appears in our counter lens. Accordingly, a counterfactual thinking presents for us a fight between people to control the mountain for this or that ethnic group's interest. In addition, by working the language hyphens between them people were able to worship God at the mountain via their preferred language system. Furthermore, when the people work the hyphens in ethnicity, as the case of *Mt. Zeqwala* informs us, all ethnic groups enjoyed equal access to the mountain without one of them being asked to change its ethnic identity as in the case of mixed ethnic people under the Kilil system. Contrastingly, the EPRDF's one-language-one-identity-one system grants full spatial access to a selective few by withholding the same privilege to the people with mixed ethnic identity.

In the western part of Ethiopia, in the province of Gojjam²⁹, people have worked their respective ethnic hyphens by producing a collective identity out of that province. Since this province was historically inhabited by “Cushitic, Nilo-Saharan, Semitic and Omotic peoples...” (Baye, 2016, p.255), they embraced a collective spatial identity that was relatable for everyone. In this province, as further noted by Baye (2016), “during the sixteenth century, a new wave of migration and settlement had radically changed the composition and number of the population. During this period, Damot, Gafat and Oromo had made important settlements. The cumulative effect of the process has made Gojjam to look like small Ethiopia” (p.255). As it was aptly observed by Baya, centuries' long encounters between people has produced a pluralistic spatial feature at the provincial level, just as it did for Ethiopia at the national level. In sum, the historical spatial journey of Gojjam informed us on the production of poly-ethnic space by working the ethnic hyphens successfully.

In the historical settings, Gojjam provided a regional based spatial experience for its multi-ethnic inhabitants. By contrast, the EPRDF's Kilil system deprived Gojjam of its

²⁹ See appendix 1

historical role by dividing people and their province into multiple Kilils. Accordingly, different parts of Gojjam now belong to the ahistorical Benishangul-Gumuz Kilil, Amhara Kilil and Oromia Kilil. Ever since then, the former province of Gojjam functions as a site for ethnic cleansing. Target killings against ethnic Agaw, Shinash, Oromos and Amharas are rampant in that Kilil. On December 22, 2020, Prime Minister Abiy visited the Kilil to discuss issues related to targeted killing with the people. However, “the next day, more than 200 people-ethnic Amharas, Oromos and Shinasha- in the village of Bekoji were slaughtered by heavily armed local Gumuz ethnic group in a devastating raid that began at dawn³⁰”. This situation clearly illustrates the fact that the Kilil system is a problematic spatial system for Ethiopia. This is so because when the EPRDF produced the Benishangul-Gumuz provincial space, it made no effort to accommodate Gojjam’s historical poly-ethnic society as part of the newly produced space. For instance, in Article 2 of the Benishangul-Gumuz Constitution, there is clear evidence of a mismatched spatial approach between the newly produced space and its historical spatial feature. This faulty spatial approach was discussed by Kassahun Melesse’s (2021) piece in the following manner:

... At the time of its formation in 1994, Amharas were 22 percent of the population, roughly the size as that of Gumuz (23 percent) whereas ethnic Oromos were 13 percent of the population in the state. In the last census, Amharas outnumbered Gumuz³¹... The Benishangul-Gumuz constitution, revised in 2002, designated five ethnic groups³² as “owners” but excluded the many Amharas, Oromos, Tigrayans, and Agaws who are deemed residents, not citizens... They are permitted to vote but cannot, in effect, run for elected office... This makes explicit what is only implicit in the federal constitution: a division between “natives” and “outsiders” whose formal rights, in particular to land, are unequal.

By misrepresenting its historical poly-ethnic society, the Benishangul-Gumuz Kilil became a magnet for intense conflict among ethnic groups. Thereafter, the newly conceived space served as the ground for targeted killings due to the government’s failure to work the

³⁰ <https://foreignpolicy.com/2021/01/06/ethiopia-benishangul-gumuz-violence-gerd-western-front/>

³¹ Online source with no page number. <https://www.ethiopia-insight.com/2021/06/30/ethnic-federalism-a-theory-threatening-to-kill-ethiopia/>

³² *Berta, Gumuz, Shinasha, Mao, and Komo*

hyphens between the newly produced Killil, and the historically situated multiple ethnic groups of Gojjam. Just as the horrific story from Gojjam told us about the case of spatial injustice, the tension between the historically produced lived space and the newly conceived space presented for us very grim evidence. This is related to the spatial needs of all ethnic groups. Bearing that problematic tension in mind, Teka (1998) writes the following: “The Institute for the Study of Ethiopian Nationalities recorded over eighty ethnic groups in Ethiopia...if, as matter of state policy, ethnic groups were to become the basis of political organization...are we going to have more than eighty regional government units?” (p.123). Seeing such a spatial scenario as a problematic situation for the country, Mehretu (2019) offers the following advice using spatial concept from political geography to examine past and current spatial arrangements in Ethiopia:

Political geography teaches that both territoriality (communities of interest) and functionality (national integration) are important virtues of administrative regions of any country that seeks to advance peace and progress for its people ... The 1974 provinces met that test. The Killil system does not. By recognizing only a few major tribes to exercise hegemony in the randomly delineated regions, the Killil system destroyed not only collective identities and the social capital of Ethiopianism built over centuries, but also forced over 80 of Ethiopia’s tribes to be subjects at the mercy of tribal brokers and strongmen in eight Killils(p.7).

2.2. Deciphering the Puzzle

In the early part of the 1990s, when the EPRDF decided to enclose people and land along ethnic lines, it presented such spatial and socio-political policy to the people by linking it with political stability and ethnic harmony. “This was a new model”, Abbink (2011) writes, “dictated partly by... an ideological programme aimed at reversing “ethnic” hierarchies, ousting the perceived elites in place, and imposing a new political dispensation...address perceived or real “ethnic grievances” (p.597). However, as aptly observed by Mehretu’s (2019) piece, the party’s policy, far from bringing the alleged objectives into reality, manifested itself as a breeding ground for all kinds of enmity between ethnic groups (Dagnachew, 2020). Hence, the EPRDF’s led government was forced to declare a state of

emergency three times³³ since its policy went into effect (Dixon, 2016). In the suspension of normal constitutional procedures, the goal of the government was partly to contain public outrage against itself and partly to demobilize ethnic based violence between ethnic groups³⁴. Moreover, through the Kilil system, the government was able to erase millions of people with mixed ethnic identity from spatial and socio-political representation in all levels of government using one-language-one-identity-one-territory ethnic policy. In mixed ethnic family units, identity is formed by relying on both sides of the parents' lineage. By contrast, the EPRDF established a patrilineal ethnolinguistic system and refuses to work the ethnic hyphen between fathers' and mothers' ethnic lineage. In short, mothers do not count as a legitimate source of ethnic identity under the policy of the EPRDF. In view of that, one cannot help but see the EPRDF's ethnic policy as an existential threat to a mixed ethnic family unit and to all mothers in the mixed ethnic family format. Moreover, the EPRDF's ethnic policy institutionalizes undemocratic relationships not only in people's living rooms, but also in the public square as well by subjecting the socio-political and spatial relationship to "decentralized despotism" (Mehretu, 2012, p.117).

In speaking of the case of decentralized despotism, Berhe (2008), the founding member of TPLF³⁵ and later its chairperson, made the following remarkable statement in his doctoral dissertation:

...in an underdeveloped multi-ethnic society such as Ethiopia, where civil and political rights were traditionally not institutionalized ... the political elite of a dominant ethnic

³³ The state of emergency was declared in 2006, October 2016, February 2018.

³⁴ According to UN study, "Tensions between Somali and Oromo communities and conflict along the border separating the two regions has displaced around 1.070 million IDPs (representing more than 87% of the total number of conflict-IDPs). These IDPs are located in 439 sites (constituting of nearly half of all sites tracked to date by the DTM-9). While some of these displacements date back from 2012, the vast majority occurred in 2017 (Figure 1). The highest concentration of conflict IDPs are hosted in East Hararghe (210,000 persons) and Dawa zones (188,000 persons) of Oromia and Somali Regions respectively" (<https://reliefweb.int/report/ethiopia/ethiopia-conflict-displacement-situation-report-3-17-april-2018>) and (https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/ethiopia_-_conflict_induced_displacement_sitrep_3_-_17_april.pdf)

³⁵ Tigray People Liberation Front. It was founded in the 1970s by Tigrinya speaking people of Ethiopia. The EPRDF is the brainchild of TPLF.

or regional group in its quest for power tends to manipulate ethnic antagonisms to remain in power (p.384) ... the case study of TPLF and its emergence and experience in government as borne out this hypothesis... (p.385).

The TPLF has stayed in power since 1991³⁶ by establishing despotic political and social relationships across the public and the private space³⁷. It also expanded the province of Tigray by twofold after displacing people and annexing land from the province of Gonder³⁸ (Tamiru, 2019) and Wollo (Mengisti & Kassa, 2020). Since November 4, 2020³⁹ (Reuters, 2021⁴⁰), in line with its despotic political orientations⁴¹, the TPLF has been waging a bloody

³⁶ For instance, when one compares the ethnic distribution power within the military among the three regimes of Ethiopia: the monarchical (1930/74) the military (1974/91) and the EPRDF(1991 to present), one finds quickly disproportionate representation of the Tigrinya speaking people in the military in the era of the EPRDF: “A cursory look at the data shows that broadly speaking the Amharas dominated the imperial army top brass holding 55.5% of the top positions, while the Shewa Amharas, who supposedly were in control of the state represent only 20% of the military leadership during the imperial period. The second largest representation was that of people with mixed heritage with 15.5%, followed by Oromos with 13.3%. Eritreans and Tigreans with 11.1% and Gurages at 4.4%. The Derg period brought a significant improvement from the imperial period not only by including hitherto unrepresented groups to the top brass (Wolayita and Harari) but also by spreading the representation relatively more evenly...*TPLF led EPRDF*... claims to bring ethnic calculus as the sole criteria for distribution of power in the country while allocating the lion’s share of power to the benefit of its own minority ethnic group. What is amazing about this group is its audacity. A group that represents 6% of the population claims 95% of the top military brass in the country and blames previous regimes for playing unfairly. <http://www.ginbot7.org/the-ethiopian-military-leadership-under-haile-selassie-and-derg-regimes/>

³⁷ Khisa (2019) labelled such an act as the politics of exclusion.

³⁸ Tamiru (2016) notes the following: “Historical documents and maps dated from about 1434 to 1991 show that Wolkait-Tegede was part of the Gondar province of Amhara. Despite the availability of a mountain of evidence to support this fact however, the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) has annexed the Wolkait-Tegede region into historical Tigray region in 1991. In fact, during its bush days, it was in 1979 when TPLF entered Wolkait-Tegede and declared the land as part of its newly coming “Greater Republic of Tigray”. <https://ecadforum.com/file/Wolkait-Tegede-AT.pdf> Accordingly, I argue, TPLF discarded the Kifle Hager system in 1991 and imposed the Kilil system to realize its “Greater Republic of Tigray” agenda.

³⁹ Regarding this infamous date and NATO members’ response, Ann Fitz-Gerald (2021) notes the following: “this (TPLF) autocratic elite demonstrated its true colours... by staging an unprovoked terrorist attack which murdered thousands of federal Ethiopian forces across all outposts of the national armed forces’ northern command in Tigray... Had the same incident been visited upon a NATO member state, no one would have questioned that ally turning to others for diplomatic support to underwrite a law enforcement operation, aimed in good faith at neutralizing such a serious threat to the national interests of the legitimate administration. Instead, and despite being fully aware of the TPLF’s repressive persecutions and terrorist classification, some global leaders knuckled under a narrative of a digital intimidation and fake news campaign that was launched by the TPLF’s remote and well-resourced satellite hubs”. <https://peacediplomacy.org/2021/11/03/failure-to-stand-for-democracy-in-ethiopia/>

⁴⁰ <https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/ethiopias-amhara-state-rallies-youth-fight-tigrayans-war-expands-2021-07-25/>

⁴¹ Regarding TPLF’s despotic political orientations, Peebles (2021) observes the following: “Murdering, raping, destroying property and the lives of Ethiopians, the TPLF is a cancer that for decades has thrown a suffocating shadow of fear and division over the country, a cancer that must be cut out totally if Ethiopia is to flourish”. <https://www.eurasiareview.com/18092021-ethiopia-tplf-terrorism-expands-civilians-massacred-oped/>

war against the federal government of Ethiopia and aiming for the collapse of the country⁴². “In addition to fighting on the ground”, Tibor Nagy⁴³ (2021) observes, “the conflict has engendered a massive social media war among the large global Ethiopian diaspora. While not involving bullets, this “warfare” is just as vicious, hateful, and vitriolic – spreading rumors, exaggerations, and ethnic hatred⁴⁴. Instead of promoting an end to the conflict, this cyber war is fanning the flames⁴⁵...” In this war, the TPLF is promoting the party’s interest over the public interest by exposing the people in the province of Tigray and in other provinces to famine and to loss of life. “Among the people who are suffering the most in this conflict, the people who have lost loved ones,”, said Eyder Peralta⁴⁶ (2021) “I keep hearing that they just don't understand why this is happening. This is a war, they tell me, that is between brothers and sisters, people who look like each other, who marry each other⁴⁷, who share a religion and a history. But when I talked to the political elites, I hear entrenched bitterness and resentment”⁴⁸. Whenever a given country falls prey to despotic political elites⁴⁹, spatial and socio-political hyphens are usually resolved by violence at the expense of the people. For instance, a centralized despotism under Emperor Haile Selassie’s government and the military regime led the country into war in which many lives in the province of Eritrea were lost (Zewde, 2001) in the later part of the twentieth century.

⁴² In this video, two of TPLF’s diaspora representatives clearly states the end goal of their party’s war: dissolving the country.

⁴³ Former Assistant Secretary of State for Africa, with 30-year career as US Diplomat.

⁴⁴ After the start of the war, so-called TPLF and other activists constantly call Prime Minister Abiy using derogatory names such as Dikala (Amharic term. It means bastard). In other words, for his mixed ethnic background, those people seeing him as bastard. This is an outrageous act of name calling act. Their very act shows their lack of respect for people other than their ethnic group.

⁴⁵ <https://www.lubbockonline.com/story/opinion/2021/10/24/tibor-nagy-death-suffering-us-frustration-face-ethiopias-war/6118303001/>

⁴⁶ He is NPR’s international correspondent who visited the actual battle ground in September 2021.

⁴⁷ Plenty of such cases within my own immediate and extended families.

⁴⁸ <https://www.npr.org/2021/10/16/1046696556/ethiopias-civil-war-may-be-getting-worse>

⁴⁹ In the case of the EPRDF’s government, “the intra-party relationship between the central and regional ruling parties shows both classic and new features of patron-client mechanism. Thesis mechanisms have made regional governments responsive and loyal to the central party (upward accountability); and invalidated the regions’ power to attend the demands and aspirations of their constituents...”(Chanie,2007,p.368).

As the disheartening story from the current war informs us, Ethiopian politics tends to orbit along the bitter sentiments of the political elites rather than on the humble views of the public. This was also the case during the middle of the 18th century when the country was consumed by war under the influence of the political elites. In that era, a bloody war among various lords took place⁵⁰ by making the country an arena for decentralized despotism. The era is known as *Zemene Mesafint* (era of the princes) and lasted for almost one hundred years (Marcus, 2002). During that era, as Pankhurst (1998) noted, "...the country was suffering under all those evils that attuned an inefficient government. Its monarch was in the power of one ambitious subject or another, received no revenue...unable to raise sufficient forces to sustain himself, let alone to control the great feudal barons" (p.131). In this way, lack of interest by the lords to work the spatial and socio-political hyphens between them brought havoc on the people just as the current war in Tigray does. Contrastingly, the stories from *Mt. Zeqwala*, *t'oot lej*, *Gojjam* and mixed ethnic identity inform us about the working of the spatial, political, religious, ethnic hyphens by the people through mutual understanding and, thereby, an inclusive space.

When it comes to the working of the hyphens by producing an inclusive space, the province of Wollo, under the Kifle Hager system, gives us an illustrious example of it. Accordingly, one finds people with mixed ethnic heritage and religious mixture living harmoniously together⁵¹. Consequently, it is common in this province to find people with Muslim first names and Christian last names or *vice versa* living in harmony. "The general

⁵⁰ Regarding the ethnic factors during the war, "the historian Donald Crummey presents a different conception of ethnicity during the Zamana Masafent and argues that ethnicity was not a large factor in the conflicts at this time...he writes "feelings of ethnic rivalry sustained and complicated subsequent struggles among the nobility lacks confirmation from the Ethiopian documents"" (Yates, 2020, p.11)

⁵¹ Considering its multicultural and religious background, Professor Mohamed Hassan, with an extensive knowledge and lived experience of Wollo, affectionally describes Wollo as "mini-Ethiopia in a progressive sense". For him, this province presents as an exemplar model for tolerance and harmonious livelihood. In comparison to the 1960s mosaic picture of Wollo, post-1991 scene of it was described by him as TPLF dominated era. In this province, TPLF purposely, as observed by Prof. Hassan, worked to change the multi-ethnic composition by settling Tegar in large numbers. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qogJDV4C1lc&ab_channel=HornofAfricaTV

lack of central state authority over Wällo”, as Yates (2010) puts it, “allowed for unique demographic, political and religious situations that produced an equally distinctive response to ethnic diversity” (p.93). In short, people in Wollo worked the religious and ethnic hyphens among themselves to make the province a livable space for all. By contrast, the despotic elites inspired Kilil system was produced⁵²...

...by effectively endorsing dual-citizenship modalities under the law in which ethnic ‘Nationality’ rights in Killils (Article 39 of the Ethiopian Constitution) may subordinate ‘Nationality’ rights in the Ethiopian state (Article 6)...This was one of the principal factors blamed for the ‘dysfunction’ of African governments even though few African countries overtly and officially allowed the slippage to dual-citizenship modalities that Ethiopia has countenanced under the Killil system...” (Mehretu, 2021, p.124/125).

In this way, the EPRDF failed to work the socio-political and spatial hyphens and, thus,

centuries of tribal mixtures and unrestricted mobility along social or territorial lines suddenly came into question making every Ethiopian (except those that reside in neutral metropolitan centers) who lived outside what the EPRDF assigned as his/her ‘homeland’ to be vulnerable to systemic marginality in which his/her national citizenship rights became superseded by rights in the ‘Killil’” (Mehretu, ibid, p. 124).

From a journalist (Eyder, 2021), to multiple scholars (Pankhurst, 1998; Zewde, 2001; Marcus, 2002; Mehretu, 2019) research has shown that squabbling among the political elites as the leading source of violent conflict in the last two hundred years of Ethiopia’s history. Regarding ethnic based violence, it was linked largely with the Kilil system than with the Kifle Hager system (Teka ,1998; Baye, 2016; Mehretu, 2019; Melesse, 2021). While these scholars were discussing Ethiopia’s particular fault line in such a manner, they failed to bring critical analysis about mixed ethnic group identity in both spatial systems. This was also the case with one of the leading scholars on Ethiopian studies by the name of Jan Abbink. When Abbink composed a piece in 2011 to reexamine the 20 years old EPRDF’s journey in ethnic-

⁵² Oddly, this discriminatory socio-political system was praised by the West. “...what in the West has been interpreted as a nascent democracy has been established without any real debate or questioning by ordinary people from the many differing ethnic groups that make up the new Federal Democratic Republic” (Hamer, 2007, p.216). Moreover, the so-called Federal Democratic Republic was established by excluding mixed ethnic people. Sadly, this discriminatory act escaped the attention of scholars for the past three decades.

based federalism, his entire arguments centered entirely on ethnicity expressed in the form of a single ethnic group with no reference related to mixed ethnic people.

Abbink (2012) writes on the study of ethnicity in Ethiopia in this manner:

Under the Derg ... a new ‘‘Institute for the Study of Ethiopian Nationalities⁵³’’ (ISEN) was set up to make an inventory of the Ethiopian nationalities and their territories. Maps and ethnographic profiles were duly produced. When the TPLF-EPRDF assumed power after its military victory in May 1991, it largely took over the ISEN maps and ethnic classifications and proceeded to work out a new regional and district division of the country... which led to a strong territorialization of ethnicity: ethnicity was territory, with exclusivist tendencies, and forms of mixture did not really fit the scheme, especially in the towns and cities, which were almost by definition mixed and pluralist (p. 599- 600).

While Ethiopia is inhabited by mixed ethnic people for centuries, Abbink and others, as shown in this chapter, exclusively discussed ethnicity as an expression of single ethnic grouping system. By contrast, the lived space was described by all of them as a place inhabited by ‘‘mixed and pluralist groups’’ or ‘‘representative of small Ethiopia’’. Considering the absence of discussion on mixed ethnic group and bearing in mind EPRDF’s discriminatory, patriarchal, and undemocratic spatial and socio-political system, I feel obligated to conduct a critical research project on this matter.

2.3. Conclusion

As the multiple discussions throughout this chapter show, the EPRDF’s ethnic policy orbits along one-language-one-identity-one-territory policy using the bitter sentiments of the political elites. Similarly, multiple scholarly discussions, as shown here, revolve around multiple issues using single ethnic groups and national identity as their only variables. When Ethiopian people were discussed at an ethnic level, pluralistic unity is mentioned to describe the harmonious relationship between various ethnic groups. Likewise, collective identity was utilized to signify a common feature among the ethnic groups at the national level. In both

⁵³ During my fieldwork period, I was able to interview scholars who participated in ISEN. They regretted for failing to study and document in a systemic manner mixed ethnic group.

cases, groups are called by their ethnic name⁵⁴ and, thus, a single ethnic name always stands as a representative term for ethnicity. Carrying out discussion in such manner, certainly ignores the historical and current presence of mixed ethnic people as one of the ethnic groups of Ethiopia. Consequently, the lack of specific scholarly and governmental attentions has subjugated mixed ethnic people to unfair socio-political and spatial institutional treatments. Additionally, despite the scholars' critical efforts, the restructuring of the country's socio-political and spatial matters along single ethnic lines has severely compromised the role of Ethiopia as an instrument for their collective sense of identity.

We now turn to the theory chapter to provide further conceptual support for the thesis' core argument: the failure of the EPRDF's ethnic policy in working the socio-political and spatial hyphens between single and mixed ethnic groups.

⁵⁴ Oromo, Tegar, Berta, Amhara and so forth.

Chapter 3: Theoretical Foundations

So, act that you use humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of any other, always at the same time as an end, never merely as a means” (Kant, 1997, p. 38/4:429)

3.1. Introduction

The EPRDF’s ethnic policy employed a discriminatory and hierarchical⁵⁵ system across the country to control and oppress people. Accordingly, the party treats people as a means to achieve its socio-political and spatial ends: a one-language-one-identity-one-territory system. This policy impacts the family unit in socio-political and spatial matters by favoring patrilineality, and, thereby, single ethnic groups. Put differently, the party compromises peoples’ well-being by operating despotically. The timeless wisdom of Immanuel Kant urges us to treat a person as an end. By contrast, the EPRDF’s ethnic policy inverted Kant’s wisdom by utilizing a person as a means to the party’s end: operationalizing a discriminatory and hierarchical system over people and space.

Bearing the well-being of a person⁵⁶ in mind, the section critically examines the impact of the Kifle Hager and the Kilil spatial systems in Ethiopia. The thesis combines analytical insights from Lefebvre (1991), Fine (1994), Mehretu (2012) and Mehretu et al (2000) to enhance the theoretical base of my thesis. This section analyzes ethnicity as a relational system, starting with historical narratives and institutional arrangements. There are two assumptions on which this analysis is conducted. The socio-political and spatial environments are the by-product of human interactions and humans interact through explicitly and implicitly coded interaction points⁵⁷. Since the focus of this thesis is ethnic based relational system, its operation and impacts are examined using two critical interaction

⁵⁵ By contrast, when a given social system set up a hierarchical system using merit, the goal of such system is usually to distribute resources, say human capital, efficiently. By contrast, when a given social system relied on a discriminatory hierarchical system-say, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or religion- it defeats the principle of efficiency by misusing resources that comes in the form of human capital.

⁵⁶ Either in mixed ethnic body or in single ethnic one.

⁵⁷ Say individual, group, family unit, ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation, etc. The thesis defines an individual as an independent entity destined to form group affiliations via their own subjective feelings. Similarly, a group is formed when individuals assume, using their subjective feelings, a common interaction point⁵⁷ between them.

points: single and mixed groups. Accordingly, the working definition of this thesis emerges by treating ethnicity as a relational system⁵⁸ with two interaction points⁵⁹. I then examine the relationship between those points using the wisdom of working the hyphens as its overarching conceptual lens. This concept attends primarily to an analysis of a relationship between two or more hyphens: i.e., ethnic, gender, spatial, and so forth. This section introduces the notion of divisive architecture of hegemonic governance and systemic marginality as additional conceptual tools.

3.2. Analysis of Ethnicity and Its Usage as a Relational System

*The problem of post-1991 Ethiopia is the problem of the EPRDF's relational system*⁶⁰

In the 1974 revolution, Ethiopia parted with its millennia long monarchical rules with the rise of a military regime to power. “The most important decision in this respect was the nationalization of land in 1975, which automatically ended tenancy...*also*⁶¹ declared equality of the country’s ethnic groups and promised self-administration through regional autonomy” (ibid, p.25). In 1991, the EPRDF took power by violent means from the military regime and changed radically state structure and basis of identity by imposing officially an ethnic-based relational system. Here, “to be precise, it is not ethnicity *per se* that defines new Ethiopia but ethnicity in its territorial guise—that is, a federal system built on ethnically determined regional-states—that forms the foundations of the new system” (Erk, 2016, p.220-221). By organizing a state sanctioned relational system at the federal, regional, and local levels, the

⁵⁸ An ethnic based relational system presupposes an interaction point to make the system operational. Making a system operational is impossible until that system clearly categorizes its interaction points. In the case of the EPRDF, categories are formed by classifying people with one-language-one-identity label.

⁵⁹The EPRDF’s ethnic policy produced discriminatory and hierarchical interaction points by categorizing people via language and patriarchy. Accordingly, ethnic lineage on the father’s side and single ethnolinguistic affiliation were ranked as superior ethnic categories over another ethnic category: mixed ethnolinguistic affiliation. This was done using objective attributes like language and gender as the basis of ethnic category. This thesis working definition, by contrast, conceptualized interaction points in non-hierarchical manner by assembling gender and ethnic lineage along the horizontal line. In this way, the thesis treats people’s differences in gender and ethnic lineage equally. In other words, using the principle of equality. Thinking along this line also shows the underlying principle of horizontally oriented affiliation: equality or, as in the case of Kantian wisdom, by treating a person as the kingdom of end.

⁶⁰ As discussed above, this phrasing is inspired by Dubois’ insight (Souls of Black Folk, 2004).

⁶¹ Italics added for emphasis.

EPRDF's government took an active role in determining people's identity before offering them a choice to define themselves⁶² and their space⁶³. Moreover, the party far from reorganizing people and space along its own history and culture, it adopted Stalin's theory of nationalities⁶⁴ (Kefale, 2013) and decided to behave "like the former Soviet Union" (Kefale, *ibid*, p.30). Subsequently, "the Ethiopian state is now involved in regulation and codification of ethnic identity. This is due to the use of ethnic otherness as the key instrument in organizing the Ethiopian federation" (*ibid*, p.30). Accordingly, the state denied mixed ethnic people formal recognition and territorial representation using othering as a key instrument for the formation of ethnic identity and ethnic-based spaces. By this means, the EPRDF utilized ethnicity as the official relational system in all parts of the country.

In pre-1991 Ethiopia, "provincial identities were an important part of the political identities that characterized the socio-political scene... *and*⁶⁵ played an important role in the struggle for the center of power" (Fessha, 2017, p.239). The Amhara, for instance, "divided along their provincial domains and fought against one another for the control of the throne... the same can be said of the Oromo" (*ibid*, 238-239). After the 1974 revolution, "the relevance of these identities was also kept alive by the military government" (*ibid*, p. 239). As a result, numerous ethnic groups continued to live in multiple provinces by adopting their respective historical provincial identities. By contrast, in post-1991 Ethiopia provincial identities lost its significance when "the demarcation of internal borders becomes a very politicized and contested exercise⁶⁶. Being left on one side or the other of a particular border could empower an ethnic group through the demographic strength that comes with linking up with the ethnic

⁶² At individual, group and national level.

⁶³ Locally, regionally, and nationally.

⁶⁴ For him, it is "formed on the basis of the common possession of four principal characteristics, namely: a common language, a common territory, a common economic life, and a common psychological make-up manifested in common specific features of national culture" (<https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/stalin/works/1929/03/18.htm>)

⁶⁵ Italics added for emphasis.

⁶⁶ Here, it should be noted that "if communities are organized only along intra-ethnic lines and the interconnections with other communities are very weak or even non-existent, then ethnic violence is quite likely" (Varshney, 1998, p.363).

kin or disenfranchise them by condemning them to perpetual minority status in another ethnic group's regional-state" (Erk, 2016, p.227). This kind of problematic relational system was discussed by Posner (2004) while analyzing two ethnic groups relationship in Zambia and Malawi. Chewa and Tumbuka are ethnic groups that reside on both sides of the Zambia and Malawi international boundary. In Zambia, both ethnic groups relate to each other as member of one big community, but in Malawi their relationship takes the form of rivalry (Posner, 2004). Just as demographic strength played a critical role in eliciting ethnic based tension in the case of post-1991 Ethiopia, Chewa and Tumbuka developed a contentious relationship in Malawi due to their large numbers "whose mobilization is politically useful in the national competition for state resources" (Posner, *ibid*, p.543). Contrastingly, "in Zambia, the Chewa and Tumbuka communities are too small to serve as viable political vehicles in and of themselves, so the cultural difference between these groups go largely ignored" (*ibid*, p.543). The multiple stories from Ethiopia, Malawi and Zambia largely inform us on the utility of ethnicity and provincial identity as the basis of relationship between people and state on one hand and, on the other, between ethnic groups and the state. Aside from the modern state efforts in making ethnic based relationships salient or insignificant, humans, historically speaking, as Hutchinson & Smith (1996) informed us, have established a relationship with one another using multiple interaction points: "kinship patterns, physical contiguity (as in localism or sectionalism), religious affiliation, language or dialect forms, tribal affiliation, nationality, phenotypical features, or any combination of these⁶⁷" (p.6).

"Etymologically" speaking, "the term *ethnos* means a number of people living together..." (Montagu, 1965, p.326). In anthropology, primordial and situational theories play a dominant role in providing an understanding of ethnicity. As Munasinghe (2018) informs us "primordial theories emphasized the continued significance of premodern cultural

⁶⁷ As Nash (1996) views it, "This metaphor of blood, substance, and deity symbolize the existence of the groups while at the same time they constitute the group" (p.25).

traits to explain group attachment to their ethnic identity in contrast to situational theories that viewed ethnicity as relational and dynamic, a consequence of social interaction between groups” (p.1). When it comes to the formation and continuation of group identity, Fishman (1996) offers the following insight using ethnicity as a conceptual lens. “Ethnicity⁶⁸”, as he (ibid) sees it, “has always been experienced as a kinship phenomenon, continuity with the self and within those who share an intergenerational link to common ancestors” (p.63). After presenting kinship as the core fundamental constitutive element of ethnicity, the writer further sharpens the argument by using the human body as an expression and example of intergenerational links. To that end, by placing the human body at the center of the argument, this commentator reasoned about ethnicity in this manner: “ethnicity is partly experienced as being ‘bone of their bone, flesh of their flesh, and blood of their blood’...*in this way* “the human body itself is viewed as an expression of ethnicity and ethnicity is commonly felt to be in the blood, bones, and flesh” (p.63). In this way, the human body is utilized as a critical factor in the formation of ethnic identity.

Historically speaking, as Jones (1997) informs us, the late 1960s and 1970s marked “the emergence of ethnicity as a primary taxonomic category... with a variety of empirical, theoretical and ideological problems with existing anthropological⁶⁹ and sociological⁷⁰ categories, alongside an increase in the political salience of ethnic consciousness” (p.51) in many parts of the world. In this way, “the emergence of the concept of ethnicity as major taxonomic category in the classification of people was partly stimulated by a theoretical shift

⁶⁸ “Though the term ‘ethnicity’ is recent, the sense of kinship, groups’ solidarity, and common culture to which it refers is as old as the historical record” (Hutchinson & Smith, 1996, p.3).

⁶⁹ A “growing dissatisfaction with concept that had traditionally formed the basis of research in humanities— notably ‘culture’, ‘society’ and ‘tribes’” (Jones, 1997, p. 51).

⁷⁰ Regarding the discipline of sociology, as Jones (1997) discussed it, “during the 1960s and 1970s sociologist became increasingly aware that the situation was more complex than acknowledged by such theories of assimilation and development” (p.54) hence, “a concerted attempt to develop theoretical explanations for the phenomenon of ethnicity” was pursued by sociologies by conceptualizing “ethnic groups as economic and political interest groups” (p.54).

away from the fixed, reified categories⁷¹ ... towards a processual analysis of ethnicity as form of social interaction” (p.55). After discussing the emergence and conceptual function of the term in such manner, Jones (1997) puts forward “the relationship between objective conditions and subjective perceptions” (p.88) as a basis for ethnic identity (Côté & Schwartz, 2002). Regarding the former, Isajiw (1993) holds, “... cultural behavior, in the form of customs, rituals and preconceptions...” (p.6) as contents for the formation of ethnic identity (Jensen, 2003; Phinney, 2003; St. Louis & Liem, 2005; Côté, 2006; Schwartz et al., 2007). While objective conditions such as that provides a lens for the understanding of ethnicity at a group level, “on the individual level, ethnicity is a social-psychological process which gives an individual a sense of belonging and identity” (Isajiw, 1993, p.8). As Umaña-Taylor et al. (2004) inform us, the subjective aspect of ethnicity contained “three distinct components: (a) the degree to which individuals have explored their ethnicity, (b)...what their ethnic identity means to them, and (c) the affect (positive or negative) that they associate with that resolution” (p.14). Consequently, ethnic identity results as a “self-ascribed sense of oneself as a member” (Schwartz, 2014, p.59) of a given ethnic group. Subsequently, “the achievement of a secure ethnic identity” as Phinney & Ong (2007) argue, “derives from experience ... *by*⁷² the actions and choices of individuals” (p.271) as a vital aspect of the internalization process. In direct contrast to Phinney & Ong (2007) wisdom, the EPRDF-inspired ethnic-based relational system was organized by neutralizing individuals’ actions and choices from an ethicized identity formation process as discussed above.

For Brass (1996) ethnic identity is formed by “objective attributes, with reference to subjective feelings...” (p.85). Here, it is easy to see language, dress, food, hair style, etc. as an example of objective attributes. However, these attributes, without the support of an individual’s internal feelings, stand no chance in becoming a representative of one’s ethnic

⁷¹ Here, race, culture, society, and tribe were given as an example by Jones.

⁷² Italics added for emphasis.

identity. For instance, the EPRDF's one-language-one-identity ethnic system does not have the support of mixed ethnic people since those people readily identify themselves with multiple languages. Additionally, the EPRDF's notion of ethnicity disadvantaged a lot of people who used Amharic as their only language without those people identifying themselves with the Amhara ethnic group⁷³. Notwithstanding this empirical reality, the EPRDF imposed its one-language-one-identity ethnic policy without considering the utility of subjective feelings as a mitigator to control the impact of the country's *lingua franca*⁷⁴ against several millions of the Amharic speaking population⁷⁵. Despite this very complex empirical reality of the country, the EPRDF issued its one-language-one-identity ethnic-based relational system from the barrel of a gun after seizing power. In other words, the EPRDF failed to adhere to the wisdom of working the objective and subjective hyphen by imposing violently its unrelatable language-based socio-political and spatial system over the people.

When it comes to a subjective feeling of ethnic identity, for instance, I readily and always associate my subjective feelings with my mother's and father's ethnic origin. But, in 2012, I was ordered by the government official to seek my ethnic identity using my father's ethnic lineage only in accordance with the EPRDF's one-language-one-identity ethnic policy. This encounter clearly shows a harm done against my subjective feelings as an individual by forcing me to accept solely patrilineality as a basis of my ethnic identity. Vertically oriented affiliation⁷⁶ may work if the family unit was comprised of fathers only. But the historical and contemporary empirical evidence from Ethiopia does not support such an assumption. Considering the impact of ethnic-based discriminatory societal system (Umaña-Taylor et al.,

⁷³ This happens due to the role of Amharic as *lingua franca* of Ethiopia.

⁷⁴ Objective attributes.

⁷⁵ In such a situation, I argued that the principle of working the hyphens supports both the objective attributes and the subjective feelings of ethnic identity.

⁷⁶ In this thesis, I defined vertical affiliation in the following way: a patrilineal familial relationship. Accordingly, the system operates by using one parent as a source of one's ethnic identity. Its guiding principle is inequality based on gender. As such, the term also expressed as a one-language-one-identity relational system while implicitly acknowledging its gender bias. This relational system also corrupts interethnic interaction by devaluing and discouraging affiliation with a mother's ethnic lineage.

2002; Sellers et al., 2006; Umaña-Taylor & Updegraff, 2007; Woo et al., 2019), the multifaceted harmful impacts of the EPRDF's patriarchal ethnic policy against mothers, from a single or a mixed family unit, became a frightening matter in need of serious attention. By contrast to this dreadful situation, mixed ethnicity, through its horizontally oriented affiliation system, treats mothers and fathers equally by approaching them as a fundamental constitutive element of a family unit. In short, the principle of horizontal affiliation works the gender hyphen within a family unit. Contrastingly, the EPRDF-inspired vertically oriented relational system does not allow gender equality within a family unit and between the country's two critical ethnic groups (mixed and single) due to its patriarchal orientation.

3.3. On the Principle of Working the Hyphens/Categories

When we examine a given social world, we are certain to find all sorts of classification systems governing its multiple interaction points. In fact, the term human, as Hall (2006) informs us, was invented by humans for the sake of classification. Accordingly, Hall (2006) writes, “until you classify things, in different ways, you cannot generate any meaning at all. So, it is an absolutely fundamental aspect of human culture...” (p.2). As Hall informed us, mode of classification enables humans to make sense of a given interaction between categories (i.e., human being as opposed to a plant or an animal) and between ethnic-based categories (i.e., single as opposed to mixed one). Whenever a given categorization system operates in a discriminatory manner, such biases are certain to cause harm to the health of the whole system⁷⁷. In contrast, when a given relational system puts a reasonable effort to work the hyphen (e.g., ethnic identity), the results of such an approach are believed to mediate interactions between two or more entities fairly. By contrast, a discriminatory relational system is certain to join two entities “with *its*⁷⁸ invention of other”

⁷⁷ For instance, our ecosystem is currently suffering from climate change upon the negligence of humans to work the hyphens harmoniously between the multiple categories in our very complex relational ecosystem. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uynhvHZUOOo&ab_channel=TheEconomist

⁷⁸ Italics added for emphasis.

(Fine, 1994, p.70). Accordingly, the hyphenated relational system conducts its operation via a partial sensitivity. For instance, the EPRDF's ethnic policy operates by treating people with mixed ethnic identity as an erasable category in its ethnic based classification and relational system. But had the EPRDF conceived its relational system by working the ethnic hyphen in a reasonable manner, mixed and single ethnic identities would be in an optimal position to coexist together. As discussed elsewhere, the EPRDF's relational system is constructed using a patrilineal affiliation as a common denominator. Consequently, the party categorized mixed ethnic people and their mothers as unrelatable entities. This type of institutional arrangement deprives peaceful coexistence between ethnic groups by othering mixed ethnicity and mothers. In a grim situation such as that, working the hyphen plays a remedial role due to its rationally couched sensitivity. In view of that, I see working the hyphen as a conducive instrument for a sensible and rational operation between two entities.

In a mixed family unit, all sorts of ethnic mixtures occur. For instance, the mixed family unit in Ethiopia is composed of multiple varieties: Gamo and Agaw; Kambaata and Argobba; Gurage and Amhara; Somali and Oromo; Tigre and Welayta; Afar, Amhara, Oromo and Agaw⁷⁹; and so forth. When it comes to the question of a classification system, the term mixed⁸⁰ describes it best since this term acknowledges explicitly the existence of multiple varieties and two or more⁸¹ lineages under it using horizontal affiliation as the fundamental principle for all sorts of formation. Since both lineages are integral parts of mixed ethnic family formation, it defies the fundamental principle of mixed ethnic identity when it becomes the target of an either/or relational approach. The EPRDF's classification

⁷⁹ Mixture cases like that are plenty when one traces back one's lineage using both grandparents on mother's and father's side.

⁸⁰ I called this mixture in Amharic Wuhid. For an extensive discussion on this term, see chapter 6: 6.4 and chapter 7: 7.3. Moreover, using this term as an analytical category helps us to understand a mixed ethnic family unit and its horizontally oriented familial relationship. Furthermore, the term indicates the existence of an interethnic familial relationship between ethnic groups on the basis of the father's and mother's lineage.

⁸¹ During a fieldwork, I have encountered cases with the grandfather's ethnic lineage differing from the grandmother's one. Also, in my own mixed ethnic family unit, we have Tigre, Oromo, and Amhara mixture. So, in cases where more than two ethnic groups involved or with two ethnic groups only, the term mixed gives coherence and a sense of solid identity.

system and its derivative institutional arrangement imposed this view on the people with mixed ethnic identity. Meaning that, mixed ethnic people must adopt patrilineage and dissolve their horizontally affiliated system. In direct contrast to the EPRDF's one-language-one-identity termination policy, the principle of horizontal affiliation⁸² brings two or more ethnic lineages into a familial relationship. Additionally, since mixed ethnic identity is formed by merging two ethnic lineages into a family unit, it recognizes the value of a single ethnic group as an indispensable element of its classification system. In other words, mixed ethnic groups existence, as an ethnic category, is conditional on the continuous existence of a single ethnic category as one of the categories of identity within the ethnic classification system of Ethiopia. By contrast, the EPRDF's inspired relational system poses an existential threat to mixed ethnic people by excluding mixed ethnic family unit from its ethnic institutional arrangements⁸³. As such, EPRDF's ethnic based classification system and its institutional design failed to work the ethnic relational hyphen in post-1991 Ethiopia. With that view in mind, the thesis adopts the principle of working the hyphens to offer a solution for the EPRDF's problematic ethnic relational system. I propose working the ethnic hyphen within a family unit and between the two critical ethnic groups, single and mixed, due to its gender and ethnic sensitivity.

Currently, the EPRDF-inspired ethnic relational system operates in an unrelatable manner. Accordingly, people with a mixed ethnic identity lost their socio-political and spatial

⁸² In this thesis, horizontal affiliation is defined in the following way: a defamilial relationship with explicit usage of both parents as an indispensable component of one's family unit and, thereby, as a basis of one's ethnic identity. For this thesis, horizontal affiliation is utilized as a coded term to describe ethnic and gender-based familial relationship. Its only guiding principles is equality between two different categories at an ethnic and gender level. In horizontally oriented relational system, entities are assembled on the same level. This understanding inspired me to use horizontal affiliation as a term to describe a non-hierarchical interethnic relationship. By contrast, a vertically oriented relationship assembles entities in up and down orders as the EPRDF's relational system shows. Moreover, a horizontal affiliation was the orientation of my own mixed ethnic family unit. Accordingly, our family treats and relates equally with ethnic groups on my mother's and father's side. For this reason, I have used horizontal affiliation as an analytical device in this thesis due to its gender and interethnic sensitivity.

⁸³ While mixed family unit continues to exist as a family unit in the eyes of its members and continue to be made by the people of Ethiopia, I have witnessed several weddings and romantic relationships during my fieldwork, the state and its constitution officially recognized one-language-one-identity familial relationship only.

rights from a living room to a public square under the influence of the EPRDF's one-language-one-identity dwelling/spatial policy. With that discriminatory relational system in mind, let us bring into discussion Lefebvre's work since he draws from and discusses on the interplay between the three hyphens of the productive process⁸⁴: spatial practice, representation of space, and representational space.

3.4. Lefebvre's Conception of Space: Conceived, Perceived and Lived Spaces

...authentic knowledge of space must address the question of its production... (Lefebvre, 1991, p.388).

Under the EPRDF's ethnic spatial system, people with mixed ethnic identity were denied spatial visibility at the local, regional, and federal level. Whenever people lose their spatial agency, those who were empowered with spatial agency will exert spatial power over them as the multiple displacement cases from Ethiopia informed us. Accordingly, this problematic institutional spatial design tells us on the suffering of Ethiopians ((Kibret, 2018; Haile, 2020), on the one hand, and on the failure of the EPRDF to work the spatial hyphens between ethnic groups, on the other. With that dire spatial situation in mind, let us examine the EPRDF's spatial system using Lefebvre's spatial insights.

The process of thinking about a space, producing a space, and living in a space occupies the mind of people across the globe by manifesting itself as a fundamental political, cultural, economic, religious agenda. The production of space is “, in fact, a process. For it to occur, it is necessary... for the society's practical capabilities and sovereign powers to have at their disposal special places” (Lefebvre, 1991, p.34). Since thinking about space, producing space, and living in space, are interwoven with one another, engaging only with one aspect of the spatial triad without the other is certain to produce spatial injustice due to the influence of

⁸⁴ As Lefebvre (1991) informed us, “this distinction must, however, be handled with considerable caution. For one thing, there is a danger of its introducing divisions and so defeating the object of the exercise, which is to rediscover the unity of the productive process” (p.42). I, therefore, paid considerable attention while anchoring Lefebvre's productive process to the principle of working the hyphens. Since the purpose of this section arise from great analytical need, - to examine the unity/disunity of the productive process within the context of the Kifle Hager and the Kilil systems-, the distinction between Lefebvre's triad was coached by a great awareness.

disunity between the productive process. “When we evoke ‘space’”, as Lefebvre (1991) informs us, “we must immediately indicate: what occupies that space and how it does so” (p.12). Considering that, the spatial triad (conceived-perceived-lived) comes to us as an adequate analytical tool to investigate the degree of unity or disunity between the three productive processes while being used in the production of a space.

In Lefebvre’s (ibid) spatial triad, the conceived space refers to an abstract, mental, and geometric aspect of space. The elites, bureaucrats, politicians, financiers, and industrialists take a dominant role in shaping this understanding of a space, using multiple institutions that are set up by the state. The perceived space, on the other hand, represents a concrete, material, and physical aspect of space, where social groups are and have been organizing and interacting. It is “lived directly before it is conceptualized; but the speculative primacy of the conceived over the lived caused practice to disappear along with life” (Lefebvre, ibid, p.34). Whatever forms of space that are thought out by spatial practice “does not rest innocently on paper –on the ground it is the bulldozer that realizes these plans” (Elden, 2004, p.189). In this way, space is represented in concrete terms. Additionally, the lived space, in Lefebvre’s (1991) triad, “as a space of ‘subjects’ rather than of calculations...has an origin, and that origin is childhood, with its hardships, its achievements and its lacks” (p.362). Hence, “the lived space bears the stamp of the conflict between...maturation process and a failure to mature that” (p.362). Consequently, the production of space requires a conscious attention to manage the degree of conflict between the triad. Whenever the spatial hyphen between the spatial practice and representation space worked inadequately, such a spatial approach is certain introduce unnecessary conflict between the productive processes. Moreover, this disunity has the potential to turn the lived space into a site of conflict. For example, in post-1991 Ethiopia, as data from the fieldwork show, the lived space is marred by conflict

(displacement, riots and so forth) due to the EPRDF's insensitivity to the unity of the productive process while developing the Kilil system.

When the EPRDF coercively produced one-language-one-identity territorial enclosures, "by most accounts", Mehretu (2011) writes, "the move has resulted in delegitimizing Ethiopia's collective identity and led to its decomposition into a collection of ethno linguistic *Killils* (territorial enclosures) with neo-tribal restrictive covenants" (p.8). Prior to such an unprecedented move, say from the 1960s onward till 1987⁸⁵, provincialism was used by different elites⁸⁶ as mark of identity for people and space. This spatial system was known as the Kifle Hager⁸⁷ system. Since the Kifle Hager system was seen as an integral part of the country and people's livelihood, multidirectional movement of people across the provincial lines/hyphens took place as one, the whole family or people roamed freely in all parts of the country in search of a better life using one's labor. Additionally, since "provincial

⁸⁵ In 1987, the military government of Ethiopia crafted a new constitution and adopted a new name: People's Democratic Republic of Ethiopia. This move was done to make the country more open for a mixed economic system: market and state based. Ethiopian leading experts from five important areas (history/ culture, law, economics, politics/sociology, governance) were given full mandate by the military regime to study ethnic groups in Ethiopia. They could also travel abroad to Capitalist and Socialist countries, to find workable solutions for the multifaceted problems of the country. This unprecedented opportunity yielded (after more than five years of study) fruitful solutions for the country: a new constitution, new administrative units, and new forms of government. Regarding the constitution, it was centred on citizenship rights. The new administrative units divided the country into 30 regions using non-language-based spatial systems such as distribution of population, ease of governance, natural resources, and so forth. Of these, five of them were given autonomous status, (see map in appendix 1). The form of government shifted from Socialist orientation to a Democratic one. Ethiopia's transition to these relational systems was cut short in 1991 when the EPRDF took power by force. Conducting itself as a colonial force, it replaced Ethiopia's a non-hierarchical relational system with its discriminatory relational system. The party also fired Ethiopia's leading experts from their jobs and confiscated their research papers. During my field work, I was able to interview two of the experts and both saw the EPRDF's socio-political and spatial act as the crime of the century. As they argued, the EPRDF relational system was imposed on the people by military might after suppressing national debate about the future of the country and after neglecting to conduct empirical study on socio-political, economic, spatial, cultural, and other matters.

⁸⁶ Under the monarchical and the military regime.

⁸⁷ Amharic term: Kifle (part) Hager (country). The very name of the administrative unit functions as an enabler to integration due to its sensitivity on the relationship between the part (province) and the whole (country). When looking at the Kifle Hager system using Lefebvre's triad, there seems to be a unity between the productive process. This unity, I argued, occurred due to the influence of the physical space and the lived space (Mehretu, 2011;2019) on the spatial practice of the state. In addition, the Kifle Hager system was a perfect fit to establish a "classical federalism, the theory and practice of governance based on divided sovereignty and the constitutional division of power between a national and sub-national government" <http://almariam.com/2017/12/11/ethiopia-win-et-deconstructing-the-t-tplfs-ethnic-federalism-part-i/>

boundaries were redrawn⁸⁸, mostly following physical features, distribution of population and resources, and ease of governance” (Mehretu, 2011, p.6), the Kifle Hager system was a better spatial model for the unity of the productive process than the Kilil system. It is so since its provincial hyphens were “...historically and culturally stable...medium sized territories...*that*⁸⁹ ...enjoyed an equitable share of the country’s high populated plateau regions” (Mehretu, 2019, p. 5-6). Additionally, those spatial hyphens also “provided an equitable share of Ethiopia’s physical assets including hydrographic, climatic, topographic, pedologic and biomass” (ibid, p.6). By contrast, the Kilil hyphens were produced without working the spatial hyphens in the Lefebvre’s triad and, thereby, by not adhering to the principle of unity between the productive process. Accordingly, the EPRDF’s ethnic-based spatial system was produced, as Mehretu’s, (ibid), work informs us, to facilitate a divisive architecture of hegemonic governance and systemic marginality. In sum, when the political elites imposed their vision of the conceived space, their action gave rise to a conflictual relationship between the productive processes.

3.5. A Divisive Architecture of Hegemonic Governance and Systemic Marginality

Since the EPRDF’s ethnic-based relational system was formed hegemonically by using “a concatenation or juxtaposition of enabling structures and processes that are artfully syncretized to yield desired political and territorial outcomes” (Mehretu, 2012, p. 116). Women and other people stood to lose their socio-political and spatial rights at the federal, regional, and local levels. This top-down destructive institutional design was treated by Mehretu (2012) as a divisive architecture of hegemonic governance. In defining such a destructive system Mehretu (2012) writes the following:

⁸⁸ From 1935 to 1940, Italy, as the occupying colonial force in the horn of Africa, had reorganized Ethiopia, Eritrea and Somalia into a single political body. It used ethnic territorial division (Amhara, Eritrea, Harar, Oromo, and Somalia) to mark artificially produced internal colonial administrative boundaries, to maintain hegemonic power over its colonial possessions. See Appendix 2 for the map.

⁸⁹ Italics added for emphasis.

The term ‘architecture’ in this context means the construction of a coordinated and integrated design of political superstructure to facilitate a centralized control⁹⁰. Hegemony is the use of power of command exercised by a ruling party dictatorship (nativist or benevolent) with or without the use of coercive force for compliance⁹¹” (p.116).

In view of that, let us ask the following question: When one applies this conceptual framework to examine the socio-political hyphens in the current spatial system, what does one’s effort bring into view? Regarding the Kilil system, I argued that the reorganization of people and space along a single ethnolinguistic line has manifested itself as a hegemonic divisive socio-political and spatial hyphen between Ethiopia’s two critical ethnic groups, including people with either single or mixed ethnicities. It also revealed its divisiveness by creating “a system where a few individuals or groups enjoy the wealth and power of the country at the expense of millions that are being marginalized” (Wubneh, 2017, p.131).

Under the EPRDF’s divisive and hegemonic system, “identity has been articulated in such a way that past historical incidents⁹² and memories have been reactivated, and old labels have been redefined⁹³ by ethnic entrepreneurs for various motives” (Debelo, 2012, p.517). Accordingly, the EPRDF’s relational system became instrumental for the exercise of undue power⁹⁴ over others by an individual or groups. Mehretu et al (2000) characterized such lopsided engagement with the following concept: systemic marginality. As they see it, such a system “results from disadvantages which people and communities experience in a socially constructed system of inequitable relations within a hegemonic order...one or a number of

⁹⁰ The Killil system is a prime example of that as it allows the EPRDF to divisively segregate people into a single ethnic enclave to have hegemonic control over them using the federal government as the enforcer of the discriminatory ethnic based spatial hyphens.

⁹¹ The reordering of people and land into the Killil system is a prime example of coercive hegemonic power. As soon as the EPRDF ascended to power, it reorganized people and land along a single ethnolinguistic line without consulting the people in general and mixed ethnic people in particular. It also did that with total disregard to millennia old national identity and ethnic mixture.

⁹² For example, inter-ethnic and interethnic conflict over economic, religious, political matter.

⁹³ For instance, the redefinition of mixed ethnic people using single ethnic identity as lens.

⁹⁴ On that point, Abraham (2005) noted the following: “The unsavory practices of the EPRDF entailed the exclusion of political parties through tacit and explicit ways not only disrupted liberal rights and freedoms of citizens but also messed up even the tentative experimentations and learning of procedural democracy” (p.112).

vulnerability markers based on class, ethnicity, age, gender and other similar characteristics” (p.91). For instance, in today’s Ethiopia, mixed ethnic people have been relegated into oblivion by the application of an inequitable and disadvantageous ethnic-based relational system.

When the EPRDF hegemonically designed a relational system based on ethnicity, its efforts gave rise to “the political relevance of ethnicity in Ethiopia... However, the decision that each major ethnic group should be dominant in one and only subnational unit has also proved to be the original sin as it has elevated ethnic identity to a primary political identity” (Fessha,2016, p.232-233). This thesis maintains that patrilineal affiliation is the only guiding principle of the system. As such, the EPRDF’s patrilineal ethnic logic made other forms of relationships obsolete in the country. This was done while people in the country interlinked with each other by forming mixed ethnic family units for centuries. Considering this historical account, the EPRDF’s inconsistency, ‘the first sin’ of the EPRDF, I argued, comes from the utility of patrilineality as the only representational and, thereby, relational system in the country. In short, the EPRDF’s original sin arises from its failure to work the ethnic and gender hyphen at an individual, family and group level.

In article 34 (3) of the 1995 Constitution, the family unit was defined as ‘the fundamental unit of society’. If a family unit is the fundamental unit of Ethiopian society, one, then, would expect an institutional design that is reflective of its constitutional assertion at the national, regional, and local levels. However, all state institutions, far from reflecting article 34 (3), were made by mirroring the EPRDF’s patrilineal affiliation logic. Accordingly, the family unit of mixed ethnic people became the subject of exclusion, fragmentation and double consciousness under the influence of one-language-one-identity institutional arrangement. Additionally, as Fessha (2016) rightly pointed out, the EPRDF’s approach “overlooked the consideration of another historically and politically relevant

identity, namely ‘provincialism’ in designing the territorial structure of the state. By doing so...it has denied itself an opportunity” (p.233). I argued that they denied the opportunity to work the spatial and socio-political hyphens between ethnic groups.

Currently, “many regional-state constitutions in Ethiopia ...have ‘sons-of-soil’ references, often leading to the political disenfranchisement of settler communities, or even expulsion... from the areas they had been living in for generations, something the International Crisis Group interprets as an act akin to ethnic-cleansing” (Erk, 2014, p.546-547). As such, the EPRDF’s government failed to work the ethnic and gender hyphens by predicating its ‘sons-of-soil’ geographical and ethnic logic on patriarchy. Unlike the historical multi-ethnic spatial experience of the people through the Kifle Hager system, the EPRDF hegemonically designed multiple institutions and used them as a divisive relational system. For instance, the mixed ethnic family unit was eliminated to make the patrilineal family unit the only legitimate familial system of the country. This form of institutional arrangements simultaneously disenfranchised women politically and spatially by denying them a dignified legitimate position within her own household and beyond it. Additionally, it recklessly deprived people from their interethnic affiliation using patriarchy as an interaction point. Considering the multiple inadequacies in the EPRDF’s relational system, how did the party’s divisive spatial and socio-political hyphens come into existence and sustain itself for the past three decades? I answer this question in this way: by using a military might.

3.6. Conclusion

When the EPRDF conceived space as a single ethnic group’s enclosure, its discriminatory spatial practice was realized by erasing the Kifle Hager system to represent its new spatial system in physical and relational terms. Thereafter, the party’s divisive and hegemonic spatial acts brought an existential threat to the people. Overnight, the historical polyethnic provincial relational system changed to a one-language-one-identity relational

system. For this reason, the EPRDF's relational system comes to us as an enabler of marginalization. Moreover, the institutionalization of one-language-one-identity, as the only state's instrument in the country to work the socio-political and spatial hyphens, was done by denying mixed ethnic people constitutional and, thereby, institutional representation.

As discussed above, the modern Ethiopian state was formed by relying on the central government and national identity through a provincial space. By contrast, the EPRDF's regimes produced an ethnolinguistic enclosure by interlinking people via an ethnolinguistic constitutional framework. However, there are "geographic and demographic factors preventing the full-scale realization of the principles enshrined in the 1995 constitution. Some ethnic groups simply lack the territorial concentration that is necessary for the creation of new constituent states. In some cases, the demographic mosaic is so complex that numerous ethnic groups inhabit the same geography without clear territorial concentration that ethnic federalism needs" (Erk, 2017, p. 225). This problematic situation strongly informs us about the absence of unity between Lefebvre's triad. Furthermore, it reveals for the us about the inadequacy of the EPRDF's relational system in working the geographic and demographic matters, on one hand and mixed ethnic people's rights, on the other.

In Lefebvre's (1991) work one finds space "reinterpreted not as a dead, inert thing or object but as organic and alive: space has a pulse, and it palpitates, flows, and collides with other spaces" (Merrifield, 2006, p.105). With that in mind, let us turn our attention to the methodology chapter to understand how this thesis examines the pulse and flows of the current relational system of Ethiopia as they collide with the historical lived experience of people with mixed ethnic identities and other people from a single ethnic background.

Chapter 4: Methodology: Critical Ethnography

The critical ethnographer resists domestication and moves from “what is” to “what could be” (Thomas, 1993).

4.1. Introduction

When the spatial historical experience of the ethnically diverse Ethiopian people was reconceptualized as the enclosure of a single ethnolinguistic group, it was a severe violation of socio-political rights of people with mixed ethnic identity, along with the eighty plus single ethnic groups. In other words, this spatial historical condition was reconfigured by the EPRDF's inspired political and spatial ideology. The newly produced space negatively impacted many people's socio-political livelihood and spatial relationship across the country. This chapter presents the various qualitative methodological approaches adopted for this dissertation to examine issues related to spatial and ethnic injustice. These approaches include (i) auto-ethnography, (ii) in-depth interviews (15 key informants and 30 people in their ordinary lives) and (iii) focus group discussions (32 people in their ordinary lives). The study begins with a brief overview of qualitative research methodology, followed by an extensive discussion of critical ethnography, and three selected methodological approaches. Finally, the work concludes by situating the research topic and the researcher's argument using working the hyphen and positionality as a conceptual lens. The former approach was also deployed during the fieldwork to make the data more representatives of Ethiopia's diverse ethnic population and the latter as an anchor for auto-ethnography. By anchoring our multiple methods onto critical ethnography, the research strives to uncover the impacts of the Kifle Hager and the Kilil system. Additionally, focus group discussions (hereafter FGD) contribute to the research by bringing in exchanges of viewpoints between the participants. Thus, the explicit and implicit agreement and disagreement of the participants in discussion serve as a source of data. This makes FGD a useful complimentary tool. Finally, in addition to an ethnic angle, other factors were also utilized to examine their impact on the people while serving as a category of people's livelihood. These include gender, age, marital status

(single, married with children and without), occupation (private vs. public sector), educational level, birthplace, adopted city, and political party affiliation.

When one chooses to study a given phenomenon using qualitative research methodology, one is expected to focus on meanings and processes. By contrast, quantitative research method directs the researcher's attention towards the measurement of variables in the form of frequency, amount, quantity, and intensity. As discussed by Denzin and Lincoln (2013), qualitative researchers "seek answers to questions that stress on how social experience is created and given meaning...the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied and the situational constrain that shape inquiry" (p.17). Accordingly, proponents of qualitative methodology put stress on value-laden nature of inquiry. While exponents of quantitative methodology make a case for a value-free research framework (*ibid*, 2013). As the focus of this thesis is to explore the merit and demerit of the Kifle Hager and the Kilil spatial systems and their respective impacts on the people from a mixed ethnic background. Qualitative research method is a better fit to gather data, due to its sensitivity to meanings and processes. This methodology allows one to explore the multiple meanings of produced space and the socio-political process by which both spatial systems operate. In-depth interviews, FGD, participant observations,⁹⁵ and autoethnography are utilized to provide insight on the depth of multidimensional impacts in both spaces. With that research design in mind, fieldwork study is conducted in Ethiopia from June 2019 until June 2020 to examine the impact of relationally oriented socio-political and spatial system. In this section, I present all the research methods⁹⁶ that are utilized in this thesis.

⁹⁵ The data from this method will be integrated with the auto-ethnography narratives.

⁹⁶ These approaches benefit the research by helping to connect the multiple accounts of the participants into a logically grounded, coherent manner. Furthermore, these approaches were helpful in merging the personal accounts of the author. The research participants' voices serve as analytical tools of belonging, ethnicity, nationality, and territoriality. These four dimensions were selected for the following reasons: human beings by virtue of their nature show an inherent desire to belong to themselves, family, friends, colleagues, etc. In view of that, a sense of belonging as an analytical tool helps the thesis to explore to what extent the two spatial systems permit a person and their family a political, social, and economic space to belong to their mixed identity. The

4.2. Critical Ethnography

Ross, Rogers & Duff (2016) inform us:

Critical ethnography is a qualitative research method that endeavors to explore and understand dominant discourses that are seen as being the 'right' way to think, see, talk about or enact a particular 'action' or situation in society and recommend ways to redress social power inequities (p.4).

Critical ethnography seeks “to expose hidden agendas, challenge oppressive assumptions, describe power relations, and critique the taken-for-granted” (O’reilly, 2009, p.51). It is an approach “that is overtly political and critical, exposing inequalities in an effort to effect change” (*ibid*, p.51). In the case at hand, the EPRDF sees the Kilil system as the right way to think about spatial and socio-political matters in post-1991 Ethiopia through the Kilil system and its one-language-one-identity-one-territory ethnic policy. Critical ethnography makes it possible for me to reveal the lack of spatial representation and socio-political recognition with respect to mixed ethnic people and explore spatial and socio-political matters through a relational lens. To that end, critical ethnography, and the wisdom of working the hyphens bring great benefit for my research due to their relational focus. Moreover, this gives me a critical angle for the analysis of marginalization, exclusion, displacement, and patrilineal system. Therefore, I take critical ethnography to be one of the best research tools to expose inequality and to effect change. This is so because at its core “critical ethnography is the study of the process of domestication and social entrapment by which we are made content with our life conditions” (Thomas, 1993, p.7).

Critical ethnography operates as a sharp angle to bring into investigation the way a given view of the world was made to function as the dominant view. Examining such

root of an ethnic identity is, in the case of Ethiopia, one’s ethnic origin. In light of that, ethnicity makes itself a vital analytical tool to explore the impact of ethnic discourse on the people from a mixed ethnic background. Just as an ethnic identity finds its roots in one’s origin, ethnicity lives within a given national identity on account of the State-based system. Ethiopia houses over eighty ethnic groups. Thus, those ethnic groups, in addition to their respective ethnic character, take Ethiopia as the symbol of their shared national identity. Taking note of that, one must ask the following question: does the scope of this national identity entertain a mixed ethnic identity as an identity or not? Territoriality makes it possible to explore the spatial arrangement in relation to a mixed ethnic group.

problematic situations always pose a challenge to a given research design. Elaborate socio-political and spatial relational work maintains the hegemonic presence in a given discourse. In situations such as that, an ethical responsibility helps a given researcher “to address processes of unfairness or injustice within a particular *lived* domain... *by going*⁹⁷...beneath surface appearance...by bringing to light underlying and obscure operations of power and control” (Madison, 2005, p.5). By guiding this research with strong ethical responsibility, a great effort was made in this thesis to let the data speak for itself on the operation of power beneath the surface of country-wide socio-political and spatial relations.

“Conventional ethnographers study culture for the purpose of describing it; critical ethnographers do so to change it” (Thomas, 1993, p.4). In critical ethnography, one studies “issues of power, empowerment, inequality, inequity ...” (Creswell, 2007, p.70). These issues signify a need for change rather than enlisting them for the sake of ethnographic description. However, how does one remain scientific while simultaneously practicing critique? The most direct answer to this vital question comes from an application of technique. Namely, not seeing only what serves the researcher’s purpose, nor placing passion before science, nor making claims beyond demonstrable evidence, nor replacing reason with stridency (*ibid*, 1993). In short, “the data should speak to us, and we should listen closely, even if what we hear is not to our liking. To do otherwise is not only bad science; it is intellectually dishonest and unethical” (*ibid*, 1993, p.62). In view of that, I made every effort to make this research project as scientific as possible while collecting data at the field site and composing the thesis.

Critical ethnography raises another important question: how does one reconcile ethical commitment with the scientific approach? The former asks for a value-laden approach, while the latter a value-neutral one. A value-neutral approach asks us to let data

⁹⁷ Italics added for emphasis.

speak for itself without removing it from its original position. In this case, letting data speak for itself is an act of a high ethical responsibility. When a researcher takes such a position, we call that a value-laden position. Accordingly, data analysis was carried out here without omitting some information and embellishing others. Its fulfillment was done by collecting data and by interpreting them without alteration or distortion. With this fundamental wisdom of Thomas' (1993) in mind, the thesis was crafted without compromising the balance between a value-neutral and a value-laden approach. While giving research participants abundant time to recount their stories, I informed them from the beginning of each engagement not to recount a story of their life that goes beyond their lived experience. Put differently, participants were informed not to recount inexperienced facts by permitting themselves to go into a realm of imagination. This was done by asking them first to give a general account of their lived experience. Afterwards, they were asked to give a detailed account of it. For example, if they were harassed at the workplace, they will be asked what the nature of that harassment was (personal, ethnic-based, gender-based, etc.). After we asked participants whether discrimination was ethnic based, we asked how they knew that. We asked them if they were in a prime position to check everyone's ID card. Such a logical approach was deployed to make the process of data collection as scientific as possible by keeping the story in the original context.

As Hall (1997) informs us, the notion of representation has multiple political and social consequences and ramifications. As he sees it, how people are represented leads to how they are treated or will be treated. For example, "during the Holocaust, Nazis referred to Jews as rats. Hutus involved in the Rwanda genocide called Tutsi's cockroaches. Slave owners throughout history considered slaves subhuman animals" (NPR, 2011⁹⁸). In this sense, the depiction of the Jewish people in such a manner made it possible for the Holocaust

⁹⁸ <https://www.npr.org/2011/03/29/134956180/criminals-see-their-victims-as-less-than-human>

to be the direct consequence of representation under the Nazi regime (Spiegelman, 1997). Similarly, when Tutsis were represented as cockroaches by the Hutus, it made it easier for the Hutus to kill the Tutsis freely just as people kill such insects freely in their households (Ilibagiza, 2006). The representation of people as subhuman also made it possible for the slave traders to destroy people and their livelihood freely for centuries (Equiano, 2001). Had it not been for representation of people as subhuman, separating children from their parents, uprooting families from their communities, and treating people like objects would not have been possible during that time. In short, portrayals and depictions of people in such a negative manner have led to horrifying genocidal acts and loss of tens of millions of innocent people. In view of that, the thesis explored the consequences of negative and positive representation⁹⁹ of people with mixed ethnic identity in the Ethiopian context.

4.3. Auto-Ethnography

In *Illegal Traveler*, Khosravi (2011) writes about auto-ethnography in the following manner: “auto-ethnography gains its narrative power from the concept of witnessing. The significance of the voice of the witness is that the witness has been there, has seen what happened” (p.6). The concept of witnessing refers to a personal experience of a given event and providing an account of it, using personal experience, written or verbal material, only as a parameter of analysis. When personal experience goes beyond those parameters via other people’s accounts, that action constitutes a deviation from the core principle of witnessing: being there and seeing it. Taking this into account, I have used my personal experience as source of data in this thesis. Khosravi’s wisdom has been employed to show the connection between the author’s personal experience with wider spatial, political, and social matters. Most importantly, this form of narrative has led me to enrich the qualitative voice of the

⁹⁹ While negative representation reduces a human being to that of a subhuman, positive representation recognizes a human being for who they are: Jewish, Tutsis and Black People. Hence, positive representation sees a person with a Jewish identity as a human being. Seeing that particular person as the embodiment of a Jewish identity is a positive representation. By contrast, depicting that particular person as the embodiment of a rat identity is a negative representation since it deprives that person of his or her humanity.

thesis by publishing for the first time a first-hand account of mixed ethnic life under the Kilil¹⁰⁰ and the Kifle Hager system to a wider audience. This includes the terrible ordeal¹⁰¹ that took place on October 20th 2019¹⁰², while I was conducting fieldwork, has been included in this research. During my research time in Ethiopia, I also benefited from unexpected opportunities that made my research topic the center of national attention. This happened due to the role of mainstream media in presenting my topic to the public via multiple interviews. Media coverage granted me unexpected opportunity to discuss the issues of mixed ethnic groups in Ethiopia. The nature of my engagement with the media revolved in narrating my personal experience as a person with mixed ethnic identity. My media experience is part of my witnessing, as discussed above. Additionally, the concept of the witnessing in the form of personal experience was utilized by research participants themselves while narrating their own experience.

4.4. In-depth Interviews

In-depth interviews make it possible for interviewees to share their opinion on a given topic according to their own pace and rhythm (Carter and Delamont, 1996; Creswell, 1998; Denzin and Lincoln, 2000; Hay, 2010; Stake, 2010). This qualitative approach provides more data than mailed-in questionnaires. For that reason, I conducted in-depth interviews with 15 key informants and with 30 people in their ordinary lives. Regarding the key informants¹⁰³, five were recruited¹⁰⁴ on their significant occupation-based involvement in spatial, legal, economic, political and media matters. Of those, one gave an account of his involvement with the Kifle Hager system toward the demise of the military regime, and the other two gave their

¹⁰⁰ In English: reservation or ethnic enclave.

¹⁰¹ My very own life was in danger as the city of Adama engulfed by ethnic based protest, violence, killings.

¹⁰² <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/10/23/world/africa/ethiopia-protest-abiy.html>

¹⁰³ While people in their ordinary lives inform us about their personal experience of both socio-political and spatial systems, the key informant tells us the function and consequences of both systems.

¹⁰⁴ The focus in here is their occupation. By contrast, for the last ten, attention was given to their academic background and political party affiliation.

account on their involvement with the Kilil system¹⁰⁵. The last two were involved in both regimes on gender-based matters¹⁰⁶. The last 10 key informants were recruited based on their academic background and political role, including five academics from the fields of Geography, History, Linguistics, Sociology and Political Science. The other five were from an ethnic and ideologically based political party: of these, four are the leader of their respective political party and one serves as a general secretary of a party.

The 30 ordinary people were recruited using specific criteria: lived experience¹⁰⁷, date of birth and mixed ethnic identity. While recruiting participants, every effort was made to ensure that the ethnic origin of the participants was as diverse¹⁰⁸ as possible. Of the available 80-plus ethnic groups in the country, more than 20 ethnic (about a quarter) is represented among the interviewees. Regarding the date of birth, 15 of the participants were born prior to 1970 and the rest were born between the years of 1985 to 1990. Proper government issued identification cards were examined to place participants in the study timeframe. The date of birth was made to correspond to the period of the two spatial systems: Pre-1991-the Kifle Hager system and post-1991- the Kilil system.

As Boyce and Neale (2006) informed us, in-depth interviewing offers an optimal environment to explore ideas, program, and situations of a small number of participants during intensive and individually crafted interview sessions. The two authors further noted on its valuable capacity to obtain detailed information on a given participant's thoughts and behaviors. It also helps explore new issues. Since the objective of this research is finding out what people's lived experience in the Kilil and the Kifle Hager systems is, in-depth interview techniques are well suited to allow participants to author the role in their own stories. By

¹⁰⁵ For the Kifle Hager the participant involvement was on spatial/economic matters and for the Kilil they participated in spatial and legal matters.

¹⁰⁶ Their involvement was in mass media and political matters.

¹⁰⁷ A definition of lived experience is a person who has been directly impacted by both spatial systems while living in either and coming in contact with either system as constituted element.

¹⁰⁸ Diversity in a mixed-ethnic composition. For example, mixed –ethnic background from ethnic x and y; from x and z; from a and c; from d and s and so forth.

keeping in mind its limitation (notably its proneness to bias, its time intensiveness, and the fact that it does not lend itself to generalization), in-depth interview is a useful method for collecting data owing to its flexibility. This method helps a researcher by creating a space for follow-up questions and for modifying a question whenever the interview session gives rise to such occasion. In this thesis, one-on-one interviews¹⁰⁹ were conducted with the participants to gather data on their lived experience from multiple angles.

During the interview sessions, participants from a mixed ethnic background¹¹⁰ were addressed as a person from a mixed ethnic background. I started all my interviews by asking the interviewee to give his or her subjective feelings about mixed ethnic identity. This question was immediately followed by discussing the two aspects of a mixed ethnic identity: a mixed marriage¹¹¹ and a mixed ethnic background. Until understanding was reached on this critical conceptual distinction between the interviewer and the interviewee, the interviews did not proceed to the second question. Some of the younger participants asked for more elaboration on the notion of the two aspects (i.e., background and family type). By contrast, older participants were able to understand it quickly and most of them described their understanding in the following way: what I am today in flesh and blood is what my parents were yesterday by virtue of their mixed marriage. By the end of the interview, both aspects of a mixed ethnic identity were clear to those who had a bit of trouble in grasping it at the beginning of their interview session. Just as the two sides of the same coin refer to the two

¹⁰⁹ Each interview lasted from 45 to 75 min using semi-structured interview format.

¹¹⁰ See appendix 1

¹¹¹ For instance, Ethiopia PM, Dr. Abiy, has a mixed marriage due to his wife's Amhara background. But local media and international media outlet and people in Ethiopia always present him as an Oromo. This form of presentation absolutely hides the concrete fact of his ethnic life: member of mixed ethnic people by virtue of his mixed marriage. Properly understood, he belongs to a mixed identity so long as he stays in that marriage. However, in his case, since he had three children out of that marriage, he is forever linked to a mixed identity by virtue of his children. This is also the case for my father, being forever attached to mixed identity by giving birth to me and my many siblings. For that reason, I conducted in-depth discussion with the participants on the two aspects of mixed identity to shed light on this.

interrelated parts of the same thing and mixed family format stand as representative of the two interconnected parts of the same identity¹¹²: mixed ethnicity.

4.5. Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)

As it was discussed by Morgan and Spanish (1984), FGDs comprise of many people. Here, a specific topic of shared interest becomes a discussion point among them. This method makes it possible for the researcher to assemble various individuals in a single space to carry out a collective conversation (Hay, 2010; Stake, 2010). For Denzin and Lincoln (2000) this approach delivers “a fruitful method for ‘thinking through’ in qualitative research” (p.309). It is a “good antidote to the overreliance that ethnographers often place on data obtained from a single informant” (Wolcott, 2008, p.185). As such, FGDs were made to play a countering checking role on the data that was collected via an in-depth interview. FGDs were added into this thesis to enhance its quality, as we collected data from the disagreements and agreements of participants’ viewpoints on a given themes/questions.

FGDs are commonly known as an efficient time saving research method. However, there is a serious risk of bias when the researcher fails to carefully control the outspoken ones while running a session in each group. The researcher should encourage the quiet discussants to participate as much as possible to avoid biases from their lack of participation. With that in mind, I put great effort into studying the temperament of each participant while recruiting them for the FGD session. Being a bit reserved upon meeting a person one has not met before is the common custom of most Ethiopians. Unsurprisingly, I found a few of the discussants in my FGDs to be a bit reticent during my first encounter with them. However, about an hour into our sitting, they all became comfortable to hold warm conversations. This culturally conditioned behavioral issue was mitigated when I decided to use the most popular pastime television show in Ethiopia as an icebreaker. The wisdom on that reached my mind from my

¹¹² More elaboration is coming on this subject in the next section where participants from a mixed family and mixed marriage made it into the data set.

observation of people- young and old- in the first 30 days since arriving there. I found people passionately glued to a television set (few cases using laptop) at home, at coffee places, at workplace, and other similar venues to watch a particular show. For instance, I saw people from all walks of life and from all kinds of ethnic origins hooked on Turkish story-based soap operas. It is broadcasted to them in Amharic and the show predominantly features domestic matters from multiple angles: social, psychological, political, economic, legal, and so forth. Since my research revolves around mixed ethnic identity, using it as an icebreaker before the start of each FGD session brought great benefit to my research. In the first 30 minutes, while consuming tea, coffee, and pop, I encouraged people to talk about that weekly show. I asked them about their reflection on the plots and the various characters. I was able to get everyone to talk freely about the show, which allowed for all participants in the FGD sessions to engage with one another afterwards. Judging by the level of participation during the subsequent conversations, the icebreaker technique benefited the research as it gave everyone the necessary boost for great conversation and aided me in collecting data from everyone.

For this research, I employed four FGD sessions with four different types of seating arrangements. Each session was filled with eight participants. Overall, I recruited 32 participants using gender, date of birth, and ethnic background. People from mixed ethnic background and single ethnic background were distributed evenly among each set of eight participants. For the third set of eight participants, I recruited individuals from a single ethnic background but with a mixed ethnic family format¹¹³ in the FGD sessions¹¹⁴. The last eight

¹¹³ Their inclusion serves this study in two senses: First, I collected data on their feelings of their mixed ethnic marriage. Meanwhile, the country is promoting a single ethnic association as the basis of affection and, thereby, grounds for marriage. Second, the study would like to show the logical connection between a mixed ethnic identity and a mixed ethnic marriage. Thus, this will make a case for this group to be included in the census data as members of mixed ethnic identity.

¹¹⁴ The reason for the inclusion of mixed ethnic family is the following: They became mixed by virtue of their own marriage. While the husband and the wife have come from a single ethnic background, their marriage made them mixed owing to their different ethnic origins. This wisdom came to me upon being confronted by many people from such marital life and format. So, I decided to include participants from such family formats since their very existence plays a vital role in reproducing mixed ethnic members due to the nature their family format. Most importantly, their inclusion allows the researcher to bring into discussion the voice of the past

of the participants came from a group of people who self-identify themselves as Ethiopians. This group of people feels more comfortable to identify themselves with Ethiopia¹¹⁵ as a basis of their identity, rather than with a particular ethnicity. All sessions contained four males and four females. In each session, there were two participants from the aforementioned four identities: single, mixed background, mixed marriage and Ethiopians. Each session was concluded within three hours; this timeframe included the icebreaker activities. Regarding their age, 16 of them were born pre-1970 and 16 of them were born between 1985 and 1990. In all sessions, there were four participants from these two date-of-birth categories.

In terms of seating arrangement, I chose a circular format. This was done for three reasons. Firstly, it was done to facilitate a favorable environment for the participants to see and hear one another (Wong, 2008). Secondly, it provided a practical solution for issues associated with social stratification (Claridge, 2004). For instance, judging by my own cultural experience, women, disadvantaged groups, and younger people always sit behind men, older people, and superior members of the society. Against this background, the circular seating format provided the opportunity for all to sit equally and participate without being overpowered by their social station in the society. Thirdly, this seating model was essential to

(those from a mixed ethnic background) and the voice of the present (those who are mixed family by marriage). Furthermore, those who have formed a mixed family by marriage also have the seeds of tomorrow within them owing to their instrumental role: being a background for a mixed ethnic identity. From this perspective flows the following logic of ethnic identity. The notion of a mixed ethnic family necessarily must stand for both aspects of a mixed ethnic identity: background and family. As logic has it, today's mixed family is destined to become the next generation background. For a mixed ethnic family its membership with a mixed ethnic identity ends when the marriage dissolves. But if that marriage results in children, their membership to a mixed ethnic identity becomes permanent regardless of their marital status. The role of mixed ethnic marriage is indispensable. While I was being interviewed by multiple media sources, I took great care in explaining this very important wisdom repeatedly. I argued that without clear understanding of the logic behind the usage of ethnic identity, background, and family, one is certain to make logical fallacy. Finally, after hard work, my mixed ethnic wisdom became a frame of reference by journalists and the public when discussing a mixed ethnic identity.

¹¹⁵ It was the common practice of Ethiopian in pre-1991 governments. It has also continued to be the case in post-1991 Ethiopia. Their inclusion in this study was made from two analytical angles. First, there must be a sharp counter viewpoint for ethnic based identity. Second, their presence as a dataset makes it possible for me to obtain comparative information on their spatial experience as a marginalized group in the Kilil system to that of mixed-ethnic identity. Most of the urban dwellers also readily identify themselves with such a mindset in pre-1991 Ethiopia. Residents of Adama host quite a few of this belief. I decided to include them in the FGD sessions to contrast the urban-based identity to that of the Kilil one: single ethnic based identity.

remove the idea of ethnic privilege on account of seating arrangement. Since the four FGD sessions are composed of different ethnic identities, seating them in a circular manner helps them, and me, to feel equal regardless of one's ethnic identity. Before the participants entered the room, I affixed each participant's name on part of a chair that was designed as a rest for the back (Hennink, 2007). In that way, I was able to apply usable techniques for the realization of model one. In the first model, I paired participants within similar categories. In the second model, each participant sat next to a participant from a different category. In the third model, I wrote "mixed ethnic territory" on the first four chairs, "single ethnic territory" on the second last two chairs, and the "Ethiopian territory" on the last two chairs. In the fourth model participants entered the room and sat on any chair at random for the duration of the session. Most importantly, the four models were inspired by emic and etic perspectives (Berry,1989). The former perspective provides an insider viewpoint, while the latter permits an outsider to look in. To put it another way, an emic viewpoint seeks to study a given topic using a particular culture. In contrast, an etic approach allows interrogation of a given topic using different cultural settings. For example, when I paired participants from different groups¹¹⁶, I was employing etic approach. Contrastingly, the pairing of participants from a similar category permitted the exercise of an emic perspective. In sum, the socio-political and spatial condition of mixed ethnic people was studied by couching the four categories/identities- single, mixed background, mixed marriage and Ethiopians -, via both approaches¹¹⁷.

The four categories/identities, along with the three methods¹¹⁸ help us to test validity by way of a triangulation. "As a basic concept in the social sciences, triangulation refers to using multiple, different approaches to generate better understanding of a given theory or

¹¹⁶ A single ethnic group with a mixed one.

¹¹⁷ Emic categories: people with mixed ethnic background and mixed ethnic marriage. Contrastingly, etic categories were people with a single ethnic identity and national identity. The latter group rejects ethnic based identity as the basis of their identity.

¹¹⁸ In-depth interviews, FGDs, and auto-ethnography

phenomenon” (Turner, Cardinal, and Burton, 2017, p.243). Accordingly, the thesis incorporates multiple approaches to enhance validity and reliability through triangulation using the four seating arrangements, the four categories and the three methods. Additionally, effort was made to provide a comprehensive understanding of the impact of the two spatial systems and the plight of mixed ethnic people-their mothers- via participant observation. Here, the October 2019 riot and its aftermath, the mourning space, the *nu buna tetu* space, the feedbacks from my media appearance provided ample opportunities. In sum, the abovementioned multiple qualitative research techniques make it possible for the researcher to avoid potential biases that usually come with a reliance on a single method.

4.6. “Working the hyphen”

In ‘working the hyphen’, Fine (1994) writes, “qualitative researchers interested in self-consciously working the hyphen-that is, unpacking the notion of scientific neutrality, universal truths, and researcher dispassion-will be invited to imagine how we can braid critical and contextual struggle back into our text” (p.70-71). Working the hyphen begins by enabling me to embed myself within the research, rather than removing me from it under the guise of scientific neutrality. Moreover, this approach makes it possible for me to examine the nature of a relationship between two or more categories. For instance, I can examine the impact of pre- and post-1991 socio-political and spatial systems on my mixed ethnic category. This method is also a suitable technique to examine the tension and harmony in the ethnically categorized world of Ethiopia. It draws attention to the working of the hyphens. It lends to a given researcher the methodological ability to interrogate the underlining principle of the gender, ethnic and others forms of hyphen as discussed elsewhere in the thesis. For example, conceptual and methodological grounding of this thesis is situated in the critical arguments of multiple hyphens. These include gender, ethnicity, age, national identity, occupation, local, federal, value-laden, value-neutral, autoethnography, in-depth interviews, and FGD.

As the discussions throughout this chapter demonstrate, I presented a critical analysis by using multiple datasets and by working the hyphens. From this standpoint, “working the hyphen means creating occasions for the researcher(s)...to discuss what is and is not ...happening within the negotiated relations of whose story is being told, why, to whom, with what interpretation, and whose story is being shadowed, why, for whom, and with what consequence” (*ibid*, 1995, p.72). Just as Thomas’ wisdom above informed us, critical ethnography operates between two poles: what is and what could be, in order to shift the social system from the former to the latter. Similarly, critical analysis and its critical findings, under the influence of working the hyphens, arise by investigating the explicit and implicit mechanisms of a given socio-political and spatial system. Consequently, in both methodological approaches, a better understanding can only be reached after various positions of life have been investigated from multiple angles. For instance, when a FGD was organized along four categories, the hope was to obtain data from multiple positions of life. Similarly, when participants in one of the FGD sessions conceptualized name of places using physical features of the earth, plants or animals, their spatial view was presented by bringing the Kifle Hager and the Kilil spatial systems into dialogue with theirs (Burawoy, 1988).

The Kilil system was organized using a vertical-patrilineal line of the family unit as the basis of ethnic relationship. However, Ethiopia is home to families that have been voluntarily organized along a horizontal-bilateral descent model. In connection therewith, one quickly comes into the following understanding: an absence of dialogue between the two-family models in the Kilil system. This type of critical understanding finds its sharpest voice when one employs working the hyphen as a methodological lens. It is against this backdrop that the thesis employed working the hyphen as its datasets construction tool as well. With that said, let us examine some of the factors within the two datasets¹¹⁹: gender, date of birth

¹¹⁹ In-depth interviews and FGD.

and length of time in the city. With respect to gender, it was clear from the beginning that the vertical-patrilineal descent model was against the role of women as representative of their own family unit. By contrast, the horizontal-bilateral descent model fully acknowledges the rights of all women as representative of their family unit. Accordingly, I employed equal female and male representation in the dataset. Similarly, when recruiting participants for the research, I paid special attention to having diverse age groups. It served a critical role in the thesis by delivering data on both the presence and lack of dialogue between the two ethnic models across time and across multiple family unit sets. In this respect, I was able to bring into dialogue people between 38-year-olds all the way up to 94-year-olds. Regarding the length of time in the city, great effort was made to bring a dialogue between short and long-time city residents. In terms of age, I excluded 14-year-olds and younger. However, there was no exclusionary criterion based on old age, as long as that person can communicate¹²⁰ about the subject matter. As a result, the data benefited from having a residency time range of 17-years to 59-years.

Mixed ethnic identity presents itself as a sensible example, in theory or in practice, for the working of the ethnic and gender hyphens. It does that by working the hyphens without a discriminatory hierarchal system. From this insight flows the following wisdom: the more equality between gender and ethnic hyphens, the more responsive the system becomes to discriminatory situations. As such, I took very time-consuming recruiting efforts to represent both genders equally and to make the ethnic background of research participants as diverse as possible.

4.7. On Positionality

While gathering data, particular attention was given to my positionality, because “knowledge is valid when it includes an acknowledgment of the knower’s specific position in any context...” (Maher & Tetreaul, 1993, p. 118). My positions as an ‘object’ of this research

¹²⁰ Meaning, so long has no age-related mental illness: amnesia.

is based on multiple hyphens. These include being an offspring of mixed ethnic marriage, a person of Ethiopian background, and a researcher. These have all been employed in a dialectical manner. In doing so, I was able to avoid Blumer's (1969) warning that puts emphasis on the initial position of the researcher and on the lack of familiarity with the chosen study area itself (as cited in Uwe Flick, 2006). In my case, I was deeply embedded and familiar with the very topic under investigation before the research started, so I was able to collect data and analyzed it by working the hyphen as a subject and as a researcher.

The Kilil system operates by creating a binary opposition between insiders and outsiders along exclusive ethnic categories. This system works against the principle of working of the hyphen by making the ethnic hyphen an obstacle for dialogue. Upon reaching my field site, I employed multiple techniques to minimize the impact of the insider/outsider binary opposition and its socio-political and spatial impacts on my work and on me: as person and as a researcher (Simmel & Wolff, 1950; Clifford & Marcus, 1986; Dwyer & Buckle, 2009; Ergun & Erdemir, 2010; Cui, 2012; Sherif, 2016). Hence, I devoted considerable social time¹²¹ to work the multiple hyphens between the people and me. I worked the binary grid using public transportation systems, coffee houses, city squares, funerals, weddings, public holidays, marketplaces, government offices (federal and Kilil branches), school grounds, hospitals, universities, colleges, hotels, restaurants, warehouses, factories, drinking houses, bus depots, place of worships, kebel offices¹²², police stations, barber shops, hair salons, street corners, leafleting events¹²³, and so on.

¹²¹ From the first day until my last day in the city.

¹²² It is the smallest administrative unit of the government in the country.

¹²³ I administered leafleting using multiple sites: houses, offices, street corners, marketplaces, public transit systems, etc. Over 1000 papers were distributed across the city.

In all encounters, I introduced myself as a researcher¹²⁴ and briefly explained my research topic to either one or multiple audiences. This allowed me to make myself and my work known to the community by word-of-mouth¹²⁵ as an effective tool. It also enabled me to collect general data about my topic from their reply. Most of the replies were made using the following statement: “You came at the right time to do this kind of research work. But please be careful, because Dr. Abiy is yet to have full control of the administrative apparatus around the country”¹²⁶. From their responses, I was able to infer the following insights: carrying out a research project is possible, but people are still worried about the negative political repercussions. In dealing with this vital issue, I took up three measures during a recruiting period: showing them my York University credentials, using codes to write their names and phone numbers, and explaining issue of confidentiality thoroughly. Moreover, my diaspora¹²⁷ status was a big help in assuring them on the security of their data. As they see it, Ethiopians in the diaspora have played a critical role in bringing Dr. Abiy to power. Hence, they felt relatively safer to work with a diaspora researcher, rather than working with a local one. As such, they seem to place their trust in an ‘outsider’ rather than an ‘insider’ due to the toxic socio-political and spatial environment. Consequently, I was treated like an outsider in some situations, while being treated simultaneously as an insider for speaking the same language as them. Also, I had the same look as them, ate the same food as them, travelled by the public transport like them, observed public holidays like them, dressed like them, showed concern on the wellbeing of the people and the country like them, and so forth. In sum, I led a

¹²⁴ I also shared with them a family connection to the city. My own father lived in the city during the military regime. While there, he held top government position. Members of my extended family still live in the city and raising a lovely mixed family.

¹²⁵ In addition to snowball sampling technique, leafleting, word-of-mouth was a very helpful technique in helping me to recruit research participants.

¹²⁶ The word “country” indicated to me, as opposed to the city, most the people see Ethiopia as theirs and would like Abiy’s government to have full control over it.

¹²⁷ Additionally, my perceived upper-class position and academic standing (PhD candidate) played insider/outsider role in some situations.

very peaceful life¹²⁸ while collecting data in the city by working the hyphens from multiple social positions.

4.8. Conclusion

In adopting a methodology, a researcher is expected to assemble coherent frameworks in the service of data collection. This is so because without data one cannot hope to advance knowledge in whatever topic one seeks to address. With that knowledge in mind, a tremendous effort was discharged in organizing three methodological approaches: auto-ethnography, in-depth interviews, and FGD. By anchoring the three approaches in critical ethnography, data was collected on the impact of the Kilil and the Kifle Hager on both people with mixed ethnic identity and single ethnic identity. Critical ethnography strives to expose the unrecognized biases in a given societal system. Correspondingly, this research aimed at exposing the hidden cost of working the socio-political and spatial hyphens negatively in Ethiopia for women, mixed and single ethnicity. This research also offered alternative socio-political and spatial approaches thereof by working the ethnic and gender hyphens positively.

¹²⁸ Except, the weeks of October 20, 2019, ordeal.

Chapter 5: A Sense of Belonging

5.1. Introduction

Since time immemorial, a child begins life here on Earth by joining an existing group either by birth, by adoption, by surrogate mothers and so forth. This is so because a child by virtue of its nature is incapable of providing food, clothing, shelter, and hygiene for its biological existence. It is unimaginable to expect a given child engaging in the act of feeding, clothing, sheltering, and cleaning itself without the assistance of a caregiver in the form of a family: immediate, extended, and foster parents. Owing to the natural needs of the child, the function of a caregiver becomes an inescapable moral obligation for all those involved. Once a given caregiving act is conceptualized in such a fashion, it makes it possible for a child to receive continuous support from its caregiver. Whenever a given morally grounded caregiving task is performed on a continuous basis, it becomes a fertile ground for the cultivation and development of emotional attachment between a caregiver and a child. With time the relationship between a caregiver and receiver turns that moral obligation and emotional attachment into a sense of belonging¹²⁹. Once the relationship reaches that stage of maturation, the receiver of care becomes fully aware of its belongingness sense to that caregiving group. Bearing in mind that, this thesis views a family unit as the primary example of a caregiving group. It also sees a family unit as a social instrument for a sense of belonging.

As Baumeister & Leary (1995) inform us, “human beings are fundamentally and pervasively motivated by a need to belong, that is, by a strong desire to form and maintain enduring interpersonal attachments” (p.522). In this sense, “a lack of belongingness should constitute severe deprivation and cause a variety of ill effects” (ibid, 1995, p.497). Recognizing this to be the case, Maslow (1968) conceptualized belongingness as one of

¹²⁹ In the Oxford dictionary, a sense of belonging is defined as “The state or feeling of belonging to a particular group” <https://www.lexico.com/definition/belongingness> For Bhimji (2008), the definition of belonging “encompasses citizenship, nationhood, gender, ethnicity and emotional dimensions of status or attachment” (p. 414).

human needs in his five-stage hierarchical model. As Rowe (2005) puts it, “we are always already being hailed by our various (be)longings from the moment of our birth...*and*¹³⁰... the site of our belonging constitutes how we see the world, what we value, who we are(becoming)” (p.16). Considering that, it is imperative for the survival of mixed ethnic people to have mixed familial relationships as a basis of their identity. Unfortunately, the EPRDF’s inspired institutional arrangement is forcing them to dissolve their mixed family unit. Consequently, mixed ethnic people are suffering from socio-political¹³¹ and spatial¹³² dislocation. In sum, a lack of belongingness is causing them pain and agony owing to the EPRDF’s unrelatable ethnic-based system.

Thus far, we have discussed the journey of a child from the womb to a group setting and the function of a particular group in the life of that child. We also qualified a family unit as one of the representatives of that group. Additionally, a sense of belonging was discussed from multiple angles¹³³. Let us now examine the lived- experience of a mixed ethnic family unit in Ethiopia under the Kifle Hager and Kilil systems.

5.2. The Family Unit

The 1995 Constitution was crafted by giving all sovereign power to Ethiopia’s ethnic groups. However, when one examines this public document through mixed ethnicity, one is certain to find gender and ethnic based dislocation as its permanent feature. As such, this social contract makes a mixed ethnic family unit the first and permanent casualty of its

¹³⁰ Italics added for emphasis.

¹³¹ “The politics of belonging” as Yuval-Davis (2006) views it, “includes also struggles around the determination of what is involved in belonging, in being a member of a community, and of what roles specific social locations and specific narratives of identity play in this” (p.205).

¹³² As Herslund (2021) puts it “human geographers were the first to put a sense of belonging to a place on the agenda. They took a phenomenological approach to place in order to give value to the personal experience and emotional bonds people could have with place” (p.234).

¹³³ “...the expression ‘I belong here’” Antonsich (2010) writes, “remains first and foremost a personal, intimate feeling of being ‘at home’ in a place (place-belongingness) it is also unavoidably conditioned by the working of power relations (politics of belonging). It is for this reason that...empirical studies on feelings of territorial belonging should necessarily take into consideration both dimensions: to focus only on personal dimension risks treating belonging as an individualist matter, independent from the social context within which its immersed; to focus only on the social dimension risks essentializing belonging as the exclusive product of social(izing) discourses and practices” (p. 652-653). Since this thesis address belongingness from a socio-political and spatial angle, it fits well within Antonsich’s analytical framework.

inconsistency. It does that by dislocating mixed ethnic people from their family unit. For this reason, critical analysis will be offered here to examine the multifaceted impacts of institutional arrangement via a family unit.

According to the 1995 Ethiopian constitution, the family is “the natural and fundamental unit of society and is entitled to protection by the society and the state” (Article 34 (3)). This article makes the family the foundation of society and the state. Consequently, it was given an assurance for its well-being from two vital stakeholders: the state and society. However, when participant #9 was asked about his lived experience in relation to article 34 (3), his reply fell far from the claims of the text. To him, family in general and mixed ones, in particular, were treated in the following manner:

Thank God for allowing me to breathe a bit of fresh air under the new PM, after surviving precariously under the former two previous regimes... During the socialist regime, a family existed only in theory. In practice, the regime presented itself as the father and the state... it was presented as the mother of everyone. Thus, they would not hesitate to go into a given family compound to snatch the father, the mother, and the children at will and used them to whatever purpose they see fit...no one has any say in it... The regime of EPRDF made the family the exclusive property of a single ethnic group... just like in the previous one... their decision was made by the governing body... As result, my children and I were asked to join my ethnic group and the mother of my children, and my dear wife was treated as an anomaly in our midst... This made us all feel we do not matter as an individual, as a family unit, as a neighbor, as a fellow country being...

Participant #9's sentiment was also equally shared by participant #21, an elderly woman. As she sees it, family life under the emperor treated mothers more fairly than the last two regimes. When asked how the two regimes differ from the emperor's regime, she explained it in the following manner:

Under the emperor's regime, women were treated as a link between two families and two different ethnic groups. Accordingly, I felt a sense of belonging to my family just as my own mother did with hers before me... Then came the socialist regime that made all feel like a private servant to itself and to the state...But with the arrival of EPRDF I ceased to exist as a member of a family and as the link for my own family unit to link them up with my ethnic group... My own children were told to identify with their father's ethnic group only. This made me feel like not a mother to my own children and

a wife to my own husband, but a burden to them all. Ever since then, tears have become the regular feature of my chins ...

If one tries to see the texts of the constitution through the tears of that mother, one will quickly find that the gap between the text and the lived experience of mothers from a mixed ethnic background. However, to the people from a single ethnic background, the gap remains hidden from view until the mixed ethnic case surfaces. In my study, a revelation came to a person from a single ethnic background when that person found himself in a focus group discussion setting. In FGD #1 participant #3 said the following:

Being young and not actually sitting down in a formal discussion group such as this one to discuss about issues like the one we are discussing now; I never knew the magnitude of their pain... I was not also aware of the implication of article 34 (3) to the people from a mixed background... It is truly unfair to make mothers feel like a burden to their own family... I certainly would not want to see my mother in such a light. To me she is my mother, not a burden to me and my family... I bet you this article was put there without consulting the types of families on the ground.

As participant #3 was ending his remarks, another participant (#8) from the same FGD added the following:

At least the socialist regime did not bother to govern itself and the people using a constitutional framework... They did not have one the first fifteen years of their reign and they got one two or three years before losing power... What is the point of having a constitution if that constitution does not treat each and every family type fairly and equally? If they accept a family as the fundamental unit of the society, then govern us all in such a manner.

Participant #8 in FGD #1 was outspoken on this matter throughout the discussion. When asked how he knew so much about the pain and anguish of people from that angle, he mentioned his own aunt as a point of reference.

My aunt married during the socialist regime, and she got four kids from that marriage... The government that came after it made my aunt's husband lose his job due to his ethnic identity... He was a teacher, and he was told to go back and teach in his ethnic group area...you know to his Kilil... But he was born and raised in my aunt's Kilil and feels at home in there ... So, they moved to the capital city seeing it as a neutral place and soon after they moved to the capital city, their marriage collapsed on the account of ethnic tension... My aunt has managed to come back to her former city and died a few years later... they lost their marriage and we lost them because of the EPRDF's Kilil based ethnic politics...

His extended family story clearly questioned the validity of the text since the constitution proclaims family protection by the society and the state as an entitlement issue in Ethiopia. The loss of life and the collapse of marriage due to ethnic strain and the loss affiliation with members of an extended family circle show how life on the ground made to live far from the proclamation of entitlement for protection. As the article puts it, there are no ifs, ands, or buts when it comes to the matter of protecting a family as a social unit. It says clearly that by accompanying protection with the powerful word of entitlement. But its constitutional power felt vacuous by participant #24 as she was made to suffer greatly on account of her family background. This is how she puts her situation:

Being born to a military family, I grew up thinking about how patriotic our family is as my own father served in the military. My father lived in all parts of the country, as the military had stationed him from one part of the country to the next ... He met my mother while performing his duty in the far corner of the country... I was born in another part of the country. That gave us three hometowns. But after the demise of the socialist regime, we lost our hometowns... During the era of the EPRDF, we were told our three hometowns not to belong to us, due to the new spatial arrangement between hometowns and “language groups” ... This spatial arrangement made us feel like a family without a hometown. Both my parents being born outside the alleged area of their respective ethnic group, we felt completely homeless. I was also told that the place of my birth does not belong to me, but to another ethnic group as well ...

Due to the nature of her father’s occupation, they felt the whole country to be theirs. They felt completely at ease with the idea of three hometowns, but the political orientation of the EPRDF denied their family such heritage by making them foreign in their place of birth. She called this feeling the “ultimate expression of foreignness”. She continues: ‘this sort of feeling was far from making us see the protection of the state and society as a constitutionally grounded form of entitlement... I see it as solid evidence for its absence’. As the story of her family attests, occupation in the socialist regime functioned as a space maker for a given individual and family. By contrast, under the EPRDF, occupation was removed from playing such a role. This made it possible for language to become the primary instrument for assigning space to people. Thus, families were forced to renounce the place they called home

and moved to a new place in which they had yet to adjust. “My family were forcefully displaced”, said participant #14 in FGD (#1), “from southeast Ethiopia to Adama while my mother was pregnant”. She continues:

She gave birth to me here in Adama. I grew up here in the city and went to school here. After I graduated with a college diploma, finding employment became the hardest thing to do... I would go every morning to a public square to read job advertisement from the job posting billboard...I rarely reach the level of the interview session... In one of those interviews a while ago, I was told that I was not employable. That interview session was a heart-breaking moment for me. I am an IT specialist and was told I was not employable on account of the Kilil-based language requirement... I was taught in Amharic and that is the only language I know. This is my city and Amharic is spoken widely in the city, but it failed to land me a job that I was trained for...

Just after she uttered the last sentence, there was a profound silence in the room. Although the silence lasted a little over a minute as it was indicated to me by the timer on my voice recorder. Participant #2 broke the silence by approaching the topic from a different angle. He explained his side of the story in the following fashion:

I grew up speaking three languages¹³⁴ fluently and have basic listening capacity to the fourth one¹³⁵... I learned Gurage from my father, Afaan Oromo from my mother, Amharic from the school/home and Somli language working at my father’s store and living among them in southeast Ethiopia... In the early part of the 1990s, our store was vandalized twice and burned once... We left that part of Ethiopia and settled in Adama. Few years after we moved to Adama my father opened a store again ... Since the store was new, business was slow... I looked desperately to get a job within the public and private sectors to lessen the financial burden on my family. But I was unable to find a job owing to my mixed ethnic heritage rather than what the case was with the previous speaker: language deficiency.

As it is indicated by the two cases, article 34 (3) does not protect families from internal displacement and discrimination. While both participants shared similar experiences with respect to internal displacement matters and joblessness, there is a distinct difference between their cases. Participant #2 was unable to get a job due to his mixed ethnic heritage. Specifically, he fell out of favour on account of his father’s ethnic affiliation. By contrast, participant #14 found herself jobless due to a language deficiency. While she registered

¹³⁴ Amharic, Afaan Oromo and Gurage

¹³⁵ Somali

ethnic affiliation on her father's side to an Oromo ethnic group, failing to speak Afaan Oromo made her unemployable. She also claims strong association to the city by virtue of being born there. But the Kilil system does not take into consideration place of birth as a requirement in getting a job. As both cases revealed to us, under the Kilil system, families find themselves unprotected by the constitution in securing a space to call home and make a living.

5.3. Leave Our City

On October 23, 2019, I found myself as a victim and primary witness of ethnic violence and its associated impacts which resulted in death and property destruction. This unfortunate situation lasted for almost a week, but the terror and fear that came with it lasted much longer than that. It was started by an alleged activist by the name of Jawar Mohammed. Apparently on Tuesday night, October 22, 2019, Jawar posted a message on his Facebook page¹³⁶. In that message, he informed his followers about his life being in danger. On Wednesday morning, not knowing what had transpired over Tuesday night, I woke up at 6am and got myself ready for work. I eventually headed towards the gate of the hotel around 8am. As I was approaching the gate of the hotel, I was asked by a security guard, who was stationed at the gate to protect the hotel. By that time, I was staying in the same hotel for several weeks and had never been asked for by any of the security people about the nature of my work. I passed through that gate every morning countless times. So, when that security official asked me to tell her where I am heading to, I was a bit surprised and bewildered at the same time. After a moment of silence, I said I am heading to conduct an interview with someone in the center of the city. Her reply to my answer sent shivers down my spine. She expressed herself in her motherly tongue in the following manner:

¹³⁶ <https://www.france24.com/en/20191025-dozens-killed-in-anti-abiy-protests-ethnic-violence-in-ethiopia>;
<https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/04/01/ethiopia-justice-needed-deadly-october-violence>

My son, this is not a day for you to conduct your business. Please return back to your room and do some work from your room. Let alone for you, it is not even safe for us all. The whole city is on fire... did you not hear about it on the Facebook¹³⁷?

I quickly indicated my ignorance about the situation and not being active on Facebook for quite some time. I remembered watching the news on TV that very morning while having breakfast and did not see any report on what that security guard informed me about. Since she was more informed about the situation than myself, I asked her what happened. As she was coming to work that morning, she saw a group of young kids and youth roaming around the city carrying machetes, stabbing knives, sticks, and stones. They were denouncing the government and *Nefitenya*¹³⁸. Also, they were calling for alleged settlers¹³⁹ to leave the city. After hearing this horror-ridden information, two things entered my mind quickly and simultaneously: fear and opportunity. One part of my mind was ordering me to go back to my room to save myself from danger. The other part was forcefully ordering me to utilize this opportunity by leaving the hotel compound to capture the depth and magnitude of the dreaded situation as it happened. For a few minutes, I stood at the gate with that mother figure security official and contemplating on these diametrically opposing thoughts.

Even before putting a face and a body to the chanters, I heard them loudly saying the following: “death to the government, death to the *Nefitenya*, death to the settlers”. Upon hearing those horrifying slogans, I walked further from the gate accompanied by a feeling of terror. I have never felt, in my entire life, such a chilling feeling of that magnitude, before hearing those terrifying messages. I walked back further from the gate but not wanting to miss the opportunity to put a face and a body to the protesters. I stopped at a distance that

¹³⁷ Later that week I asked her if she had a Facebook account because mothers of her age (approaching 60) do not engage with Facebook. She said she does not have one and does not even own a phone with the capacity to run such apps. She thought that since I was a resident of Canada, I would know how engage with those kinds of apps. I told her that due to the heavy workload and not wanting to influence myself by all types of information that is coming out of Facebook pages, I would stay away from it until I finished my work in the city.

¹³⁸ While this term describes a person armed with some sort of weapon, it is now used as a derogatory term to demonize Amhara’s ethnic group.

¹³⁹ Amharic: *mete*

afforded me the capacity to visually examine them. As the chanting got louder, a lot of people who managed to get inside the compound in search of safety run back from the gate. I stood at a safe distance waiting for their arrival with my heart beating heavily in my chest. The guards stood firmly at the gate and it remained open. When the protesters finally arrived at the gate, I saw some of them armed with machetes and others with stabbing knives and sticks. There was no one among them who carried a firearm. At the gate, the chanting continued to grow louder and louder in three languages: Afaan Oromo, Amharic and English. Sensing an imminent danger, the guards pressed forward to speak with them. The protesters demanded all the people to leave the hotel and people from the Oromo background to follow them. The woman who saved me from this terrible ordeal that very morning came running toward me and said: “please go further away from the gate and make sure you are not seen by them”. As I was retreating further, I saw them once again. They were very young and looked very agitated. They were over fifty¹⁴⁰ in number.

My room was five minutes walking distance from the reception desk. However, on that day, my body was sweating profusely, I had a very painful muscle tension and I had goose bumps all over my body. Those five minutes journey turned into eternity. Beforehand, entering my room was an enjoyable thing to do. But on that very morning I was truly ceased by fear at the prospect of entering it. I worried about someone hiding inside my room armed with a machete. So, I opened the door and I stood for few minutes outside as I was trying hard to scan the room from a safe distance with weak concentration. For the first time in my entire life, I cursed myself for not arming myself with a semi-automatic gun. Finally, with the little energy that I had left in me, I entered my room. Upon finding it safe from harm, I quickly collected all my field work notes and USB drive, other research materials, and left the room quickly. I took those things, along with my laptop and recording device, and went to

¹⁴⁰ When I saw them arriving at the gate, I quickly started counting. I was able to count to fifty, but their number slowly grew larger while they were at the gate.

the far end of the hotel grounds. Being guided by my past few weeks experience in the hotel, I quickly identified a safe space to hide all my belongings. While I was in the process of hiding my things, I tried hard to reassure myself by saying repeatedly: “my belongings will be safe for now sitting far from shrubs and bushes”. I was worried about the protesters setting the hotel on fire and my materials being consumed by their heinous acts.

While I was running from place to place in search of a safe space to hide my things, I remembered hearing my phone ringing few times. I checked all the missed calls as soon as I secured a safe space. I received thirty calls in total. Twenty of them were from family members who were living in the capital city, in Gonder, or Adama itself. After going over my missed calls, I rested at the patio. In there, I shared a big table with a few guys and asked them the following question: are you guys the guest of the hotel or using its patio as a safe space from the imminent danger that is lurking outside the main gate and across the city? Their answer was in the latter. I followed up by asking them if they lived close by or far from the hotel. All but one said they lived far from the hotel. By this time, we were approaching mid-afternoon and we all felt the need to eat. While we were waiting for the food to arrive, I formally introduced myself and asked everyone their respective names. In doing so, my hope was to get a glimpse of their ethnic background. But my effort produced no result on that front because all the names were typically biblical names. Identifying their ethnic background using language did not help either since all of them spoke Amharic with no accent. I looked for clues from their skin tone, but their skin tone was like mine¹⁴¹. But the question remained: who were they? What was their ethnic background, single or mixed? What brought them to this part of the city in the early morning hours? What type of work do they do for a living? Is this their first terrible ordeal, or have they had an experience with rioters previously? So, I waited for our lunch to arrive and to reengage with those burning questions after we were

¹⁴¹ Dark brown. Ethiopians do have, depending on geographical area, deep black, light brown, medium tan, pale skin tone, etc.

done eating. In the meantime, I told them my experience with the Occupy Wall Street Movement. I used that as an icebreaker. It worked very well by getting from them what I needed the most: a friendly and engaging conversational environment.

Ethiopian traditional food does not require utensils. It is eaten using one's fingers¹⁴². Most Ethiopians use their right hands to eat¹⁴³. The traditional serving method is a communal platter¹⁴⁴. The communal platter itself is covered with a national staple food: *injera*¹⁴⁵. From the living room to the dining table of a given restaurant, *injera*-based dishes are usually served with a common platter. After putting *injera* on a communal platter, the order taker applies various types of stews on top of it¹⁴⁶. Of course, the restaurant patron can choose whatever dishes she or he likes. Once the food arrives¹⁴⁷, one tears off a piece of *injera* to scoop up the stews. While feasting on a common platter, it is a common custom for diners to practice *Gursha*¹⁴⁸: feeding others. So, I waited eagerly for the arrival of our order to engage with this custom. The act of putting food in other's mouth is highly regarded as a symbol of love and friendship. *Gursha* speaks about love and friendship among family members, neighbors, colleagues, acquaintances, strangers etc. Therefore, it is done everyone since it affords for one the ability to demonstrate, in an informal manner, a vital service of good-fellowship. I felt the need to demonstrate my love and friendship for them via *Gursha* and was able to do that while sharing a common platter with them. After executing such a delicate task, I also received a *Gursha*. I believe this traditional lovely gesture helped me to

¹⁴² See Appendix 10.

¹⁴³ See Appendix 9.

¹⁴⁴ See Appendix 5.

¹⁴⁵ Injera is about sixty centimeters in diameter and has the shape of a flatbread, with its signature quality of sponginess. A good *injera* should have a lot of tiny craters and should also be very thin.

¹⁴⁶ See Appendix 6.

¹⁴⁷ It is a common custom to make an *Enibla* call. *Enibla* is an Amharic term, and the literal meaning is: please join me so we can eat this meal together. Whenever Ethiopians sit to eat in public (i.e., restaurant) or private space (i.e., home), if people are around, it is customary to make *Enibla* call. See Appendix 7 & 8 for demonstration of *Enibla* in pictures.

¹⁴⁸ See Appendix 11,12 and 13

relax and chat freely with them. Before we finished eating, we chatted about the current prime minister, the city, each other's academic background, and more.

After our lunch concluded, I gave them more information about my research and asked for their free consent to participate in a formal manner. All of them gave their positive affirmation on that as well. So, I began by asking one of the unemployed what brought him to this part of the city early this morning. He said:

...look...For the past four years I have been leaving my house early in the morning hours looking for work. I have a degree in finance but so far, no job is coming my way. My degree is from the capital city, but I was born and raised here... I love the city and my parents are from the city so I would love to live and work here...

Before finishing up his thoughts, the second unemployed person cut him off by waving his hand from left to right. He shook his head in a similar way but faster with his hands. When the speaker noticed that he stopped in the middle of his sentence by accompanying his act with a sly smile. Having given the opportunity to speak, the second guy added the following remarks:

What is the point of leaving the city? I did that right after my graduation from the School of Management Science... I travelled between the capital city and another city in search of work, but no jobs were to be found in my area...

Having heard the previous two speakers' remarks, the third unemployed person asked everyone to recall the life of the city for the past five years or so. For his part, he said the following:

...few years after I left high school, I got a job as a waiter at a restaurant. After doing that for few years, I got myself into the construction industry as a day labourer. But for the past five years, that industry dried up due to ethnic-based violence here in the city and across the country...My family and I do not feel safe here anymore, but we have no financial means to relocate to the capital city... My only older brother is jobless with a college diploma, and I am jobless with a high school diploma... I left home this morning hoping to look for a job and this horrible thing happened...

Right after his last sentence, silence took command of our table. I believed his last sentence reminded everyone the terrible ordeal that hovered above us at that very moment. Sure enough, one of the employees who was listening to the whole conversation attentively

began to breathe hard and long. His style of breathing summoned everyone's attention toward his seat. When we fixed our eyes on him, he picked up a glass of water and took a couple of sips from it and began to say:

I am truly feeling a severe chest pain right now... The closest house to my kids' school is my cousin's place... when this thing happened my cousin went quickly to the school and brought my two kids to her home. Few hours later my wife made it there safely by the grace of God ... my wife speaks Afaan Oromo, and it is also her ethnic background. I came from an Amhara ethnic background, and, unlike my wife, I only speak Amharic.... I met my wife here in the city thirteen years ago and got married here in the city two years after we met. After getting severely beaten in one of the previous ethnic-centered uprisings, I do not feel safe in the city anymore...I have no money to relocate my family to the capital city...

After saying that, he took a pause and emptied the water from his glass. Following that, his hard and long breathing came back and took control of the movement of his mouth. The speaker who came after him was the lone female in our group. While others were speaking, she was listening to them attentively with watery eyes. Every now and then, her tears would leave the socket of her eyes and rolled down on her chin slowly. Whenever that happens, sometimes she meets it with a soft tissue and other times she let it dry up on her chin. Whenever she engaged with the latter act, her face always sent an absent-minded image. An astute observer can tell right away that her mind was not there with us, but thinking about something far from our table. The sad look in her face never failed to give a hint about the nature of the content in her mind: unhappiness. While I was listening attentively to the sad story of others, I would recast my eyes from the current speaker to her direction to empathize with her with my compassionate facial expression. Whenever she took out a soft tissue to wipe her tears, she went from a huddled position to sitting straight up. She said:

I do not feel safe in the city either... My government-issued identification card enlisted me as Oromo. Yes, I am half Oromo, but that is not the whole story of my life. I am carrying our 2-month-old fetus, half Gurage, in my womb. I have been thinking about the welfare of my child in my womb, myself, my first kid, and my husband... Since this morning, those horrible people were openly and loudly denouncing my husband, my fetus, my offspring, and my mother... A few years ago, I heard about a pregnant woman being killed in a similar ethnic-centered uprising. So, I said to you my friend not only

an adult person like you are in danger of losing their life, but our fetuses are not safe from the rioters either...

Unemployed person #3 Said:

What is this world coming to when you cannot even treat a fetus as an innocent life anymore...? Where are we heading? Here on earth or hell.... Said unemployed person #2. If this is not hell, then hell has no meaning for me...

By this time, the sun was no longer with us. A moon was in command of the sky. I looked around and the patio was sparsely occupied. I asked the waiter where most people go.

He said:

Some of the people, who live close to the hotel, left before it got too dark. I guess they probably left after hearing of the arrival of the military toward the late afternoon. But others who live far from here have already rented rooms here... The hotel general manager not wanting to take a risk with our lives, gave an order for all the hotel's staff to stay here at the hotel for the night... I was worried about my elderly mother when this horrible thing erupted in the morning... thank God, she is safe now, having left to stay in the house right next to ours. That house belongs to an elderly Oromo woman. I gave them a call countless times throughout the day to check up on them. So far, they are safe there...

All the people at my table were also doing the same thing throughout the day. Two of them were receiving text messages and the others were receiving calls. I asked two of them why they were receiving more texts than calls. They told me that their respective neighbours were texting to update them on the welfare of their parents. I asked if this was some sort of neighbourhood watch club. They said yes. They said after the last melee, some people in the neighbourhood set up such informal crime watch groups to care for each other's welfare. After I became aware of this, the biggest question that came to mind was the role of the police force in the city. This vital question truly has puzzled me up until now. Because ever since I got to the city, I took their constant and visible presence as a safety net for myself. While I was preparing to travel to the city of Adama, my immediate and extended family members tried very hard to make me stay in Addis Ababa and carry out my research task from there. They always said to me Oromia Kilil is not safe for anyone. Sometimes they added: including for the Oromo themselves. "Why are you troubling yourself with a thought

of going there”? “Why can’t you do it from here”? I always reply that I am doing an ethnographic study and I must go there to observe people in their real-life environment. I need to interview them while breathing the social, spatial, political, economic atmosphere. Honestly, I never expected nor anticipated to find myself in a terror-filled environment that I found myself in since the arrival of the rioters at my hotel gate.

My greatest fear since arriving in Adama was being robbed by local thieves and pick pocket. I was told about their presence by more than a few people since the first week of my stay in the city. I always take a serious mental note every day where the police are stationed and walking around. While I was walking or being driven across the city to carry out the task of the day, I always saw them walking up and down a given street in a group of four or two. I also used to see them standing at each busy intersection. Whenever I used to see them, I used to feel a sense of relief from my daily worries of being robbed of my laptop, recording device, or my cell phone. The other safe space for me from such worries was my hotel compound. The main gate is always protected by more than three guards. one of them is also able to see more guards strategically stationed in the interior part of the compound. Therefore, whenever I passed through the gate, I usually walked with ease and comfort. Once inside the compound, I usually went straight to the main patio to completely release myself from my daily fear of being robbed. After the incident, I was still protected by hotel security. However, the police force that was supposed to protect me from harm had surrendered the streets to these death squads. One day, the local police force that I used to see every morning upon exiting the hotel gate was not there anymore. I thought to myself “Oh God”! Have I made a massive mistake for leaving the hotel compound every morning for the past several weeks, foolishly believing that the police force was the protector of the city? I must and need to investigate that as soon as possible after leaving the safety of my hotel space. While I was contemplating that, the clocked passed the midnight hour. The people who shared that very

table and patio with me had all departed from the patio; I decided to collect my notes from the table and headed to my room. I left my laptop and recording device in the safe place where I hid them since Wednesday morning. I asked one of the security guards to accompany me to my room and entered my room safely.

Adama is known for the hustle and bustle of a city life. But on Thursday morning, I saw with my own eyes a profound silence reigning over the city streets. Where did the people go? Most importantly, where did the death squad go? I posed these questions quickly to the security guard who was standing on my right. While he was informing me on what had transpired over the night, I saw a four-wheel military vehicle going up the road with a mounting machine gun. Eight stern looking military personnel sat on the left and right side of the mounting machine gun. A few minutes later, a Humvee-looking military vehicle passed us going in the opposite direction. Its 50-Cal machine gun was commanded by a single person. I was unable to tell the number of military officers in the Humvee. This vehicle was equipped with very small windows on its sides. The guy, who was behind the 50-Cal, was protected by a metal sheet all sides. I turned toward the guard and said: the military is finally here. He replied:

Yes, they are here. We do need them badly... The police force in the city is useless. In fact, some of them take part in destroying property... they facilitate for the rioters to stab and to kill people at will... In one of those uprising few years back, a lot of people in all parts of the city were stabbed and murdered. Meanwhile the police force watched the whole thing from a distance. I am an Oromo, and it makes me sick when I see and hear the loss of life and property in my name...I never imagined it to be this bad during the socialist regime, let alone seeing crazy events like this ... it seems like now, death and destruction are becoming the vicious cycle of our lovely... I thought with our new Prime Minster things were supposed to be different ...but here we are now hearing and witnessing death and destruction openly in broad daylight...

There were hidden unhappy feelings sitting behind these poverty-stricken but friendly faces. They used mildly tempered words to keep down those sorrowful feelings from surfacing. However, now those feelings managed to occupy the expressions on their faces. In short, those internal grief-stricken feelings have become the basis of people's language and

facial expressions. One sees and hears them openly, at the patio and across the hotel's massive ground as the day sky was progressing slowly into the night. One of those grief-stricken faces was coming my way from the direction of the patio as I was turning my back to the gate. The pregnant woman that I shared a table with and others on Wednesday was heading to the gate as I was walking away from it. Judging by the fast movement of her feet, one can quickly tell a sense of urgency compelling those steps to hurriedly touch and depart from the surface of the earth. So, I stopped walking and waited for those quick steps to reach me. By then, I was few meters away from the gate and then she reached me right away. After exchanging the customary morning greetings with her, I asked where she was heading to. Her reply was home. I asked her why she could not wait until noon, because I only saw a few military vehicles and I was told that more are coming soon. She said:

I cannot afford to wait half a day...I need to get home as soon as possible because my son is ill and was vomiting and crying all night long...my husband kept that hidden from me yesterday...I had miscarriage once and cannot afford another one...I need to get home right away rather than waiting here in pain and anguish. I had enough of that yesterday and over the night...

I waited for her to pause and plead with her to have breakfast here at hotel before she passed through the gate. She said she had no stomach for that. I was hoping to keep her there using breakfast as an excuse until the street outside our gate was filled with military vehicles. Being told a moment ago about the uselessness of the city's police force, I plead repeatedly for her to stay, but to no avail. Finally, I stood there helplessly watching as she passed through the gate to face an imminent danger alone for the sake of her fetus and offspring.

I spent Thursday morning at the patio, listening attentively for the imminent arrival of the death squads. Instead of hearing them, I began to hear other scary multiple sounds. Some people at the patio were able to identify them as the sounds of a machinegun and the other the sounds of semi-automatic. Some of the shots were very loud and others were muffled. The shots were heard going off sometimes at a rapid interval and other times in a delayed manner.

As the sounds of the machine guns continued to vibrate through the air waves of the city, I observed people at the patio nodding and smiling. Finally, a guy at the far end of the patio who had on a big hat and blue shirt, had proclaimed in a celebratory manner the presence of the military in the city using the sounds of multiple shots as a sign of strength¹⁴⁹. We spent the morning hours in a celebratory mode at the patio. However, towards noon, some people began to leave the hotel compound in order to get home while the sun was still in the sky. I spent the rest of that afternoon by making multiple calls to immediate and extended family members to break the news on the arrival of the military and to update them on my well-being. All throughout the night, bullets kept being fired from all sorts of guns across the city. Some of the shots were coming from nearby places but others were from far away. Most of the shots, however, were coming from downtown.

5.4. Assessing the Impact of the Rioters

On Friday morning, I saw the street outside the hotel gate quieter than the previous two days. Saturday also came and went in a similar manner. The business-oriented activities at the patio and in other parts of the hotel's ground remained very quiet as well owing to the presence of very few guests. However, the sounds of machine guns permeated the busiest part of the city until Saturday. As all sorts of weapons continued to announce their dominance to an otherwise very quiet city, I wondered deeply and sadly about the people who were being hit or missed by those very bullets. Judging by the number of shots that were being heard throughout the city, one cannot help but imagine a very high casualty rate. So, I thought about visiting every part of the city as soon as the first opportunity came my way. I finally got my chance on Monday, October 28, 2019.

A few minutes walking distance from my hotel sits one of the city's vibrant shopping malls. In the past, I visited and passed by that small mall a few times as I was surveying the

¹⁴⁹ He said in Amharic: beka alekelachew. Its literal meaning is: Beka: finished. Alekelachew: they will handle them accordingly.

city for potential research candidates. In my multiple visits, I had observed Christians and Muslims, from multiple language backgrounds, filling the space of the mall. Shoppers and shopkeepers conducted their respective affairs peacefully. But on that Monday morning, I came face to face with the mall's charred structure and burned stores items. I was told that the rioters have managed to destroy the livelihood of the people and their property by setting the place on fire a few days ago. I stood there in horror waiting for an opportunity to speak with one of the shop owners that I used to know from my previous few visits. An hour or so later, after I got to the space of destruction, I stood face to face with the owner that I met before. The sparkling eyes I was accustomed to seeing were now red with tears. Casting his look toward the sky, he said:

We the Muslim people of this country have no problem leaving our village to make a better living in the city close to our village or far from it... I left my village long ago and made a decent livelihood out of this city by working first at the street corner and then having a store of my own. It took me a long time to get from the street corner to owning a shop... But please look what they have done to me... They destroyed my store in a single night.... why why why...do we really deserve this...it took a very long time for me to own a store... We are here in the city clothing and feeding people from all walks of life...we do not deserve this... these criminal police force working hand in hand with them made us lose our hard-earned businesses...we pay city taxes and all kinds of taxes ...but look what they have done to us...I have five school-aged children and I do not know how to raise them now...

While he was being interviewed, I saw more and more people arriving steadily on the site that used to be the source of livelihood for many people in the city. I saw a few of people walking toward us. After completing the interview with him, I gave him my last comforting words so other people could console him.

5.5. The Mourning Space

From Tuesday afternoon onward, I visited a few houses to pay my respects over the death of people's loved ones. The mourning rituals of most Ethiopians gave permission for one to grieve loudly by wailing regardless of gender. Accordingly, mourners enter a grieving space by expressing their sorrow using loud high-pitched cries. Mourner will normally

approach the gathering in mid-size tent set up in the front of the house. Then they will begin to grieve loudly and acknowledge each other's presence. Calling out the deceased's name is a mourning ritual while wailing over the loss of life. During this sorrowful reminiscing moment, mourners will say "my son" or my "daughter" even if they have no blood relationship. These honorary familial relations play a key role in expressing one's utmost love and respect for the deceased. If the deceased is an older person, mourners will say "my father" or "my mother" even if there is no blood relationship. If it is an adult, "my brother", or "my sister"; if the deceased is very young, "my child" will be said repeatedly by wailing with affectionate tone.

As I travelled between mourning spaces to pay my respects over the loss of innocent life, I normally heard shouts of "my brother" followed by shouts of "my son". These signifiers informed me that most the deceased were male adults and youths. Most importantly, these familial descriptors informed me on the utility of our mourning ritual as a space in which one loudly proclaims one's sense of belonging to the deceased, their families, and their neighbours in an affectionate manner. As I was hearing repeatedly these descriptors, I felt a great sense of belonging with the deceased and all the mourners. I would mourn with them for hours in the same space. By contrast, the rioters would like to live a world using the hateful pronouns "us and them". This type of language makes everyone vulnerable as the week of October 23 showed to us.

I gathered enough information on the deceased ones in my previous four visits. On Friday morning, November 1, 2019, I held a conversation with an elderly person about the events that led to the death of a particular person. This old person was always part of a mourning crowd in which I participated. While we were sitting in another mourning space, I overheard him discussing his wife's ethnic background with another older person. Ever since then, I took an interest in him and considered him as one of the people I would like to speak

with whenever an opportunity arises for me to do so. That opportunity came my way on Friday morning around 10:00am. So, I started by asking him if he is a family member or someone in the neighborhood. He said that he lives in the same neighborhood. I asked him if he lived here all his life or part of his life here in the city. He said he was born, raised, and retired here in the city. Using small talks as icebreaker for few minutes, I then asked him the following question: *mane gedelew*¹⁵⁰. He said:

That is very difficult question to answer because the situation that led to his demise was not orchestrated by a single person or by two of them...but by a group of youth... You know those people that called themselves Qeerroo...He was stabbed to death by them...it is truly sad to see young men dying like that in broad daylight ... being stabbed by a group of people who were shuttled in from another place to carry out such heinous crime on the people who live in our city...the people in the city have been living together for a very long time ... as you can see we mourn together...I am an Oromo and happily married to an Amhara woman... We have seven children together...this thing called Qeerroo were shouting for the death of my wife last week...I love my wife and I do not want her to die by their hands or anybody's hands ...their politics is too dangerous...while I am the father of all of my children... for Qeerroo, since all of my children are Amharic speaking, they want them to leave the city or die like this person ...look, the deceased one is an Oromo on both sides of the family, but they killed him anyway. I just do not understand them...as you can see my children are vulnerable to horrible death like the one, we are mourning over....

I was able to speak with people like him in all the mourning houses I visited. I heard countless other mourners talking with each other and they were saying the same things over and over again. Most of the people who brought havoc to the city were not from here. If that is the case, what force prevented the police force from protecting the city and the people from harm? Believing this to be a vital question in need of an official answer, I visited two local police stations. In both stations, I was told the same thing: there was no order for them to take action against *Qeerroo*. When I told the police that a lot of people accusing them of directly or indirectly participating with *Qeerroo*, they denied it. In fact, one of the stations I visited called two of their own police officers to show me their wounds.

¹⁵⁰ Amharic: who killed him?

5.6. The Aftermath

There was death, injuries, and property destruction everywhere in the city. However, the question is who is to blame for that? According to the 1995 constitution, the government has the responsibility to protect life and property using the police force, among other law enforcement agencies. As the week of October 23, 2019, shows, the police force failed to fulfil its duty in the service of the city and the people in it. Does the terrible ordeal that has been impacting the city in the month of October show only dereliction of duty? Or does it show the unfolding of an ethnic hatred owing to the ethnic discourse of the EPRDF? The language of violence by a mob of people known as *Qeerroo* speaks volumes about the latter being the real culprit. I engaged with many participants during and after the terrible ordeal in October. They all blamed the ethnic based political discourse of the EPRDF as the driving force behind the act of ethnic cleansing in October and other riots that happened before it. For example, participant #7 (FGD #2) discussed it in the following way:

The Kilil system is set to make our city unbearable to live in ... people like us who proclaim Ethiopia as our identity marker see life in the city through a non-ethnic lens... but the Kilil system is making the city an un-relatable bota¹⁵¹ (space) for us ...

As participant #11 puts it (FGD #3):

The EPRDF did that on purpose to our city... yegeter nuro¹⁵² lacks diversity in comparison to the nuro in the city ... the EPRDF hates diversity and yeketema hiwot¹⁵³ is a perfect incubator of diversity... so when the rioters were telling you to get out of a city ...their goal was to kill diversity in the city by such a method...

For participant #20 (FGD #4),

... by removing our mothers from our living room the EPRDF worked hard to make our city the home of fathers only... as a woman and future mother, I worried about my place in the society ...

Participants #16 (FGD # 2) continued by saying,

¹⁵¹ Amharic term for space.

¹⁵² Amharic:Country living or life in country side.

¹⁵³ Amharic: Yeketema (city) Hiwot(life)

The rioters never got tired of preaching us about andewot bota, hiwot¹⁵⁴, ... while I came from a single ethnic background, I do not subscribe to their preaching ... I see no harm in having diversity in our private life, living room and in our city as well...

“The politician”, as participant #31 sees it (FGD #4),

They do not really care for us as human beings... to them we are an instrument of power just like the gun in their hands ... as I have witnessed it, in every riot, rioters die too but the politician always stayed out of harm ... diverse or homogenous, we want the government to respect us as human beings first ...

As participant #16 sees it,

Whenever the rioters issued a leave the city order in very violent manner, those with space of their own have a place to go but people with mixed identity have no place to go ...

For participant #25,

The EPRDF's constitution gives constitutional mandate to a father and his children to issue leave the city in order to abandon their mother... I, therefore, see them as the original rioters long before the birth of Qeerroo ...

“Can you”, said participant #28,

...imagine a government of serial killers? ... no people in their right mind would think of such a type of people to be a governing body of a given city... just as serial killers commit a series of murders to qualify themselves as serial killers, the EPRDF and its henchman have stayed in power for over 27 years while committing a series of murders across the country...we the mixed one are the first and permanent target of their murderous constitutional agenda...accordingly, they issued the delete your mother order for us using the Kilil system...in view of that, I see Qeerroo as their henchmen...leave from our city is item number #2...item #1 is delete your mother from your life...

As participant #16 sees it, those with mixed ethnic identities suffer the most since they have no space of their own to go to in order to rescue themselves from an immediate onslaught of the rioters. When the rioters proclaim the city as theirs only, participants #11 and #17 interpreted that as an attack against the notion of diversity. For them, the city should always be the place of people from diverse ethnic backgrounds. However, as participant #7's argument demonstrates, the Kilil system produced an un-relatable space by seeing space through ethnic lens only. By contrast, participant #20 and #25's arguments show the limitation of the Kilil system using gender as the basis of their arguments. As they see it, the

¹⁵⁴ Amharic: Andewot (homogeneous) bota (space/place) hiwot (life)

EPRDF organized space in favor of the fathers only. Accordingly, mothers stood to lose greatly by being excluded systematically from the Kilil system. When the EPRDF's government shows no value for a person as a human being (as discussed by participant #31), it is possible to form a government of serial killers in Ethiopia (as discussed by participant #28). While the aforementioned participants came from diverse background, they all treated the rioters as the by-product of the Kilil system. As all of them see it, the Kilil system makes people see each other as strangers. It treats us as if we are *bytewar*¹⁵⁵ to our Ethiopian identity; (participant #30, FGD #3); to our birthplace (participant #5); to our country's languages (participant #17,FGD #1); to our own bodies (participant #15 ,FGD #4); to our own families (participants ,#5, FGD #2); to the people we grow up with (participant ,#22 ,FGD #1); to our mothers, (participant #3); and to our mixed identities (participant #2). In short, all of them hold the Kilil system and the EPRDF accountable for the loss of life and property more so than the rioters. Killing innocent people and destroying their property were done with ease because of the 1995 constitution. As the riots showed to us, people have been killed to make way for a single ethnic based political system. The constitution that sets such political system in motion watches in silence as families in their living room, merchants in their stores, and people in the street are being murdered in the name of the Kilil system.

5.7. Conclusion

Article 34 (3) of the 1995 Ethiopian Constitution proclaims the family as the most vital and fundamental social unit of the country. However, the aforementioned lived experience of the people has clearly testified the precarious situation of that social unit in Ethiopia. In the case of a family from a mixed ethnic background, their lived experience signifies an attack against them merely for being who they are: a mixed ethnic people. In the eyes of the people with a single ethnic family agenda, a mixed ethnic family does not qualify

¹⁵⁵ Amharic: stranger. I asked participants what the feeling of *bytewar* in all aspect of life. Most identified similar elements of life, i.e. family, neighbourhood, birth place and growing up places, etc.

to be called a family unit. Accordingly, people with a mixed ethnic identity see their mixed family unit in an alienated manner in comparison to a single ethnic family unit across the city. By contrast, the lived experience of a family unit from a single ethnic background tells a territorial based violence being carried out against them. In other words, a single-family unit that belongs to an Oromo ethnic group and with a good command of the Oromo language feels relatively safer in the city of Adama. On the other hand, a single-family unit from other ethnic backgrounds regardless of their length of residency¹⁵⁶ feels a sense of alienation in Adama. As the above-mentioned stories from their lived experience shows to us, an Oromo individual from a single ethnic family unit suffers equally like an individual from a different single family ethnic background upon failing to speak Afaan Oromo fluently.

The family unit, whether under the reign of the socialist regime, or under the ruling of ethnic-based political system, suffers equally by a violent intrusion of both regimes for the sake of both their respective political ends. The former regime, by orienting itself as the head of the family unit, felt free to steal children at the family's expense. As the lived experience of the people informed us, this approach by the government stands to make a family unit irrelevant by promoting government interests only. Similarly, the politics of the EPRDF have managed to turn the family unit on its head by making ethnic affiliation as the dominant social unit of its governing system. Accordingly, a family unit consisting of parents and their children has been treated as worthless. In connection with this line of thinking, people from a mixed ethnic family unit are suffering the most. This is so because the family unit they are part of, by birth and marriage, no longer serve them as a viable instrument of protection¹⁵⁷ and integration¹⁵⁸. Protection and integration in societal system gives one a sense of belonging. In Ethiopia, the business of protection and integration has been given to a single

¹⁵⁶ Born, or raised or recently moved in there.

¹⁵⁷ From mental, emotional, and physical harms.

¹⁵⁸ Politically, socially, economically, and spatially.

ethnic identity-based system. Accordingly, people with mixed identity have felt a sense of alienation from their own family unit in spite of article 34 (3)'s view of the family unit as a foundation of society. Taking that into consideration, one cannot hope but to see article 34 (3) weakened by showing a bias in favour of a single ethnic family context. We need to articulate this to bring context for clarification on potential biases of article 34 (3). This will be the focus of my next chapter.

Chapter 6: Ethnicity and Horizontal Affiliation

6.1. Introduction

Since the birth of the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) as an ethnic based coalition, the party has made ethnicity the cornerstone of its political, social, spatial and economic policies. Accordingly, six years¹⁵⁹ after its birth, the party crafted a constitution. In the preamble of the 1995 Constitution, the following principles stipulated as binding rule of the country: "We", begins the preamble, "the Nations, Nationalities and People of Ethiopia¹⁶⁰... are firmly convinced... to live together on the basis of equality and without any sexual, religious or cultural discrimination". Taking the latter part of the principle into account, one sees nothing but an egalitarian paradise being organized via a constitutional framework. However, as it was discussed in Chapter 5, people with a mixed ethnic identity and other groups with a single ethnic identity registered their unpleasant experience under this very constitution. With that view in mind, this chapter will examine the impact of the preamble phrase by discussing firstly the constitution, secondly, the EPRDF's one-language-one-identity ethnic policy, thirdly, mixed ethnicity constitutive structures via the concept of horizontally oriented affiliation.

6.2. The 1995 Constitution

In post-1991 Ethiopia, identity politics played a critical role in shaping one's identity using language as the basis of one's ethnic affiliation. In accordance with such frame of thought, the EPRDF crafted the 1995 Constitution to legitimize its version of ethnicity. It is, therefore, imperative to examine the impact of the 1995 Constitution in relation to its main and dominant concern: identity politics in the form of ethnicity. For example, when key informant (henceforth KI) #4 was asked about the value of the 1995 constitution for

¹⁵⁹ EPRDF was founded in 1988.

¹⁶⁰ "Following its Marxist roots, the EPRDF creates a three-layer hierarchy among the people of Ethiopia...these three terms are supposed to denote different states of social development: *nation* is the most advanced, followed by *nationality*, while *people* refer to those that are the least advanced...the simple fact is that none of the various peoples of Ethiopia identify themselves with any of these categories..." (Tibebu, 2008, p.366). Tibebu's observation gives us a critical insight on the EPRDF's reckless approach.

Ethiopians and his ethnic group, he opened his booklet and asked me to be patient with him as he was reading the preamble of the constitution from the beginning to the end. Once he finished reading, he looked up toward me and said:

Wogene¹⁶¹ ... This country was oppressing all kinds of ethnic groups for many centuries ...I, therefore, take this constitution to be the voice of the oppressed people... with this constitution, ethnic identity became the means to register one's identity and to claim a respectable place in the country... I have no issue with the constitution...but I do have serious issues with the EPRDF ... for its power-hungry tendency...

In direct contrast to this speaker's view of the 1995 Constitution, KI #7 treated the constitution as a political scheme to propel the EPRDF itself in power, not the alleged oppressed people of Ethiopia. To that end, he said:

Ethiopia is very unfortunate country... The military regime who claimed power in the name of landless peasants made itself the supreme law of the country in 1974...they used socialism as a façade and ruled without a constitution for over a decade... In 1995, the EPRDF forcefully imposed on our country its own party-political orientation in the name of a constitution... their constitution is full of errors and stands only for the EPRDF's supremacy... under, it most of the ethnic groups have met more suppression than ever before...

As KI #7 informed us, the military regime ruled Ethiopia without a constitution and, thereby, made it possible for it to stay in power by making itself the supreme law of the country. By contrast, the EPRDF managed to craft a constitution, as KI #4 put it, "to make ethnicity the legitimate form of association". What KI #7 saw as a major problem of both regimes was their chosen approach to the art of governance: monopoly of power. The former regime was seen by him as an unfair governing body with absolute power over the people. He saw the later one as a self-appointed oppressor under the cover of an erroneous constitution. In direct contrast to this view, KI #4 treated the EPRDF's constitution as a fair power sharing mechanism for ethnic groups. To this speaker, the lack of mixed ethnic representation in the constitution did not occur to him as a problem. By qualifying the constitution as a fair power-sharing framework, this speaker failed to see the oppression of mixed ethnic group by this

¹⁶¹ Amharic: my fellow being.

very constitution. Other participants, however, treated this constitution as an inadequate power-sharing model by excluding ethnic groups from the mother's side. One elderly mother who was involved in FGD #2 put the matter this way:

I was born while Emperor Haile Selassie was ruling our country... Having lost my father to illness, I and eight siblings of mine grew up with our mother as our only household figure... My mother used to collect money from renting out a few houses ... but the military regime in the name of socialism confiscated all our property and made us poor overnight... it also killed a lot of people in the name of a revolution...the EPRDF is silently murdering all our mothers with its inati yeleshi¹⁶² hige-menigisiti¹⁶³...

With a maternally based critical angle, participant #26 paused to give other participants a chance to express their stories and concerns. However, other participants, far from utilizing that opportunity, chose to remain quiet as well. A moment later, the silence in the room was broken when participant #5 (FGD #2) began to say the following remarks:

...I am truly afraid of forming a family of my own... the 1995 hige-menigisiti denied our mothers a role over her family... in the past, I was coerced by a government official to enlist myself as a member of an ethnic group using my father's lineage only... Knowing full well the fate of a mother within a family unit worries me a lot to form a family of my own...

The exclusion of mixed ethnic identity in the constitution was discussed by participant #5, just as it was the case with participant #26, using mothers as a point of reference to show the constitution's fault lines. Agreeing with both participants views, participant #9 (FGD #2) said the following:

...I do not want to live in the world where mothers are living in anguish and young girls are afraid of forming a family of their choice...why can't those politicians in the parliament and house of federation do something about it ... what is stopping them from coming up with a better hige-menigisiti than this one...

After saying that, participant #9 rested his head against the wall and looked toward the roof. His gaze toward the roof did not last long because a participant who was sitting at far end of his seat stood up to make her remarks. Up until this particular act, all of the participants were delivering stories about their lived experience without getting up from their

¹⁶² Amharic: inati yeleshi means motherless. Inati (mother) Yeleshi (nothing)

¹⁶³ Amharic: constitution.

seat. Owing to this particular gesture, I believed, he returned his gaze from the roof to the only person who was standing in the room. Having gained everyone's undivided attention by her very gesture, participant #4 (FGD #2) injected the following remarks:

I am a teacher...This profession has made it possible for me to interact with all kinds of students' year in and year out... When it comes to ethnic identity, for instance, when students asked to identify their ethnic background, they quickly reply as a member of ethnic group x, and it is usually their father's ethnic group... there is no discussion in our school system on the value of a mother as a source of ethnic identity¹⁶⁴...

Soon after her remarks, participant #29 (FGD #2), who was sitting two seats away from the previous speaker, cleared his throat quickly and added the following points:

I have a similar experience at the workplace... Discussion of ethnicity worries me a lot there... I always do my best to avoid a discussion of ethnicity... but if I find myself in front of my boss or other senior administrators, I take the quick and easy way out by identifying myself with my father's lineage rather than with my mixed ethnic identity...

While the text of the constitution talks about gender equality, the lived experience of the aforementioned cases clearly illustrates a social and political life far from it. When a gender-based inequality is facilitated by an ethnic based vertically oriented patriarchal system, mothers stand to lose the most. Consequently, under the cover of ethnicity, patriarchal affiliation flourishes easily in all aspects of family life. When participants from a single ethnic background were asked about gender inequality within their family setting, they took the question to mean nothing to them, since their parents are members of the same ethnic group. However, when asked the same question again after removing ethnicity as a variable, they took patriarchal based family orientation to be an instrument of gender inequality. By contrast, for the participants from a mixed ethnic background, they see gender

¹⁶⁴ There is very derogatory adage in Ethiopia that discourages people from identifying their ethnic affiliation via their mothers. This adage flourishes unabated since it did not occur to people as an insult to their mixed ethnic group. When a person is asked about ethnic identity, if the reply is my mother is from ethnic group X, that reply is usually followed by calling that person a mule. As commonly understood, a mule's mother is a horse, but the father is a donkey. The wisdom of the adage is this: since a horse has more prestige than a donkey, the mule cleverly avoided mentioning the father donkey by calling the mother horse. In the past, I have been asked if I am a mule or not when I used my mother as a source of my ethnic identity. In my field work, I have also come across many stories of people being referred to as mules for using their mothers as a source of ethnic identity. The adage implicitly reinforces patriarchy. It makes sense for students to identify with the father's side to avoid being referred to in that derogatory way. That saddest aspect of this adage is the association of a mother with a mule, as if the mother is less human than the father.

inequality with or without ethnic infusion as a problematic proposition. Gender inequality was also the focus of KI #15. He explained the problematic situation as he found himself within the EPRDF's patriarchal based constitutional arrangement. He puts it like this:

...the authors of the constitution are literally saying this to us: kill your mother, kill your mixed identity, and surrender your mutilated identity to our patriarchally oriented constitution... Qyit¹⁶⁵ people deserve a better and more respectful treatment than what we have under this hige-menigisiti ...

As I have learned from his narration and newspaper articles on him, this person played a significant role in voicing the rights of mothers using a mixed ethnic identity as a political platform. In fact, due to his¹⁶⁶ active political involvement, before the EPRDF introduced its constitution and after it was ratified, he was sent to prison a few times. His wife, KI #14, recounts that episode in the following manner:

... our determination to be heard made us even more resolute despite the EPRDF's outrageous threats against our life... as can be seen, their hate against us is clearly visible in 2007 Ethiopia census data... They boldly reported people of our kind to be only 36,524... it is easy to find over a million Qyit people here in the capital city alone ... you see how evil the EPRDF is... Instated of fixing the hige-menigisiti by counting our mothers as a legitimate member of Qyit family unit, they went above and beyond to silence and slice us up by fabricating census numbers in the official census data report ...

Upon the conclusion of my interview with both, I decided to gather information on census data from the Central Statistics Agency of Ethiopia and from the enumerators. I was told by some of the people who were involved in the collection of census data in 2007, what the focus was: a single blood line. Every now and then, they admit coming across people who want to register as a people with a mixed identity. "Whenever we encountered people who identify themselves as *Qyit*, we do our best¹⁶⁷ to persuade them to pick one bloodline only".

¹⁶⁵ Amharic: mixed ethnicity. It is the most common term to refer people with a mixed identity. Using the mass-media I popularise the term *Wuhid manenet* instead of *Qyit*. In chapter 7, I present extensive discussion on the usage of *Wuhid manenet* as my preferred term.

¹⁶⁶ Ato Samuel and others founded, in 1995, the first *Qyit* party in the history of Ethiopia. This person, including members of his family, suffered greatly at the hands of EPRDF owing to their *Qyit* politics. Suffice to say that, EPRDF stopped people from identifying themselves as *Qyit* and from organizing under *Qyit* politics. See appendix 35 for picture of Ato Samuel.

¹⁶⁷ By jokingly telling them the following *camomot mesenbet*. Popular Amharic adage: its literal meaning is: better to live than to die. This adage is used by everyone in order to cope up with an unpleasant situation. When

This shows a lack of understanding on a social and political value of *Qyit* identity as a category of identity. In connection with this problematic situation, I visited the headquarters of the statistics agency to ask what the dominant ethnic discourse of the constitution is. The reply was a single ethnic identity, which has become the prominent reference point for the agency and for the data collectors. The political implication of such an approach unfolded itself in three ways: withdrawing state sponsored support for the people with a mixed ethnic identity, making mothers irrelevant, and compromising the integrity of a mixed ethnic family as a category in its own rights. Material and financial resources are allocated using population size as a predominant variable. In light of this critical policy angle, counting people properly plays a vital role. When people with a mixed ethnic identity are persuaded to register as a single ethnic identity, it makes it easier for the government to bypass people with a mixed ethnic identity and allocate all of state resources to the people with a single ethnic identity.

When it comes to the withdrawal of state support for a mixed ethnic identity, there is no better illustration than the 1995 Constitution. This public document was crafted using a single ethnic identity as its only guiding principle¹⁶⁸. For instance, when participant #5 was asked to join a political party, he did so without informing them about his mixed ethnic identity. Few years after joining a public sector as a civil servant, he continues,

I was asked by the head of my department to join the EPRDF...Judging me by my language skills only, they decided to assign me to an ethnic group they thought I was part of... Although I speak the Amharic language fluently, I am not a member of their ethnic group... When I informed my boss about my mixed ethnic heritage, he laughed at me and said ... Do you want to keep your job or not? I decided to keep my job by involuntarily removing myself from my mixed ethnic identity...the EPRDF will starve you to death if you do not follow the party's order...

this adage is deployed against government directives, it always sends two important messages: submit to government directives or die. Therefore, as the adage informs us, *mesenbet* (to live) is better than *camomot* (death). In the case of the enumerators, it was deployed to explain to the people the dire consequences of choosing a mixed identity while the government is promoting a single ethnic identity.

¹⁶⁸ As a result, mothers were treated as inconsequential subjects and, thereby making it possible for public and private entities to show open biases in favour of a single ethnic identity.

According to Article 46 (2), the state is required by law to seek the “consent of the people concerned” before establishing one’s ethnic identity. While the general spirit regarding consent was conceived in a liberal democratic tone, as the case shows in Article 46 (2), participants received a formidable resistance from the EPRDF against their chosen identity. As the stories from the lived experience’s show, when people were insisting on identifying themselves with a mixed ethnic identity, such consent was not granted. Consequently, people with a mixed ethnic identity suffered injustice in the area of political representation. For instance, there is no parliamentary seat for the people with a mixed ethnic identity.

In Ethiopia’s parliamentary system, political representation is organized via two chambers: The House of Federation and the House of People’s Representatives. In the House of Federation, says KI #5, a constitutional scholar,

members represent their own respective ethnic groups... the House has the power to interpret the constitution... Most importantly, as it was stated in Article 62 (4) ‘it shall promote the equality of the peoples of Ethiopia...’ but in its over two decades long history, the house never once tried to discuss the merit of representation on behalf of a mixed ethnic identity. As a result, the house remains as a representative of a single ethnic group... I, myself, belong to a mixed ethnic family...fearing of losing my job made me register as a member of a single ethnic group in keeping up with the general spirit of the constitution on ethnicity...

The House of Federation is the most important and the highest branch of Ethiopia’s government. The presence or absence of a representative in the House of Federation plays a critical role in the protection of an ethnic group’s rights. Taking the absence of a mixed ethnic representative into consideration, it is easy to see a lack of interest in respecting Article 62 (4) by the House of Federation. Ideally, one would like to promote the equality of the people. That being the case in the House of Federation, what does the history of representation in the parliament inform in regard to a mixed ethnic identity? “As you know yourself”, said KI #8,

The parliament is composed of 547-seats and not a single seat out of that large figure is occupied by a representative on behalf of a mixed ethnic identity... I am not a member of a mixed ethnic group by birth, but I belong to it on account of my mixed marriage. I, therefore, care about this issue for the sake of my children and my marriage...

Parliament is the most important political institution in the country. As the case above informs us, under the EPRDF this important institution was organized to promote and defend people with a single ethnic identity. The erasure of a mixed ethnic identity in this institution is a way to deprive those people of their political rights to exist as ethnic group. However, judging by Abiy's reform-oriented political approaches, it is safe to assume the arrival of a different representation system in the near future. Nevertheless, the terrible ordeal that has been afflicted upon the city of Adama and other parts of the country in the week of October 20, 2019, seems to push that kind of hope into a distant future. The government and both houses must take a proactive role in improving the representation of the people with mixed ethnic identity. They should also educate the youth, adults, and people in general on the value and rights of a mixed ethnic identity. Undoubtedly, they play a vital role for peaceful coexistence in the country. Participant #20 sees no better future in Ethiopia so long as the EPRDF keeps this biased ethnic design in place. "While", he said:

Mengistu¹⁶⁹ was the head of the government, I joined the school system as a teacher... I went to prison twice and was tortured badly by that regime for my political opinions...I have seen a lot of death and destruction under the EPRDF as well...Dr. Abiy took power in 2018 but we still have riots and displacement with us... youths roaming around all over the country with machetes rather than carrying pens worries me a lot...

While the speaker sees no better future for the country even with a new head of a government, others place their hope in Dr. Abiy due to his ethnic and religious mixed background¹⁷⁰. The Guardian newspaper reports, "in Addis Abeba, the face of Abiy Ahmed is almost ubiquitous, emblazoned on stickers, posters, T-shirts and books. Some of his most enthusiastic supporters liken him to a prophet... If he had time, he could change

¹⁶⁹ The head of Ethiopian government during the era of socialism: 1974-1991

¹⁷⁰ He was born from a Christian mother and a Muslim father. His mother is an Amhara, and his father is Oromo.

everything”¹⁷¹. Owing to his mixed identity, a lot of people from all walks of life and ethnic identity are putting their faith on him as an agent of change. “We want Abiy”, said participant #12,

to replace the EPRDF’s constitution... the EPRDF called its koshasha¹⁷² hige-menigisiti the voice of the oppressed. How is that so? This hige-menigisiti was utilized as a political and social instrument to erect a wall within my household, between me and my neighbours, between me and my colleagues...

Most of the participants see the constitution as a legal instrument for the spread of ethnic hatred from one generation to the next. “I was only eleven”, noted participant #19,

when the EPRDF took power... While both my parents are from the south and are members of two different ethnic groups, I only speak Amharic...my parents did not have an issue with me for not speaking their respective mother tongue ... but, here in Adama, my so-called teachers were harassing me constantly for not speaking a language of their choice¹⁷³ ... what about respecting my choice? Do not people have a right to speak whatever language they want to speak in ...

On the week of October 20, 2019, ethnic hatred, far from unfolding itself in the form of harassment, played a prominent role in saving and disposing of life at will. Since the Kilil system holds a given ethno-linguistic group as the norm in a specific space, those people who happened to belong to another language group have become a target for all kinds of violence by the rioters. As Michel Foucault’s (1990) work on biopolitics informs us, conflict between people “no longer waged in the name of a sovereign who must be defended; they are waged on behalf of the existence of everyone; entire populations are mobilized for the purpose of wholesale slaughter... (p.137) ...against those who pose a threat to the biological heritage” (2003, p.61) of the chosen ethnic group, as the rioters case informed us. As such, the rioters mobilized *en masse* to remove those who were deemed by the Kilil system as a biological hazard to their single ethnic heritage. A few days after the great mayhem took place, I made a point to observe people by strategically positioning myself at the main city bus and coach

¹⁷¹ <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2018/sep/25/abiy-ahmed-miracle-ethiopia-democratic-awakening>

¹⁷² Amharic: rubbish.

¹⁷³ Afaan Oromo

station. After observing people carefully, I approached those with a heavy load to inquire about their itinerary. Most of the people I was able to speak with were heading to the capital city of Ethiopia. When asked about the reason for leaving Adama and for choosing Addis Ababa as their final destination, they¹⁷⁴ replied “in there I do not have to worry about speaking this or that language and being murdered due to my ethnic heritage”. While few people with a mixed identity were leaving the city, most of them were from the southern part of Ethiopia and Amharic is their second language. Most of them were also in their 20s and lived only in Adama for few years.

6.3. *One-Language-One-Identity Ethnic Policy*

In the post-1991 era, under the guidance of the EPRDF, the politics of the nation-state departed radically from the previous Marxist political structure by going “further than any other African state...in using ethnicity as its fundamental organizing principle” (Turton, 2006, p.1). By such a method, the EPRDF succeeded in producing a one-language-one-identity ethnic federal system. In its liberal philosophical tradition, federalism, unlike the Swiss models, was used “to meet the needs of administrative convenience and bureaucratic efficiency as to accommodate ethno-territorial pluralism” (p.2). In the case of colonial powers, multinational federalism was used as an instrument of power to keep a colonial possession of separate ethnic territories within a single state framework as the examples from Asia and Africa etc. informs us (Young, 1998). However, Ethiopia’s experiment in an ethnic-based federal system has alarmed others for sharpening, “...feelings of differences between groups..., thereby tension...” (Kymlicka, 2006, p.57). “By imposing a fixed ethno-territorial

¹⁷⁴ Those with a mixed ethnic background and those from the southern part of Ethiopia with a single ethnic background reply in a similar manner. Seeing the capital city as a safe space for all seems to be the general consensus from those, I was able to speak to. Some were leaving and others chose to stay. Those from the southern part of Ethiopia I got in touch with spoke Amharic with no accents. However, they could be easily identified as people from the south based on their darker skin tone. In fact, few of them told me that: the rioters seem to know who we are based on our skin tone and attacked our kind for being in the wrong city. I also found people at the hospital who were stabbed from behind by the rioters using the victim’s skin tone as a cue. The rioters’ skin tones, among those who I was able to observe from my hotel, were a mix of brown, dark brown and darker skin as well. Here it should be known that over 50 ethnic groups reside in the southern Kilil and not all people in the south share identical skin tones. It varies between ethnic groups and among a single ethnic group from various shades of brown to various shades of black skin tone.

grid on populations with a long history of mobility and internal migration” (Turton,2006, p.14). Hence, “there is a mismatch between the constitutionally sanctioned view of ethnic groups as territorially bounded, and the population mobility accompanied by inter-group marriage” (p.14). Moreover, “the TPLF’s policy of Ethnic (or tribal) federalism split communities, enflamed resentments and fostered the creation ethnocentric political groups” (Peebles, 2021) by deliberately ignoring historical and cultural ties among Ethiopia’s ethnic groups.

There is a mismatch between the EPRDF’s one-language-one-identity ethnic policy and the historical reality of ethnic groups on the ground. The WoGaGoDa case stands tall as a testament for the straitjacket ethno-linguistic ideology of the EPRDF. The North Omo zone of the Southern part of Ethiopia is inhabited by people from Wolaita, Gamo, Gofa, Dawro and Knota ethnic people. In the 1990s the EPRDF decided to apply its straitjacket ethnic policy on them by merging the five ethnic groups into a single ethno-linguistic identity. In that part of Ethiopia, “different dialects were used at different times in different part of the zone. However, the ruling party was not happy with that situation and thus instructed “a team of experts” to produce a common language” (Dea, 2006, p.148). The new language was called WoGaGoDa, using the first two letters of the first four major ethnic groups’ names. When people began to oppose the grafting of new language-based identity as a deadly threat to their historical ethnic identity, government forces began to imprison people for protesting the EPRDF’s ethnic identity erasure scheme. On November 8, 1999 “angry students marched to the store of the Ministry of Education where the books in the new language WoGaGoDa were stored ... *they*¹⁷⁵ broke into the store and burned down some of books...in relation to WoGaGoDa 5 people were killed. 11 were shot and wounded, 2 disappeared, 78 were detained, 10 suspended from work, 29 released after detention, and 136 teachers were

¹⁷⁵ Italics added for emphasis.

transferred from their workplace...” (p.148-149). In this way, as Dea rightly notes, “what was supposed to be the management of diversity ended up being gross political mismanagement” (p.155). In the end, the government abandoned project to erase one’s historical identity after meeting powerful resistance from below, and after squandering lives and resources foolishly for a decade.

The EPRDF’s experiment in WoGaGoDa was “a spectacular demonstration of political short-sightedness” (Vaughan, 2006, p.191). The WoGaGoDa case informs us about the errors of the EPRDF on the will of the people regarding their historical ethnic identity. The history of mixed ethnic people equally reveals the spectacular error of the EPRDF’s one-language-one-identity ethnic policy. This is so because mixed ethnic people traced back their ethnic identity using more than one ethnic group. Moreover, the EPRDF’s one-language-one-identity policy poses a serious threat to the survival of mixed ethnic identity as a classification of ethnic groups. The EPRDF, however, imposed its error-ridden language based ethnic policy by carelessly converging language and ethnicity without examining the historical reality of mixed and other people in all parts of the country. On the lack of historical analysis, Cohen (2006) puts forward the following empirical reality into the discussion. For him, “the concept of ethnicity itself and the assumption that ethnicity is represented by language” are

...at odds with the reality of patterns of language use in Ethiopia... Where individuals who regard themselves as belonging to a particular ethnic group commonly speak different languages as mother tongues, and where members of recognizably different ethnic groups may share mother tongue. The first case well illustrated by the Gurage, amongst whom more than ten distinct Semitic languages are spoken. An increasing proportion of Gurages, moreover, speak Amharic as a first or second language, both in urban areas where they are settled and in the Gurage zone. Many Gurages are monolingual Amharic speakers but, nevertheless, consider themselves to belong, unequivocally, to the Gurage ethnic group. The second case illustrate by the fact that members of various ethnic groups living in urban areas have Amharic as mother tongue. Ethnic Tigrayans, Oromo and Gurage living in urban areas, for example, are often monolingual Amharic speakers (p.170).

As Cohen's work informs us, it is common in Ethiopia to speak language X and identify oneself passionately and unequivocally with the people who speak language Y. For example, some of the people who got hurt and those who miraculously escaped from harm during the week of October 20, 2019, were members of an Oromo ethnic group, but they were monolingual Amharic speakers. However, as Foucault's (2003) concept aptly captured it for us, in the eyes of the rioters, those Oromo who failed to speak their ethnic language were a hazard to their language-based biological heritage.

Being monolingual or multilingual is common for, and the historical reality of, people with a mixed-ethnic heritage. However, the EPRDF government forces people with a mixed-ethnic identity to enlist themselves as a member of a single ethnic group. I, myself, became the victim of such faulty assumptions when I went to get an ID from a local kebele¹⁷⁶ office in Addis Ababa the capital city of Ethiopia. In there, the official (hereafter KO) asked me about my ethnic identity in the following manner:

KO: What is your ethnic background?

Me: Ethiopia

KO: That is your national identity not your ethnicity.

Me: I am the offspring of two language groups.

KO: What is your father's mother tongue?

Me: He speaks both Amarãña and Tigrinya.

KO: Where was he born?

Me: Gonder.

KO: Then he is an Amhara, and you are Amhara¹⁷⁷...

Me: I am not.....please leave that space blank.

KO: It is against the law to leave a blank space on the issue of your ethnic identity.

Me: I do not know about your law, but I am certain that your rationale is incorrect

KO: How is that so?

Me: To begin with... your scale of ethnic measurement...you started out with language and when language failed to categorize me to your ethno-linguistic requirement,

¹⁷⁶ The smallest administrative unit of Ethiopia's current political system. Its equivalent in English is Ward. I went there to get an identification card, to re-establish my Ethiopian identity, and to relocate myself to Ethiopia permanently. I thought about that after living an alienated and stressful existence in the diaspora for many years.

¹⁷⁷ I was born in Asmara (currently the capital city of Eritrea). According to the EPRDF's genealogy, this means that the ethnic connection between my child and my father will come to an end upon my child's birth. Because using place of birth as the fundamental criteria of one's ethnic identity will automatically relocate my child, on the account of my birthplace, to Asmara. To the EPRDF Asmara belongs to the Tigray ethnic group. Therefore, my child will be labelled as Tigray while his grandfather was labelled as Amhara. This is the most bizarre lineage tracing logic and sad genealogical story.

*you brought another element: place-of-birth...you are coercing me to claim a single ethnic identity... What about my mother? What about my mixed ethno-linguistic background*¹⁷⁸.

KO: Your mother has nothing to do with your ethnicity!

Me: Why?

*KO: That is our government policy and our tradition*¹⁷⁹.

While I was growing up in Ethiopia, I never felt even for once as a member of a single ethnic group. My family orientation was always horizontal. Hence, both my parents' ethnic groups are equally important to me. But the EPRDF ordered me to accept an ethnic identity that does not include my dear mother. So how could I accept a discriminatory policy that does not include my mother? She belongs to a Tigrinya speaking ethnic group in the Hamasien region of Eritrea¹⁸⁰. She speaks Tigrinya and Amharic with ease just as my father does with both languages. My immediate and extended family never had an issue in speaking and identifying themselves with both languages. Even those monolingual extended family members claim both branches as theirs. It was very common and enjoyable practice in our household to start a conversation in Tigrinya and finish it in Amharic or *vice versa*. Even for those who were hired in our household as domestic workers and guards, they freely engaged in multiple languages regularly while discharging their daily chores. However, the EPRDF set up a one-language-one-identity ethnic policy that does not recognize our family and other families' empirical reality regarding language usage and familial relationships. There is no harm in speaking more than one language. Similarly, there is no harm in claiming more than one language as the foundation of one's ethnic identity. By contrast, the EPRDF's one-language-one-identity ethnic policy forces a mixed ethnic person to erase its mixed ethnic heritage. Since I was aware of my mixed ethnic identity, I kindly asked the KO to recognize

¹⁷⁸ My father's ethnolinguistic heritage is Amharic and my mother one is Tigrinya (Eritrean).

¹⁷⁹ This is again a pure political fiction by the EPRDF. In the northern part of Ethiopia where my father is from, one traces one's lineage in a bilateral fashion. "Where in most African cultures to which lineage is characteristically extremely important, descent is traced primarily either through the male (patrilineal) or female (matrilineal) line, in this region each enjoyed a broadly equal status, and hereditary rights in land in particular could be claimed either through one's father or one's mother" (Claphma, 2017, p.13).

¹⁸⁰ At the time of my birth, it was one of the provinces of Ethiopia.

me as such. However, my plea was completely ignored due to the EPRDF's misreading of Ethiopia's empirical reality regarding her people with a mixed-ethnic heritage.

The restrictive nature of the EPRDF's ethno-linguistic framework was also challenged by others during the 2007 census data collection by the State. Participant #4 tells his engagement with the state on that front in this way:

...the data collector decided to categorize me as an Oromo on the account of language fluency... When I told him about my Hadiya and Gamo background ... a sneering smile covered his face...he asked me if I am able to speak those languages fluently. I told him I do not...I grew up only speaking Afaan Oromo and Amharic... But I strongly feel a sense of belonging to my Hadiya and Gamo ethnic heritage...

The ideological association between primary language spoken and ethnic identity does not reflect the lived reality of people and their sense of belonging to a specific ethnic identity. As the EPRDF sees it, the socialist and the monarchical regimes of Ethiopia were busy suppressing ethnic identity. The party set up a language based ethnic system in order to liberate people from ethnic-based suppression. The EPRDF's effort, however, brought more harm than ever before by imposing a one-language-one-identity ethnic policy on the people in spite of their wishes to a mixed ethnic heritage. The errors of the previous two regimes were found in ignoring the identity of the people on the ground. The EPRDF's relationships with the people was also shaped by the same top-down approach, as the participants' experience informed us. Moreover, the focal point of the two previous regimes was inoculating Ethiopia as the identity for all and all ethnic groups were encouraged to see Ethiopia as their common homeland. While the two regimes used Amharic as a working language in all parts of the country, people were free to learn and to speak their own ethnic language, as my own family and other families' stories attest. By contrast, the EPRDF's with its one-language-one-identity ethnic policy worked recklessly to alter historical ethnic identity. By confusing language usage with ethnic heritage, the EPRDF also upended the historical relationship between language and people. For instance, Amharic functions as the

lingua franca in all parts of Ethiopia, and all the participants in my research spoke Amharic with ease. However, they identified themselves as a people who have mixed ethnic identity. In fact, Amharic served as the only primary language for almost half of the participants without identifying themselves with the Amhara ethnic group. However, they have been treated as such, without them having Amhara as one of their ethnic backgrounds, due to the influence of the EPRDF's ethnic policy. Participant #22's story illustrates the gap between one's sense of identity and language usage clearly. To that end, he noted:

I was born and raised here in Adama. My parents are from Oromo and Gurage background. While my parents speak their respective mother tongue, I only speak Amharic ... but I strongly feel both of their identities in my heart ... but here at the workplace they always treat me as an Amhara ...even after telling them many times over about my ethnic affiliation...

Under the EPRDF, language has met its unfortunate end by being utilized as an instrument of harassment, displacement, and murder. In a coercive situation such as that, ethnic groups will not be in a position to learn from one another's ethnic language. Prior to the EPRDF's one-language-one-identity ethnic policy, ethnic languages thrived on account of interethnic marriages, economies, neighborhood's interactions, and interaction. Centuries of cultural mixing made it possible for Ethiopia to be the home of 80-plus ethno-linguistic groups. However, the EPRDF's views on language and identity are inviting unnecessary harm to the rich ethnic heritage of Ethiopia. Instead of encouraging people to learn and to speak languages as they wish, the EPRDF's ethnic policy is discouraging people from doing so. They are discouraged from not only acquiring a new language but also from proudly speak it. They also demand them to identify with their primary language as part of their ethnic identity. However, as the story of mixed ethnic groups and other participants show, participants placed more sentimental attachment to their respective ethnic traditional dances,

foods¹⁸¹, hair styles, clothing, holidays and so forth and so on when tracing their ethnic heritage than specific ethnic language *per se*. In one of the FGD sessions, participants were asked to come to the meeting¹⁸² wearing their traditional attire and doing their hair in a traditional style. A female participant #4 (FGD #2) with urban attire spoke about her feelings about traditional attire in this way:

...I speak fluently one of my parent's languages... but I associate my traditional attire and hair style more than I associate a language to my ethnic heritage ...whenever I put on my traditional attire and do my hair in a traditional way, I feel great about my heritage...those special feelings cannot be expressed in words ...

A female participant #32 (FGD #1) with a traditional attire and hair style expressed her thoughts on similar subject matter in this way:

...I came here to our FGD session once wearing my urban attire and here I am now with my traditional attire ... my hair style and my scarf and my bracelet belongs to my mother's side of my family and the tops and skirts to my father's side of the family... I usually do not wear them like this, but after our first FGD meeting¹⁸³ I thought about it deeply and became very creative in representing both cultures...

The creative acts of research participants speak volumes about the role of traditional attire and hairstyles by allowing one to display one's feelings about one's ethnicity and identity. Using the asset of her mixed-ethnic heritage, the participants put together both heritages' colours, bracelets, clothes, and hairdos in a very complementary way as an expression of ethnic affiliation. I witnessed firsthand a strong sense of mixed ethnic affiliation from such practices. While showing deep connection by such practices, participants also uttered a sense of joy on their mixed language heritage. People with a mixed

¹⁸¹ Although most Ethiopians nowadays eat similar vegetarian food and almost everyone eats raw meat, there are a few food-based distinctions among various ethnic groups. For example, Kitfo is fundamentally Gurage's traditional food, but it has evolved to become everyone's favourite dish in today's Ethiopia.

¹⁸² Those participants who were selected to do that were individuals with very limited knowledge of their mixed ethnic languages. Their primary language is Amharic, but this language is not their mixed ethnic background. Others were asked to come to that meeting wearing their usual urban attire: jeans, t-shirt, etc. Those participants were fluent in Amharic as well as with one or both of their languages from their mixed ethnic heritage.

¹⁸³ The second meeting usually happens, over our traditional coffee ceremony, to express my gratitude for their participation. We usually ended up having very productive conversations similar to the first one. In the second meeting, all the participants from the four sessions were asked to come with their traditional attire. Those from wuhid, male or female, adorned themselves in very a creative manner in representing their Wuhid ethnic heritage.

ethnic identity by virtue of their family settings have wonderful opportunities to learn more than one language. However, the EPRDF's one-language-one-identity ethnic policy unnecessarily undermines the value of such family heritage. They essentially make people see the domains of language- learning, speaking, writing, reading, and listening as a burdensome experience.

In one-language-one-identity context, family lineage operates on a vertical patriarchal line. As my own encounter and other participants' stories show, government officials acknowledge ethnic identity using the father as the context of one's identity. In this way, patriarchy was treated by the EPRDF as an impartial family structure in spite of its discriminatory nature. By contrast, a mixed ethnic family setting operates on a horizontal line by using both parents as an important source of ethnic identity. Meaning, a person becomes a member of a mixed ethnic family when that person only situates itself at that horizontal-bilateral line with both parents occupying both ends of that horizontal line equally. Despite the contextual reality of mixed ethnic families, the EPRDF imposed its vertically oriented patriarchal system on the family using one-language-one-identity ethnic policy. By promoting this, the EPRDF attempted to erase unwisely horizontally oriented family affiliations as one of the assets of the country. Mixed ethnic identity is a vital national asset for peaceful coexistence between ethnic and linguistic groups. The government must revisit its constitution to give explicit recognition to a horizontally oriented family context.

6.4. Horizontally Oriented Affiliation

While presenting the Constitution as 'an expression of ethnic sovereignty'¹⁸⁴, the EPRDF attempted to erase five historical ethnic identities by inventing WoGaGoDa as a new single ethnic identity for them. Moreover, by stipulating in its Constitution "...equitable representation in State and Federal government" (Article 39 (3)), the EPRDF promoted one-language-one-identity ethnic policy by erasing mixed-ethnic identity as an expression of

¹⁸⁴ As it was stipulated in Article 8 from 1-3.

ethnic sovereignty. Furthermore, although inventing WoGaGoDa *ex nihilo* as a symbol of shared identity, the EPRDF problematized Ethiopia as a country by discounting her historical role as a symbol of shared national identity (Yassine, 2017; Tsige, 2019; Mengiste, 2019; Bogale, 2020; Dagnachew, 2020). With these fundamental contradictions in mind, let us discuss the pros and cons of Ethiopia as a symbol of shared national identity using historical and contemporary peoples' political, social, and ethnic sentiments through an analytical lens. By doing so, the hope is to examine the role of horizontal affiliation as a fundamental principle underpinning Ethiopia¹⁸⁵ and mixed-ethnic identity as shared identity in their respective domains¹⁸⁶. Also, the tension between the EPRDF's one-language-one-identity territorial grid and Ethiopia's historically ethnically fluid territorial grid will be discussed here.

Long before the EPRDF assumed power, in the late 1960s, Ethiopia's stature as a shared national identity faced serious challenges from the Ethiopian students' movement of that very decade. As KI #2 discussed it,

The student's movement in the 1960 treated Ethiopia not as our shared home, but as a prison house of nations... I'm proud to inform you that I was one of those people who founded an ethnic based party in order to free my ethnic group from the prison house known as Ethiopia¹⁸⁷ ... as my ethnic party sees it and strongly believes in it, Ethiopia as a country stands for imprisonment of my ethnic group ...

¹⁸⁵ Horizontally oriented affiliation at a national level proclaims the existence of an imagined community of a given country with its own territory (Anderson, 1983) . At the empirical level, the representation of that given country takes place using a national flag, a national anthem, national holidays, national iconic images etc. After the introduction of those vital instruments of identification as a symbol of shared identity, various public and private institutions within that country work on human mind and heart to keep those shared national symbols alive from one generation to the next. When multiple national symbols began to be felt by all as their shared identity, it is safe to assume the existence of a sense of belonging to that country and the people in it by those people who have been exposed to those shared symbols. For instance, Amharic as *lingua franca* serves Ethiopians as a national shared symbol in the area of communication.

¹⁸⁶ For Ethiopia, every ethnic group serves as the sphere of activity and for mixed-ethnic identity, every mixed ethnic family serves as a symbol of shared identity.

¹⁸⁷ For over a millennium, Ethiopia's landscape and ethnic composition rotated between expansion and contraction. As the history of Ethiopia tells us, in either of those cases, the shape of the country was always decided using elite bargains, religion or military might. In the 19th century, Ethiopia was described as a 'museum of the people' due to the presence of many ethnic groups within it. By contrast, the 1960s students' movement, particularly after Walleign Mekonnen piece appeared in the late 1960s, discussed Ethiopia using a 'prison house of nation' through a conceptual lens. This conceptual lens was imported from Joseph Stalin's writings, rather than conducting an empirical study of ethnic groups in Ethiopia by the students themselves.

“When the students in the 1960s began to call Ethiopia with such derogatory names”, said KI #1, who is also from that very decade,

My parents and I protested it vigorously because that kind of thinking has nothing to do with our history...that that that that that¹⁸⁸ notion was imported to Ethiopia from Joseph Stalin’s writing on ethnicity...

With his head tilted to the left, he struggled to say those five words again: a prison house of nations. Having seen similar gestures from others regarding those words, I made no attempt to repeat them while conducting an in-depth interview with him. By contrast, KI #2, while using those five words, took on an expanded posture, with a small smile covering his face, as he was ending his critical remarks on Ethiopia. When viewing Ethiopia as a prison house of nations, Amharic language is always used by the critics as a reference point to support their prison house argument. As KI #9 put it,

Amharic is a medium of instruction in our school system...it is the dominant and widely used language of the government...its dominance in this country forces you to speak it...why can’t the country use my ethnic language like that...

To make sense of the pros and cons of the role of Amharic as an instrument of imprisonment, it is imperative to bring into the discussion its genesis and evolution in the history of Ethiopia. To that extent, Ethiopia’s leading historian by the name of Bahru Zewde (2008) explains the rise of Amharic in this way:

...although Amharic obtained the honorific characterization of lesana negus (the language of the kings) Ge’ez remained the literary language ... as elsewhere in Africa

Most of the students, as all my KI informed me, were inspired by reading Soviet pamphlets on socialism and ethnicity. In view of that, it is safe to place the mono-ethnic reading of the nation by the students within the Soviet Union’s pamphlets, rather than in the sentiment of Ethiopia’s ethnic groups. Six of my siblings, four females and two males, were part of the student’s movement. Of six, two males and one female, spent more than three years in the bushes by arming themselves to wage war against the military regime of Ethiopia. Three of my females’ siblings were sent to prison by that very regime. Most of the students in the 1960s were from relatively privileged family backgrounds and were urban dwellers. Their Stalinist discourse was foreign to the peasants of Ethiopia and rural dwellers. The students’ movement was influenced by the writings of other countries’ elites about their own social, political, and economic problems. The student’s movement did not discuss issues related to mixed-ethnic identity in Ethiopia. While presenting themselves as the vanguard of ethnic politics, they failed to understand people with mixed-ethnic identities as one of ethnic category of Ethiopia. Half of the KI in my data set were part of the students’ movement. In addition, some of them came from a mixed-ethnic background. However, they (as well as my own siblings) failed to include mixed-ethnic identity into their ethnic-centred political, social, and economic discussions. With that view in mind, this thesis plays a critical role in bringing awareness and advocacy for the people with mixed ethnic identity.

¹⁸⁸ Participant repeated for emphasis.

missionaries played an important role in the development of Amharic as a literary language. First to come were the Jesuits who were active in the sixteenth and seventeenth century ... even more successful were the missionaries who came in the nineteenth century. Not only did they promote the development of Amharic through the composition or translation of religious texts and its use as a medium of instruction, but they also promoted the development of two other major languages: Afaan-Oromo and Tigriya (p.82-83).

In the nineteenth century, Amharic was further promoted by Emperor Tewodros II (1855-1868) as he officially began to correspond domestically and internationally with it. His successor, Emperor Yohannes IV (1872-1889), continued to promote it while using Tigriya as a medium of oral communication in private consultations with his close advisors. In this way,

By the second half of the nineteenth century at the latest, Amharic has developed as literary political lingua franca” ... nonetheless, it is a fact that urbanization did promote the widespread use of Amharic. This reached a level where members of other ethnic groups came to regard Amharic as their mother tongue. A statistical survey of the mid-1960s revealed that 48% of the population resident in nearly two hundred towns (excluding the capital) claimed Amharic as their mother tongue. For Addis Ababa the proportion (75%) was much higher. This is the situation that has given rise to the not infrequent phenomenon of non-Amhara who speak and write better Amharic than the Amhara themselves ... (p.84-85).

While Amharic was spreading with the help of urbanization, missionaries, and government officials, “its native Amharic speakers generally referred to themselves by their region rather than by their ethnic identity, i.e., Gojjame, Gondare, Shewe or Walloye... Until 1991, the prevalent administrative divisions also reinforced this regional identity” (p.83). With this historical experience ingrained in their mind, a lot of native Amharic speakers complained about being unfairly and unjustly treated as an oppressive ethnic group while they themselves still organized in regional terms. They see Amharic as the *lingua franca* of Ethiopia rather than their language only. To that extent, participant #19 (FGD #3) expressed his sadness in this way:

yes, we speak the Amharic language, but we identify more with our respective province than with pan-Amhara ethnic sentiment... I, myself, was born and raised here in the capital city. My parents are from the province of Wollo. While my parents strongly

identified with their province's sentiments, I strongly feel a sense of identity more with the province of Shewe and our capital city rather than with my parent's province ...

Other participants echoed the previous speaker's views on Amharic. Taking the discussion beyond the provincial grid, participant #24 (FGD #3) puts great emphasis on Amharic's role as the *lingua franca* of Ethiopians, rather than as an instrument of oppression. To that extent, she said:

Before the EPRDF made Amharic the language of the Amhara only, it was the language of all Ethiopians... the EPRDF is problematizing our common language for no good reason ...this country has over 80 language groups and in the absence of a common language between us how is it possible to work, to shop, and to entertain with one another...

Using a biblical story as a reference point, participant #30 (FGD #3) presented his argument on the historical relationship between language and Ethiopian people in the following manner:

...Ethiopian people in the past moved around the country freely and learned to speak many languages by living together...I speak two languages in addition to Amharic... however, the EPRDF, with its Kilil system, is removing people from an opportunity to speak more than one language... it also works hard to kill our lingua franca to make the Tower of Babel story out of us ...

In the biblical story of the tower, the unity of the people was symbolized by the presence of a common language. That unity, however, was dissolved when God “confuse(d) their language so they will not understand each other”¹⁸⁹. Similarly, as the reflection from participant #30 and others informed us, the EPRDF's version of ethnicity segregates people by turning them into a monolingual regime. In accordance with its one-language-one-identity ethnic policy, the Kilil structure discourages systematically the utility of Amharic as a *lingua franca* by using space and its ethnic policy as an impenetrable fortress to hinder interaction among the people of Ethiopia. This line of thinking is also widely shared by people from all walks of life, including playwrights, novelists, and musicians. For instance, Ejigayehu Shibabaw, known by her stage name as Gigi, is one of the most popular post-1991

¹⁸⁹ Genesis 11:6-7. <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis%2011%3A6-7&version=NIV>

contemporary musicians. Her song entitled *Eske Meche*¹⁹⁰ (1998) expressed the tension between horizontally and vertically oriented ethnic and spatial affiliations. The song was released seven years after the EPRDF institutionalized vertically oriented affiliation as the basis of ethnicity and spatial arrangement. She begins the song by expressing deep grief using the two words in the title: “*ehhhhh eske meche ehhhhh*”. Right after the expression of people’s agony in such a heart-wrenching manner, she asks: “how long shall we wait?” and, continued her wailing by saying:

please walk fast my leg; we have a long way to go; why are you dragging ash to ash; my heart is infected with fear; my body is numbed by hunger and thirstiness; they thought I was hungry for food and thirsty for milk and wine; I heard those people talking about me without having a clue about my problem. No, I am not hungry or thirsty for that; I am hungry for love...

As the lyrics informed us, she is surprised to see people not walking fast while their hearts were tormented by fear. Also, their bodies were tormented by hunger and thirst on the account of post-1991 spatial and ethnic planning. In other words, she wants the country to escape quickly from post-1991 spatial and ethnic arrangements, referred in her lyrics as ash. Hence, she crafted her lyrical messages using dialogue with oneself as a vehicle. In that way, people can carry out similar dialogue with themselves¹⁹¹ by posing a question in the following way. Namely, the title implies “*eske meche?*” (Until when?): this distressing existence is going to go on. After framing the disturbing issue in such a manner, she explained the kind of love (meaning spatial and interethnic love) that was missing in post-1991 Ethiopia in the following concrete terms:

If the crops of Gojjam are not sold in Gondar; if the crops of Gonder are not sold in Gojjam; if the father of Shewa does not wed his child to a Tigre; if the merchant of Harar does not sell in Welega; where is love? Where is love? Where are we heading?

¹⁹⁰ Amharic: until when. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xtCVYIsD8Lg&ab_channel=Gigi-Topic

¹⁹¹ In here, by asking the people to conduct dialogue within themselves, she is signalling two important messages. First, one must convince oneself first before engaging in conversation with others. Second, if one is able to convince oneself, one will be in an optimal position to be an agent of change. In other words, one will be in position to change the current spatial and ethnic arrangement by changing its relationship with the situation first. Walking fast and not dragging ash to ash were presented as a strategy to escape the distressing spatial and ethnic situation in the lyrics.

In the Kifle Hager system, those six provinces had ethnically fluid cultures. By contrast, the Kilil system rebrands them to make a single ethnic enclave¹⁹² by collapsing them into one Kilil, and by dividing others into different Kilils. Thus, Gigi powerfully protested the ethnicization of space by referring back to their former names and to their distinct former ethnically fluid provincial cultures. Moreover, by crafting her lyrical message using the Kifle Hager system as a reference point to explain the fault lines in the Kilil system, she offered the people a comparable spatial lens. After explaining convincingly on the lack of horizontally oriented marital, trade, ethnic and spatial interactions, she ends the sad saga of the country by repeating again and again the missing vital element in the country: *yerabign fiker* (I am hungry for love). “That song”, says participant #10 (FGD #3),

makes me cry every time I hear it ... when the EPRDF took power, teachers who have been teaching in various provinces for so many years were ordered to go back to their newly created ethnic territory ... all types of public service workers were also dismissed from their workplace and displaced from the place they used to call home ... our national military institutions, which were in operation since the time of emperor Haile Selassie, were dismantled, leaving hundreds and thousands of our soldiers jobless... that is the reason why Gigi chanted in a mourning tone about our real hunger ... the EPRDF brought starvation of love over the whole country and Gigi wept for us all...

After recounting some of the ills of the country in a somber tone, he stopped in mid-sentence and ended his remarks by calling the whole affair a tragedy. Soon after that, participant #28 (FGD #3), reused the line and said:

...Indeed, a great tragedy. How is it possible for a rebel force, heavily dominated by a Tigrinya speaking ethnic group, to call itself the national army after dismantling our national army... a national army should and must be the embodiment of all Ethiopians, not the instrument of a single ethnic group ...

While he was detailing the plight of the country in the 1990s, the tone of his voice oscillated between sadness and rage. After waiting for him to pause, an elderly mother began

¹⁹² In the Kilil system, Gonder and Gojjam rebranded as Amhara Kilil and Welega as Oromia Kilil. Shewa was divided between three Kilils and Harar between two Kilils. Tigray Kilil was made the home of the Tegararu.

calmly to recount about her work life, and as well as her co-worker's life in pre- and post-1991 Ethiopia. To that end, participant #21 (FGD #3) said:

Few months after the collapse of the military regime, well-armed TPLF's army came to the factory where I used to work at and ordered us to form a line using language spoken at home...we got confused because most of us speak Amharic only, but Amhara is not our ethnicity... while the military regime were in power, factory workers were treated as the engine of the revolution ... by contrast, the EPRDF viewed us as the sole property of an ethnic group...they closed down our factory shortly after... ever since then, some of my co-workers and I were transferred from wezader to lemany¹⁹³...

As calm as she was at the beginning of her narration, she ended it very calmly as well. But the young girl who started to narrate her story right after her, began to recite it in a highly elevated tone of anger. (Participant #1 FGD #3)

Of course, they did not come to protect us... they pushed the military government out to split us apart ...just look how many people are out of jobs since they took power ... the military government was constantly at war with them but tried hard to give people a job ... By contrast, the EPRDF created nothing but a system of corruption ... now you cannot get a simple bureaucrat to discharge its duty without paying bribery money...

She stopped in the middle of that sentence and finished it by saying: "the EPRDF does not care about us and about our country". By ending her sentence in such a manner, she gave them a zero both as liberator and protector of ethnicity and the country. Similar sentiment regarding their political report card were echoed by participant #26. She said:

While Europe was tearing down the wall of division in the 90s, the EPRDF erected a wall of separation with its constitution ...while the world was seeing our planet as a small village, Ethiopians were told by the EPRDF to see one another as strangers...

The early part of the 1990s, as symbolized the collapse of the Berlin Wall, arguably, ended the political rivalry of the cold war. It was responsible for dividing up the world, predominantly, into American's Western and Soviets' Eastern spheres of influence. This era was symbolized by the physical presence of the Berlin Wall. Just as the Berlin Wall was a symbol of political, social, and economic division of that era, participant #26 and others viewed the Kilil based constitutional framework as an instrument of separation by fostering unhealthy political, social, and economic rivalry. As such, the Kilil system made people lose

¹⁹³ Amharic: wezader means proletarian and Lemanyi means begger.

their homes, jobs, and social life on account of their ethnic background. While Ethiopians were losing their livelihood, by contrast, the post-Berlin Wall era gave a sense of togetherness to other parts of the world. In post-1991 Ethiopia, the EPRDF, with its one-language-one-identity ethnic policy, erected a wall of separation not only between ethnic groups, but also between a woman and her livelihood. To that end, participant #14 noted:

I am a woman, but the EPRDF ordered me to surrender my right as a woman and a mother... this country needs to recognize us as an indispensable part of its existence ... they need to tear down the wall of separation between a woman and her household...between a woman and her ethnicity ... between a woman and Ethiopia ...

Having recited the distressing experience of a woman in a country with composed and assertive voice, participant #14 got up to stretch her legs and sat down again. She asked if I had more questions; I said I do. Have you heard Gigi's song *Eske Meche*? She said yes and continued with the same breath:

... the song told us the state of things in the 90s... here we are now in 2019 with a machete in one hand and a gun in the other protecting the wall of separation as it was the case in the 90s...

6.5. The Horizontal Turn of the EPRDF

In the 1990s, the EPRDF did not only preoccupy itself in erecting the wall of separation within the country using a one-language-one-identity ethnic policy. It also led the country into a war with Eritrea in the latter part of that very decade. "The war", as the BBC puts it, "began on May 6, 1998, sparked by a battle for control over the border town of Badme – a humble, dusty market town with no apparent value. It had neither oil nor diamonds, but it did not matter; both Eritrea and Ethiopia wanted it on their side of the border. At the time, the war was described as 'two bald men fighting over a comb'"¹⁹⁴. The metaphor is the best illustration of peoples' life in Ethiopia. Just as a war between two bald men over a comb informs us on the irrelevancy of that war, a vertically oriented ethnic policy showed to the EPRDF the irrelevancy of its policy in galvanizing national support. Hence, the

¹⁹⁴ <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-44004212>

EPRDF sought national support from a horizontally oriented historical heritage. To that end, participant #25 (FGD #4) noted:

The EPRDF worked in a frantic and energetic manner to tell us how proud we should be as Ethiopians ... national songs that used to be the voice of TV and radio in pre-1991 Ethiopia quickly filled the air waves in 1998 ... a lot of people rejoiced the war for bringing back the discourse of national identity to the mouth of the EPRDF ...

The 1998 war between Ethiopia and Eritrea resulted, as one commentator noted in 2018 on its 20 years anniversary piece, in “a bloody and senseless WWI-style trench war in which tens of thousands of soldiers ran into machine guns, tanks and artillery fire in waves. The war left an estimated 100,000 dead and more than a million displaced”¹⁹⁵. Speaking of displacement, participant #23, recalls his ordeal in this manner:

...when the war between Ethiopia and Eritrea broke out in 1998 ... the EPRDF started deporting people of Eritrean descent back to Eritrea... my father was one of those who got deported in his late 60s ... they shamelessly deported him from Ethiopia to Eritrea...this happened after my father lived here in Ethiopia for over forty years ... all kinds of people got deported back including people who spoke Amharic as their only language ... I also only speak Amharic ... I miraculously escaped the deportation order because on their file I was categorized as an Amhara...

During this human carnage, Ethiopia’s Prime Minister, the late Meles Zenawi, was asked about his government rationale on the issue of deportation. His reply got more people confused and worried about their own future under his government. Regarding deportation, the following corrosive and racist remarks were made by him: “if the Ethiopian government said I do not like the color of your eyes, those people who have been told that must leave quickly without asking how threatening they are to us”¹⁹⁶. Using that as its guiding principle, the EPRDF displaced people by destroying their many decades’ old livelihood. On another front, however, there was an unexpected benefit of the war. Zenawi’s government was forced to shift temporarily, from vertically oriented and patriarchal ethnic discourse, into a

¹⁹⁵ <https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/ethiopia-eritrea-conflict-20-years-brothers-war-180506082447762.html>

¹⁹⁶ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IoAn7n5Bfq0>

horizontally oriented political and social discourse. In sum, national love and protection¹⁹⁷ were pursued as a rally point. The 1998 Ethio-Eritrean war demanded nothing short of that because Eritrea, for its part, was engaging in that war using a horizontal affiliation to galvanize support for the war from its multi-ethnic population. The disputed territory between the two countries was in the Tigray Kilil. However, going to war alone, as the vertically organized ethnic based system demands, in the presence of Eritrea's horizontally organized military force was treated as a problematic proposition by the Tigray Kilil. Hence, the EPRDF made a tactical move to tear down a vertically erected ethnic wall. They worked the ethnic hyphens by weaving people from various ethnic backgrounds as members of one big family and, thereby, made it possible for the government to produce its ultimate desire: a war making machine under a horizontally assembled national efforts¹⁹⁸.

“We were so thrilled”, said participant #7:

to see our shared national identity on the rise ... the EPRDF views on ethnicity was looked at, during the war, as a symbol of vulnerability and weakness ... as government talks on national identity intensified, those of us with a mixed ethnic identity began to feel safe once again. Because what the government was preaching, solidarity among ethnic groups, already vibrantly existed in our own household ... our parents mixed ethnic marriage is the tallest symbol of ethnic solidarity...

Up until the beginning of the war, EPRDF's ethnic discourse was delivered by erasing the historical account of horizontally based relationships between ethnic groups. The 1995 Constitution and the Kilil system were designed without addressing spatial and identity issues regarding people with mixed ethnicity. However, the war forced the EPRDF to preach on horizontally based ethnic relationships as a vital fact of life for Ethiopians. As participant #7

¹⁹⁷ Similarly, to what has transpired in the Ethio-Eritrean war “within the chaos of conflict” of the TPLF's initiated 2020-2021 on-going war, as Grham Peebles put it, “a powerful sense of national unity has emerged; the people have a common enemy – the TPLF, as well as the US, and western media, which has lost all credibility among Ethiopians. It is essential that this sense of togetherness is maintained and that fragmentation along ethnic/tribal lines, which the TPLF agitated when in power, is minimised (November 26, 2021). <https://www.counterpunch.org/2021/11/26/ethiopia-conflict-by-us-design/>

¹⁹⁸ Not learning from the success of national spirit from the 1998-2000 war, TPLF declared war on November 4, 2020, against the federal army of Ethiopia. The TPLF lost the war and its party status because Dr. Abiy was able to mobilize the federal army using a horizontally organized national spirit. The TPLF was defeated 3 weeks after it declared the war because its vertically organized single ethnic based military force was no match to a horizontally organized and mobilized national army of Ethiopia.

recalled it, people with mixed ethnic identity were happy to hear discourse on the ethnic alliance. After the war, the discourse of ethnic alliance did not materialize as ethnic policy for the benefit of people with mixed ethnicity. But it did help the EPRDF's government from defeat¹⁹⁹. However, the war, far from delivering the much-needed peace between the same families, it was followed by “political stalemate that ensued from the war and stubbornly persisted for two decades proved to be exclusivist and alienating. The conflict shattered family lives of millions of people on both sides of the border. It deprived landlocked Ethiopia access to Eritrean ports. It cut off Eritrea from access to the largest market in the region”²⁰⁰. Cutting people off from their family members was not the only negative impact of the war.

6.6. In Praise of Horizontal Affiliation

This vertically orientated and patriarchal system, far from helping Zenawi and its TPLF party sustain their political hegemony, became their undoing when people across the country continued to voice for ethnic justice before the 1998-2000 war and after it. As participant #15 put it:

I just do not understand what Melse Zenawi and his party TPLF stand to gain from their ethnic based system ... His ethnic group represents only 6% per cent of the general population. Yet they insisted on having an ethnic based political system ...

As representative of minority ethnic groups, the TPLF is probably seeking protection for its ethnic group by organizing politics along ethnic lines. This strategy may deliver protection for Tegar at the Kilil level. However, at federal level, other ethnic groups stand to benefit the most. To this end, participant #3 relies on a number-based argument:

...Since taking power, the TPLF never got tired of preaching to us about one-man - one- vote political system ... do not they know that, it is the surest way for them to lose political power at the federal level ... one-man-one-vote works in favour of the numerically large number of ethnic groups ... in the Ethiopian context the Oromo and

¹⁹⁹ As one commentator put it “...over all, the cost of the war for Ethiopia was nearly \$3bn”
<https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/ethiopia-eritrea-conflict-20-years-brothers-war-180506082447762.html>

²⁰⁰ <https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/ethiopia-eritrea-conflict-20-years-brothers-war-180506082447762.html>

Amhara will be the beneficiary of that system ... while preaching one-man- one-vote system, the TPLF kept itself in power only by using the EPRDF as a front...

By violently suppressing the challenges against its monopoly of political power from the Oromo, Amhara, and other ethnic groups, the TPLF has managed to stay in power for twenty-seven years. However, toward the latter part of 2016, the Oromo and Amhara ethnic groups began to mobilize people from their respective groups using horizontal affiliation as a guiding principle. They formed a resistance movement by using the two ethnic groups. Oromo members, such as Abiy Ahmed and Lemma Megersa, and Amhara members such as Demeke Mekonne and Gedu Andargachew, began to form solidarity. They mobilized the two ethnic groups against the TPLF. Consequently, the TPLF was left with no choice but to step down from federal power in 2018. In the diaspora, countless activists, ordinary Ethiopians, distinguished figures, and professors, also organized and mobilized people along the horizontal line. To the people in the diaspora, the TPLF's vertically oriented ethnic system was seen as a black apartheid political system and its Kilil system as the 'Bantustanization of Ethiopia'. In fact, Al Mariam, using that as the title of his piece, noted,

I believe the problem of the first two decades of 21st Century Ethiopia is the problem of the ethnic line. It is an ethnic line conceived and gestated in the womb of the T-TPLF and birthed to inflict destruction and ruin in the Ethiopian body politics ... Like the minority white apartheid regime in South Africa, the T-TPLF has built its political and economic power by literally owning all of the land in the country (Art. 40 of the T-TPLF constitution) and by totally controlling political power (the T-TPLF "won" the May 2015 election²⁰¹ by 100 per cent and reinforces its dictatorial rule by the barrel of the gun), monopolizing the private sector (T-TPLF controlled interlocking syndicates maintain complete monopoly over the economy) and parceling out employment, educational and other opportunities in exchange for political support and allegiance²⁰²

Eighteen years before the publication of Al Mariam's 2016 piece, Gigi identified the Kilil system as the great fault line in her 1998 *Eske Mecha* song. She titled her album "One Ethiopia" because Ethiopia was facing serious obstacles to keep her one big family intact. The survival of any ethnic group in Ethiopia, arguably, depends on the survival of Ethiopia as

²⁰¹ Arriola, & Lyons (2016) also discussed extensively on the impacts of a 100 per cent election.

²⁰² <https://almariam.com/2016/04/03/the-bantustanization-kililistization-of-ethiopia/>

a nation state. Here, horizontal affiliation plays a critical role by weaving various ethnic groups as fellow countrywomen and men. When all ethnic groups work together peacefully, minority ethnic groups like the people of Tigray will be in an optimal position to maintain their ethnic identity and sovereignty. However, the TPLF, far from working to realize that on the account of horizontal affiliation, preferred to erect a wall between ethnic groups using the Kilil system. This sent the country into a process of disintegration. The musician Tewodros Kassahun (aka Teddy Afro) lamented for Ethiopia and his people. Sensing the danger at play, just as Gigi did 20 years ago, he called his 2017 album “Ethiopia”. In that album, he wept for Ethiopia and begged the people to save the motherland from the catastrophe of civil war. To rescue the motherland from vertically oriented ethnic carnage, he begged the people, with a sorrowful tone, to use horizontal affiliation like Emperor Tewodros II did when he freed the motherland from warmongering local princes and their vertically oriented principalities. In the aptly titled song “Atse Tewodros²⁰³”, he took his audience to the point in which the great emperor gasped his last precious breath in a heroic and dignified manner in the service of the motherland²⁰⁴:

... at ‘Mekdela’²⁰⁵ steppes... leaning his hand on a fire²⁰⁶ proudly drank that sour and died for one country wearing a flag; ... roar like a lion Kassa!²⁰⁷ before the pride of a motherland forgotten! roar like a lion Kassa!²⁰⁸ ...

²⁰³ Amharic or Geex: Atse means Emperor.

²⁰⁴ See the song here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JizAcZoRW5M&ab_channel=TeddyAfro

²⁰⁵ It is the place where emperor Tewodros II fought his final battle against the British army. It is located between Gondar and Wollo.

²⁰⁶ His gun

²⁰⁷ Emperor Tewodros’ II birth name. In the monarchical tradition of Ethiopia. A person changes his name upon assuming power as emperor. Emperor Haile Selassie’s birth name was Teferi . Rastafarian is an amalgamation of his honorary title Ras and his name Teferi.

²⁰⁸ Before the birth of Kassa, Ethiopia was divided up for a century by a lot of feuding principalities and kingdoms with warmongering leaders at helm (Pankhurst, 1966; Rubenson, 1966; Abir, 1968; Zewde, 2001). Kassa fought hard to rescue Ethiopia from those types of jingoists with vertically oriented spatial arrangements and a warlike political environment. So, the song *Kassa* was used in two senses. In its first sense, the word *Kassa* signifies one becoming an insurer for someone else. In its second sense, it invites the current generation, which is being called Kassa (the insurer), to revisit the heroic sacrifice and noble contribution of Kassa the Emperor. In other words, his song conceptualized the current generation as the undertaker of saving the country’s insurance contract.

In this song, he is asking the current generation to roar like a lion to the occasion to pay their horizontal oriented dues as Kassa did in his time with dignity. In the following segment of that very powerfully mesmerizing song, he told his audience passionately what the roaring like a lion is going to accomplish:

*Gondar, Gojjam, Wollo and Tigray; Oromo, Tegulet, Gurage, Harar, Wolita, Benshangul, Somali, Afar Asayita come together*²⁰⁹

In calling Gondar, Gojjam and Wollo by their pre-1991 provincial name, he showed his liking for a non-ethnic spatial arrangement. He, therefore, called upon various ethnic groups to come together by giving them cautionary advice in a grief-stricken tone so that they do not repeat the mistakes of warmongering lords of the eighteenth century. To that end, he chanted soulfully in this way:

Do not you all know that we all have the same mother; ethnicity and religion should not separate us; if we work together, nothing is impossible for us to accomplish...

He ends with a touching line by chanting in a tone of great sorrow ‘Ohhh Ohhh I pity for us because despite our great asset as the sons and daughters of a single mother, we are in danger of losing her and ourselves by going back to the era of feuding princes and bloodbath principalities’²¹⁰. Thus, he urged people to re-enact Kassa’s save-the-country advocacy by using horizontal affiliation²¹¹ as a vital instrument to bridge the gap between ethnic groups²¹².

²⁰⁹ The first four names are provinces in the Kifle Hager system, and the last nine names are ethnic groups in Ethiopia.

²¹⁰ After the November 4, 2020, war between the federal government and the TPLF, some people see Teddy Afro like a prophet for telling them what the future has in store for them: feuding principalities.

²¹¹ In pre-1991, the students’ movement chanted for ethnic rights using vertical affiliation without acknowledging the rights of the people with mixed-ethnic identity. Similarly, after 1991, Ethiopians from all walks of life promoted horizontal affiliation as a road map for peaceful co-existence. They have yet to make a similar argument on the behalf of mixed ethnicity. In other words, issues of mixed-identities will not be addressed by the discourse of horizontal affiliation alone, until formal and official recognition are bestowed by the constitution to the people with mixed-ethnic identities.

²¹² With this song, he was able to deliver his critical message by way of “poetic eloquence, polished diction, passionate patriotism (love of the country and compatriots)” and by openly proclaiming “his un-severable attachment to Mother Ethiopia by a primordial umbilical cord <http://almariam.com/2017/05/21/ethiopiawin-et-and-tewdros-kassa-hun/>

Abiy Ahmed became the voice of Ethiopians' horizontally oriented reform journey²¹³. He called that Journey Medemer,²¹⁴ and published a book in October 2019 using the same title to explain the philosophy behind it. In Medemer (2019), Abiy critically analyzed the last five decades of the twentieth century of Ethiopia's history. "In the dynamic processes of cooperation and competition", Al Mariam writes, "Medemer represents synergy (from the Latin root "syn" ("together") and "ergy" ("work")). Medemer describes a synergistic process of the coming together of individuals, groups, leaders and institutions to work more energetically, effectively and creatively for the common good and in the public interest"²¹⁵. One cannot help but to clearly see Abiy's mixed ethnic and religious background readily furnishing the substance and context of Medemer's philosophy. More importantly, Medemer makes it possible for a mixed ethnic identity to be seen both as its precursor and as its illustrious example. This is so because long before the publication of Medemer, Ethiopians from various ethnic backgrounds were merging along the horizontal line to form a mixed ethnic identity and family. It is also against this background that a mixed ethnic identity readily presents itself as a home grown²¹⁶ concrete example of Medemer.

²¹³ Roaring like a lion for the sake of horizontal affiliation was answered in multiple ways by countless Ethiopians. Lemma Megersa, the head of Oromo Kilil, publicly broadcasted this when he framed one's relationship with Ethiopia in the following metaphor: "sense of belonging to Ethiopia is similar to addictive sense and taste of powerful drugs" (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=le23U9FN-Rs&feature=youtu.be&ab_channel=MANKIRA). In sum, Ethiopians by working together, Lemma, Abiy Ahmed and others (Gedu Andargachew, Demeke mekonnen and many more), they managed to end the TPLF's 27-year-old hegemonic and vertically oriented political power in Ethiopia.

²¹⁴ In this thesis, Medemer is defined as a horizontally oriented discourse, since its literal meaning in Amharic means 'coming together'. In a horizontally oriented family format, two persons from different backgrounds come together to form a mixed-ethnic family. "In some media accounts, Medemer has been equated with "synergy" and an attempt to transform a "mosaic into a melting pot" : http://almariam.com/2019/10/20/medemer-by-abiy-ahmed-ph-d-an-interpretive-book-review-in-two-parts/#_ednref12

²¹⁵ http://almariam.com/2019/10/20/medemer-by-abiy-ahmed-ph-d-an-interpretive-book-review-in-two-parts/#_ednref12

²¹⁶ As he discusses in his book, Ethiopia's successive governments imported ideologies from the outside. They terribly failed to understand and solve Ethiopia's multifaceted social, political, and economic problems. This was due to the fact that they were importing ideologies that were alien to Ethiopia's political, social, and economic reality. Therefore, he prescribes reversing the trend by relying on a home-grown ideology.

6.7. Conclusion

Vertical affiliation is a discriminatory hierarchical system when it is examined from the position of gender and mixed ethnic identity. Due to its one-sidedness, people with mixed ethnic identity are required to affiliate with their father's lineage only. By contrast, horizontal affiliation, either in the form of a mixed ethnic identity or in the form of national identity, by the very presence of its constitutive elements, stands as the sum of its parts in a non-hierarchical manner. For example, Ethiopia, as a symbol of shared identity, represents the sum of its eighty-plus ethnic parts. But the logical conclusion of vertical affiliation treats one of the ethnic groups as the sum of all ethnic groups due to its chauvinistic character. Similarly, when one-language-one-identity ethnic policy makes fathers the anchor of one's identity, fathers become the sum of ethnic identity rather than functioning as one part of the family unit. Since a mixed ethnic identity contains more than one ethnic element in its composition, it treats fathers and mothers equally. Accordingly, a mixed ethnic family manifests itself in a non-hierarchical manner. For this very reason, a mixed ethnic identity sees the EPRDF's vertically organized ethnic identity as a threat to its survival due to its one-sided approach. By contrast, the horizontally organized orientation of a national identity offers hope for the survival of mixed ethnic identity. The family unit of mixed identity represents the national identity on smaller scale. But the presence of national identity alone does not ensure equality between the two critical ethnic identities. Hence, the survival of mixed-ethnic identity necessarily depends on constitutionally stipulated rights, just as single ethnic identity depends on it for its survival since the 1990s.

A given national identity makes every segment of its parts a vital part of the whole in a non-hierarchical arrangement. A mixed ethnic identity equally treats its own single part as an indispensable part of its admixture to keep intact its mixed ethnic family heritage. Considering this contextual lens, one sees clearly a benefit pouring into a single ethnic

identity from two important sources: a national identity and a mixed one. However, the EPRDF's vertically oriented constitutional framework seems to invite unnecessary threat to a single ethnic identity; it does this by positioning it in contradictory manner against its two important complementary sources. Since the very survival of a national and a mixed ethnic identity depends on the well-being of their respective parts, it is logical to assume both identities relationship with a single ethnic identity being maintained by their common interest. For instance, if a government in Ethiopia abolishes a single ethnic identity as a category of identification, the logical end of this approach equally forces a mixed ethnic identity to cease its operation as a category of identification. Similarly, national identity, as a representative of a single and a mixed ethnic identity, loses its logical merit in the absence of its indispensable constitutive parts in such ethnically organized country like Ethiopia. Moreover, mixed, and national identities are best framed using a horizontally oriented affiliation. The EPRDF's insistence on the utility of its one-language-one-identity ethnic policy has succeeded in antagonizing people since its inception. For a peaceful co-existence to occur in the country, national and mixed identities must be re-contextualized using a horizontal orientation as an expression of identity within the constitutional framework.

This thesis, thus far, has discussed the negative impact of the EPRDF's relational system in regard to a sense of belonging, ethnicity, and national identity, using mixed ethnic identity as an analytical tool. We now turn our attention, in the next chapter, to the issue of vertically oriented spatial arrangement and its consequences to people with mixed ethnic identity and others.

Chapter 7: Spatiality and Nu Buna Tetu²¹⁷

7.1. Introduction

This chapter examines spatial arrangements in Ethiopia using the Kilil and Kifle Hager systems. I argue for an inclusive spatial arrangement as it was exhibited in the *buna tetu* tradition.

As history informs us, the production of space by humans was done to satisfy the material and organic needs of the body. Hence, humans relied on multiple schemes²¹⁸ to claim a given portion of the Earth as theirs to stay alive. In a common-land scheme, the Earth is utilized equally by all to sustain their livelihood. By contrast, when land is fenced in by a person or group, those who found themselves outside of that particular fence²¹⁹ stand to lose the most when it is done without their consent. With respect to an arbitrary fencing scheme, Rousseau's (1964) alarming illustration is instructive here:

the first man ... enclosed a piece of ground, bethought himself of saying this is mine, and found people simple enough to believe him, was the real founder of civil society. From how many crimes, wars, and murders, from how many horrors and misfortunes might not any one has saved mankind, by pulling up the stakes, or filling up the ditch, and crying to his fellows, "Beware of listening to this impostor; you are undone if you once forget that the fruits of the earth belong to us all, and the earth itself to nobody (p.142).

In this story, Rousseau simultaneously treats the act of arbitrary fencing and enclosed pieces of land as a spatial scheme for the birth of an imposter and multiple misfortunes. In direct contrast to the Robinson Crusoe²²⁰ story (Poole & Defoe, 1805), the Rousseauian perspective gives us the picture of a given space already inhabited by people when one of the inhabitants boldly decided to arbitrarily enclose a piece of the Earth at the expense of other inhabitants. As he sees it, what makes a person an imposter is when that particular person is able to enclose a piece land while it was already inhabited by people. Finally, what solidifies

²¹⁷ Amharic: come and drink coffee. In its functional sense, it means: Let's drink coffee together.

²¹⁸ Religion, ideology, war, kings, lords, so forth.

²¹⁹ Tribal, monarchical, governmental, fiefdoms, regional, national, county, so forth.

²²⁰ The main character of that very novel. As the book informs us, Robinson arrived on island alone with three animals.

such a spatial arrangement as an act by an imposter is when that person's spatial scheme was able to transform people from the role of inhabitants to helpless spectators²²¹. In this way, his story puts great emphasis on the dire implications of unfair spatial relations to those who have been impacted by it. In short, the story informs us of the idea of spatial alienation²²² as the by-product of fencing without the consent of its inhabitants. For example, when the EPRDF produced space using a one-language-one-identity-one-territory as the only guiding principle in the country, people with mixed ethnic identities found themselves outside of the ethnic based territorial grid. With this in mind, let us investigate how governments and the people communicate in spatial matters over the years. The focus will be on the Kilil system and the *buna tetu* tradition, since the latter poses an historical, and communal, and spatial challenge to the former.

7.2. Spatiality and the Kilil system

When one examines the 1974 Ethiopia's Revolution against the backdrop of Rousseau's powerful land-centered story, one quickly finds the unfair spatial relations embedded in the arrangement. Prior to the revolution, land was granted to the people under the goodwill of the Emperor (Bailey, 1980; Woldemariam, 2017). But soon after overthrowing the monarchical regime of Ethiopia, the military regime adopted a socialist orientation to distribute 'the fruit of the Earth' among the people equally and, most importantly, sought to abolish the spatial inequality in the country. To that end, Cohen & Koehn (1978) write,

the PMAC's- provisional military administrative council or in Ethiopian common language the Derg- strategy involved an attack on the authority of propertied and traditional elites, promulgation of a series of income-leveling measures, state acquisition of the country's productive facilities and resources, and the exercise of

²²¹ The Kilil system, by dividing land along a single ethnic identity, has turned people with mixed ethnic identity into helpless spectators. For this very reason, the EPRDF is treated in this thesis as the primary example of Rousseau's imposter and its instructive land-centred story.

²²² Thus, in this thesis, an imposter is defined as an anchor of unfair spatial relations. Accordingly, a person, government, or a given group can be called an imposter when their respective spatial acts manifest themselves as an anchor of unfair spatial relations.

public control over agricultural and urban land, rented urban houses, large commercial and industrial enterprises and apartment buildings (p.4).

In short, the new regime with the proclamation No. 31 of 1975 abolished all private urban and rural land ownership without compensation. Thus, they made it possible for the people to have a new form of spatial and material arrangement. Shortly after, however, the new government instituted red terror²²³ and turned the people into helpless spectators and victims. The new regime, commonly known as Derg, ignored its own 1975 proclamation and became Rousseau's imposter by claiming exclusive rights over the Earth and people via red terror. As Lefort (1983) notes,

“History offers few examples of revolutions that have devoured their own children with such viciousness and so much cruelty. It can be estimated that, of ten civilians who had actively worked for a radical transformation of Ethiopia, only one escaped arrest, imprisonment, torture, execution, or assassination. The revolution swallowed the whole of the young generation of Ethiopian intellectuals that is literates” (p.257).

“The object of the red terror campaign”, Keller (c1988) adds, “was to liquidate the so-called enemies of the revolution by any means available” (p.200). Schwab (1985) adds that, “the police, military, and kebelles²²⁴-were instructed to flush out and execute all enemies of the government” (p.40). This made it possible for the military regime to become the new owner of the country, just as the Emperor was before it (Tsige, 2019). Finally, after killing and terrorizing countless people for seventeen years, the government was ousted from power, owing to its role as the great imposter over the country.

In May 1991, the EPRDF, led by a Tigrinya-speaking rebel group, assumed power. The notion of a proletarian society, which was supposedly the ‘alleged doctrine’ of the military regime, was put to rest in favour of an ethnic-based spatial, social, political, and economic arrangement over the country. Accordingly, the EPRDF divided the land into

²²³ The 1977-78 red terror was characterized by state-sanctioned murders against its own citizens. They murdered people without a trial. They displayed their lifeless bodies for public viewing by laying them in front of their houses, at street corner or at public square. They denied their respective parents to recover the lifeless bodies of their loved ones. By denying them their natural right, many shed tears over the loss of loved ones. They coerced parents to pay for each bullet that was found in their son or daughter's murdered bodies.

²²⁴ Amharic: The smallest administrative unit of the state.

single ethnic enclaves and called it the Kilil system. These exclusive spaces came into being using a one-language-one-identity policy as the sole instrument for the country wide relational system. In this way, it divided the country among few single ethnic groups at the expense of the people with mixed ethnic identities, and 80-plus single ethnic groups. Moreover, the Kilil system speaks volumes on the limitations of the EPRDF's relational system.

For KI #6, the Kilil system is an unfortunate spatial turn in the history of Ethiopia. To that end, he begins by saying:

Geography is what made me who I am as a person, thinker, writer, and lecturer for over four decades... in a country such as Ethiopia, without a history of clearly demarcated ethnic boundaries, this type of spatial arrangement invites serious conflict among ethnic groups ... the Kilil system, far from facilitating spatial justice for ethnic groups, presented itself as a constitutionally grounded recipe for ethnic cleansing...we all have witnessed unprecedented cases of displacement since the EPRDF puts this ahistorical and unscientific political decision in practice...

As the above commentator sees it, the EPRDF's Kilil system was made using the party's political interest as the guiding principle. It ignored the spatial interests and historical realities of the people on the ground. While sharing KI #6's views on the Kilil's ahistorical and unscientific aspects, participant #10 dissected the political history of Ethiopia in the following manner:

... before the 1974 Revolution, the Emperor used religion to have total control over land and the people ... By contrast, the EPRDF uses land in the name of ethnicity to segregate us and to control our life... both regimes are self-serving rulers with zero political interest in changing the life of people on the ground...

As both participants explained it, the past and current regimes of Ethiopia use political power to advance their own political interests, rather than addressing the political and spatial interests of the people. Those with power created an authoritarian state by turning the country into the land of a few privileged groups. Meanwhile, they used people in the country as instruments of power to sustain their authoritarianism. When Ethiopia was governed by the monarchical system, the Emperor and his feudal lords presented themselves as the undisputed

rulers of the country. Similarly, the EPRDF's ascension to power was aided by military might. The party remained in power using a discourse about ethnicity to sustain itself as discussed by participant #10. By contrast, KI #9 sees ethnic-based spatial and political arrangements as the only sensible solution to restore ethnic pride and to empower ethnic groups in Ethiopia. As he sees it,

...ethnic groups have suffered unspeakable pain and agony in order to maintain Ethiopia as a country ... to me, the interest of my ethnic group comes before the interest of Ethiopia as a country... However, the military government and its many predecessors focused on Ethiopia as a whole... the EPRDF makes us think dominantly about our ethnic groups because ethnic groups are real, and Ethiopia is a fiction ... since we are real entities, we deserve a territory of our own ... we have that under the EPRDF ...

While KI #6, participant #10 and KI #9 share similar views on the existence of ethnic groups in Ethiopia, KI #9 differs from the others by treating ethnic groups as real and Ethiopia as fictional. KI #9 sees the Kilil system addressing the interests of ethnic groups in Ethiopia. By contrast, KI #6 views it as a recipe for disaster since it failed to consider the consequence of its implementation in the absence of clearly demarcated historical ethnic boundaries. When it comes to an ethnic-based system under its current format, KI #6 and participant #10 see it as an erroneous system for advancing the interest of the EPRDF. KI #9 views it as the best model to free ethnic groups from oppression. Hence, KI #9 treated Ethiopia itself as a threat for the survival of ethnic groups. By contrast, the former two view the EPRDF's ethnic-based system as a threat to the country by discounting the people on the ground.

When it comes to the relationship between the people and the Kilil system, participant #23 (FGD #4) discussed the matter in this way:

... the Kilil map was made using machine guns as its only guiding principle ... have not we suffered enough from the EPRDF's aggression? ... while professing to care for the spatial interest of all ethnic groups, it succeeded in making the selected few masters of an ethnic enclave ... If you want to go an ethnic way, you need to go all the way up... but the EPRDF stopped at nine ... as a result, very few ethnic groups were permitted exclusive rights over our common land by giving them provincial status via the Kilil

system ... the rest of the ethnic groups were given no such privileges and status at all ... I called this self-serving ethnic politics...

For this participant, the EPRDF's ethnic-based relational system is incapable of addressing the spatial interest of all ethnic groups in the country. As such, the Kilil system posed a grave threat for peaceful coexistence by furnishing an unfairly organized and hierarchical spatial arrangement. The EPRDF decided to distribute two-third of the land among five²²⁵ ethnic groups. Those single ethnic groups which have been disadvantaged by such an unfair spatial arrangement felt greatly betrayed by that very system, just as people with mixed ethnic identity have.

7.3. The Great Betrayal

Regarding the issue of the great betrayal by the EPRDF's Kilil system, participant #15 (FGD #4) puts forward the following graphic examples:

Please picture in your mind a pregnant woman with a couple of fetuses in her womb ... all of the medical reports speak clearly and loudly about their health status. Knowing full well about this vital info, family members were awaiting joyfully the arrival of newly born multiple babies. But during the delivery process, those who were assisting in childbirth have decided to stop arbitrarily after letting only two babies out of the mother's womb ... and told the mother to go home and live her post-pregnancy life...

Before participant #15 ever gets the chance to unpack the wisdom of her parable, participant #12 (FGD #4) explained the previous speaker's wisdom in this way,

In post-1991 Ethiopia, the EPRDF assumed the role of midwifery ... The party preached to us around the clock how ill-equipped the Kifle-Hager system was as a spatial instrument for the integrity and dignity of each and every ethnic group ... in accordance with its discourse of fairness, the party abolished the Kifle Hager system to make only the selected few ethnic groups masters of the land, and the rest yebeyi temelikachi²²⁶... where is the fairness in that? The EPRDF is asking us to see the Kilil system as a fair spatial system, but I do not see it that way, do you?

By posing the question in such a manner, participant #12 stopped talking, and this allowed participant #18 (FGD #4) to tackle the question before her:

²²⁵ Tegar, Afar, Amhara, Oromo, and Somali.

²²⁶ Amharic: it's very popular adage to describe unfair situations. Its literal meaning is. this: we stand by as helpless spectator while others are feasting.

The short answer to your question is this ... the EPRDF karta²²⁷ is not a fair spatial system ... As the EPRDF itself told us, all the ethnic groups do have a functional language in our country ... of course except for the Geez and Amharic, in the nineteenth century, all other languages relied mainly on an oral based system ... but an oral language vs written language was not used by the EPRDF in support of their language based ethnic system ... why then did the EPRDF decided to award few of them with the Kilil status and deprive the rest of the ethnic groups such spatial status ...

Participant #18 ended her argument by posing a question on the nature of the relationship between the Kilil system and those ethnic groups without a Kilil status. As participant #6 (FGD #4) sees it, ethnic identity in the southern part of Ethiopia was ignored by the EPRDF while producing provincial identity using ethnic's language as the basis of such space. Hence, for this person,

The EPRDF's karta sera²²⁸ speaks volumes on the party's sinister act than on the merit or demerit of the ethnic group's language as marker of space ... look what they did to fifty plus ethnic groups who reside in the southern part of Ethiopia ... this part of the country was named using one of the four cardinal geographical directions ... what about naming the rest of the land in the country in a similar manner ...

As this speaker sees it, the language of multiple ethnic groups was disrespected by the EPRDF; part of the country was named after ethnic languages, while other parts of were named after geographical directions. In this view, participant #31 (FGD #4), also sees the Kilil system as facilitating

... a constitutionally grounded discrimination system ... people in the South deserved a much better treatment than the one offered by this zerenya karta²²⁹ ... I am from the South ... our people have rich culture and fertile land... Oromos, Amhara, and Tigray people treated us horribly in the past and now the Tigrayan are extending that very tradition by their zerenya karta... let us abolish it and use instead geography or plants or animals as a name for our new karta....

Agreeing with the previous speaker, participant #20 (FGD #4) said,

... putting fifty- plus ethnic groups together and using geography to name the place while rewarding land to others ethnic groups by their ethnic name is wrong... as a Qyit²³⁰ person myself I know how painful it is to lead a life without Qyit karta ... since the current karta is full of errors, let us abolish it and use the four cardinal directions, animals, or plants in making our new karta...

²²⁷ Amharic: Map

²²⁸ Amharic: Map making.

²²⁹ Amharic: Ethnocentric map.

²³⁰ Amharic: Mixed

While analyzing the spatial affairs in the southern part of Ethiopia, Sarah Vaughan (2006) noted, “in introducing ethnic federalism, its architects, the EPRDF, attempted a reconstitution of the twin axes of the politics of the state – representation and territory- along the lines of the country’s major language groups” (p.184). However, the last five participants see the EPRDF’s ethnic federalism as a far cry from reconciling the twin axes. In fact, the more than fifty ethnic groups and people with mixed ethnic identity feel very much neglected and abandoned. Their ethnic groups have been discounted from forming an exclusive provincial identity. Only a few ethnic groups have the privilege of such a status. Here, the EPRDF’s ethnic based territorial system shows more discrimination than representation. Regarding discrimination, participant #13 (FGD #2) said the following:

The EPRDF, by putting us together in what they call the South, its zerenya karta made it easier for those single ethnic groups with a land attached to their name to have the whole country for themselves... we in the South are bickering and fighting over the resources of our single Kilil ... where is the justice in that ... we were left at the margins of society by the past regimes of Ethiopia ... the EPRDF’s zerenya karta officiated the same zerenya tradition using its language-based constitution ...

While leaving people at the margins seemed to be easily visible in the case of the people who are residing in southwestern Ethiopia, in the case of spatial and political representation for the people with mixed identity, the evidence clearly shows an act of erasure. To that end, participant #11 commented in this way:

The EPRDF’s karta stands only for a people with a single ethnic identity ... even on that front, some ethnic groups were given more attention than others... as a result; few valued highly at the expense of other ethnic groups ... as I see it and lived through it, the Kilil system was not made for Qyit people like me...

The Kilil system was designed without allocating a territory to the people with Qyit identity. Whenever people from a mixed identity asked about their territory, as participant #6’s case below illustrates, the government officials gave them a single choice: dissolve your family. On that end, participant #6 says the following:

...why should I dissolve my family? Why did not they make a space for us in this country...I am a woman with two kids of my own ... but with this karta I am dead to

them and just as my mother is to them as well ... this karta is the work of either an ignorant person or a devil ... since this karta is asking us to dissolve our Qyit identity by erasing our mother from our life, I see it as a karta of Setan²³¹...

While some of the participants were expressing similar sentiments like participant #6, others treated the idea of dissolving a family and erasing one's mother from an ethnic memory as a slippery slope argument. As participant #13 noted:

I can give you concrete examples to show you the devastating impact of executing the EPRDF's sinister order...when you remove yourself from your mixed identity, those with a single ethnic identity always treat you as a second-class member of their single ethnic group, regardless of your effort... it happened to me many times over in the past...

A while back, said participant #29,

I was called to give my account for a civil lawsuit in the courtroom ... but a few days before the trial, I was removed from the case by the court ...later on, I was informed about it: my Qyit identity was the problem... this happens in spite of the plaintiff being a member of my father's ethnic group as indicated to them by my official ID card... the EPRDF ordered me to destroy my mixed ethnic identity with its karta ... after I did that, I found my new identity being ignored by them on multiple occasions ... where do you go my friends after being destroyed like that ... I became an alcoholic because of it ...

After uttering those words in a mournful tone, he let out a very long and hard breath. He said he thought of killing himself many times but letting himself being consumed by alcohol helped him to suppress those thoughts. While some of the participants see alcohol as a coping instrument, other participants, especially women, are leading a life filled with anxiety attacks²³² and heavy stress. Participant #8's remarks are an illustration of most of the comments that I heard in that regard from other participants. She added:

... whether a mother resides in an urban area or in a countryside, she normally does not consume alcohol to numb her pain like our fathers do...for this reason, we face some of the problems with a sharp consciousness instead of with an impaired mind like our fathers ... I am a Gurage on my father's side and Oromo on my mother's side ... my husband is from the South on both sides ... Adama is my city, but the EPRDF's karta is telling me to relocate somewhere else ... ever since they came up with this beshitenya karta²³³, I found myself getting sicker and sicker by the day ...

²³¹ Amharic: a devil.

²³² As they put it, they experienced very fast pounding in their heart followed by immobilizing and debilitating feelings.

²³³ Amharic: Sick map.

As these stories inform us, the Kilil system, far from empowering ethnic groups with pride and dignity, succeeded in depressing and denying ethnic based identity for people with mixed ethnic identity. It also alienated more than seventy single ethnic groups by failing to accommodate them politically. Furthermore, it led to extreme forms of ethnic tension and conflict by creating first- and second-class spatial rights. Accordingly, internal displacement has become part of life for nearly three decades. For example, in 2018 alone, as it was reported by the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre:

Ethiopia had the highest number of new internal displacements associated with conflict worldwide in 2018. The country's crisis has been deepening steadily since 2016, but conflict and inter-communal violence escalated significantly and spread to new areas last year, triggering almost 2.9 million new displacements, four times the figure for 2017. Conflict and displacement were recorded along three of the Oromia region's borders, with the Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples' (SNNP) region in the south-west, the Benishangul-Gumuz region in the north-west and the Somali region in the east. Urban centres were also affected, including Addis Ababa and Jijiga, the capital of the Somali region²³⁴

This type of ethnic based displacement did not take place under the Kifle Hager system. In fact, “it was conceived in such was in order to create what the Germans call “lebensraum”-living space...served to integrate cultures (Kendie, 2001, p.39). In the Kifle Hager system, movement of people from one place of the country into another was possible because land was organized without using ethnic identity as a marker of space (Mehretu, 2019). By contrast, the Kilil system impedes movement of people and causes internal displacement by guiding itself with a one-language-one-identity-one-territory principle.

When one interrogates the story of spatial arrangement in Ethiopia, one finds conflict often arising from limited natural resources from the unfair spatial arrangement by past and present regimes of Ethiopia. As Lirens (2001) explains, “while conflicts among nomadic population over use of grazing land, water and pasture had occurred in past regimes, the introduction of ethnic-based regional administration has raised ethnic tensions to a high

²³⁴ <https://www.internal-displacement.org/sites/default/files/publications/documents/2019-IDMC-GRID-spotlight-ethiopia.pdf>

level” (p.9). In this view, the limited resources and ethnicity have negatively impacted the people of Ethiopia. In the case of the latter, Lirenso (2001) noted:

In the past, scarcity of farmland and lack of employment opportunities had forced young peasants from Kambata, Hadiya, and Wolaita regions of Southern Ethiopia to engage in off-farm seasonal employments outside their regions...However, since Killils were introduced, inter-regional migration of labor had ceased, and off-farm earnings have been affected. As early as 1991, some unexpected incidents had happened. Farm households who settled in Arsi for decades were displaced for being in wrong Killils and civil servants (schoolteachers, health assistants, etc.) who were employed in other regions either lost their jobs or were sent back to their home regions... (p.9).

Taking the negative impacts of the Kilil system, Kendie (2001), under the heading of ‘Ethiopia: An Alternative Approach to National Development’, writes, “the existing Ethiopian constitution that is based on ethnicity should be discarded and replaced by another constitution that recognizes territorial nationalism, which manifested itself in historic Ethiopia as regionalism or provincialism” (p.1). The current government, however, by imposing the Kilil system in top-down manner, has dissolved the historical spatial relations to make way for an unrelatable spatial system.

In the early part of the 1990s, the regime in power decided to enclose a piece of land along ethnic lines. It sold the idea to the people by linking such forms of spatial arrangement with political stability and ethnic harmony. However, 27 years later, the government is far from bringing much desired stability and harmony. In fact, it made spatial matters worse by not paying reasonable attention to the unity of the productive process. Its short comings manifested itself in the form of spatial and socio-political marginalization. Hence, the government was forced to declare a state of emergency several times in a short period of time²³⁵ to complacent for its divisive and systemic matters. The social and political unrest associated with ethnic representation and ethnic based spatial arrangement also led to the resignation of Prime Minister Hailemariam in 2017²³⁶.

²³⁵ <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/2/16/ethiopia-declares-state-of-emergency-after-pm-quits>

²³⁶ <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-43073285>

Rousseau's story alerted people to beware of the imposter with respect to their relationship with the Earth, and 'with the fruits of the Earth'. As the many stories throughout this thesis illustrate, unjust spatial and ethnic relationships are drawing Ethiopians into conflict. This assessment is also widely shared by notable thinkers in Ethiopia (Tadesse, 2016; Yassine, 2017; Wakjira, 2019; Woldemariam, 2019, Araya, 2020). Therefore, to save Ethiopia from another round of political and social unrest, bloody conflict, and displacement, the federal and the local governments must adequately address these issues by having a candid dialogue with the people on the ground. Failing to do so is certain to make the country the site of horror as it was witnessed beforehand with the displacement of millions and killings of thousands.

7.4. In Search of an Inclusive Space

In a federal system of government, each spatial and political unit of the state comes together to form a union (Bellia, 2011). Upon forming the union, each unit is also permitted to maintain its own spatial and political integrity (Kincaid, 2011; De Bom, 2015). In the case of Ethiopia's federal system, however, people with a mixed ethnic identity were made to lose their ethno-political spatial integrity. The EPRDF organized the system using a single ethnic identity as the only component of the federal body. Since ethno-political and spatial interests were organized using a vertically oriented patriarchal system, the horizontally oriented ethno-political and spatial interests of mixed ethnic people were given no attention by the EPRDF and its Kilil system. Just as Rousseau's imposter produced a space for itself without giving regards to other's people spatial interests, the EPRDF produced its own ethno-political space by paying no attention to the people with a mixed ethnic identity. In doing so, the EPRDF has made a federal form of spatial arrangement a mockery of the space-sharing scheme.

When it comes to an inclusive space-sharing platform, there is not a better inspiring model in Ethiopia than the *nu buna tetu*²³⁷ ceremony²³⁸. In the *nu buna tetu* tradition, we find a communal space being produced²³⁹ on a daily basis of the neighborhood, by the neighborhood, and for the neighborhood²⁴⁰. The produced space in turn plays a very important communal function in the lives of people across the country in countless neighborhoods. Socially, it brings together, every morning and throughout the day, people in the neighborhood to multiple households for communal hangout time²⁴¹. Once breakfast is served, kids²⁴² will be sent out from multiple households to call neighbors for communal coffee-drinking time. I myself have done this service for my mother many times while I was in elementary school²⁴³. As I reached our neighbors' doors, I loudly yelled the following phrase in Amharic: *Emmaye nu buna tetu tilaleche* (my mother said come and drink coffee). Every household does the calling in the name of our respective mothers. This happens two or three times a day²⁴⁴ and continues to be the case all weeks around. By this very communal act, *nu buna tetu* realizes itself as the ultimate expression of an inclusive space. Furthermore, the produced communal space helps neighbors to receive multiple benefits from it via their discussion. These include discussing good and bad news in the neighborhood, trading home

²³⁷ Amharic: *nu* means come; *buna* means coffee; *tetu* means drink.

²³⁸ See appendix 14, 15, & 16.

²³⁹ See appendix 20.

²⁴⁰ On November 19, 1863, Abraham Lincoln, in the Gettysburg Address, urged the people to devote their life, for the survival and protection of America's self-government, using the following memorable three-part phrases: government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the Earth. When one examines Lincoln's address using working the hyphens through an analytical lens, one quickly finds Lincoln's ultimate intention: to overcome the problem of the civil war by framing his speech as dialogue between the dead and the living. The civil war was the hyphen of America in that era. Lincoln, however, was far from carrying a dialogue between the two sides. Instead, he decided to work the hyphen by situating the dead and the living as the two sides of the hyphen. After framing the speech in such a manner, he said the following: "that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion -- that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain -- that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom". In other words, the working of the hyphen/civil war gives a 'new birth of freedom' for America. (<http://www.abrahamlincolnonline.org/lincoln/speeches/gettysburg.htm>)

²⁴¹ See appendix 17, 18, & 19.

²⁴² Sometimes maids or guards.

²⁴³ Kids usually provided service of such nature when school is closed or on the weekend. If you have no kids in your household, you look for neighbours' kids who usually play outside to do the service. In the absence of kids, you sent out adults to deliver the message.

²⁴⁴ The multiplicity of the drinking cycles gives neighbours ample opportunity to visit multiple drinking spaces throughout the day or the week.

remedies on all kinds of ailments, discussing discounts at the market items, and so forth. Additionally, the nu *buna tetu* space empowers mothers by helping them to resolve conflict between neighbors by using *buna* space as their primary tools to settle disputes. In short, the *buna* space makes it possible for the people in the neighborhood to work the hyphens, good or bad, between them by giving them ample time for dialogue. Burning of frankincense is part of a *buna* ceremony. It is done to presumably ward off all types of evil spirits from the space where the *buna* ceremony is taking place. As such, people attempt to protect themselves from the evil spirits by conducting a dialogue with the spiritual world using the fragrant smoke as an instrument of communication between them and divine spirit.

In the wisdom of working the hyphens, dialogue serves as a vital communication instrument. In a given neighborhood, each household represents itself as a hyphen by virtue of its composition. These include bonds of marriage, birth, adoption, extended families, friendship, cohabitation and so forth. It can also serve as a living space for a single individual. People in each household, however, far from limiting themselves within the walls of their household, brought themselves closer to each other by utilizing the nu *buna tetu* space as a vital instrument to work the hyphens. Likewise, a television program, which is called *Shay Buna*²⁴⁵, functioned as a national platform to work the hyphens between Ethiopians for many years. The program used to get airtime on Walta TV every Wednesday at 9pm. This prime-time slot makes it possible for the show to be watched by everyone and it gives the opportunity to the television audience to work the hyphen as well. The program, which was hosted by Solomon Shumye²⁴⁶, follows the format of working the hyphens. The host brings to the show a panel of people²⁴⁷ from very different political, social, economic, ethnic, identarian orientations. The assembly can work the hyphens through the extensive

²⁴⁵ Amharic: Shay means Tea and Buna means Coffee. See video links in reference page under Gebeyanu. Also, see appendix 22.

²⁴⁶ See appendix 25.

²⁴⁷ Between 20 to 30 people.

discussion among themselves and with the host. In the show, the host gives the panelists²⁴⁸ plenty of time to improvise the hyphens. The television audience across the country gave the program high ratings²⁴⁹ for allowing the panelists to speak freely on any given topic under discussion. However, this form of mass media engagement drew the ire of the EPRDF-led government. The show was removed from the air a few times in the past. True to its popularity, the show never veered away talking about very sensitive public issues: joblessness, corruption, dictatorship, ethnic tension, ethnic hatred, and internal displacement. For the EPRDF, due to its authoritarian nature, the preferable method of dealing with sensitive issues is the cadre model: hiring indoctrinated persons who skillfully slide over sensitive issues. By contrast, *Shay Buna's* spontaneous and intense discussions are the defining features of its show. The November 2019 show which I was part of was truly representative of its defining features²⁵⁰.

7.5. The Shay Buna Space

In the program, a young girl offered Ethiopia's traditional *buna* ceremony for us²⁵¹. Following the tradition, she burned frankincense. The moment our *Shay Buna* space was filled with its fragrant smoke and aromatic smell, it brought back wonderful memories from my mother's *buna* space. Earlier in the hour before entering the recording room, I was in the lobby having a *macchiato* and trying to unsuccessfully calm myself down before my very first debate on television. However, during the show, the smell of the frankincense was remedy for my anxiety. The aromatic smell travelled through my nostrils and brought back

²⁴⁸ See appendix 26 and 30.

²⁴⁹ Judging by my own experience after the show. My appearance on the show went viral.

²⁵⁰ Most importantly, the show I was part of made history in Ethiopia and in the annals of TV shows. They showed raw footage in which two of the panelists were stopped by the host, a moment away from physically fighting. This incident was the scariest and most amusing moment of the show. Its scariest part was when it showed to me how sensitive and intolerant our people have become on discussing identity politics. In an effort to soften the tension in the room, a panelist made spontaneous joke about it. He said, I wonder what both of them would have done if they were the head of their respective ethnic group. After hearing that joke, we all laughed (including them) and went back to our debate session calmly.

²⁵¹ See appendix 23.

the memory of my mother's multiple roles in the *buna tetu* space: a storyteller, a conflict resolver, a home remedy provider and so forth. While reminiscing about the memory of my mother's *buna* space, I thought about my role in that very recording space in the following light: just as my mother shared wonderful stories and worked out the hyphens in our neighborhood for the sake of peaceful coexistence, here I am now being called upon by the spirit of my mother to work the hyphens between *wuhid manenet*²⁵² and *netela manenet*²⁵³. Also, it helped me examine how the EPRDF negotiated the hyphens while composing the constitution and reorganizing space.

The icebreaker of the show was an *Azmari*,²⁵⁴ a traditional Ethiopian musician. *Azmari* play two critical roles in the country: communal space maker and discussion facilitator between the hyphens. In their later role, *Azmari* function as social, political, economic, moral, and religious commentators, while working the hyphens using *qene*. In this form of poetic speech, one makes a pun with multiple meanings. The hidden message usually requires more digging into that very pun. In short, the *azmari* works the hyphen by discussing two points in the same sentence. On that day the *Azmari (Yalelt Adgua)*²⁵⁵ who was entertaining us, clad in Ethiopian traditional costume, began to sing and play his musical instrument. A few minutes later, he kept repeating the chorus. Whenever an *Azmari* does that, it means one thing: giving people a cue to participate. In that very instance, an *Azmari* realizes its formal role: producing communal inclusive space. Everyone takes part by giving

²⁵² Amharic: wuhid means mixed and manenet means identity.

²⁵³ Amharic: netela means single and manenet means identity. In my encounter with the mass media and people from all walks of life, I observed a dominant tendency in contextualizing a single ethnic identity with ethnicity. But when refereeing to a mixed ethnic identity, they add a number before the term. For instance, people usually say he/she is belong/s to two ethnic groups. In the case of a single ethnic identity, one says simply I'm Oromo, Tigre, Gurage, etc. In an effort to bring both forms of identity on equal standing, I decided to use netela and wuhid as a context of ethnic identity. Most importantly, in doing so, I was able to remove the number two as the context of mixed identity. I replace the language of identity, as it is usually expressed. I was able to bypass these previous number systems

²⁵⁴ Azmari is a traditional singer. The singer uses a musical instrument called masenqo. It is a one-string fiddle. Azmari comes in groups of one or two: male and female. Both sings, but the male usually plays the instrument. See appendix 24.

²⁵⁵ See appendix 24.

verse on whatever topic that person wishes to express. As a given person delivers a verse to the *Azmari* word by word or few words at time, the *Azmari* repeats it, loudly and immediately. In collaboration with the people, the *Azmari* helps the people to produce a communal space by working the hyphens using words and melodies.

In music, a note represents a musical sound, and working the notes/hyphens produces melodic sound. In the case of a *masenqo*, melody is made by working the notes/hyphens using five fingers. On that day, the *Azmari* produced a beautiful sound by playing the *Masenqo*; he also invited the audience to write the lyrics with him in accordance with the *Azmari* traditions.

An audience member, by the name of Aster, delivered the following verse:

GOD, your work is mystical and keeps me in awe all the time...you are very profoundly patient with us... You have seen everything in life but us we are always bickering on the little things...

The *Azmari* repeated the last few words, the little things, few times and conducted a dialogue with Aster's verse using his own in the following way...

We (Ethiopians) are oblivious to who we are, but we are a profound being ...please let us live in harmony because she (Ethiopia) has bizu bota²⁵⁶ for us all...

By contrasting the little things people are bickering about with each other with a massive space the country has for all, the *Azmari* reinforced the previous verse with concrete spatial data. Accepting the argument on a spacious country, another audience redirected the musical dialogue to identity politics and said:

...regardless of my ethnic origin, I am only proud of my Ethiopian identity...

The *Azmari* quickly followed the spirit of that verse by making a verse of his own in the following manner:

...I do not care if you call me an Oromo, Amhara, Tigre, Walyta or Afar but I would like you to know that I am the sole by-product of a single bloodline called Ethiopia...

²⁵⁶ Amharic: bizu means massive and bota means space. So, I take this verse to be a commentary on our spatial understanding. As he put it, it makes no sense for us to fight over space while the country has massive bota for us all.

With that verse, the *Azmari* placed ethnic groups in relational terms by positioning Ethiopia as the mother for all. In other words, one's ethnic identity does not make one less or more Ethiopian since all ethnic groups relate to Ethiopia equally. After listening to all the verses, the first thing that came to my mind was the strength of Ethiopia identity in the hearts of the last two verse providers. So, I was anxious to hear what the rest of the audience would say on their relationship with Ethiopia, with each other and identity politics.

After the conclusion of our musical dialogue, the host asked us to work the hyphens between individual and community-based identity. Following his remarks, Aster, who was also the only female in the audience²⁵⁷ said:

... When it comes to ethnicity, I have my mother side of it and father side of it, but the government wants me to choose one-side only ...

As she was wrapping up her views, the host interrupted her in the middle of her sentence to ask this: are you saying the problem in this country originated from government sanctioned identity? She replied yes with great confidence. Few people raised their hand for a permission to speak, the host nodded for Kegela, who is the Oromo Liberation Front spokesperson²⁵⁸. He said:

... I took my identity from an Oromo culture ...I am happy and proud of it...

²⁵⁷ After the conclusion of the show, I asked the host for an explanation for the male only show. He said: I tried my best to have females in the audience for this debate but, thus far, all of my efforts have been rewarded with limited success. I also asked Aster why she was the only female in the show. She said our society is patriarchal and my sisters have yet to reassert their rights and freedoms from our patriarchal orientation. She said she always encourages females to participate in the public forum. She said she will continue to do that until our public forums are filled with them. "If you dig deeper, today's topic is about the exclusion of females in the politics of identity formation. ... it is sad that I am the only one tonight defending our rights as human beings". After pausing for a few minutes, she thanked me for defending my mother forcefully. She said, "of the 27 men in the room, you are the only man that defended women in general and your mother in particular... shame on the rest of the man who were here with us today".

²⁵⁸ He lived in exile for almost two decades until Abiy's government granted permission for his political party, and for him to return to Ethiopia. OLF, founded in 1973, is one of the most extreme radical ethnic based political parties that demand for the creation of a new country in the name of the Oromo ethnic groups. However, recently their stance on Ethiopia changed. Hence, the party recognizes Ethiopia as a nation-state and would like to live within it with respect and dignity with another ethnic group. See appendix 27.

Aster and Kegela located the source of identity outside of the individual. The former expressed it as unfortunate matter, while the latter expressed it as a given fact. So, the microphone went to another speaker, Amanuel, and he tackled the issue differently:

... Identity can be created by the person himself ...

Ambassador Mesfin, by contrast, relocated back the source of identity outside the individual using the law as an identity formalizer. Meaning, if there is no community-based law to formalize a given identity, individuals on their own are powerless to make one. Wondewossen framed identity as inconsequential when a person resides in familiar community. However, it is a matter of great concern upon dwelling with diverse community members. In other words, the situation of the individual is more important than community *per se*. Daniel, in turn, problematized community-based identity by analyzing women's life in two countries: America and Ethiopia. As he sees it, a woman in American is more privileged today than a woman in Ethiopia.

While the commentators worked the hyphens between the individual and community-based identity using the law, modernity, gender, nationalism, and ethnicity, "my take on the issue of identity is a bit different", said Sebsebe:

... We get our identity from the movement of time in space. Period! ...

As Sebsebe sees it, identity is not be frozen in time and space as this country's backward looking ethnic groups asking people to do so. It is to be treated as fluid, dynamic, and transformative activity. He added:

...look around ...all of us in this room clad in shirts, jackets, coats, and cravat of modern western fashion ... people used to roam around the earth naked but now people have cloths ... freezing people in time and in the custom of bygone eras are the thought of a delusional mind ... for this very reason I call ethnicity and ethnic based identity a project of illusion by confused and delusional people²⁵⁹ ...

²⁵⁹ Sebsebe published a book in 2019 to make a case against an ethnic based identity. The title of his book speaks volumes about the contents of its 300 -pages long argument. It is called: Ethnic Identity is Delusional. See appendix 29.

In this way, Sebsebe discussed identity by working the hyphen using activities from a bygone era in relation to dynamic, fluid, and transformative activities of the modern world. Soon after Sebsebe's remarks, a heated argument ensued. One called his remarks a dangerous assumption; another said, "you are the one in a state of confusion, not us," and a third person pleaded for more elaboration from Sebsebe. While the microphone was travelling from person to person, a heated argument between two individuals led into a physical altercation²⁶⁰. Upon seeing that, the host left his seat quickly to stop the fight. Afterwards, satisfied with his peace-making efforts, he went back to his seat. Soon after he went back to his seat, he gave permission for Ababayehu, the one who got involved in the physical altercation, to speak. Ababayehu began this way:

...that guy (Sebsebe) said, there is no such thing as ethnicity or ethnic based identity. But to me there is such a thing called ethnicity and ethnic based identity... my father taught me about it. He said to me you are an Oromo ...I speak that language and dance to its musical rhythms...I may not dance in a song like Tigrigna because I did not grow up in it... in Afan Oromo and Amharic I dance because I feel it²⁶¹.

Few people commented after him, and most of the comments affirmed the existence of ethnic based identity. In short, ethnicity was treated as a form of group identity. By contrast, Dr. Erssido argued for the definition of identity using an individual as the context of definition over a group-based definition. He worked the hyphen in the following way:

There is such a thing called Ethiopian identity in this country and no one can deny that²⁶². There is also ethnic based identity. No one can also deny that... In fact, what is driving this country into a dangerous arena is the tension between Ethiopian based identity and an ethnic based one... But I followed a third approach... it is called individual sovereignty... I strongly believe in organizing our politics along the third approach because it helps us to bring much needed peace for our country...

²⁶⁰ Gesturing for a fist fight while being recorded for a TV show, and showing it on TV afterwards, made history in Ethiopia for the show by broadcasting people in such a manner. Aster, the only female in the audience, called the whole affair "the problem of man". She said, "as I lived through it and studied it carefully, Ethiopia's political problems is always arising from man. We females have nothing to do with this craziness". She said that loudly and all the man in the room laughed upon hearing her remarks. See appendix 29.

²⁶¹ While calling himself as an Oromo, he simultaneously told us about his mixed ethnic background: Amhara on his mother's side and Oromo on his father's side

²⁶² Few people rejected Ethiopia as the basis of identity. For those people, group identity can only be formed using ethnicity as a context. So, Dr. Erssido challenged their view by calling his identity Ethiopian.

By the time Dr. Erissido²⁶³ was working the hyphens between three identities, we were entering into the third hour of the show. As I was watching, listening, and digesting the various viewpoints being made by the participants, I felt the hours to have gone by quickly. The participants came from all kinds of academic backgrounds, ethnic and ideological orientations, occupations, and economic standing. The composition of the participants clearly embodied the principle of working the hyphens, just like the composition of the *nu buna tetu* tradition. In there, the tradition makes every household part of the *nu buna tetu space* regardless their backgrounds. As such, the customary cultural practice that separates people based upon their economic standing is neutralized. Hence, the maids, the guards, the day laborers, and so forth crack jokes and freely give their opinions about both serious and light matters. While hosting countless *nu buna tetu* ceremonies with young and old, rich and poor, with people from multiple ethnic backgrounds, my mother would warmly laugh, talk, and listen on what is being said. She sheds tears whenever sad stories were being told in their midst. Starting a sentence in Tigryia and ending it in Amharic and *vice versa* was the mode of interaction for my mother and for some of our neighbours as well. What used to surprise me the most was that the person with very limited understanding of Tigryia used to get the sense out of the sentence. They would participate meaningfully in the topic of the moment with my mother and others. I have witnessed countless times a lovely and mystical social space being produced by the *nu buna tetu*. But, here at *Shay Buna* space, I witnessed markedly different mannerisms from the one I am fondly familiar with. Heated arguments and a tendency to be physical about a given topic was not part of the *nu buna tetu* tradition with which I grew up. In fact, our mothers, make every effort to cast away the combative behaviours and elusive

²⁶³ My own wife is born from Amhara and Oromo family format, and I myself belong to a Hadiya ethnic group... My own children do not speak Hadiya or Afaan Oromo, but they do speak Amharic because they were born here in Addis Ababa. They also speak Arabic after picking it up from TV. If you ask them what their identity is, which I asked them several times, they always say our father is Hadiya and our mother is Amhara and Oromo... In short, they will call themselves Qyit identity. See appendix 28.

evil spirit²⁶⁴ from people and space. They would always cover the produced *nu buna tetu* space by throwing fresh grasses, popcorn, (*kolo*²⁶⁵), and homemade traditional bread on the ground of the produced space²⁶⁶.

While hosting the *nu buna tetu* ceremony, coffee is served in three rounds: *abol*, *tona* and *baraka*²⁶⁷. After the last round, one of the elders among them always gives his/her blessing of the day for the host, for the people who participated, for the neighbourhood, for the country, and for the world. Similarly, in the *Shay Buna* show, coffee was served in three rounds, but no blessing was done since people were preoccupied with heated debate. Since this mystical and conflict-resolution/ working the hyphens tradition was violated by two participants, I asked myself repeatedly how to work the hyphens while presenting the issue of *wuhid manenet*. What I wanted the most from my upcoming words was the mystical consensus building *nu buna tetu* tradition of our mothers to come out loud and clear. So, when the third hour of the recording began, I decided to speak from my heart using my personal experience as evidence on the failure of the Ethiopian constitution and its ethnic based spatial system²⁶⁸. I said, at Kebele I was ordered to split myself in half²⁶⁹ in order to obtain an identification card. When I said no using my *wuhid manenet* as evidence and defense, I was told by the official not to kid myself. Upon hearing that, I decided to use a metaphor to explain my case to the official. Recalling the metaphor from my sociology

²⁶⁴ As they see it, conflict between people, illnesses, sadness, etc. is the product of evil spirits. So, holding a *nu buna tetu* ceremony removes those evil spirits from people in the neighbourhood. They burn frankincense to protect every inch of space in the neighbourhood. Frankincense, due to its burning nature, covers space by visibly seen smoke and aromatic fragrance. For this reason, it is treated with great spiritual value by all.

²⁶⁵ Amharic: traditional snack made from roasted grains: chickpeas, barley and, sometimes, sunflower seeds.

²⁶⁶ Indoor and outdoor areas come to serve as *buna tetu* space. I used to suffer from chronic headaches when I was in elementary school. Whenever I felt sick from it, my mother would bring the *buna tetu* ceremony to my bedroom. This made it possible for her to produce a *buna tetu* space out of my bedroom. Once the drinking was done, she would leave the fresh grasses, Kolo, and popcorn that was spread on the ground behind to keep the space with the healing spirit of the *buna* ceremony.

²⁶⁷ I asked many scholars and laypeople about the origin of those words. Some say Geez and another Amharic. At any rate, *Abol* means the first, *Tona* the second and *Baraka* the last or blessing. After drinking the *Baraka*, one must give its blessing to the host, to the people who participated, to the city, the country, the world, etc.

²⁶⁸ See appendix 31.

²⁶⁹ See appendix 32.

class²⁷⁰, I began to plea for understanding in this way. A drunken man searching for his lost keys under a lamp post was approached by the puzzled police officer. When asked by the police officer about his mission under the lamppost...the drunken man said, I lost my car keys over there but the light is a lot better over here, so I am searching for it over here... similarly, I said to the official, your government lost me over there (while crafting the constitution) but you are asking me now to search myself over here (in their one-language-one-identity-one-territory ethnic policy) ... it is an impossible mission to undertake. A few words later, I pointed my finger to the table in front of the *Shay Buna* host and said: that table once upon a time was a tree... but after going through various processing stages, it became what it is now, a table. Is it possible to turn that table into a tree? I said No... please do not ask people with *wuhid* identity to turn themselves into a *netela* identity... While I was in the process of concluding my second metaphor, I heard the host expressing his appreciation by clapping and vocalizing “wow”. Others also clapped their hands by accompanying their clapping with excited facial expressions²⁷¹. Seeing this incredible adulation, as a threat to his political viewpoint or else, Ababayehu challenged the host on the reason for his excitement. “You did not do that for us, why are doing that for him”?. The host replied quickly by saying that “when I hear fresh expressions and metaphors that I never heard before, I am entitled to express my appreciation vocally and by clapping my hands as well”. The host continued

I do not see myself assuming a spectator role in the show. That is not what I set out to accomplish with this show. I see myself as an integral part of it. I am, therefore, free to make comments of my own and free to recognize fresh expression in a candid and civil manner from my audience. As you (Ababayehu) and others know very well, our public forums have become the sight of hate and violence, and my mission with this show is to make it free of such unproductive mannerisms

Having made his points, the host granted permission for Ababayehu to speak once again. Holding the microphone in his right hand, Ababayehu said:

²⁷⁰ While I was doing my undergrad courses in Sociology, I remembered vividly using such metaphor quite often over the years once I received it from my classroom.

²⁷¹ See appendix 33.

...what we are saying is this ...the historical journey of this country is wrong... some people got hurt and some did not... I came out of the people who have been disadvantaged by the political, social, and economic system of this country...we, therefore, would like to dismantle the table, crush it into pieces, and start a new system from scratch²⁷²...

After his concluding remarks, I reflected on my metaphor. My viewpoint and my metaphor were welcomed warmly by a significant majority in the audience. However, five of them protested in various ways: shaking their head from side to side, vocalizing their disapproval of them, and reaming silence. I became anxious about the reaction of the public once it became available on television and social media formats. Finally, as I was leaving the recording studio, I felt great representing my mother, my family, myself and *wuhid manenet* by working the hyphens in ethnicity in a humble and dignified manner.

7.6. The Feedbacks

A few weeks later, the program was aired throughout the country. When the segment involving me aired, I happened to be in Addis Ababa doing some archival work. While walking in the street, I received multiple hand waves from a distance. Sometimes those close to me gave me our customary greetings of a small bow. I replied in similar manner. Few cars honked their car horn and motioned me toward them for, apparently, a free ride. I motioned back to them my gratitude with our customary small bow and continued my walking. I passed a few stores and an office building. When I reached a furniture store, I saw

²⁷² I have no problem with starting a new social, economic, political, and spatial system from scratch. But destroying *wuhid* identity while maintaining *netela idneity* intact is a very problematic proposition. I, therefore, after the conclusion of the recording tried to communicate with Ababayehu. But I was unable to do so because I was surrounded by others who wanted to have a small talk with me. Several weeks later, I accidentally came face to face with him as I was departing from a taxi in front of Wabi Shebele hotel. I did not recognize him at first because he had a mask. He asked me why I wasn't wearing a mask. He said, "you do not care about Covid". I said I do not and laughed, and he laughed with me as well. I told him my interest to have lunch or dinner with him and go over our Shay Buna discussion, and Ethiopian politics in general. So, a few days later and we had a discussion over lunch. I said to him openly, "you present yourself as an aggressive person in the show, upon closer examination, I see a very humbled and calm person in you. He told me that in the 2005 national election he ran as a candidate for a multi-ethnic political party. But after the EPRDF dismantled the party, due to the conduct of some politicians in his former party, he changed his political position from and began to identify himself with ethnic based politics: Oromo ethnic group. But I said to him, "your mother is an Amhara". He replied "not only my mother. My wife is also an Amhara". I quickly replied to him, "welcome to a *wuhid* identity". He smiled mildly after my words. We both showed interest for a second round of discussion, but soon after my first meeting with him, I returned back to Canada. I am looking forward to speaking with him once I made it back to Ethiopia.

a few guys having a conversation amongst themselves, while some were sitting, and others were standing. When I was close enough to hear what they were saying, I heard them in Amharic saying *esu new*²⁷³. One of them said to me, “we saw you on *shay buna* and we all loved it. You are the most talked about person in the city and your video went viral. Can we please take a picture with you”? I said yes and took a picture with them. Taking pictures, holding small conversations, waving hands, honking car horns, and small bowing continued to be the case afterwards for quite a few weeks. Being accepted as a person with a *wuhid* identity by my own people gave me a certain confidence in the valuable role of my *wuhid manenet* and my research work. But the icing on the cake moment was when I received a similar form of reverence while dining, walking, and attending a conference with my very research supervisor, Dr. Mensah. What a joy it was to have him witness the impact of my very research in action²⁷⁴. A few days later, I saw my picture creatively placed with a reformer, Dr. Abiy, and a hardliner, Jawar Mohammed, using the following caption message: “this is what I called Ethiopian. Alarmed by the dangerous political situation, he came back home to save us and the country”²⁷⁵.

Following my very first television appearance, invitations for more interviews kept coming my way from multiple mass media sources: radio, online shows, television, town-hall meetings and so forth. One Friday morning in March 2020, I was in the capital city to do an interview for an online show. Following the interview, the host asked me to wait for him in the lobby so I can get a free ride from him. He speaks Amharic with Addis Ababa’s accent. Unable to tell his ethnic background on the account of his accent²⁷⁶, I asked him what his

²⁷³ He is the one.

²⁷⁴ When I told that to my father, my father said to me “take that as a confirmation from God for your personal, family and nation-healing effort”. Most importantly, he continued, “take this as a sign of you mother’s blessing reaching you from heaven”.

²⁷⁵ It was done by Natanael Mekonnen. He is a very popular blogger with hundreds of thousands of followers. See appendix 34.

²⁷⁶ It is easy for most Ethiopians to tell their ethnic origin if their Amharic is spoken with an accent. For example, those from Oromo, Tigray and Gurage background are easily identified by their Amharic accent. Since

ethnic background was. He said he is *qyit* but always related and identified himself as an Ethiopian. He continued, “I do not like our ethnic based politics”. Upon hearing his reply, I asked him quickly, “why did you have me on your show then”? He replied quickly in this way:

When I saw you for the first time on shay buna using your table and tree metaphor, be desta fendahu²⁷⁷ for finally hearing a beautiful metaphor that speaks eloquently about our 30 years old misery ... it is common to hear more than three languages being used in our household... I myself fluently speak three of them²⁷⁸ ... but according to the EPRDF, I must turn myself into a monolingual person ... they wanted us...I guess... magically to remove ourselves from our multilingual personality and replace it by a monolingual one ... this is like, as you aptly put it, asking the table to turn itself into a tree...

As the story informed us, families have no issue in working the hyphens in languages, but the EPRDF does, by unreasonably enforcing its one-language-one-identity ethnic policy.

7.7. Of Wuhid Manenet

When it comes to the issue of *wuhid manenet* and its place in the society, the evidence shows a footnote treatment being utilized to deal with it under the dominant influence of the EPRDF’s one-language-one-identity ethnic policy. A footnote is inserted onto the space of a given page by a given author, when a given author wishes to supplement extra information to the main text. In this way, a footnote occupies the bottom space of a given page. Similarly, in the *shay buna* public forum, *wuhid manenet* was mentioned by multiple participants as a way of giving extra information about their ethnic background or family format. However, it is never the focal point of their background or family identity. This kind of approach tells us two important problematic situations about the place of *wuhid manenet* in Ethiopia. Since Ethiopia’s identity politics had been organized and made to

Addis Ababa has its own distinct accent, it is fairly easy to tell Amharic speakers’ accent from the province of Gonder, Gojam or Wollow.

²⁷⁷ In Amharic *be* is an Amharic term that is used as an adjective before a given noun. In the sentence that is used above *desta* was placed after *be* Therefore, in this sentence *desta* functions as a noun. *Desta* means joy and *fendahu* means exploded.

²⁷⁸ He speaks Amharic, Afan Oromo and Tigrinya.

operate based on *netela manenet*²⁷⁹, people²⁸⁰ are being influenced negatively to downplay their *wuhid manenet*. Secondly, the silence of the 1995 Constitution on *wuhid manenet* and the EPRDF's exclusive preoccupation with *netela manenet* made people relate to *wuhid* identity. Just as the main text relates to a footnote, this provides extra information about their ethnic identity. *Wuhid manenet* was neglected by the constitution and its Kilil system under the unfortunate influence of one-language-one-identity ethnic policy. In November 2019, a program with its focus on *wuhid manenet* was organized by a private citizen²⁸¹ from the diaspora to work the hyphens in ethnicity using Facebook as its media outlet. *Wuhid Ethiopiawi*²⁸², as it called itself, promotes *wuhid manenet* as a worthy identity in its own right. *Wuhid Ethiopiawi* has begun as an online broadcasting service, but it now broadcasts its weekly show using satellite television as its media outlet²⁸³. I was a guest on the program multiple times and became a permanent fixture of the program in its opening montage²⁸⁴. The montage uses interesting discussion points from previously interviewed people. These include prominent and ordinary individuals. The montage²⁸⁵ works the hyphens creatively

²⁷⁹ Single identity

²⁸⁰ People with *netela* or *wuhid* identity. At the shay buna show, participants from either identity treated *wuhid* identity playing a subordinated role in their life.

²⁸¹ Martha and her friends started the program from California. Based upon my interview with Martha, she came up with the idea, becoming a voice for *wuhid manenet* in the mass media. Out of frustration in way which Ethiopia is treating *wuhid manenet*, she said to me: "I, myself, have *wuhid* identity, but the EPRDF make us feel irrelevant and, thereby, dismantled the family bondage between parents and children, between husband and wife, between siblings, and between our past and current generations. I, therefore, after having many discussions with my parents, family members and friends, decided to involve myself in setting up a media outlet to make our voice be heard across the nation and beyond. It is sad to see your own family member identifying with a single ethnic identity, while the family background and family format clearly shows a mixed ethnic identity. When we have no voice in the government, in the constitution, in the school system, in workplaces, it is easy for the mass media to ignore us. So, our mission with *Wuhid Ethiopiawi* is to bring awareness to the existence of *wuhid manenet* as crucial identity. This will also give the necessary moral, political, social, and intellectual support for those who are *wuhid*. Furthermore, it will help those who are suffering in Ethiopia and beyond because of their *wuhid* identity". I have been following *wuhid Ethiopiawi* program since December 2019. It is doing a great service by bringing much-needed awareness to the public.

²⁸² See video link in reference page under *wuhid Ethiopiawi*.

²⁸³ The transition from an online media format to satellite took place in March 2020.

²⁸⁴ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e39FARNYQRY&ab_channel=WuhidEthiopiawi

²⁸⁵ In the montage, the following are said: act #1 (a well-known movie and theatre actor): "I am *wuhid*. ... use whatever means to test it, people are mixed not only in this country, but in the entire world"; act #2 (a journalist): "...I am *wuhid*. I belong to 3 ethnic groups. My ethnic background is *wuhid*"; act #3 (a well-known politician): "I strongly believe that over 95% of our people do have *wuhid manenet*"; act #4 (ordinary citizen): "nation building begins when people are allowed to exercise their freewill"; act #5 (myself): "more than 40

using multiple socio-political viewpoints and individuals' empirical angles, including population size, biology, genetics, free will, authenticity, marriage, romance, and so forth.

Wuhid manenet, properly understood, plays a vital role in working the hyphens and in harmonizing spatial and social relationships between ethnic groups. People with *wuhid* identity provide such critical services by forming a family unit out of different ethnic groups. In a country such as Ethiopia, with eighty plus ethnic groups, maintaining peace between various groups is essential for the survival of the country. To that end, the *wuhid* family unit brings tremendous benefit to the country by giving rise to a sense of community among the more than eighty ethnic groups. It connects them with each other using itself as a social and spatial conduit. However, the treatment of *wuhid* people as a footnote to the political, spatial, social, and economic life of Ethiopia is the surest way to marginalize and alienate them. *Wuhid Ethiopiawi* is doing exemplary work by reasserting the critical role of *wuhid manenet* for Ethiopia and its society. The government must do its part, as it has been doing for a *netela manenet* for the past three decades. It should finance, train and allocate the necessary resources for the promotion, enrichment and presentation of *wuhid manenet* in all aspects of societal life. By doing so, local, and national governments will be able to work the hyphen. Thus, they can offer much-needed productive help to *wuhid manenet* by integrating them into all aspects of the country and daily life, while the local and national governments must make the country an embodiment of an inclusive space by working the hyphens in ethnicity.

7.8. Conclusion

In the *nu buna tetu* tradition, neighbors produce a communal space out of each household. By holding a *nu buna tetu* ceremony, households send very important messages to

million of our population are believed to be *wuhid*...do you know that"; act #6 (a scholar): "there are cases where the mother is Sidamo and the father is Amhara or Tigray... Ethiopian people are mixed"; act #7 (well-known human rights activist): "what we say *wuhid* came out of mutual love... people fall in love and got married and became the source of *wuhid manenet*"; act #8 (scholar): "can someone tell us using genetics this person is not an Oromo, Gurage or Tigray..."; act #9 (ordinary citizen): "a person can only reach their heights in life when that person stands on their true identity". In this way, the intro montage reaffirmed the existence of *wuhid manenet* in Ethiopia by working the hyphens.

each other: my door is open for you, just as yours is for me. Each ceremony is conducted in a communal spirit by treating everyone as an extended family member. People from all walks of life and ethnic backgrounds are welcome to take a part in it. This makes it possible for the ceremony to cut across all types of spatial, social, ethnic, and class categories. On this very fact, the *buna* ceremony presents itself as an inclusive space. The *nu buna tetu* space is the national symbol of Ethiopia²⁸⁶. At the local level, it manifests itself as a communal space for hanging out with neighbors. Every morning and throughout the day, it plays a very critical role in every neighborhood as a socio-spatial lubricant. It enables each household to host a vibrant neighborhood gathering. The *nu buna tetu* space enables people to produce a communal space for surface-level and deeper-level conversation on various topics, be they private or public²⁸⁷. In a similar manner, Ethiopia, as the name of a country and place of people, functions as the symbol of shared space and shared national identity for the people within its clearly marked international space. By contrast, in the Kilil system, socio-spatial bias in favor of *netela manenet* operates against *wuhid* people by marginalizing and alienating them from a communal existence and communal space. When the EPRDF crafted the 1995 Constitution, under the influence of *netela manenet*, it used a vertical-patriarchal lineage as its *modus operandi*. People with *wuhid* identity were forced to dissolve their families to acquire legal identity in the form of *netela manenet*. For this very reason, *wuhid*

²⁸⁶ When Barack Obama made the first visit to Ethiopia by a serving US president, the *nu buna tetu* ceremony was conducted to grace his stay and to make him part of the community in Ethiopia. In short, the Ethiopian government worked the hyphens between America and Ethiopia by producing the *nu buna tetu* space. <https://www.facebook.com/876151359134878/photos/a.876159229134091/876159692467378> (<http://www.bbc.com/travel/gallery/20180910-the-oldest-coffee-in-the-world>)

²⁸⁷ In the *nu buna tetu* ceremony, controversial issues beneath the surface come to life including infidelity, relationship issues, domestic abuse, alcohol abuse, embezzlement, and so forth. Sometimes, people in a given neighbourhood do not want to become the topic of discussion in the *nu buna tetu* space, so they tried their best to behave in a morally acceptable manner. Similarly, critical ethnography as a research method aims to bring hidden social, political, economic, and spatial existences to light. By doing so, it plays a catalyst role for social, political, economic, and spatial change. Deep hanging-out is the *modus operandi* of a critical ethnography. Similarly, in *nu buna tetu*, neighbours produce a space that enables people to interact in a deep way. This is done on daily basis, sometimes beyond their neighbourhood. In other words, neighbours create a conducive condition for deep hanging-out time to occur by making each sitting episode to revolve around multiple topics, rather than a specific timetable. Accordingly, a given sitting lasts from an hour to three hours or more. Viewing it from this temporal angle, it suffices to assume the ceremony is a perfect platform for a collection of neighbourhood data both on a surface level and even deeper than that.

families have been made the subject of disintegration and marginalization. In a word, people with *wuhid* identity have been forced to exist as a footnote in EPRDF's inspired relational system.

In the wisdom of 'working the hyphens', the hyphens must be worked out by both parties for the sake of peaceful co-existence between them. There is no better example of this at work than in the *nu buna tetu* space. In it, one quickly finds the produced space functioning as an inclusive social instrument for hanging out together by furnishing conducive space for communal dialogue. In this way, the produced space helps neighbours to work out the hyphens between their respective households. By contrast, the EPRDF's relational system prevents people from working their respective hyphens by facilitating hostility between them. Example of these include the October 2019 rioters, the Kilil system, and the 1995 constitution.

Wuhid identity, as theorized and discussed in this thesis, delivers a very important service for Ethiopia and the people in it by working the hyphen between various ethnic groups at a macro and micro level. In the case of the former, *wuhid* identity facilitates peaceful coexistence in the country by bridging the gap between various ethnic groups using *wuhid* family unit as a link between them. In the case of the latter, *wuhid* identity enables individuals from different ethnic backgrounds to form a family unit by working the hyphens between them. At the macro-level, *wuhid* family functions as a facilitator of communal bondage by virtue of its nature: a link between two-plus ethnic groups. At a micro-level, the *wuhid* identity enables two individuals from different ethnic backgrounds to form a family unit. In this way, the *wuhid* family unit operates as an expression of communal coexistence²⁸⁸

²⁸⁸ Seeing a *wuhid* family unit as an expression of communal coexistence between two ethnic groups is very critical for the survival of the *wuhid* family as a unit. By contrast, the EPRDF ethnic discourse and its constitution, implicitly and explicitly, dismisses the *wuhid* family unit by removing a given mother from her family. Conversely, seeing the *wuhid* family as an expression of communal coexistence keeps a given father and mother from being removed under the influence of *netela* identity.

at a macro level and as an expression of individuals' coexistence at a micro level²⁸⁹. Considering this critical and vital function, Ethiopia must amend its Constitution to give *wuhid* identity constitutionally based legitimacy. This legal identity must also be supplemented by constitutionally based spatial arrangement. The Kilil system, as it stands today, makes Ethiopia the only home of people with *netela* identity.

The EPRDF proved itself as an imposter by producing the Kilil system at the expense of people with *wuhid* and other identities. "The rationale for gerrymandering Killil boundaries to resolve non-existent tribal conflicts in Ethiopia was largely fraudulent. Tribal feelings of pride and prejudice may have been present in Ethiopia as everywhere in the world. But that is not a rationale to create an apartheid state" (Mehretu, 2019, p.1). The common denominator between the apartheid state and the Kilil system is found in their refusal to work their respective hyphens: race-based and ethnic-based. It is imperative for the Ethiopian government to work the hyphen by granting *wuhid manenet* constitutionally mandated spatial, social, political, economic, and institutional structures at the local and national level. This can be done by dissolving the current nine Kililoch²⁹⁰ to make way for an inclusive space for all ethnic groups in the country.

*Teume boon*²⁹¹ is the phrase people use in our household to express their satisfaction after testing a coffee with their first sip. The coffee maker replies by saying *teume yehabka or yehabki*²⁹². The constitution and its Kilil system, as they stand, are not *teume* for the people with a *wuhid* family background and format. A constitution and spatial arrangement that recognizes *wuhid* identity as an integrated segment of society are certain to be called *teume*

²⁸⁹ By contrast, *netela* identity based ethnic discourse sees a given family unit as the domain of the father. Accordingly, the EPRDF's government recognizes a given individual ethnic identity along the father's lineage only and, thereby, subjects individuals from a *wuhid* family unit to sever their individual based coexistence.

²⁹⁰ While I was working on this thesis, Abiy's government gave permission to produce a new Kilil out of the Southern, Nationals, Nationalities and People Kilil. This happened after the Sidama ethnic groups, nearly three decades long, quest for Kilil status was affirmed by casting a referendum vote. On June 18, 2020, the 10 Kilil was formed. It is now called the Sidama Kilil. (<https://addisstandard.com/breaking-sidama-becomes-ethiopian-10th-regional-state/>)

²⁹¹ It is Tigrinya for saying "very good coffee".

²⁹² Tigrinya: "may you receive good things". Yehabka for male and yehabki for female.

by the people with *wuhid* identity. The government, therefore, must make the necessary amendment by working the hyphens so that it can reply *teume yehabkum*²⁹³, just as the coffee maker does after hearing *teume boon*²⁹⁴ from the coffee drinkers.

²⁹³ Tigrinya: Yehabkum plural of both genders. Also, it can be used when one deals with elders.

²⁹⁴ Tigrinya: coffee.

Chapter 8: Conclusion

*The problem of EPRDF's ethnic policy is the problem of its one-language-one-identity orientation*²⁹⁵

8.1. Introduction

When the EPRDF took power, single ethnic identity was imposed by the party as the official and unique socio-political and spatial hyphen between people. This was done despite the historical and contemporary empirical reality of the country's two critical ethnic groups.. Even though this seems to be the proper historical and contemporary expression of ethnicity in Ethiopia, the EPRDF's ethnic-based relational system was designed by distorting the empirical reality of the country. However, one cannot hope to work the hyphen in any given relational system by ignoring one side for the others sake. Until all sides receive fair and equal treatment,²⁹⁶ the relational system remains skewed and distorted. For instance, the hyphen in religion has many sides. However, if one looks at it from one side only, say Christianity, and takes that to be the only expression of religion, one is certain to do harm to the people who express their belief from a different side of the religious hyphen. Similarly, the EPRDF's one-language-one-identity-one-territory relational system has brought harm to the people with mixed ethnic identity by conceiving a single ethnolinguistic affiliation as the only expression of ethnicity. Accordingly, mixed ethnic identity that sits on a different side of the ethnic hyphen was problematized as an unrelatable entity within the ethnic-based

²⁹⁵ Inspired by DuBois' insight (2004).

²⁹⁶ Let us examine the marketplace, say the automotive industry, using the principle of working the hyphens. The automotive industry contains a very wide range of companies as the empirical evidence attests to us currently. When the principle of working the hyphens applied in there, the marketplace becomes accessible to all companies so long as their respective product meets reasonable safety standards. In this example, when all companies are granted full and equal accesses to the marketplace, automotive companies gain access to a marketplace as a condition for the working of the hyphens between multiple brands/identities. By contrast, when the system makes the marketplace accessible only to company X, such kind of relational system is certain to bring harms to many other companies. Just as access to a marketplace measures the working of the hyphens in the automotive industry, the working of the ethnic hyphens in Ethiopia, I argue, must be measured by the principle of full and equal access of all to an ethnic-based relational system. Meaning that, for the ethnic hyphens to work, people with a single and mixed ethnic identity must be permitted to use and to represent their respective ethnic identity at the local, regional, and national level equally and with dignity. Currently, the EPRDF's ethnic policy and its constitutional framework denied full and equal access to the people with mixed ethnic identity by relying on the party's one-language-one-identity-one-territory policy. By such a method, the EPRDF failed to work the ethnic hyphen equally with dignity by preferring to organize people and accompanying state's institutions with a discriminatory hierarchical system.

relational system of the EPRDF. As far as the EPRDF is concerned, ethnic groups with a single ethnic identity are the only inhabitant of the country. Consequently, the Kilil system was produced to represent them in concrete terms. This form of spatial arrangement works against the unity of Lefebvre's (1991) productive process: conceived-perceived-lived. Unlike the EPRDF's one-sided view of Ethiopia's lived space, its physical space is inhabited by both ethnic groups: single and mixed. By ignoring this empirical reality, the EPRDF decided to produce space using single ethnicity as the only variable. In doing so, the party defeated the instrumental value of the triad as argued by Lefebvre (ibid): rediscovering the unity of the productive process. Moreover, the EPRDF's space denied mixed ethnic people spatial representation by introducing irreconcilable division between the three productive processes. Ever since then, the EPRDF's socio-political and spatial system has been operating as a divisive architecture of hegemonic governance. The subjugation of mixed ethnic people and their mothers to a systemic marginality and spatial injustice was perceived by the victims as the most unrelatable system. As the victims see it, the EPRDF's relational system was designed to divide and conquer ethnic groups rather than addressing socio-political and spatial matters among them. The thesis' key findings also concurred to their insights by identifying the divisiveness of the relational system within a family unit and between the country's two critical ethnic groups: mixed and single. Suffice it to say that the victims held the EPRDF accountable for institutionalizing an unfair socio-political and spatial system.

8. 2. Contribution to the Literature on Wuhid Manenet in Ethiopia

Scientific knowledge arises when concept and data relate with each other sensibly and coherently. In other words, in paraphrasing Immanuel Kant (1998)²⁹⁷, concept without data is empty and data without concept is blind. When one examines the EPRDF's relational system

²⁹⁷ "Without sensibility no object would be given to us, and without understanding none would be thought. Thoughts without content are empty, intuitions without concepts are blind. It is thus just as necessary to make the mind's concepts sensible (i.e., to add an object to them in intuition) as it is to make its intuitions understandable (i.e., to bring them under concepts)" (p.193-94).

using Kant's wisdom, one is certain to find readily available socio-political and spatial scenarios in which mixed ethnicity, as ethnic dataset, sits blindly, awaiting a conceptual articulation of its existence. Similarly, when one interrogates the EPRDF's conceptualization of ethnicity in the presence of mixed ethnicity, such an examination is certain to prove the emptiness of the party's ethnic concept. Considering this problematic scenario, I tasked myself to contribute to the resolution of this situation by connecting data with the adequate concept and filling concept with empirically verifiable datasets.

Since the early part of the 1990s, the EPRDF conceptualized ethnicity using only a child and that child's father as a dataset. However, Ethiopia's ethnic-based relational system goes far beyond such articulation. People with mixed ethnic identity conceive their relational system using both parents as their dataset, because the very notion of mixed ethnicity requires the presence of more than one ethnic lineage at play. Despite the presence of mothers in a family unit, the EPRDF conceptualized ethnicity by excluding mothers as an inadequate source for its ethnic based relational system. Consequently, people with mixed ethnic identity were forced to dissolve their family unit under the influence of the EPRDF's hegemonic one-sided conceptual approach.

As my yearlong fieldwork and my own family's experience indicated to me, mixed ethnic groups have lived in Ethiopia for many centuries without attracting the attention of most scholars and governments. This lack of attention has resulted in harmful consequences as the multiple cases in this thesis show. The EPRDF-inspired Constitution proclaims and propagates vertically oriented affiliation as the only relational system in Ethiopia. People with horizontally oriented relational systems were forced to breakup their relational system just to fit in the EPRDF framework. This existential problem further undermines the conceptual understanding of *wuhid* people by Ethiopian scholars, the government, politicians, the public, the media and so forth. For instance, the Amharic term I used to describe a mixed

ethnic identity was *Wuhid*²⁹⁸ (union); The Ethiopian Statistics Agency²⁹⁹ used a different term, *Yetedebalequ* (mixture), and the public refer to mixed identity using the term *Qyit* (intermingled). While I was being interviewed by multiple media outlets, I consciously employed *Wuhid* to describe mixed ethnicity and utilized the term *Netela* for a single ethno-lingual affiliation. There is a strong misinformed tendency by the public and the government in seeing single ethno-linguistic affiliation as a synonym for ethnicity. But my deliberate usage³⁰⁰ of *netela* and *wuhid* identities as two different attributes of ethnicity sought to correct the misinformed tendency of the public and the government.

When we translate Kant's wisdom into an ethnic and gender based socio-political and spatial relational system of Ethiopia, it is clear to see the critical contribution of my thesis: supplying adequate conceptual articulation for the EPRDF-inspired empirical problem of Ethiopia. In short, the historically conditioned and contemporary presence of *wuhid* people in Ethiopia poses an empirical question to the body politic of Ethiopia. EPRDF answered this vital empirical question by dissolving *wuhid* people at the family level and, thereby, disqualifying the horizontally oriented relational system as a legitimate basis of affiliation.

²⁹⁸ I educated people on the media and during my interview session by giving them new Amharic concept in the service of a single ethnic identity: NETELA (singular). Accordingly, I asked everyone to always use Netela and Wuhid while discussing issues in relation to a mixed ethnic identity and a single ethnic group. As discussed, elsewhere, there is a strong tendency by the public and, obviously, by the government, to equate ethnicity with a single ethnic group only. This is happening, I argue, due to the EPRDF's inspired media campaign on its version of ethnicity.

²⁹⁹ The 2007 census data shamelessly reported 36,524 people to be a member of mixed ethnic background. I went to the agency to inquire about such kind of reporting. A high ranking official at the agency told me about his mixed ethnic background but not registering as such for fearing of political persecution: may cost him a job. So, according to the people I talked to in the agency the number does not represent reality on the ground but the dominant political sentiment: making national data on ethnic identity revolves only around a single ethnic identity as the dominant ethnic category. The 1984 census data referred to mixed ethnic people in this way: different ethnic group. By contrast, the 1994 and 2007 used the following term: From different parents. Both terms put their emphasis on different rather than treating mixed ethnicity as an ethnic identity in its own right. To put it another way, the term different makes it easier for the government to fragment mixed ethnic family unit. See Appendix 36, 37,38, and 39.

³⁰⁰ This occurred while I was being interviewed by multiple media outlets and in my off the air encounter with the public. Judging by social media usage of those words thereafter, I noticed more people utilizing those words while discussing ethnicity. While more work remains in giving those words more utility time, I consider my contribution as one of the highlights of this research in popularizing those words as instruments of conceptual articulation.

By contrast, this thesis solved this vital empirical question by articulating this empirical reality with adequate conceptual lens: *wuhid manenet*/mixed identity.

8.3. Research Findings

Speaking of systemic racial oppression, in the case of Black people in America, W.E.B. DuBois ([1903] 2004) observed in his book, *The Souls of Black Folk*, that: “the problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the color-line” (p.9). By such insight, DuBois identified racial oppression as a major fault-line that governed the hegemonic color-based hyphen between people in America. The long-standing issue of systemic oppression against Black people will remain in place so long as the government puts no efforts to work the color-line in a dignified and meaningful manner. Just as systemic oppression has deprived Black people their freedom by subjecting them to discriminatory racial policies, the key finding of this study is that people with *wuhid* identity have been discriminated by the EPRDF’s constitutionally grounded one-language-one-identity ethnic policy in post-1991 Ethiopia. The study also found that the problem of Ethiopia is the one-language-one-identity-one-territory constitutionally grounded relational system. Another important finding points to the erasure of mixed ethnicity as the logical end of the EPRDF’s relational system. Consequently, the EPRDF reorganized people and space via patrilineality³⁰¹. As the key findings point out, the introduction of patrilineality was perceived by research participants as an unfair system. Moreover, people with mixed ethnic identity strongly regards patrilineal familial affiliation as an existential threat to their survival.

When the EPRDF undermined the positive role of mixed ethnicity while constructing new relational system for the country, mothers and people with mixed ethnic identity were exposed to a harmful mental phenomenon known as double consciousness. As DuBois (2004) discussed it, this destructive internal conflict occurs when a racially oriented

³⁰¹ Since EPRDF’s leadership was hegemonically dominated by man, patrilineality function as self-serving instrument for them.

oppressive system classifies a given racial group as an inferior race and, thereafter, forces that group to relate with itself and others using that discriminatory racial lens. In short, when people organized the relational system in a discriminatory manner, the mind is certain to suffer from injurious internal conflict. Similarly, when the EPRDF excluded mothers and mixed ethnicity as a point of interaction for its ethnic-based relational system, this patriarchal constitutional framework is certain to harm the minds of mixed ethnic people by subjecting them to double consciousness as my own and other people's experience attested in the data.

Prior to this oppressive ethnically categorized relational system, Ethiopia's countless emperors used religion, national identity, and the monarchy itself as a vital conduit to produce their version of a relational system for millennia³⁰². However, the 1974 revolution gave rise to the Marxist oriented relational system. As such, the military regime strived to make proletarians the basis of its relational system. While embarking upon this idyllic mission with zeal, the government lost the confidence of the people after subjecting them to countless antagonized moments via the red terror, civil war, brute terror, oppressive bureaucrats and so forth (Kebede, 2008). The government was violently deposed from power in the 1991 coup. The post-socialist era, however, far from removing the country and the people from the agonizing relational world, sets up its own version of domination using a discriminatory relational system (Yassine, 2017). As such, this EPRDF-inspired relational world produced agony out of a mixed family unit by fragmenting it using patrilineal ethnic policy. By such a draconian method, the EPRDF harmed society as a whole by excluding the role of women in ethnic lineage.

When the EPRDF ordered people to relate with one another using one-parent-one-identity relational system, those people who have been relating with one another via two-

³⁰² As it was noted by Abbink (2002), "Ethno-cultural differences and indigenous social organization were largely tolerated in the imperial system of governance: there were no mass campaigns of forced conversion or abandonment of customary law, traditional socio-political organization, or 'harmful customs' as long as political loyalty was shown to the centre" (p. 156).

parents-mixed-identity relational system automatically became an unrelatable ethnic category. The key finding of this study proved to the toxicity of EPRDF's inspired one-language-one-identity-one-territory system. This is a very toxic relational system, and its toxicity has affected the livelihood of people with mixed ethnicity ever since then. For instance, on March 8, 2020, I witnessed this toxicity when a young girl delivered a genocidal speech against mixed ethnic identity.

8.4. Patrilineal Mentality at Work

March 8, 2020, marks International Women's Day, which "has been observed since the early 1900's"³⁰³ in many parts of world. As commonly known, for centuries, women were forced to relate with men in an unequal manner. For this reason, people behind the March 8th agenda campaigned for gender equality. On this day, people around the world create awareness about women by demanding equality in many societal fronts. They simultaneously celebrate the achievements of women thus far in various ways: by holding meetings, by marching, by planting trees, and so forth. The theme of the International Women's Day 2020 was stated in the following manner: "I'm Generation Equality: Realizing Women's Rights"³⁰⁴.

On this day, in the city of Adama, a major opposition political party under the name of Oromo Federalist Congress held a meeting in part to celebrate the International Women's Day. This party was led by very outspoken, prominent political figures: Dr. Merera Gudina, Jawar Mohammed³⁰⁵, Bekele Gerba³⁰⁶ and more. With some of the party's prominent leaders in attendance, a young girl, who is a member of their young girls' caucus, said the following: "those of you who have been living in a marital relationship with a member of other ethnic

³⁰³ <https://www.internationalwomensday.com/Activity/15586/The-history-of-IWD>

³⁰⁴ <https://www.un.org/en/observances/womens-day>

³⁰⁵ By his own admission, he described his ethnic background as mixed ethnicity. But, I argued, he enlisted himself as a member of a single ethnic group due to the heavy influence of the EPRDF's inspired ethnic policy, and the corrosive impact of double consciousness.

³⁰⁶ As of June 30, 2020, Jawar Mohammed and Bekele Gerba are in jail for their unlawful involvement following the death a prominent musician and for the loss of many lives and destruction of the many cities.

group, dissolve your marriage right away. Those of you who are dating a person other than your ethnic group stop dating now”³⁰⁷. Those people who attended the meeting and including their prominent leaders gave their affirmation to her- ‘dissolve your mixed family’ and ‘stop dating’- bias statement by laughing hard and clapping hands³⁰⁸. OMN TV³⁰⁹, which is owned by Jawar Mohammed, was broadcasting it live to the people in Ethiopia and across the world at the time. A few hours after those abhorrent statements were broadcasted; I received countless calls from my immediate family members, extended family members, admirers, and supporters to take the necessary action³¹⁰ in protecting myself from a possible harm that is coming my way imminently. As all my callers saw it, that a genocidal statement was a declaration of war against mixed ethnicity and myself. Since I was a permanent feature of the media on mixed ethnicity, I took their advice seriously and hid myself from public view for the remainder of the day on March 8th. Since the war was declared on my mixed ethnic identity from the very city where I have been conducting my fieldwork, I stayed away from my field site by moving to the capital city to protect myself from harm. On the very next day of the declaration of war, I received calls from multiple media outlets for a rebuttal of that abhorrent statement. That very week, I got on the media and advised the people to calm down, explained the vital societal role³¹¹ a mixed ethnic group plays in Ethiopia, and asked the government to take legal action against OFC and OMN³¹².

The genocidal statement made on March 8th, 2020, clearly showed the impacts of the EPRDF’s one-language-one-identity relational system. The young girl in that infamous meeting forcefully demanded party members, party leaders and people from her Oromo

³⁰⁷ Since the beginning of November 4,2020, TPLF supporters and their sympathizers have been waging a digital war against mixed ethnicity using similar language like that young girl.

³⁰⁸ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IE21h3Lau38&feature=youtu.be>

³⁰⁹ Oromo Media Network.

³¹⁰ Asking the government to arm me or to give me a guard. I didn’t do either. From that point onward, I stopped working in the night and worked only during the day.

³¹¹ They serve as bridge for love and solidarity for the people from a single ethnic background.

³¹² <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fdENbvGTi3Q>

ethnic group, who are in a romantic relationship with other ethnic groups, to dissolve their mixed family unit and to stop dating people other than their ethnic group. While spewing the EPRDF's toxic relational system in such a manner, the young girl failed to realize the significance of March 8th for the advancement of women's rights and the value of mixed ethnic groups in fostering such rights as discussed extensively by this thesis. Similarly, those people who gathered in that place failed to realize that as well. Their failure on that front was registered by clapping hands and laughter following her toxic statement. Whenever a legally established political party such as the OFC operates like the TPLF-led-EPRDF³¹³ in the service of inequality, the country is certain to become the unfortunate site of riots, internal displacement, civil strife, civil war and so forth as the key findings show throughout this thesis.

“Contemporary theory in feminism and the humanities has brought a critical self-consciousness to bear on both the place and mode of enunciation (who speaks and how) ...” (Mani, 1990, p.25). As evidently shown in “dissolve your mixed marriage and stop dating” speech, the EPRDF's ethnic policy has empowered patriarchal discourse as the dominant frame of reference for socio-political and spatial relations. By analyzing the connections between patriarchy and ethnicity, the thesis brings much needed policy and scholarly attention on the plight of mixed ethnic people and their family unit. Additionally, the thesis makes contributions to various bodies of literature: political geography, critical race theory, and ethnic studies. As Linke and O'Loughlin (2015) inform us “political geographers, despite their diversity of methodologies and topical foci, share the belief that the social settings of events influence individual- and group-level behaviors and attitudes. Political behaviors such

³¹³ The following observation was made by one commentator when discussing about TPLF's dominance in the EPRDF: “For 27 years they were the dominant force within a so-called coalition government. Corrupt and brutal, the TPLF stole election after election, trampled on human rights, embezzled federal funds and aid money, and committed State Terrorism in various regions of the country. Administering a policy of Ethnic Federalism, they ruled through fear, divided the people along ethnic lines and are widely hated by most Ethiopians”. (<https://www.eurasiareview.com/18092021-ethiopia-tplf-terrorism-expands-civilians-massacred-oped/>)

as ...conflict about territorial control, political boundary delineation ...” (p.189-190). As such, the thesis contributes to political geography by revealing the toxicity of EPRDF’s ethnic policy through multiples spatial analysis: local (a living room), regional (the Kilil system) and federal (county wide). In such analysis, the thesis conclusively identifies the detrimental effect of the policy on mixed ethnicity via double consciousness and the erasure. It also exposes the manifestation of racism or, more precisely, ethnocentrism, as a normal state of affairs despite the plight of mixed ethnic people and their mothers. This understanding was reached by examining the relationship between the constitution and mixed ethnicity. This makes it possible for the thesis to contribute to Critical Race Theory perspective that focuses on the intersection between race and law in America (Delgado, Stefancic & Harris, 2017). One of its basic tenants says the following about racism: “racism is ordinary-not aberrational- “normal science” the usual way society does business...” (p.8). As the findings of this thesis show, patriarchally oriented ethnic relations has been integrated into the supreme law of the land as its common feature. Consequently, eliminating mixed ethnic people and their mothers from an ethnic based relational system have become a common state of affair in theory and practices in post-1991 Ethiopia.

Furthermore, the thesis also contributes to ethnic studies by showing the EPRDF’s hegemonic and divisive relational system and its consequences. The findings show the EPRDF’s one-language-one-identity-one territory policy to be an instrument of ethnic cleansing. As such, it forcefully relocates people from a mixed ethnic familial environment into a single ethnic one. Cashmore, (2004) defines displacement as an act of ethnic cleansing. As the author puts it, ethnic cleansing “refers to a policy of forced population movement to render a geopolitical locality homogenous in relation to ethnicity” (p.136). Likewise, the EPRDF’s ethnic policy homogenizes socio-political and spatial matters by removing mixed ethnic people and their mothers from the country’s relational system. Also,

the rise of EPRDF's relational system led by a systemic desire homogenize people and space brought havoc in the country by encouraging hostility between ethnic groups.

8.5. Limitation of My Research

As commonly known, when one embarks upon the study of a particular topic, one's interest in that area is usually ignited by multiple sources: personal experience, bodies of academic literatures, the works of investigative journalism, and so forth. Multiple sources play a critical role in one's research endeavor by helping the researcher to identify gaps in research areas and conflicts in previous findings of the chosen area. Consequently, one's effort in this regard usually brings reward to the researcher by equipping him or her with a relevant understanding of the chosen topic. In this way, prior studies and findings help one to build a foundational knowledge in that research area. This thesis has benefited tremendously from multiple sources. However, the lack of research materials which specifically address issues of *Wuhid Manenet*/mixed identity has imposed limitations in my research. My research interest regarding people with mixed identity was restricted and confined to the scope of my datasets. This limitation highlights the critical role of this thesis in the study of mixed identity, while simultaneously encouraging future research work on this very subject.

8.6. Policy Prescriptions

Ethiopia is inhabited by more than eighty ethnic groups. Of these, five³¹⁴ single ethnic groups were allocated two-thirds of the county's land by the EPRDF. This unequal spatial arrangement was done using the 1995 Constitution without consulting other ethnic groups about their own spatial matter³¹⁵. Just as Rousseau's imposter produced unequal spatial relation by making itself an owner and by turning others into spectators, the EPRDF's

³¹⁴ Somali, Oromo Afar, Amhara, and Tigray.

³¹⁵ The EPRDF's spatial system was seen from its inception as a great Faultline for the country by the people. To that end, Bariagaber (1998) adds the following insight about it: "Ethiopia's 'ethnic federalism' resembles the post-1945 Yugoslav constitution which some have blamed for the disintegration of Yugoslavia and the ensuing human suffering of mammoth proportions, and many do not see any future in the Ethiopian experiment" (p.1058).

constitutionally grounded spatial system turned significant numbers of people into second-class citizens overnight by depriving them equal living rights in their own country. Since then, this unjust spatial arrangement has resulted in internally displacing people³¹⁶ from the place they used to call home for generations³¹⁷. While this unfair spatial relation among a single ethnic group can be contested within the socio-political arena due to the sensitivity of the EPRDF's ethnic policy toward them, the lack of constitutionally inspired socio-political recognition makes it hard for the people with mixed identity to contest this unfair spatial arrangement. Similarly, the EPRDF organized the two chambers of the federal body by excluding mixed ethnicity from both chambers. Accordingly, 90%³¹⁸ of the seats represent a single ethnic group in the parliament, along with 100% of the House of Federation. Since this body plays an instrumental role in making laws and passing laws, it would have detrimental effects on mixed ethnic people. The exclusion of mixed ethnicity from a public policy debate also receives fewer challenges owing to the dominant role of single ethnicity. Accordingly, as the findings suggest, the EPRDF is able to practice ethnocentrism using census data, school system, workplaces, sport clubs, political parties, financial institutions, and mainstream media. The defining character of ethnocentrism arises when a given racist institutional practice embedded itself as a norm within a multiple societal apparatus. As the findings point out, unjust spatial arrangement, systemic marginalization, divisive hegemonic governance have been treated as a normal practice of the state by the EPRDF. While the EPRDF's government suppresses the people by such discriminatory methods, Ethiopia's rich inclusive communal tradition in the form of *nu buna tetu* still stands in direct contrast to this unfair

³¹⁶ On the week of October 20, 2020, I've witnessed the process of internal displacement happening in Adama. I rescued myself by hiding inside a hotel for 3 days in a row while a group of Oromo youth were forcing people to leave the city, burning down properties and murdering people at will.

³¹⁷ Reaching its peak in 2018 <http://www.internal-displacement.org/countries/Ethiopia>

³¹⁸ The rest by independent MPs and by ideological based political parties.

relational system by helping people to continue the production of egalitarian communal space in their neighborhood³¹⁹.

Unlike the Kifle Hager polyethnic socio-political and spatial system, the Kilil system was constructed to be a container and an incubator of people from a single ethnolinguistic background. The movement of people from place to place is considered by the EPRDF as a threat to the survival of the party's discriminatory relational and spatial system. Moreover, the mixed ethnic family unit and mothers were relegated to an eradicable position upon the arbitrary decision of the party. Yet, the EPRDF still calls the country The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia while centralizing power along a single ethnolinguistic line. Federalism, by contrast, entails the division of power and space between the federal and the provincial body as Kincaid (2011) and Bellia (2011) informed us. In the case of Ethiopia's ethnic-based federal system, power and space are divided between ethnic groups under the principle of one-language-one-identity-one-territory. These power and space sharing schemes were put in place without working the ethnic hyphen between the two critical ethnic groups: mixed and single. In this view, it is impossible to call the country a Federal Republic. Similarly, the labeling of a country as a Democratic Republic of Ethiopia by the EPRDF, while practicing one-sided ethnic policy, points to a mischievous act of misrepresentation rather than a democratic system. A Democratic Republic is founded upon free and fair participation of citizens to work the multifaceted hyphens between themselves (Honohan & Jennings, 2006) but the so-called Democratic Republic of Ethiopia was founded by erasing *Wuhid* identity as

³¹⁹ During my yearlong field work period, I visited several cities across the country: Addis Abeba, Awasa, Shashamene, Sebeta, Bishoftu, Gonder, Assela, Arba Minch and Irgalem,. I witnessed an inclusive, neighbourly *nu buna tetu* tradition being practiced. But the ubiquity of the *nu buna tetu* kiosk is alarming. While being presented in a traditional manner, the primary purpose of the kiosk is making money. By contrast, the primary goal of the historical one is social. Meaning that, our mothers produce a *nu buna tetu* space to bring neighbours together. In an effort to create jobs for young girls, local government officials and countless EPRDF cadres, since the late 1990s, have encouraged young girls to set up a *nu buna tetu* kiosk. I view this monetizing approach as a compromising element since it defeats the historical purpose of the *nu buna tetu* space: community, neighbours, and female empowerment. See appendix 21 for a representational picture on a *nu buna tetu* kiosk

an ethnic category using the 1995 Constitution and establishing the Kilil system. To make Ethiopia an embodiment of a federal democratic republic, the thesis calls strongly:

- (i) for the re-articulation of ethnicity in Ethiopia by empirically variable means. In other words, this subjective feelings of a person in relation to his or her preferred objective attributes;
- (ii) for conducting proper census on people with mixed ethnic identity using free and independent internationally recognized statistic agencies³²⁰;
- (iii) for the reconceptualization of ethnicity using the two critical attributes in the country: Netela and Wuhid identity;
- (iv) for the formal recognition of *Wuhid* identity by a constitutional amendment;
- (v) for the recognition of the mixed ethnic family unit by the constitution as one of the expressions of a family unit in Ethiopia;
- (vi) for the re-articulation of the constitution by centering it³²¹ on mutual understanding between the four essential socio-political categories: ethnic based, non-ethnic based (namely Individualism), gender based, and national identity;
- (vii) for the re-articulation of a person's full name from a single-parent naming framework to two-parents' naming framework in all public documents: identification card, driver's license, academic transcripts, employee badges and so forth;
- (viii) for the setting up of federally funded mixed ethnicity research institutions and media outlets, just as it has been done for single ethnicity for the past three decades;
- (ix) for setting up of federally and regionally funded mixed ethnicity advocacy agency; and
- (x) for the re-articulation of a socio-political, spatial, and economic relation at the federal, regional, and local levels using human wellbeing³²² and not ethnic identity per se.

As multiple data in this thesis indicated to us, the Kilil system has been operating since its inception as a primary facilitator for ethnic divisions by giving rise to multiple forms

³²⁰ As the evidence from the 2007 census data shows and my interview with Ethiopia's statistics agency officials reveals, the EPRDF was exerting its maximum political power to misrepresent mixed ethnic people in the census data. As I was informed by the agency officials, the problem in the agency is not from a lack of statistical skills by the employees of the agency, but from the EPRDF's organized and concerted efforts in data manipulation for the sake of its discriminatory socio-political relational system. Ethiopia counts her people every 10 years, but the 1997 counting period has yet to be conducted due to ethnic based violence and political crises at all levels of government. The incoming Abiy's government is planning to carry out its national obligation by counting the people in 2022. In light of that, I would still argue for the deployment of free and independent, internationally recognized statistics agencies to do the counting along Ethiopia's statistics agency.

³²¹ As opposed to its single ethnolinguistic gravity.

³²² As opposed to the EPRDF's discriminatory ethnic policy: single ethnolinguistic wellbeing. Here, putting human wellbeing before one's ethnic identity works like putting the cart before the horse. As a result, this destroyed peoples' livelihood like they did with the people with mixed ethnic identity. This became a normal state of affairs for the party and its government.

of ethnic-based riots and internal displacement³²³. As it stands today, the Kilil system also places a formidable barrier for the realization of this thesis' recommendations: making the ethnic hyphen work between the people. For this reason, the thesis strongly recommends the replacement of the Kilil system by a new inclusive space using the following seven space-forming questions suggested by Mehretu's (2019):

- (i) Are the state or provincial boundaries historic and culturally stable with foundations in natural features, communities of interest or neutral cartographic coordinates?
- (ii) Are the states or provinces of comparative size in surface area with absence of extreme disparity?
- (iii) Do the states or provinces reflect a reasonable share of the country's demographic assets with population thresholds that can support basic cultural, social, and developmental objectives?
- (iv) Do the states or provinces reflect a reasonable distribution of the country's natural resources?
- (v) Are the states or provinces accessible to other provinces and metropolitan hubs in the nation to afford dynamic interactive potential for movements of people, ideas, and goods?
- (vi) Do the states or provinces have significant communities of interest and cultural signifiers with hubs that serve as loci of cultural identity, pride, and celebration?
- (vii) Do the states or provinces have reasonable "compact" morphology (without extreme deformities) to afford high levels of accessibility and integration for their respective constituencies to the geographic centers of the states or provinces through available forms of transportation and communication infrastructure? (p.4-5).

The core question before me was this: what makes the composition of the socio-political and spatial relational system advantageous for all peoples of Ethiopia? As has been shown throughout this thesis the agony of the people under the EPRDF arose from the party's failure in working the socio-political and spatial hyphens between the peoples sensibly, responsibly, respectfully, feasibly, and justly. This thesis carefully examined historical and

³²³ As one commentator puts it, "The country's regions were re-drawn on ethnic lines (suspiciously close to the same borders Italy used during the war and occupation from 1936 to 1941-please see Appendix 2 and 4 for comparison's sake) ... All of this, from a group without any mandate or legitimacy — a rag tag group of largely uneducated rebel fighters...If you happen to be born outside of your 'homeland' — as many were for several generations — prospects for employment, personal security and wellbeing were greatly diminished and tens of thousands have lost their lives to ethnic cleansings in all the regions including Afar, Amhara, Bene Shangul, Oromia, Somalia and Tigray — by pitting neighbor upon neighbor." (<https://medium.com/@dentoncollins/food-aid-the-new-iran-contra-in-ethiopia-and-the-power-of-brain-washing-3519cc95c525>)

contemporary relational systems using the family unit, the constitution, the Kilil and the Kifle Hager system, the riot in Adama, and the *nu buna tetu* space as a contextual ground. Based upon this thesis' key findings, Ethiopians have been forced to lead an unbearable existence under the EPRDF-inspired socio-political and spatial relational system. The incoming³²⁴ Ethiopian federal, regional, and local government must work the multiple hyphens between the people to make the multiple hyphenated relationships bearable for all. Since the EPRDF-inspired socio-political and spatial relational system was organized in a discriminatory, hierarchal manner, all levels of the incoming government³²⁵ must strive to work the multiple hyphens between the people using the eleven recommendations of this author's thesis along with Mehretu's seven socio-political, economic, and spatial questions.

As theorized, articulated, and discussed throughout this thesis using multiple empirical angles, ethnic and gender-based categories have been deployed by EPRDF as veins and arteries of its relational system. However, these relational chains on which the body politic depends on for the supply of people have blocked mixed ethnic people and mothers from entering the circulatory system of the body politic by classifying them as a wasted matter. This thesis views the EPRDF's ethnic- and gender-based circulatory system as the

³²⁴ Here, I am refereeing to the general election that was supposed to take place on June 21 and 30 September 2021. While I was still working on my thesis, the election took place on said dates and Abiy's Prosperity Party registered landslide victory. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/7/10/ethiopias-ruling-party-wins-national-election-in-landslide>

³²⁵ Since the EPRDF was a divisive and corrupt political party when being judged by the lived experience of the people, on December 1, 2019, the Prosperity Party (here after PP) was formed as successor of the EPRDF. The new political party came into existence through the merger of three former party members of the EPRDF: The Oromo Democratic Party, the Southern Ethiopian People's Democratic Movement, and the Amhara Democratic Party. But TPLF, which was the dominant power within the EPRDF³²⁵, declined to join the new party and instead declared war against the PP on November 4, 2020. They murdered soldiers from the Ethiopia Defence Force of Northern command who were guarding Ethiopia's international boarder and the province of Tigray from foreign forces. As far as TPLF is concerned, Abiy and its newly created political party stand against the interests of Ethiopia's ethnic groups, "but the facts on the ground contradicted it; regions that were not granted autonomy under the EPRDF, such as Sidama, managed to hold their first referendum...Regions relegated to the peripheries of power such as Gambella, Benishangul, and Somali were given more political leverage in joining the leading coalition. Despite this, pervasive anti-Abiy propaganda continued in TPLF circles" (Zemichael, 2021) and in the western media circle. On October 30, 2021, The House of Federation announced the creation of a new Kilil out of the Sothern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples' Region. This happened after five ethnic groups were allowed to have their say via a referendum. With the addition of this newly created Kilil, the Kilil system expanded to eleven. In the history of the Kilil system, the last two Kilil were formed by the wishes of the people. By contrast, the original nine Kilil were produced by the wishes of the EPRDF.

most ill-equipped circulatory system to maintain the health of the body politic. As such, the EPRDF's inspired relational system restricts its circulatory system by removing the mixed ethnic group. The key findings of this thesis have clearly shown the devastating impact of the EPRDF's ethnic- and gender-based relational system. Replacing this harmful circulatory system is a must for the country to save itself from a vicious cycle of violence. As conceptually and empirically argued throughout, saving Ethiopians and their country can be done. One of the main goals is to supply the body politic with people³²⁶ after working the multiple hyphens between them.

8.7. Recommendations for Future Research

This thesis, as the first groundbreaking research work on mixed ethnicity in Ethiopia, plays a critical role in showing the true value and real merit of mixed ethnic identity and its horizontally oriented non-discriminatory relational system. In order to free mixed ethnic people from the EPRDF-inspired socio-political and spatial injustice, more research needs to be done by multiple researchers in multiple regions of the country using mixed identity as the focal point. The more research materials become available on this important issue in the country, the more likely people will see the multifaceted harms of EPRDF's discriminatory socio-political and spatial relational system.

Finally, this thesis was composed using critical ethnography's commitment to ethical responsibility as its guiding principle. This was done since critical ethnography "deepens and sharpens ethical commitments by forcing us to develop and act upon value commitments in the context of political agendas" (Thomas, 1993, p.2). In accordance with such a principle and its objectives, future research endeavors must be guided by strong ethical responsibility and commitment. It should also question diverse socio-political and spatial issues regarding both mixed ethnic people, and other ethnic groups in general.

³²⁶ Currently, the contents of the body politic are filled by discriminatory ethnic politics rather than solving human problems and addressing human needs.

8.8. Concluding Remarks

“Ever since the formation of modern Ethiopia in the late 19th century, successive governments have grappled with the same basic question: How best to weld the country’s mosaic of more than 90 ethnicities and nationalities into a cohesive whole?³²⁷” (Green, 2021). Ethiopia dealt with this fundamental question in the following manner: Its multiple governments’, over the centuries, attempted to oscillate between two points, namely, nationalism based on provincialism, and ethnicity on the account of ethnolinguistic enclosure. During the *Zemene Mesafint*, provincial power reigned over Ethiopia while loosely maintaining a cohesive whole via national Ethiopian identity. Regional lords, who fought continuously against each other along provincial lines, became the dominant force at the center. This century-old conflict and center-based political desire became a reality when Kassa Hailu³²⁸ managed to defeat all provincial lords and became an emperor of Ethiopia in 1855 (Zewde, 2001). With the rise of Emperor Tewodros II to the throne, national identity was strengthened by reinforcing the power of the central government and by building a strong alliance between the provinces (Wubneh, 2017). This model was adopted by succeeding Emperors³²⁹ of Ethiopia. With the 1974 Ethiopian revolution, the country parted with its monarchical reign (Clapham, 1998; Tsige, 2019). However, there was “some continuity, with Mengistu³³⁰ equating nationhood with a strong central state” (Green, 2021). Hence, the military government worked the socio-political and spatial hyphens between the people using national identity along provincial lines.

³²⁷ <https://www.reuters.com/investigates/special-report/ethiopia-conflict-fractured/>

³²⁸ Emperor Tewodros II birth name. He was from Gondar and Qwara district. His district is in the western part of Gondar.

³²⁹ Emperor Yohannes IV (1872-89) from the province of Tigray, Emperor Menelik II (1889-1913) from the province of Shewa, Lij Iyasu (1913-1916) from the province of Wollo, Empress Zewditu I (1916-30) from the province of Shewa and Emperor Haile Selassie I (1930-74) from the province of Harar. In their multifaceted efforts to strengthen the stature of the central government and the nation state, violent war and negotiation were employed by all of them as instrument.

³³⁰ The head of the military regime.

Contrastingly, the EPRDF's government radically changed the institutional arrangements of Ethiopia by working the socio-political and spatial hyphens along ethnolinguistic lines and ethnolinguistic enclosures. This institutional model was codified into law by Article 8 (1) of the 1995 Constitution: "all sovereign power resides in the Nations, Nationalities, and peoples of Ethiopia". However, the EPRDF's approaches, far from transferring power from the center to the regions, kept all of the powers at the center using multiple national policies. These were which the mirror and derivative of the party's ideological tenets: "state ownership of land (inhibiting agrarian development and usable as a political control mechanism), strong control of the political process and of civil society, the judiciary, and the civil service, and in general a model of "democratic centralism" with the party as sole arbiter and power factor" (Abbink, 2009, p.10). As such, the EPRDF followed a top-down elitist approach like its predecessors by decentering the people from socio-political and spatial matters (Chane, 2007; Aalen & Tronvoll, 2009; Bruton & Fitz-Gerald, 2021; Green, 2021). Accordingly, the EPRDF killed hundreds and arrested hundreds of thousands (Green, 2021) to keep power at the center. As Green (2021) sees it, the current ethnic based system "represents a contrarian bet on a continent where conflicts playing out along ethnic lines represent one of the greatest impediments to the formation of stable post-independence states³³¹". However, the ascent of Abiy Ahmed to power in 2018 gave "reassure those worried that Ethiopia would succumb to ethic conflict...many hope Mr. Ahmed can now heal those rifts" (Keay, 2018). But, far from fulfilling this massive national reconciliation and healing task, on June 23, 2018 the new prime minister was almost assassinated when an assailant threw a grenade in his direction" (Keay,ibid; Meseret, 2018). Furthermore, two years into his premiership, a polarizing ethnic war broke out in November 2020 and

³³¹ <https://www.reuters.com/investigates/special-report/ethiopia-conflict-fractured/>

continues unabated up until the present day³³². As Lefebvre informs us, challenges in productive processes must be handled carefully to reduce unnecessary tension between them. Contrastingly, the EPRDF-inspired relational system, far from dictating its special logic by reconciling the possible multifaced tensions between the conceived space, perceived and lived space, was designed by, explicitly³³³ and implicitly³³⁴, widening the spatial gap between the productive process. Ever since then, citizens have become the subject of internal displacement. For instance, “Ethiopia set a world record for displacements in a single year: 5.1 million in 2021³³⁵”. As mentioned above, the EPRDF relational system was organized without integrating citizens into the planning of the productive process. This case conforms to the existence of spatial injustice and ,thereby, internal displacement. Hence, to keep the country from further spatial and ethnic polarization and, thereby, from eventual dismemberment, the federal, all regional/local governments and the people must work the socio-political and spatial hyphens using a national dialogue and a sensible relational system.

Moreover, as the key findings show, the EPRDF’s relational system is solely responsible for a forceful exclusion of mixed ethnic people and their mothers from socio-political and spatial matters. I, therefore, strongly, and urgently call for a constitutional amendment and institutional readjustment³³⁶ to emancipate mixed ethnic people and mothers from an erasable category and abhorrent socio-political and spatial conditions.

³³² It is now March 10, 2022, and the war, unfortunately, still going on.

³³³ By abolishing the Kifle Hager system.

³³⁴ By depriving mixed ethnic people spatial representation.

³³⁵ <https://www.npr.org/sections/goatsandsoda/2022/05/28/1100469734/ethiopia-set-a-world-record-for-displacements-in-a-single-year-5-1-million-in-20#:~:text=via%20Getty%20Images-,People%20who%20fled%20from%20fighting%20in%20Ethiopia%20gather%20in%20a,from%20the%20World%20Food%20Programme>.

³³⁶ In all levels of government: local, regional and federal.

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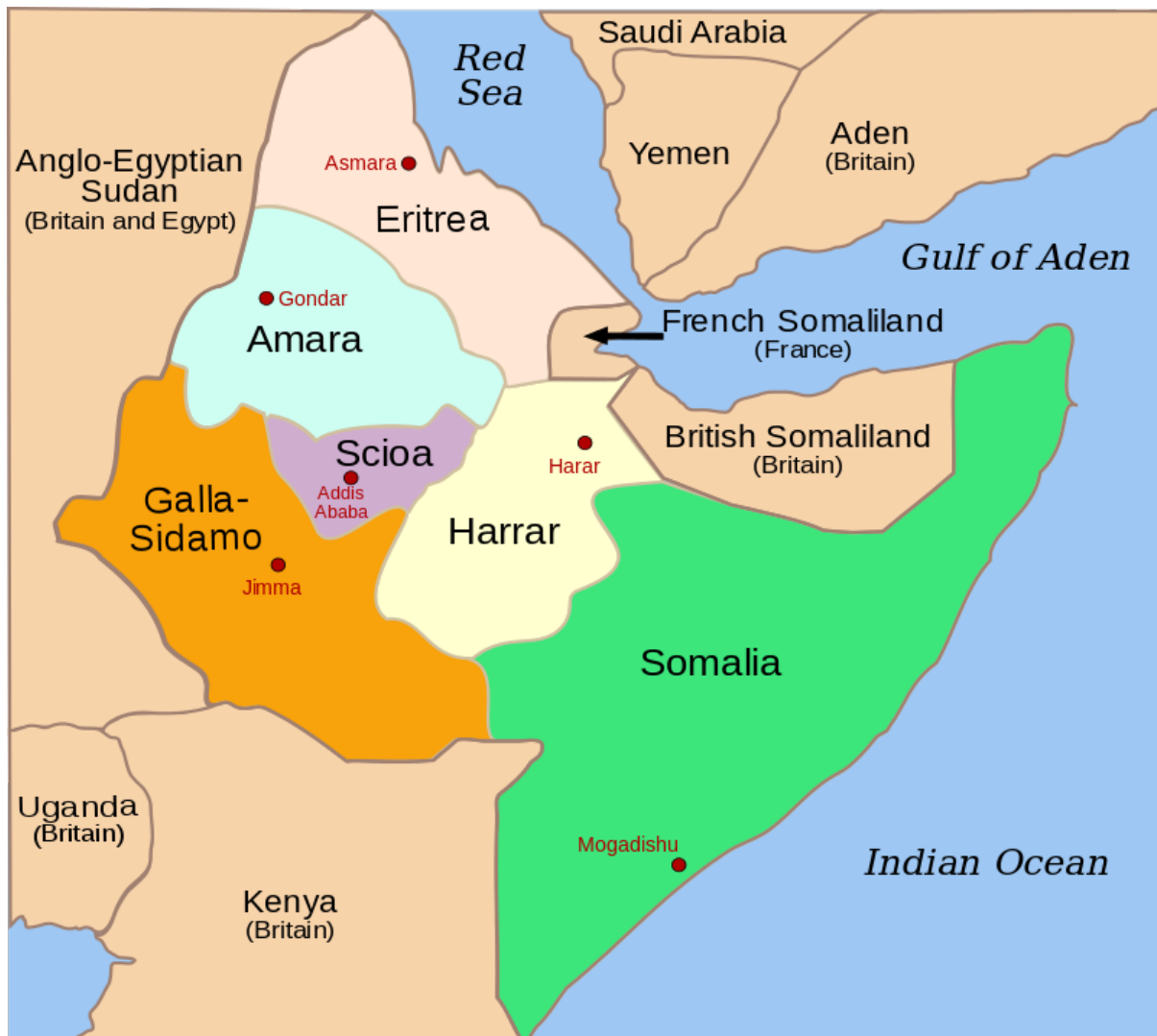
Appendices

Appendix: 1 Administrative Map of Ethiopia: 1987-1991³³⁸.



³³⁸Retrieved June 11, 2019, from https://www.google.com/search?q=ethiopian+map+before+1991&tbm=isch&ved=2ahUKEwj4smN4c32AhXahXIEHYCQDysQ2-cCegQIABAA&oq=Ethiopian+Map&gs_lcp=CgNpbWcQARgBMgQIABBDmgUIABCABDIFCAAQgAQyBQgAEIAEMgQIABBDmgUIABCABDIFCAAQgAQyBQgAEIAEMgUIABCABDIFCAAQgARQAFgAYPkm aABwAHgAgAFSiAFSkgEBMZgBAKoBC2d3cy13aXotaW1nwAEB&scient=img&ei=qXszYqPqK9qLytMP gKG-2AI&bih=754&biw=1536#imgrc=BNYLrsMHZsWruM

Appendix 2: Map of Ethiopia during the Italian Occupation, 1935-40³³⁹



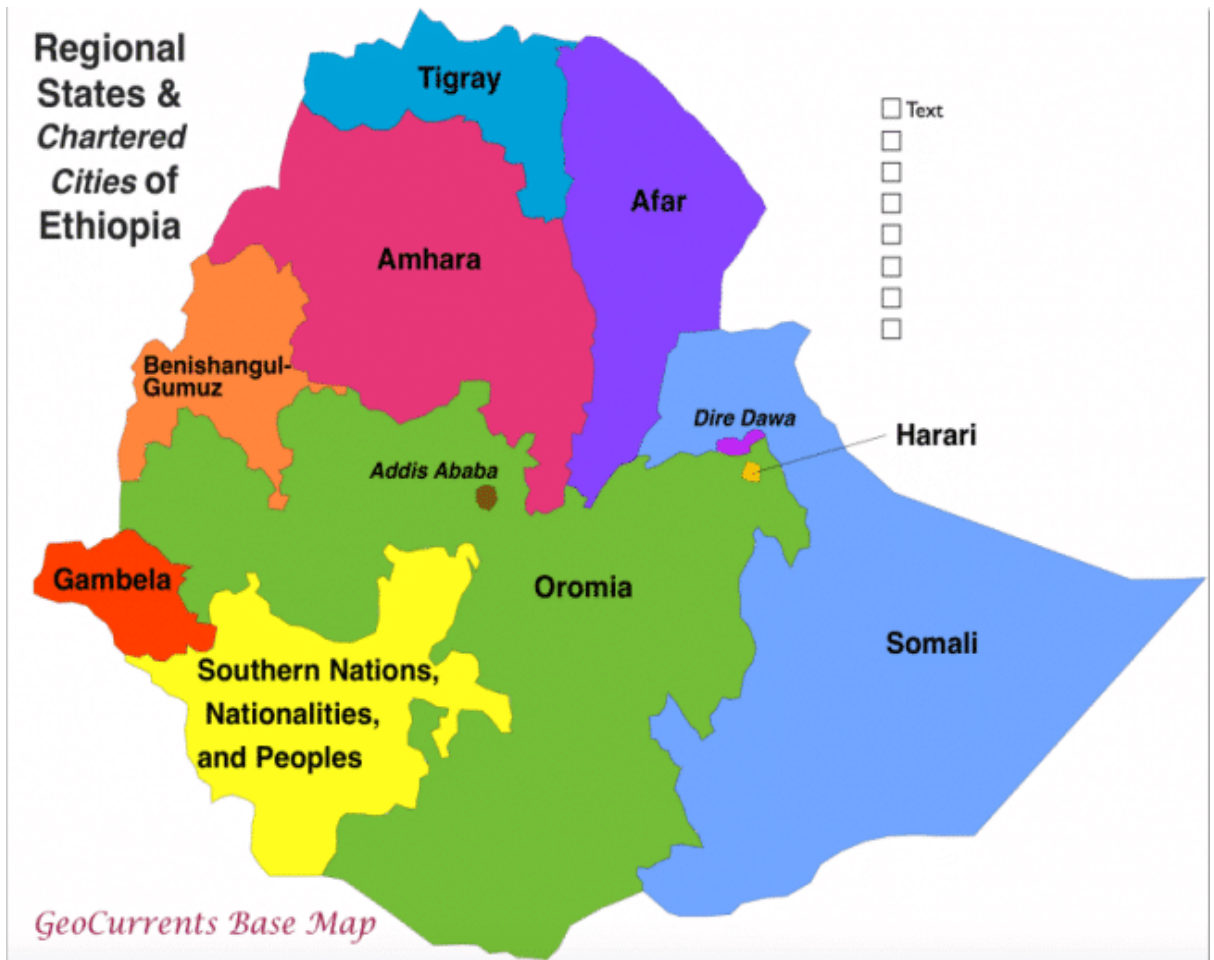
³³⁹ It is safe to assume post-1991 map as a direct mirror of Italian's divide and conquer map of Ethiopia. Retrieved March 13, 2017, https://www.google.com/search?q=ethiopian+map+during+Italian+occuption+&tbm=isch&ved=2ahUKEwi10_eZ4c32AhUPrnIEHTL8BhYQ2-cCegQIABAA&oq=ethiopian+map+during+Italian+occuption+&gs_lcp=CgNpbWcQAzoECAAQQzoFCAAQgAQ6BAgAEBg6BggAeAgQHICICFi0YGDCYmgAcAB4AIABd4gB3BOSAQQzNi4xmAEAoAEBqgELZ3dzLXdpei1pbWfAAQE&scient=img&ei=w3szYvXIJJo_cytMPsvibsAE&bih=754&biw=1536#imgrc=5KGEzrvyWYuDFM

Appendix 3: Pre-1991_ The Kifle Hager System³⁴⁰:



³⁴⁰Retrieved November 11, 2016, from https://www.google.com/search?q=map+of+ethiopia+before+1974&tbm=isch&ved=2ahUKEwjB1NvS5c32AhXSgXIEHWeBCQAQ2-cCegQIABAA&oq=Map+of+Ethiopia+be&gs_lcp=CgNpbWcQARgCMgUIABCABDIECAAQGDIIECAAQGDIECAAQGDolCAAQgAAQsQM6CwgAEIAEELEDEIMBOgQIABBDOgoIABCxAxCDARBDogcIABCxAxBDOggIABCxAxCDAToECAAAQzoGCAAQCBAeUABY9FZgiHNbBHAAeAOAAccBiAGEHJIBBDQyLjKYAQCgAQGqAQtd3Mtd2l6LWltZ7ABAMABAQ&scient=img&ei=bIAzYsHuG9KDytMP54Im&bih=754&biw=1536#imgrc=0hhhLMONiqv7EM

Appendix 4: Post_1991_The Killil System³⁴¹



³⁴¹Retrieved November 15, 2016, https://www.google.com/search?q=ethiopian+map+during+haile+selassie&tbm=isch&ved=2ahUKEwi-9-q_4s32AhWcr3IEHbGuDcwQ2-cCegQIABAA&oq=ethiopian+map+&gs_lcp=CgNpbWcQARgHMgUIABCABDIFCAAQgAQyBQgAEIAEMgUIABCABDIFCAAQgAQyBQgAEIAEMgUIABCABDIFCAAQgAQyBQgAEIAEMgUIABCABDoECAAQGDoGCAAQCBAeUABY6zpglGFoAHAAeAGAAAdgBiAGHDpIBBjIxlJluMZgBAKABAaoBC2d3cy13aXotaW1nwAEB&scient=img&ei=H30zYv7rIZzfytMPsd224Aw&bih=754&biw=1536#imgrc=dkbKrfEpx-2LLM

Appendix: 5 A Traditional Platter with Multiple Dishes



Appendix: 6 Various Types of Stews on of Injera



Appendix 7: Making an Enibla Call



Appendix 8: Making an Enibla Call



Appendix 9: Feasting Together on a Single Platter Using One's Right Hand



Appendix 10: Feasting Together on a Single Platter Using Our Fingers



Appendix: 11 Pitching to Deliver Gursha



Appendix: 12 Delivering Gursha



Appendix: 13 Delivering Gursha



Appendix: 14 Nu Buna Tetu Ceremony in Progress



Appendix: 15 Nu Buna Tetu Ceremony in Progress



Appendix: 16 Nu Buna Tetu Ceremony in Progress



Appendix 17: Nu Buna Tetu Ceremony in Progress



Appendix 18: Nu Buna Tetu Ceremony in Progress



Appendix 19: Nu Buna Tetu Ceremony in Progress



Appendix 20: Nu Buna Tetu Ceremony in Progress



Appendix 21: Nu Buna Tetu Kiosk



Appendix 22: Shay Buna Logo



Appendix 23: Traditional buna ceremony being offered during the show



Appendix 24: The Azmari



Appendix 25: Shay Buna host Solomon Shumye



Appendix 26: Shay Buna's Panelists



Appendix 27: Aster, the Only Female Panelist



Appendix 28: Dr. Erissido Holding the Microphone



Appendix 29: Sebsebe Holding the Microphone



Appendix 30: The Panelists



Appendix 31: Discussing the plight of Wuhid people for the first time on TV



Appendix 32: While I was in don't split me moment



Appendix 33: The panelists recognizing my critical insights



Appendix 34: This is it! This is what a genuine Ethiopian looks like.



Appendix 35: With Ato Samuel³⁴² at Qyit Party headquarter in Addis Ababa



³⁴² For more than two decades he defended courageously the rights of mixed ethnic people by organizing political party. He did that by risking his own welfare and the security of his family.

Appendix 36: Otherring at play using the 1984 Census Data³⁴³

Timbaro	768	0.016	57170	0.151	57938	0.136
Tsemay	631	0.013	10106	0.027	10737	0.025
Undu	26	0.001	1465	0.004	1491	0.003
Wage	846	0.017	1276	0.003	2142	0.005
Welaita	68047	1.397	1024911	2.715	1092958	2.565
Weyto	850	0.017	2966	0.008	3816	0.009
Yemisa	5118	0.105	110788	0.293	115906	0.272
Zeyse	327	0.007	17516	0.046	17843	0.042
Zilman	293	0.006	5025	0.013	5318	0.012
Naturalized	6035	0.124	1528	0.004	7563	0.018
Different* Ethnic group	32021	0.658	15776	0.042	47797	0.112
Others**	23272	0.478	306035	0.811	329307	0.773
Foreigners	7029	0.144	2012	0.005	9041	0.021
Not Stated	24156	0.496	109747	0.291	133903	0.314
Total	4869290	100	37747586	100	42616876	100

* 'Different Ethnic Groups' refer to persons whose parents are from different ethnic origins and don't want to identify themselves with either.

** 'Others' refers to ethnic groups that are different from those precoded in the 1984 Population and Housing Census.

Appendix 37: Otherring at play using the 1994 Census Data³⁴⁴

ETHNIC GROUP	URBAN + RURAL				URBAN				RURAL			
	Total		Male	Female	Total		Male	Female	Total		Male	Female
	No	%			No	%			No	%		
Sheko	23,785	0.0	11,785	12,000	341	0.0	197	144	23,444	0.1	11,588	11,856
Shinasha	32,698	0.1	16,236	16,462	3,826	0.1	1,945	1,881	28,872	0.1	14,291	14,581
Oyda	14,075	0.0	7,224	6,851	440	0.0	236	204	13,635	0.0	6,988	6,647
Saho	23,275	0.0	11,472	11,803	1,866	0.0	941	925	21,409	0.0	10,531	10,878
Sheko	23,785	0.0	11,785	12,000	341	0.0	197	144	23,444	0.1	11,588	11,856
Shinasha	32,698	0.1	16,236	16,462	3,826	0.1	1,945	1,881	28,872	0.1	14,291	14,581
Shita	307	0.0	144	163	41	0.0	26	15	266	0.0	118	148
Sidama	1,842,314	3.5	937,367	904,947	37,660	0.5	20,536	17,124	1,804,654	3.9	916,831	887,823
Somali	3,160,540	5.9	1,726,538	1,434,002	420,146	5.7	224,411	195,735	2,740,394	6.0	1,502,127	1,238,267
Suri	19,632	0.0	9,731	9,901	56	0.0	31	25	19,576	0.0	9,700	9,876
Tigray	3,284,568	6.2	1,615,265	1,669,303	688,849	9.4	322,222	366,627	2,595,719	5.7	1,293,043	1,302,676
Tsamay	9,702	0.0	5,196	4,506	319	0.0	187	132	9,383	0.0	5,009	4,374
Welaita	1,269,216	2.4	631,029	638,187	128,516	1.8	64,924	63,592	1,140,700	2.5	566,105	574,595
Dorzi	28,990	0.1	18,482	10,508	26,021	0.4	16,657	9,364	2,969	0.0	1,825	1,144
Gamo	719,847	1.4	360,118	359,729	57,692	0.8	31,657	26,035	662,155	1.4	328,461	333,694
Goffa	241,530	0.5	120,496	121,034	16,967	0.2	8,345	8,622	224,563	0.5	112,151	112,412
Konta	49,627	0.1	23,967	25,660	2,448	0.0	1,132	1,316	47,179	0.1	22,835	24,344
Kulo	331,483	0.6	162,311	169,172	26,544	0.4	12,538	14,006	304,939	0.7	149,773	155,166
Mello	20,189	0.0	10,038	10,151	1,706	0.0	842	864	18,483	0.0	9,196	9,287
Weyto	1,631	0.0	820	811	463	0.0	230	233	1,168	0.0	590	578
Yemisa	165,184	0.3	82,087	83,097	10,475	0.1	4,789	5,686	154,709	0.3	77,298	77,411
Zeyse	10,842	0.0	5,583	5,259	538	0.0	287	251	10,304	0.0	5,296	5,008
Zergula	390	0.0	186	204	78	0.0	38	40	312	0.0	148	164
Other Eth National Groups	107,073	0.2	55,519	51,554	11,160	0.2	5,754	5,406	95,913	0.2	49,765	46,148
From Different Parents	26,770	0.1	13,577	13,193	20,562	0.3	10,256	10,306	6,208	0.0	3,321	2,887
Eritreans	61,857	0.1	31,625	30,232	36,928	0.5	18,542	18,386	24,929	0.1	13,083	11,846
Djebutians	367	0.0	186	181	357	0.0	181	176	10	0.0	5	5
Somali	24,726	0.0	12,865	11,861	20,090	0.3	10,463	9,627	4,636	0.0	2,402	2,234
Kenyan	134	0.0	75	59	101	0.0	54	47	33	0.0	21	12
Sudanese	2,035	0.0	1,366	669	1,661	0.0	1,139	522	374	0.0	227	147
Other Foreigners	16,302	0.0	8,650	7,652	14,883	0.2	7,872	7,011	1,419	0.0	778	641
Not Stated	5,827	0.0	3,271	2,556	2,688	0.0	1,584	1,104	3,139	0.0	1,687	1,452

³⁴³ <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1-4EGIClvTz2jXOq0siet8cDYLRJ7cHc/view>

³⁴⁴ <https://www.statsethiopia.gov.et/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/1994-Population-Census-Analytical-report.pdf>

Appendix 38: Othoring at play using the 2007 Census Data³⁴⁵

Table 3.1 Population by Urban-Rural Residence, Sex, and Ethnic Group: 2007

Ethnic Group	URBAN + RURAL			Urban			Rural		
	Both Sexes	Male	Female	Both Sexes	Male	Female	Both Sexes	Male	Female
COUNTRY TOTAL									
Surma	27,886	13,639	14,247	2,309	1,228	1,081	25,577	12,411	13,166
She	319	175	144	236	131	105	83	44	39
Tigrie	4,486,513	2,212,789	2,273,724	1,060,528	507,748	552,780	3,425,985	1,705,041	1,720,944
Timebaro	98,589	48,117	50,472	8,794	4,600	4,194	89,795	43,517	46,278
Tsemay	20,045	10,008	10,037	444	250	194	19,601	9,758	9,843
Upo	1,586	811	775	288	158	130	1,298	653	645
Welaita	1,676,128	834,086	842,042	281,462	145,556	135,906	1,394,666	688,530	706,136
Werji	12,847	6,443	6,404	9,442	4,683	4,759	3,405	1,760	1,645
Yem	159,923	79,610	80,313	20,120	9,422	10,698	139,803	70,188	69,615
Zeyese	17,889	9,034	8,855	1,811	927	884	16,078	8,107	7,971
Zelmam	2,703	1,335	1,368	339	176	163	2,364	1,159	1,205
Other									
Ethiopian National	142,275	74,429	67,846	22,280	11,679	10,601	119,995	62,750	57,245
From different									
Parents	36,524	18,205	18,319	29,538	14,556	14,982	6,986	3,649	3,337
Eritrean	9,736	5,714	4,022	4,203	2,223	1,980	5,533	3,491	2,042
Djiboutian	733	368	365	411	202	209	322	166	156
Somalian	20,227	9,725	10,502	12,778	6,140	6,638	7,449	3,585	3,864
Kenyan	727	381	346	303	175	128	424	206	218
Sudanese	10,333	5,755	4,578	1,927	1,180	747	8,406	4,575	3,831
Other Foreigners	15,550	8,783	6,767	8,672	4,854	3,818	6,878	3,929	2,949
TIGRAY REGION									
All Groups	4,316,988	2,126,465	2,190,523	844,040	398,795	445,245	3,472,948	1,727,670	1,745,278
Affar	12,314	6,763	5,551	1,203	649	554	11,111	6,114	4,997
Agew-Awi	918	448	470	415	226	189	503	222	281
Agew Hamyra	8,270	4,076	4,194	927	441	486	7,343	3,635	3,708
Alaha	233	132	101	179	102	77	54	30	24

Appendix 39: The 2007 Census Data by Urban-Rural Residence³⁴⁶

Microsoft Word - INTRODUCTION type of residence relationship and age.doc 97 / 385 100%

Table 3.1 Population by Urban-Rural Residence, Sex, and Ethnic Group: 2007

Ethnic Group	URBAN + RURAL			Urban			Rural		
	Both Sexes	Male	Female	Both Sexes	Male	Female	Both Sexes	Male	Female
ESPECIAL ENUMERATION AREA									
Surma	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
She	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Tigrie	213	113	100	208	110	98	5	3	2
Timebaro	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Tsemay	4	2	2	4	2	2	-	-	-
Upo	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Welaita	924	483	441	919	483	436	5	-	5
Werji	58	27	31	56	26	30	2	1	1
Yem	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Zeyese	3	-	3	3	-	3	-	-	-
Zelmam	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Other									
Ethiopian National	190	107	83	92	44	48	98	63	35
From different									
Parents	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Eritrean	10	5	5	10	5	5	-	-	-
Djiboutian	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Somalian	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Kenyan	3	-	3	3	-	3	-	-	-
Sudanese	2	1	1	1	1	-	1	-	1
Other Foreigners	78	44	34	66	43	23	12	1	11

³⁴⁵ https://www.statethiopia.gov.et/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/National_Statistical.pdf

³⁴⁶ https://www.statethiopia.gov.et/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/National_Statistical.pdf