

# The Historical Outline of the Blue Nile-Lake Tana Water Resources and Their Impact on the Socio-Economic, Geo-Political and Historical Developments of Modern Ethiopian Empire

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## Abstract

The main objective of this paper is to assess the survey of the Blue Nile- Lake Tana water resources and their impact on the socio- economic, cultural, geo-political and historic developments of modern Ethiopian Empire. Hence, the Blue Nile- Lake Tana area of Ethiopia has been the focal point and bone of contention generally for Europeans and particularly for Egypt since the birth of Civilization. It's already known that the economy and majority of the people's livelihood in Ethiopia are directly relied on agriculture. To develop the socio-economy and eradicate poverty throughout the Country, the policy of transformation and interventions should focus on agriculture as the focal point. Therefore, the key challenges that need to be strongly addressed in this paper will be transforming agriculture by overcoming a multitude of problems. For instance, water management issues for sustainable socio-economic growth in particular and geo-political development in general.

**Keywords:** Socio-economic growth, Geo-political significance, Challenges, Water negotiations and historical success.

## 1. General Background

### 1.1. Geographical setting and Geological survey

Over the last few centuries, several European adventures have travelled through Ethiopia in search for the source of the Nile River Basin. As early as the 1600s, Portuguese priests established that the source of Blue Nile was Lake Tana. Accordingly, the lake is located at an altitude of 1,830 m above sea level and found in the north western highlands of Ethiopia. Besides, the lake is by far the Ethiopia's largest lake, containing half of the country's fresh water supply<sup>1</sup>.

Based on the recent document analysis of Amhara National Regional state, Lake Tana Transport Agency, the lake covers an area of 3,035 km<sup>2</sup> and its depth varies from 50 meters to 9 meters in average. Furthermore, it stretches 73 kilo meters from North to south and 68 kilometers from west to East. As regards to its location, Lake Tana is bordered by North Gondar to North, West Gojjam and Bahir Dar city to south, West Gojjam to the West and South and North Gondar along the East. Lake Tana has more than 37 islands. From these Islands, around twenty (20) have historical places, churches and monasteries. Besides, the lake has strategic significance for the development of socio-cultural, economic, Political and historical linkage.<sup>2</sup>

Several large and permanent rivers feed in to the lake. For instance, Gilgel /Bikollo/ Abay river, Gelda River, Gumara River, Ribb River, Koga River and other small seasonal rivers are ending at the lake indifferent directions. As the geological survey is concerned, the time of up lift is uncertain and the age of the lake is also yet unknown. But subsequent fracturing and subsidence of the dome generated the Tana basin. This basin occurs perched with in a large dome 1000 km up lifted in the Ethiopian plateau. Based on the emphasis given by Martin de Graff, the lake might owe its present form to damming by a 50km- long quaternary basalt flow, which filled the exit channel of the Blue Nile River to a possible depth of 100m. Hence, the age of this lava flow is estimated to be some 10, 000 years before present. As him, whether or not the lake was present before or after the blocking of the Nile out let, the lava most likely created the water falls at Tissisat, isolating lake Tana from the lower Nile drainage. In case of the formation, deGraff illustrated that the Tana basin was occupied at least partly by a lake around eight million years ago but it is un known if that lake survived the regional up lift during late Miocene, quaternary episodes.<sup>3</sup> As the origin and development of the Blue Nile basin is concerned, it is among the Ethiopian major rivers flow out of Ethiopia in to Sudan, constituting the Eastern Nile basin, distinct from the White Nile flowing from the south. The blue Nile basin alone covers an estimated area of 311, 437 km<sup>2</sup> and it is shared by Ethiopia and Sudan, the upper and downstream countries respectively<sup>4</sup>.

As regards the location, although it varies as the authors vary, the Blue Nile is found between 7<sup>o</sup>40'N and 16<sup>o</sup> 2'N latitude, and 32<sup>o</sup> 30'E and 39<sup>o</sup> 49' E longitude lines. Even though it creates controversial, the source of

<sup>1</sup> Martin de Graff, "LakeTana'sPiscivorousBarbus/ Cyprinidae Ethiopia):Ecology, Evolution, and Exploitation". (Doctoral Thesis , Wageningen University, 2003). P.11.

<sup>2</sup>Amhara National Regional state, Lake Tana Transport Agency ( Bahir Dar : Transport and Agency press, 2013), pp.1-3.

<sup>3</sup> Graff, pp. 11-12.

<sup>4</sup> Douglas J. Marry and TadeleGebreselassie," CGIAR Challenge program on water and Food: Nile, promoting Improved Rain water and Land Management in the Blue Nile Basin of Ethiopia."NBDC Technical Report(Bahir Dar University , 2011), p.32.

the Blue Nile is Gish Abay, West Gojjam Zone, Sekala Woreda, from where it flows north in to Lake Tana until it ends the lake with having the name of Gilgal / Bikollo) Abay. In line with the controversial as the real source of the rivers is concerned, some local and foreign authors have debated several times. For instance, some authors are narrating that the source of the Blue Nile is lake Tana, Where as some others are indicating the source at Gish Abay.<sup>1</sup>

In my turn as an eye witness account regarding its origin of Blue Nile, I am un doubtly argue that the source of Blue Nile is indeed from the stream of Gish Abay, the Holy water where Christian faith and pray is conducting as the healing power still. When I have visited the area three times, some monks and abbots were narrated me about the original stream of the source of Blue Nile (observation). The Ethiopian portion of the Blue Nile Basin also called Abay by home people, covers an area of nearly 200,000km<sup>2</sup> and accounts for a major share of the country's irrigation and hydro power potential. The basin has an average annual run-off estimated at 54.8 Billion cubic meters and accounts for approximately 40% of Ethiopia's total surface water resource. As the topography is concerned, the Blue Nile basin is characterized by rugged mountainous high lands and deep gorges in the eastern and central portion of the basin with altitudes ranging from 1,000 to 1,500 meters above sea level to 4,260 meters above sea level with slopes over 25% in the eastern portion of the basin.<sup>2</sup>

The Ethiopian low lands are relatively flat, with slopes generally under 7% . Similarly, the high lands have the highest rainfall, often ranging from 1,500 to 2,200 mm/ annual. As the total surface coverage of the Nile water is concerned, with in Ethiopia alone the Blue Nile is 960 km long and has an annual discharge of some 55,000 ,000 m<sup>3</sup> constituting the major portion of the flow of the Nile. Over the entire year, about 86 percent of the Nile's water originates from the Ethiopian high lands as compared to the contribution of white Nile which having only 14percent.<sup>3</sup> During the flood period, about 95 percent of the Nile water originates from Ethiopia whereas the rest 5 percent is collected from East Africa. In its transit, the Blue Nile takes decomposed basalt, rich alluvial soil and silts and then converts what would otherwise have been a complete desert in to a rich agricultural area.<sup>4</sup>

## 1.2 Peopling

As the population number of the Blue Nile basin is concerned, the population and Census conducted by the Central statistics Agency in 2007 indicates that the Blue Nile (Abay) basin has approximately 27 million, from which about 34% of Ethiopia's total population, with highest densities in the high lands and relatively low densities in the low lands.<sup>5</sup> However, based on the recent evidences, the total number of population particularly living around the Blue Nile is estimated as 40.30%/.

## 2. Water Resources and Historical Context.

According to the author, the existence of laws between the upper and lower stream countries over the Nile is simply a fact. Instead, the problem is how one interprets the causes and direction of those historical disagreements. Besides, there are also ongoing interstate tensions over the water based national boundaries within the Nile basin. To the opposite to the present speculations that these border disputes signaled water wars probably. These interstate border conflicts are resulted from the ambiguous nature of the boundary marks.<sup>6</sup> Historically, no nations have gone to war strictly over water, and the weight of historical evidence shows that international conflicts do not occur even at the time of water supply runs low. Within the hydro political history of the Nile Basin, both Ethiopia and Egypt are verbal rivals. However, in the reality, the water war does not show the actual war where the two Nile Basin countries are fighting because of the domination over water. It was a mysterious god in the history of ancient Egypt.<sup>7</sup>

For instance, the Nile River is subject to the international law of Trans- Boundary Rivers, primarily regulated by treaty law between interested parties. As the recent controversies and tension of Egypt over Ethiopia is concerned, Zeray has indicated three crucial questions. At first, the legality of Egypt's consideration of using or threatening to use, military force and sabotage, as well as funding armed opposition groups against Ethiopia. Secondly, whether the Egyptian threats made against Ethiopia violates Egyptian duty under the United Nations Charter and thus made it internationally responsible for its deeds and the final issue would be whether or

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URL: <http://www.bdu.edu.et>. Pdf.5Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Merry and Tadele, p.33.

<sup>3</sup>Daniel Kendie, " Egypt and the Hydro-politics of the Blue Nile River". *North East African studies, Issn. Vol.6, No. 1-2/* Michingan: Michigan State University Press, 1999).p.143. URL:<http://www.jstor.org/stable/41931230>. Accessed: 08/07/2014.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

URL; <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41931230>

<sup>5</sup>Central Statics Agency. *Population and Census*, Reported in population Densities in Abay Basin ( Addis Ababa, 2007).

<sup>6</sup> Jeremiah kitunda, *The Nile River Basin Water wars: Questioning the Rhetoric of Environmental Apocalyptic Narrative in the Nile River Basin of Eastern Africa, 1800s—2000s* ( Anne Beik Hall : Appalachian State University press, 2000), p.5

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

not Ethiopia is obliged under international law to stop the construction of the dam.<sup>1</sup>

Historically, Egypt has exercised various hegemonic strategies to control the water resources of the Nile. One of them is through “resource capture.” As illustration, both Egypt and Sudan are the hegemony, by authority or by dominance. Particularly Egypt has been referred to as the most hegemonic downstream riparian state in the Nile basin. The historical ideas and the knowledge that Egypt was able to construct around the Nile waters and then use for absolute unilateral Nile water resources development has led to contemporary complex and contested asymmetric power reactions<sup>2</sup>.

### 3. Water Resources and Socio- Economic Linkage.

Civilization of human being and socio-economic development are strongly associated with the capacity to manage and utilize water for beneficial purposes such as agriculture, power production, clean water supply, etc. and cope with the negative externalities of impact of water, for instance, flood, drought, contaminations, etc...water is closely linked with hunger, poverty and health. In line with this, Ethiopia is strongly challenged with water management, and unable to enhance the positive role of water and reduce the negative externalities, and as such not time in its history able to manage water fully and effectively to accelerate its development. Evidently, the current situation is encouraging and excellent start particularly since 2003<sup>3</sup>

However, the lake as the source of the Blue Nile has been under the focal sight and looking gesture of Europeans particularly, the British who having colonies adjacent to Ethiopia, the Sudan. Their pretext and mischievous calculation was long lasting but it was failure because of the resistance of Ethiopia. In the case of socio-cultural linkage, Lake Tana is among the pioneering lakes where water transport has started in Ethiopia. According to the evidence from the lake Tana Transport Agency, modern water transport started during the five years Fascist Italian occupation of Ethiopia from 1935/36 to 1941. This was possible for transporting Italian troops, their ammunitions and provisions from Gondar, the seat of Colonial officials, by making *Gorgora*<sup>4</sup> as their coastal outlet. Furthermore, as has been indicated within the blue print of the Agency, With “Amharic Version”, the large numbers of boats served during the Italian occupation were left under the lake following the Italian withdrawal from Ethiopia in 1941. For instance, three Italian boats which were put at the hidden place within the lake, particularly at a place called “*Angari TekleHaymanot*” at a depth of 50 meters has been picked out by the collaboration of Italian personalities and the Ethiopian government. Since its formation, Tana has played a paramount role in case of socio-cultural, religious, economic and political linkage internally as well as externally.<sup>5</sup>

Ethiopia is an agricultural country dominated by subsistence farming. About 85% of the population depends on agriculture for its livelihood. Agriculture accounts for 45% of the country’s GDP. Ethiopia has 123 Billion Cubic meters (bcm) of surface water on an annual basis. Of this amount, a mere 3 percent remains in the country, while the rest of it flows to the neighboring countries in all directions.<sup>6</sup>

The Abay River in Ethiopia is believed to be “the father” of all rivers and the symbol of the nation. Ethiopia’s historical attachment to the Abay River has been deeply spiritual, and holds great reverence, sense of identity and prestige. This great river has not been harnessed or put in to any meaningful economic use, and the inhabitants of its 200,000 km<sup>2</sup> basin have experienced and still do experience nature’s might and power in and through it more than they derive any economic benefit from it<sup>7</sup>

The Abbay /Blue Nile ) River Basin has considerable irrigated land. As Ethiopia is constantly hit by drought induced farmers, it is necessary for irrigation. In the 1970s, there were plans for irrigated agriculture in the Blue Nile basin. Regarding the irrigation of the Ethiopian Nile Basin, Knife indicates that “1, 600,000 hectares of land including 115, 000 hectares of land around the Baro/ Sobat/ River and 400.000 hectares of land around Abbay/ Blue Nile / was planned to be under irrigation for agriculture. Moreover, most of the rivers in the Ethiopian Nile Basin are suitable for generation of hydroelectric power. As quoted by knife “Ethiopia has no option but to harness its water resources for consumptive and non- consumptive purposes. There is no legal or institutional obligation which limits Ethiopian policy makers as well as planners from fulfilling this duty in the

<sup>1</sup> ZerayYihdego, " The Blue Nile Dam Controversy in the Eyes of *International Law Discussion Paper 1326*",(Aberdeen University, July, 2013 ), pp.9-10.[URL:http://WWW.Creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0](http://WWW.Creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0) pdf

<sup>2</sup>DawitHailu, “Ethiopia’s Counter Hydro Hegemonic Influence: Changing the Tides of the Blue Nile waters for an “Equitable “ Basin wide system ( cooperation and Integration)”. A major Research paper for Graduate school of Public and International Affairs ( Ryerson University , 2011),p.16.

<sup>3</sup>SeleshiBekele, " Water –Centered Growth challenges, Innovations and interventions In Ethiopia." *International water management Institute, East Africa and Nile Basin Office*( Addis Ababa press, 2005), p.19. [URL:http://www.jstor.org/pdf](http://www.jstor.org/pdf)

<sup>4</sup> *Gorgora*, is a place name found north-west of Bahir Dar where out let to Lake Tana is significant.

<sup>5</sup>Tana Transport Agency,p.4.

<sup>6</sup>YacobArsano, “ Ethiopia and the Nile : The Dilemmas of National and Regional Hydro politics.” presented to the Faculty of Arts of the University of Zurich for the Degree of Doctor of philosophy ( Zurich University, 2007), p.29

<sup>7</sup>Yacob, p. 69

best interest of the Ethiopian people “<sup>1</sup>

For instance, the intensive study of the Abay basin project proceeded for five years which lasted from 1959-1964, in which its report was on the hydrology, water quality, hypsography, geology, sedimentation, mineral resources, land resources, ground water and the local socio economic situation. Accordingly, this comprehensive study proposed four dams downstream with a total holding capacity of 51 bcm/billion cubic meters) as the annual rate .<sup>2</sup>

In line with this, Tana- Beles project was the most recent development project in the Bales river valley, one of the major tributaries of the Blue Nile, was launched in 1985 because of the 1984 /85 drought and Famine in Ethiopia. This was immediately aimed at re-settling populations from drought affected regions of northern Ethiopia and from the over populated areas of the south central provinces of Ethiopia. Hence, the project was aimed at irrigating agriculture and resettlement schemes downstream and for hydroelectric power production in the upper course of the Beles River.<sup>3</sup> However, the Egyptian challenge of boasting was an extra impact of the implementation. Furthermore, there are also numerous development investment projects under way in the Abbay basin. For instance, Tana- Beles Integrated water Resources Development project supported by World Bank, Koga Irrigation and Water Shed Management Project, Community Based Integrated Natural Resource project in the Lake Tana Sub- Basin, Investment programs in Abbay, under way Grand Renaissance Dam .<sup>4</sup>

To the Contrary, Ethiopia has been able to utilize only 0.65% of the water resources of the Nile basin even though the Nile in Ethiopia constitutes 68% of the countries available water resources. This might has been because of the problem of technical and financial strength, internal political instabilities, civil strife and absence of institutional capabilities.<sup>5</sup>

#### **4. Water Negotiations, Developmental Challenges, and Successes for Modern Ethiopian Empire**

##### **4.1. Water Negotiations**

##### **4.1.1. The Anglo- Ethiopian Treaty of 1902 over Lake Tana.**

The treaty was signed between Ethiopia and Britain through a delegation headed by John Harrington on May 15, 1902 in Addis Ababa. Its aim was to negotiate border and Nile water issues. During the treaty, Ethiopia was represented by Emperor Menelik. Why Britain involved with in the treaty was understood in a reality as securing the interest of Egyptians over the Nile water as Egypt was her colony since 1882<sup>6</sup>.

In this case, Emperor Menelik was engaged him towards the government of Britain on condition that:

His Britannic Majesty not to build or allow to be built, any works across the Blue Nile, Lake Tana or the Baro (Sobat), which would arrest the flow of their waters in to the Nile except in agreement with His Britannic Majesty’s Government and the Government of the Sudan.

For more, Article III of the 1902 agreement is the clear indicator of it . Because of the afro-mentioned re-challenging events, as a reply, Marawan Badr, who was an Egyptian Ambassador to Ethiopia at the time defended and wrote to the government of Ethiopia in the following way:

Such political commentary, or more correctly, political trash, cannot come ( except) from a sick and disturbed mind. Ethio- Egyptian relations are not in a crisis. We do not even have problems. There are serious issues, which need to be addressed<sup>78</sup>.

To overcome the problems mentioned above, both Ethiopia and Egypt have re –arranged several meetings in between the officials of both countries aimed at digging the possibilities of cooperation on the waters of the Blue Nile. As the precondition, Ethiopia was advocating the principle of negotiation on water sharing. Whereas the position of Egypt was for limiting negotiations to cooperation in sharing information in the area of hydrological exploration.<sup>9</sup>

To make the idea strong, we knew in history that Mohammed Ali of Egypt conquered Sudan in 1820s having an ambition of foot holding Ethiopia because of the source of the Blue Nile and then forming Greater Egypt in North East Africa to be worse mentioned. Besides, the motive behind Egypt under khedive Ismail Pasha was also the original copy of the predecessor.

<sup>1</sup> KinfēAbrham, *Nile opportunities, A venues Toward Awin, win Deal* .The Ethiopian International Institutes for peace and Development( EIIPD): (Addis Ababa press, 2003),pp.28-29.

<sup>2</sup>Yacob, pp.155-156

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>4</sup>Merrey and Tadele, p.35.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid*

<sup>6</sup>Daniel, p.146.

<sup>7</sup> Daniel, P.142.

<sup>8</sup>*Ibid*

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid*, P.144

#### 4.1.2. The 1906 Tripartite Treaty

The 1906 tripartite treaty in between Britain, France and Italy also recognized the Ethiopian territory of the Nile basin as a British sphere of influence. This agreement was obtained in exchange of British recognition of the hinter lands of Eritrea and Somaliland as well as western part of Addis Ababa as an Italian sphere of influence.<sup>1</sup> This treaty was signed without the knowledge of Ethiopia, which later became fruitless because of the strong resistance of Ethiopia. In a return, the agreement designated the corridor of the Franco- Ethiopian rail way as the area of French influence. In a return, Italy gave a vital recognition for Britain in case that the lake Tana area including the Nile Basin through the way of Addis Ababa to be under the British sphere of influence<sup>2</sup>.

#### 4.1.3. Anglo-Ethiopian Negotiations for the Lake Tana Dam (1922-1935).

As has been illustrated by the author, Ethiopia showed interest to negotiate treaties with imperialist powers to build a dam at the Blue Nile's out let from Lake Tana with in the years lasted from 1922 to 1935. The quest for the Lake Tana project dominated Ethio- British relations for the first three decades of the twentieth century, which stimulated the United States, the first major involver in Ethiopia, and even supported to lay the bench mark for the Fascist Italian occupation, lasted from 1935/36 to 1941.<sup>3</sup>

As the origins of Lake Tana project has concerned, McCann described that the scheme of the lake has originated from the fact that the Blue Nile in Ethiopia, provides about 84% of the water reaching Egypt and virtually all of the decomposed basalts which make up the silt that provides soil fertility to the Egyptian agriculture<sup>4</sup>. As the result of the significance and the geopolitical and economic interest over the Nile – River Basin, the Lake Tana area of Ethiopia was the focal point of the Britain, the colonial governor of both Sudan and Egypt, the downstream counties of the Nile Basin. In line with this, after having controlled the level of the lake down, the engineers from Britain tried to avoid drowning churches and monasteries located on the islands of the lake<sup>5</sup>.

Furthermore, as the 1902 treaty with Ethiopia was meaningless for the British government, they also tried to reform another treaty with Ethiopia over Lake Tana in between 1916 to 1926. In this stage, because of the internal political crisis with in Ethiopia, Britain pushed both the Empress and the regent to keep the promise of 1902. However, the empress and the regent changed their mentality and argued that the creation of barrage over the lake would flood sacred churches and monasteries in and around the lake, and also may introduce unwanted foreign influence to the country.

#### 4.1.4 .The1925 Anglo- Italian Secret Agreement.

This treaty allowed the Italians to continue with their colonial aspirations over Ethiopia and to build roads and rail ways in the Ethiopian territory adjacent to the then Italian colonies of Eritrea and Somalia. In their turn, the Italians recognized the British interest in the Ethiopian Nile Basin with respect to a continuous flow of waters to Sudan.<sup>6</sup>

The Ethiopian authorities prompted to embark on a Lake Tana project decided for future (1929-1934), having been provoked by the Anglo-Italian bilateral agreements of December, 1925. This treaty obliged Italy not to construct in the head waters of the Nile, the Sobat and their tributaries any work which might sensibly modify their flow in to the main river. In this accord, these two colonial powers did not inform for the government of Ethiopia to attend the meeting. Following this exclusive bilateral agreement to divide Ethiopia up in to Anglo-Italian spheres of influence and potential economic control, the Ethiopian authorities conceived a Lake Tana project.<sup>7</sup>

The main objective of the Lake Tana project was to construct a dam on Lake Tana's out let to the main Abay River and to sell water to the British government in Sudan or to their cotton corporations there. At the time, the Ethiopian authorities believed that the project would be successful by involving the Americans who were unhappy because their own cotton market in England had been replaced by the production of long staple cotton in Egypt and Sudan<sup>8</sup>. Ethiopia's calculation was that the Americans would be interested in collaborating with them to sell water to the British in Sudan, thereby making the economic gains and offsetting what they had lost due to the cut back in the cotton market. Because of this in 1927, Ethiopian diplomats directed and delivered the proposal of lake Tana to the G.J. White Engineering corporation of New York.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Yacob, P.96.

<sup>2</sup>Yacob, *Ibid*,P.96.

<sup>3</sup>James McCann, " Ethiopia, Britain and Negotiations for the Lake Tana Dam, 1922-1935". *The International Journal of African Historical studies. Vol. 14. No. , 4*( African Studies Center: Boston university press, 1981), P. 667.

URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/218231>

Accessed: 30/06/2014

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>5</sup>McCann, pp. 669 -673. See also Daniel Kendie, concerning the impact of 1902 Anglo-Ethiopian treaty, p. 146.

<sup>6</sup>Yacob, P.96

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid* ,P. 151

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid*, P.152. See also the emphasis given by Daniel Kendie( p. 146 ).

Therefore, the White Engineering Corporation of the U.S. carried out complete information about the Lake Tana project area in the succeeding years of 1930 and 1934. However, the plan of the corporation over the lake was not implemented. Reasonably because of Firstly, the British labor government put diplomatic pressure on the government of U.S.A. So that the G.J. White Engineering corporation would not intact with its planned project on the source of the Nile. Secondly, the Italian invasion of Ethiopia was already looming, and Ethiopia was pre-occupied with how to overt the Italian invasion.<sup>1</sup> British motives for the 1925 Anglo- Italian secret exchange emerged from economic pressures to expand Gezira Cotton irrigation scheme by using the opportunity of the Ethiopian domestic political instability. However, British interest over the lake was clearly visible following her political administration over Egypt and the Sudan.<sup>2</sup>

## 5. Methodology

This research was conducted based on the qualitative approach where both primary and secondary sources of data are significantly used. To mention some of them; key informants, focus group discussions, archival materials and analyzing both oral and written sources. These written primary and secondary documents are well assessed depending on their preparation and in formations attached within it. The oral sources were collected from the key social groups/nomadic people/ who are earning their day to day livelihood through fishing, herding and seasonal farming through irrigation and rainfall. Furthermore, written materials were also tapped in an effort to fill historical gaps. The researcher has also exerted great effort and succeeded in assessing vital archival sources from the study area.

## 6. Results and Discussions

### 6.1. Developmental Challenges

#### 6.1.1. External Challenges

Besides, the re- challenging attempt of Europeans over the Lake Tana, as the Lake is the source of Blue Nile, major and minor treaties were signed in between the Western powers and the Ethiopian emperors and appointee rulers. In order to secure their interests over the lake, Britain repeatedly, knocked the Ethiopian doors directly or indirectly either through the Italians or on the behalf of her colonies, both Sudan and Egypt respectively. While *RasTafari* was within the political crack of internal opponents, he was also busy with British over the issue of Lake Tana externality as the lake is found in between the governing axis of *Ras Gugsa* and *RasHailu* .*Tafari* was also has been aware of other schemes by which the British had hoped to tie North West Ethiopia to the Sudan because of the economic and monetary significance.<sup>3</sup>

As regards the concession of Lake Tana, Britain had a plan of either using military or diplomatic solutions on Ethiopia or had an option of supporting *RasHailu* or *Ras Gugsa* for the political turmoil of the central government. For instance, in 1920, *Ras Hailu* transferred his wealth to Addis Ababa in the form of advancing cash to *Grabham* , who led the expedition in exchange for a check to be drawn on the British legation account in Addis Ababa .<sup>4</sup>As the 1925 Anglo –Italian Secret treaty is concerned, in a response, for exchange of letters between Britain and Italy, *RasTafari* embarked on a twofold of initiatives in which, of first, the regent interested to defuse British imperialism by negotiating an international frame work for the concession of Tana and Secondly, *Tafari* moved more quickly to make strong his own position against the regional powers and conservative opponents who had blocked the scheme from the steady move<sup>5</sup>. However, consolidated over time and reflecting *Tafari*'s increasing command of Ethiopian affairs, the regent's Tana demarche helped (Supported) to determine the course of events in Ethiopia from 1920 to 1935<sup>6</sup>.

Following the failure of the Anglo-Italian agreement over the issue of Lake Tana in 1925, Italy's growing influence after the 1928 Treaty of Friend Ship with *Tafari* increased the aspiration of the U.S. and *Tafari*'s strengthening of political position sharply reduced the British chances of retaining and exclusive sphere of influence over the lake and the water shade of Blue Nile. The emperor's attempt to conclude the project over Lake Tana was also failed as the result of factors beyond his scope<sup>7</sup>. For instance, in 1929 a Nile waters agreement was signed by the British, Egypt and Anglo-Sudanese exclusively. When Ethiopia presented the petition to the League of Nations concerning the treaty, no one heard what Ethiopia presented. Therefore, the Tana project's failure demonstrates that the initiatives and reactions of the emperor were; compromised by ecological constraints world commodity prices, and domestic policies.<sup>8</sup>

As far as the Blue Nile River is concerned, it has been claimed that Egypt must in a position either to

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid*, P.153

<sup>2</sup> *McCann*, P.671.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, PP.674-676

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid* ,p.678

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid*, PP .684- 685 .See also Daniel Kendie on page 147.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid* ,PP.694-698

dominate Ethiopia, or to neutralize whatever unfriendly period might emerge there as soon as possible. The author of this Journal has quoted about the boastings of Anwar Sadat, who was the president of Egypt following the death of Gamal Abdel Nasser (1971) as the issue of the Blue Nile is concerned, “Any action that would endanger the water of the Blue Nile will be faced with a firm reaction on the part of Egypt even if that action should lead to war.”<sup>1</sup> From this prospect, the calculation of Egyptians made over the Blue Nile is a Zero- sum game, in which Egypt is determined to win but to be a puzzle to it when prosperity and self-commitment might be strong on the side of Ethiopia<sup>2</sup>. Following the restoration of the government of Haile Sellassie from exile in 1941 by the British military support repudiated the 1902 Treaty on account of British recognition of the Italian conquest of Ethiopia. Besides, Ethiopia also declined to recognize the 1929 Anglo –Egyptian treaty arguing that it had never been under the colony of Britons.<sup>3</sup>

Politically, Egypt harassed the Arab League to declare its intention to put Eritrea under the Trustee Ship of the Arab Nations since 1945. Besides, Radio Cairo broad casts began to remind the Ethiopian Muslims where their primary loyalties lay and due to this fact of arrogance the government of Egypt allowed scholar ships to Muslim Eritreans at Al- Azhar University. Furthermore, Egypt also opened military training camp for Eritrean young stars near Alexandria in 1958 by using the pretext of liberating Eritrea from Ethiopia. For instance, Egypt agitated the Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF) to begin civil war against Ethiopia initially by fricting Eritrean Muslims against Eritrean Christians, high Landers against Low Landers and Eritrean Liberation Front ( ELF) against Eritrean people’s Liberation Force (EPLF). In this case, the intervention of Egypt within the sovereignty of Ethio- Eritrea contributed strongly to political instability, economic decline and social turmoil as being its motive is destabilizing Ethiopia.<sup>4</sup>

Additionally, during the Ethio- Somali wars of 1960-1964 and more critically during the Ogaden war of 1977 to 1978, Somalia was highly supported by the government of Cairo aimed at Ethiopian instability. Not only Somalia but also Egyptian support during the Ethio-Eritrean wars of 1990 to 1991 is heard. As evidence, Ethiopia accused Egypt in case of equipping Eritrean solders with heavily and light explosive weapons manufactured in Egypt<sup>5</sup>.

Following the recent growing tension in between Ethiopia and Egypt, as has emphasized by the author, “if Ethiopia uses its geographic position to the Blue Nile River as the only factor for negotiation, Egypt could clearly respond with military and other forms of attacks in the aim of protecting the source of the Nile at any cost. For example, most of Egypt’s past and current leaders have stated very clearly that going to war over the source of the Nile waters as soon as possible<sup>6</sup>. However, Ethiopia Still believes in negotiation and diplomacy for the legal and equitable use of the Nile water. Furthermore, Ethiopia continues to emphasize the usage of Blue Nile waters for the purpose of hydroelectric production and further sustainable management which Egypt could also benefit in the long run. For instance, one of the key proposals proposed by Ethiopia is to build the dam up stream to provide long term water storage capacity that can be shared through the regulation of the Nile River waters instead of using military strategy against the downstream countries, like Egypt.<sup>7</sup>

### 6.1.2. Internal Challenges

*Ras*Tafari Mekonnen was internally busy during the period of Diarchy (the dual political rule between Empress Zewditu and him as the regent) from 1916 to 1930. This was due to the fact that politically and economically, Tafari’s government was not accepted by *Ras* GugsuWolle, Who was the ex-husband of the empress and the governor of Begmider from 1918 to 1930. *Ras*HailuTekleHaimanot was also another strong and outstanding governor of Gojjam , who repeatedly re-challenged the central government having controlled Gojjam up to the Shore of Lake Tana. From the two afro- mentioned internal opponents, *Ras* Hailu re-challenged *Ras*Tafari highly and to the scheme of Tana in particular because *Ras* Hailu’s strategic significance of controlling the route from Addis Ababa to the lake Tana and the southern points of the Lake. Due to his power full geographic location, Hailu commanded respect as a political skillful enough to operate in both traditional and modern political frameworks.<sup>8</sup>

For instance, by 1920 *Ras* Hailu refused to pay taxes and ritual submissions to the central government unlike those Ethiopian rulers who sustained their power by allowing their privileges and wealth in kind. To the contrary, *Ras* Hailu subverted tradition to collect (accumulate) wealth in both currency and kind aimed at either building roads, bridges, small scale irrigation schemes or building Hotels. For instance, he owned a fleet of taxis, cinema and Hotel night club in Addis Ababa in 1930.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>2</sup> Daniel, P. 141

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, P. 147.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*, PP. 154-155.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid*, PP.160-163.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid*, PP.160-163.

<sup>7</sup> Dawit, P. 40.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid*, pp.674-676-seeMcCann, the Ethio -British Negotiations on the Lake Tana Dam (1922-1935).

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid*, P.677

On the other case, *Ras* Hailu put a more serious threat than *Ras* Gugsu evidently because unlike that of a former (*Gugsu*), *Ras* Hailu was not only rich, but also had geographical tie and gateway with foreign powers who having colonies adjacent to Ethiopia along the west and also had a strategic way along Addis Ababa .Abay Gorge to lake Tana .Hailu also seemed strong and powerful in army and determined to profit from any arrangement regarding lake Tana than *Ras* Gugsu Wolle.<sup>1</sup>

They both were also played an intelligence service to European and American travelers. Prolonged internal conflict and corresponding economic decline in Ethiopia until the 1990s explain the country's past failure to address the inequitable status quo.<sup>2</sup> For instance, the beginning of the Eritrean armed struggle which lasted from 1961 to 1991 under the support of Egypt against the central government of Ethiopia was among the challenges that signaled the economic problem and the social and political instabilities in the country.<sup>3</sup>

Both the external and internal political changes prompted *Ras* Tafari in the next five years (1930-1935), to venture / take / a new initiative based on Tana's potential as an economic enterprise. In the first three decades of twentieth century, the internal affairs and external threats had prohibited the acceptance of Tana concession.<sup>4</sup> In addition to the afro-mentioned problems, Ethiopia has not utilized the Blue Nile development potential as part because of its agriculture is a depend largely on rain fed, and partly because of the political crisis that Egypt helped to intensify earlier by forcing Ethiopia to alter/divert/ Scarce resources from development in to security and defense.<sup>5</sup>

#### 6.1.3. Confidence Building measures and Lessons learned

Removing fear and building trust is important in order to sustain communication and productive cooperation among the three countries. This can be promoted through specific confidence building measures that need to be agreed upon. Inter-regional trade, socio-economic development and joint water management projects will be of great importance in building more trust and confidence among the riparian countries<sup>6</sup>. Projects initiated with the aim of building trust and confidence is by definition long-term in nature and requires special care, talent and experience as well as continuity of the officials involved. Raising awareness among the public through the mass media on the repercussions of new phases of cooperation among riparian countries will be critical. It is also essential that a major shift in thinking take place. It has now become the shared view that. There is no freshwater security without a major shift in thinking. It is important to establish situations of interactive learning processes; learning to listen is as essential as self-reflection.

The riparian countries of the Nile River are beginning the new millennium with great optimism. The progress made during the 1990s is quite remarkable. A new learning environment has been created with openness, mutual respect for one another's perspectives and a focused implementation of 'A Strategic Action Program'. Most notable is the 'Shared Vision' that places sustainable socio-economic development at its center. This is an historic step forward, taken on a long road towards facing the challenges and complexities of a new era<sup>7</sup>.

#### 6.1.4. Successes for Modern Ethiopian Empire

The negotiations for the Lake Tana Dam with the European imperialist powers for instance, with Britain brought about significant role between inter war policies of imperial economic expansion and Ethiopia's internal process of consolidation and modernization. Concerning this, the recent studies made on European diplomatic significance during the inter war years have accepted the importance of lake Tana's project in determining diplomatic interest towards Ethiopia<sup>8</sup> In March 1930, Negus Tafari's army under the command of the War Minister, *Ras* Mulugeta Yigazu ( who came to power following the natural death of *Fitawrari* HabteGiorgis Dinagde, 1926 ), and the Shoan army together defeated the armies of *Ras* Gugsu Wolle at the battle of Anchim, where Gugsu himself was killed<sup>9</sup>.

Fortunate to Negus Tafari, within three days' time interval, Empress Zewditu passed away incidentally. Having this victory, *Ras* Hailu was detained in Addis- Ababa while he was attending the ceremonial celebration of *Negus* Tafari, who crowned as *Emperor* Haile Sellassie I, King of Kings of Ethiopia. Furthermore, the emperor's move seems golden since then and in 1933, he gained acceptance from *king* Abba Jiffar II of Jimma and in 1934, the emperor restored the province of Tigre by creating political marriage tie with the families of *Ras*

<sup>1</sup> Ibid, P. 690

<sup>2</sup> Laura Parkes, " The politics of ' Water Scarcity ' in the Nile Basin: The case of Egypt", *Journal of politics and International Studies*, vol.9 (2013), P.458.

<sup>3</sup> Laura, P.458

<sup>4</sup> McCann, PP.692-694.

<sup>5</sup> M .Falkenmark, 2000. *No freshwater without major shift in thinking, ten-year message from the Stockholm Water Symposia, Stockholm International Water Institute (SIWI)*, Stockholm(2000), pp.46-47.

<sup>6</sup> M.Falkenmark, p.P.47.

<sup>7</sup> M. .Falkenmark, *Ibid*

<sup>8</sup> McCann, P. 668

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid*, PP. 692-694

MengeshaYohannes, for instance, *Ras Seyoum Mengesha*.<sup>1</sup>

In the 1950s, Ethiopia contracted U.S engineering from Balton Hennessey and Partners to conduct a comprehensive study of the Abbay / Blue Nile / River. To this function, the project's survey was conducted from 1957 to 1962. Hence, the survey for project over the River involved the studies of stream flow, soils, hydroelectric power potential, land use, communication, dams as well as irrigation<sup>2</sup>. With a favorable international image and political stability, Ethiopia currently possesses the power to mobilize resources to develop the Blue Nile and other tributaries, and its topography offers suitable sites for needed dams and reservoirs. The newly founded confidence and self-esteem in Addis Ababa can be gauged from the fact that the Government of Ethiopia refused a request by the World Bank in 1994 having agitated by the Sudan and Egypt over even a small irrigation projects in its high lands.<sup>3</sup>

In 1988 Ethiopia launched the first phase of an ambitious hydroelectric scheme called the Tana Beles project. The motive of Ethiopia in doing this project is aimed at doubling the hydroelectric production and to provide for newly settled areas with up to 200,000 farmers. Hence water was to be taken from lake Tana to the Beles River. However, Egypt was deeply concerned about the potential effect of the scheme on the flow of the Blue Nile and since 1990; it blocked a loan provision for the project that Ethiopia had requested from the African Development Bank<sup>4</sup>. However, economic and diplomatic advances after 1991, following the coming of the new democratic government in Ethiopia provided the country with the means to confront Egyptian hydro hegemony through unilateral development of hydraulic infrastructure.<sup>5</sup>

The main goal of Ethiopian government as explained by the vice Minister of Water Resources in 1996 was to increase agricultural production by seeking and obtaining a fair share of the waters of the Nile. Since then in reality the Ethiopian parliament approved the construction of two small hydropower dams on the Blue Nile in June 1996. Furthermore, Ethiopia is planned to have more people to feed by the coming 2025 than Egypt by maintaining the nation's sovereign right to develop all resources within its borders<sup>6</sup>. Even though the financial problems and technological difficulties have hindered the implementation of major capital projects for a long time, the Government expects to expand its agricultural and irrigation capacities during what is expected to be an ongoing era of relative political and economic stability.<sup>7</sup>

As the socio-economic and geopolitical interests in the Nile Basin is concerned, the construction of a series of dams in the Ethiopian high lands would provide not only more irrigations for farmers in those areas, but also boast the upstream water storage, and reduce the almost annual Nile floods, which would benefit both the Sudan and Egypt, since decreasing the evaporation would increase the total volume of available water.<sup>8</sup>

After moving on the efforts of tragedy, in 1999 Water Ministers from the Nile basin riparian countries dealt on sharing Nile waters, on ways to exploit the underutilized Nile tributaries, on more cooperation in joint water projects, on 40 percent of rain fall in the region which is not exploited currently. The ten riparian countries together established the organ called Nile Basin Initiative (NBI), with Entebbe, Uganda as its center office<sup>9</sup>. In this meeting, the member states have agreed to unite in common (joint) pursuit of sustainable development and Management of the Nile. As the advantages of Trilateral Agreement is concerned, the building of Dams on Ethiopia can solve evaporation and transmission losses, availability of regulated flow, development of river transport, control of flood hazards, generation of surplus energy for their own common benefit.<sup>10</sup>

In line with this point, *Sheikh Abdel- AkherHammad*, who was an Egyptian politician said that the Dam and the altering of the Blue Nile amounts to a "declaration of war by Ethiopia on Egypt." In a response, Ethiopia on her turn reiterated that the dam shall generate electric power which will be exported abroad and shall also prove beneficial to most down and upper stream countries.<sup>11</sup> Although the Dam is set to become one of Africa's largest hydroelectric plants, some studies indicate it could have a major impact on the whole basin and significantly affect the water supplies of neighboring countries.<sup>12</sup>

## 7. Conclusion

The Nile Basin is among the river basins of the world which laid a basis for the beginning of ancient civilizations.

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid*,

<sup>2</sup> Kinfe, P. 27, See also the Journal of Yacob, P. 153

<sup>3</sup> Swain, p.692.

<sup>4</sup> Jutta Brunne and Stephen J. Toope, "The changing of Nile Basin Regime": Does Law Matter? *Harvard International Law Journal*, Vol. 43, No., 1 (Harvard press, 2002), P.127. URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/>

<sup>5</sup> Parkes, p.458

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>7</sup> Ashok Swain, "Ethiopia, the Sudan, and Egypt: The Nile River Dispute", *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol. 35, No.4 (Cambridge University Press, Dec., 1997), P.689 URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/162009>. Accessed: 04/07/2014.

<sup>8</sup> Swain, P.693

<sup>9</sup> Daniel, P.164

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>11</sup> Zeray, PP.1-2 URL: <http://www.creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0.pdf>.

<sup>12</sup> Any Freitas, "Water Politics in the Nile Basin". *European Union Institute for Security Studies* (May, 2013), P.2.

As the birth area of its civilization, it is an area of bone of contention. The source of the river also called the Blue Nile created the debate. For instance, some scholars are arguing in favor of Lake Tana as the source while some others stood. In favor of Gish Abbay, *Sakala* area of Western Gojjam as a source. Lake Tana was under the focal point of the Western European imperialist powers particularly, the British, who having colonies adjacent to Ethiopia and the colonial master over Sudan and Egypt, the down Stream countries of the Nile River. This is mainly because, the Lake is believed to be the Source of the Blue Nile. Aimed at this, Britain signed agreements and negotiations. With the government of Ethiopia so many times. Having after failure, she also created friendship treaties on the behalf of others to succeed her mission particularly over the lake. However, with long lasting resistance and political stability as well as strong international image, Ethiopia now enhances the strength to mobilize resources to develop the Blue Nile and other tributaries and its topography offers suitable sites for building its dams and reservoirs. The Great Renaissance dams one illustrative element for Ethiopia's re-birth of civilization.

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