

ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES

THE IMPACT OF DECENTRALIZATION ON EFFICENCY AND MERITOCRACY OF
THE CIVIL SERVICE IN ETHIOPIA:
THE CASE OF OROMIA AND SOUTHERN NATIONS, NATIONALITIES AND
PEOPLES REGIONS

BY
TESFAYE DIGIE

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES OF ADDIS
ABABA UNIVERSITY IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR
THE DEGREE OF MASTER'S IN REGIONAL AND LOCAL DEVELOPMENT STUDIES

JUNE 2000

ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES

**The Impact of Decentralization on Efficiency and Meritocracy of the
Civil Service in Ethiopia: The Case of Oromia and Southern Nations,
Nationalities and Peoples Regions**

By Tesfaye Digie

Regional and Local Development Studies (RLDS)

Approved by Board of Examiners

METHERET AYENGW

Chairman of the Board

TEGEGNE TEKA

Advisor

ATKILT ASSEFA

External Examiner

DAMON CHENIE

Internal Examiner

Signature

Metheret Ayenew

Tefegne Teka

Atkilt Assefa

Damon Chenie

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First and foremost, I would like to thank Dr. Tegegne Teka who has been advising me in writing the research in spite of huge responsibilities. To be honest, this thesis would not have materialized without his professional and personal commitment. I benefited from his guidance not only for this research, but also for my future career.

My gratitude also goes to the Institute of Social Studies (ISS), The Hague, and Addis Ababa University which extended invaluable support to conduct the research.

I am also greatly indebted to all government officials at the Federal and Regional levels who have cooperated and helped me in the data collection.

Last but not least, I am indebted to my wife W/ro Abay Mazengia and my friend Melaku Betermariam who have been encouraging me throughout my study.

Tesfaye Digie

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List of Abbreviations

CBOs	Community Based Organizations
CPA	Central Personnel Agency
CSA	Central Statistical Authority
EPRDF	Ethiopian Peoples Revolutionary Democratic Front
FCSC	Federal Civil Service Commission
FDRE	Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia
NGOs	Non-Government Organizations
OPDO	Oromo People Democratic Organization
PAs	Peasants Associations
SNNP	Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples
SPDF	Southern Peoples Democratic Front
TGE	Transitional Government of Ethiopia
UDAs	Urban Dwellers Associations
WPE	Workers Party Of Ethiopia

ABSTRACT

The concept of Civil Service has various dimensions. One of its dimensions relates it to the system of personnel administrations that are applied to the government employees. The second focuses on the government functions by the people who occupy job positions that are neither political, juridical nor military. The third is related to employees of government ministries and agencies.

Civil Service also takes different forms and structures in different systems of governance. In a decentralized system, it is related to a larger extent, to the responsibilities of the decentralized units. There are numerous benefits of the Civil Service in decentralization. It is reported that in decentralization, Civil Service is capable of providing efficient and relevant public services to the local conditions.

In Ethiopia, even though there were some attempts of decentralization through regionalization of the country, where some regions were considered as autonomous, it was only after 1991 that decentralization was taken as a major political measure. In 1991, when the EPRDF took over political power, one of the first political measures taken was the regionalization of the country along ethnic lines. The ethnic based regions established thus have been enjoying autonomous status with respect to government activities that fall under their authority. The Civil Service, hence, is one of the responsibilities of the regions. The usual tradition, where the central ministries and agencies control and supervise the regional Civil Service activities has been no longer the practice.

This system has its own impact upon the efficiency and meritocracy of the Civil Service of the regions. Accordingly, it is found that the efficiency of the regional Civil Service is undermined after the ethnic based decentralization has been undertaken in the country. This is due to the fact that the organization structure of some bureaus and offices does not help to achieving efficiency. There are bureaus and offices in the regions that are established with little tasks to perform and there are also other bureaus and offices of which the tasks are similar with others but unnecessarily established as separate entities. Moreover, some bureaus and offices are operating in costly and delayed implementation of Civil Service administration.

In addition, the merit aspect of the regional Civil Service is at risk because of the ethnic based decentralization. This is due to the prevalence of ethnic and language issues and the interference of political considerations in the operations of the Civil Service at the Regional levels.

1. INTRODUCTION

In many countries, which are diverse and big in territory, running government activities strictly from the center do have numerous problems. Central bureaucracy in today's world rather loses ground. Moving decisions to the periphery where they are actually performed as opposed to centralized controls and consolidated agencies generate more benefits. Decentralization of activities to lower levels, in which they are actually undertaken, has offered a number of justifications. Efficient provision of public services to the citizens, improved governance and the preservation of the rights of different ethnic groups are some of the benefits.

Ethiopia began implementing the process of decentralization in 1991, after the downfall of the Military socialist government. To this effect, initially the Transitional Government established 14 Regions with autonomous status, out of which 13 were based on ethnic lines. The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, which was established in 1995, reorganized the 14 Regions into 9 Regions and two city administrations, but the basis of regionalization was still ethnicity and language.

These Regions are relatively autonomous in undertaking and administering the Civil Service in their territories. The interventions of the Federal Government ministries and agencies in terms of controlling, supervising and directing of government functions in the Regions is no longer in practice. Moreover, many Regions have started to use their respective ethnic languages as working mediums in public offices, courts, and schools.

This decentralized system of governance has its own impact upon the general principles of efficiency and merit in the Civil Service administration. Therefore, this research examines the possible impacts of the recent decentralization process since 1995, on the application of the merit principle and efficiency of the Civil Service by taking the cases of two Regions, i.e. the Oromia and the Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples (SNNP) Regions in Ethiopia.

1.1 Statement of the Research Problem

In this research, the following issues are raised as investigation points.

1. Does the organization structure of the Civil Service at the Regional, Zonal and *Woreda* (District) levels promote efficiency and merit in the Civil Service administration?
2. To what extent have the Regions based their decisions concerning Civil Service administration like recruitment, promotion, placement, etc., upon merit and non-merit considerations?
3. To what extent have the lower administrative units, i.e. the Zonal and *Woreda* (District) levels acquired sufficient powers, duties, and responsibilities in the decentralization process so that they could be able to discharge their activities efficiently and effectively?
4. Do the Civil Service institutions established in the Regions justify their existence as separate entities with respect to the availability of the required level of tasks?
5. To what extent has the Federal Government helped the implementation of the Regional Civil Service administration?
6. To what extent have the Regional Civil Services apply the policies, procedures and working rules developed by them to accommodate their exclusive circumstances?

7. To what extent have the Regional Civil Services apply the policies, procedures and working rules developed by the Federal Government sector agencies?

1.2 Objective of the Research

There are two major objectives to be assessed in the research. The first objective is to indicate the impact of the recent decentralization process since 1995 undertaken in the country that is based on ethnic lines upon the efficient provision of public service to the citizens. The second objective is to show the application of the merit principle in the Civil Service administration of the country.

Specifically, the research tries to address the following issues.

1. Assessing the powers, duties, and responsibilities of the Regional Governments, the Zones and *Woredas* and the relations that exist among them.
2. Examining the effectiveness of the Regional Civil Service administration in light of organizational structure, cost effective provision of public services, and timely implementation of activities.
3. Examining the extent of non-merit considerations in the Civil Services of the Regions after the adoption of the decentralized system.
4. Suggesting investigative ideas used for future study concerning aspects related to the research.

1.3 Methodology of the Research

The research focuses on descriptive type of analysis. It indicates the situation of efficiency and meritocracy of the Regional Civil Services after the country adopted decentralized system of governance in many aspects of government functions in 1995.

In order to assess the impact of decentralization on the efficiency and meritocracy of the Civil Service, qualitative and quantitative data are used in the research. Some of the information used in the research are the following.

- Review of relevant theoretical literature on the concept of decentralization and the Civil Service.
- Review of relevant documents available at various levels of the case study Regions, i.e. Regional, Zonal, and *Woreda* levels. At the Federal Government level documents were collected from the Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Economic Development and Cooperation, and the Federal Civil Service Commission.
- Individual interviews with concerned officials in various Regional bureaus and Federal Government bodies.
- Group discussions with senior officials and other staff members at Regional and Federal levels.
- Administration of questionnaires on senior Regional Government officials and other civil servants.
- Observations of activities, organizational structures, systems and procedures, and other activities in the Regional Civil Service institutions.

The case study areas

The research takes a case study technique, where two Regions have been selected from among the nine Regions and two city administrations in the country. The cases selected for the research are the Oromia and the Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples' (SNNP) Regions. Among the nine Regions: Tigray, Afar, Oromia, Somale, and Harar are Regions with single ethnic groups. Other Regions: Amhara, Benshangul/Gumuz, Gambella, Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples (SNNP), Addis Ababa, and Dire Dawa are with more than one ethnic group. Particularly, the Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples' (SNNP) is a region of 45 ethnic groups, a Region with the largest ethnic groups. The justification for selecting the above two Regions as case studies is due to the fact that the Regions are based on language and ethnicity. As a result, the Oromia Region is selected as a representative for those Regions with a single language and ethnic group, while the Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples' (SNNP) Region as a representative of those with more than one language and ethnic group.

Sampling Technique

The sampling method used in the research takes a cluster sampling technique. The twenty-two bureaus in the two Regions are divided into three groups or clusters according to their significance to the research. The first group includes three bureaus, the Civil Service Bureau, the Planning and Economic Development bureau, and the Finance Bureau. Because of their importance for indicating the impact of the decentralization process on efficiency and meritocracy of the Civil Service activities in the Regions, all of above three bureaus are included in the sample. The second cluster comprises those bureaus that are second in their

importance for the research. The bureaus are Agriculture, Health, Education, Labour and Social Affairs, Trade, Industry and Tourism, Investment, Public Works and Urban Development, and Justice. Out of these, two bureaus are selected in the sample, i.e. the Bureau of Agriculture, and the Bureau of Trade, Industry and Tourism. The third group includes the remaining bureaus and offices, i.e. the Regional Council Office, Supreme Court, Culture and Information, Sport Office, Disaster Prevention and Preparedness, Water Resources, Mining and Energy, Transport and Communication, Peasants' Cooperatives, Population, Rural Roads, Audit and Control, and Women's Affairs. Out of the last group, one bureau is selected, i.e. the Bureau of Transport and Communication. Relevant data and information to be used in the research are collected from the above sample bureaus.

1.4 Scope and Limitations of the Research

The research focuses on the Civil Service activities of the Regions after the ethnic-based decentralization is undertaken in 1995. As the title of the research implies, not all aspects of the Civil Service activities come under the coverage of the research. Only efficiency and merit considerations in the Regional Civil Service administration are dealt with.

The research encountered two major constraints. The first limitation is related to reluctance of some officials to give the required information. Since some of the points to be addressed in the research seem politically sensitive issues prevalent recently in the Ethiopia, some officials, it appears, refrained from delivering their true views and perspectives. In some cases, the required information was not obtained. Moreover, the researcher was constrained for not having enough time by being placed as a student and full time employee.

Finally, there are other Regions that people claim to have weaker organizational and institutional capacity, like Gambella, Afar, Benshangul/Gumuz, and Somale, in the implementation of Civil Service administration. They need to be studied to generate comparable data. However, time and funds did not allow the researcher to do so. Hence, the researcher recommends for other researchers to study the above Regions.

1.5 Organization of the Research

The research is organized into six parts. The first part deals with introduction about the research. The second part is about the theoretical framework of the Civil Service and the decentralization process in the literature. The third part is devoted to the background information about the Civil Service and the decentralization process in Ethiopia. The fourth part, which is the major part of the research, deals with the impact of the current decentralization process upon efficiency and meritocracy of the Civil Service in the Regional Civil service administration by taking the cases of the Oromia and Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples Regions. The fifth part deals with the presentation of the findings of the research and finally, summary and conclusions are presented.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Conceptual Issues on the Civil Service

The definition of Civil Service has various dimensions. One of the dimensions relates Civil Service to the personnel administration system applied to government employees. Under this dimension, Civil Service refers to as:

A system of employment, focusing on the size of Civil Service, and rules of Civil Service employment as these relate to such issues as recruitment, selection, job evaluation, training and development, performance appraisal, and the role and composition of the higher Civil Service as against the rest of the service (Olowu, 1999: 2-3).

The other dimension of the Civil Service definition is related to the civil servants or employees of government ministries and agencies who occupy job positions below politically assigned ones and those of the military. In this dimension, Civil Service is defined in reference to the job position an individual holds. Pertinent to this dimension, Civil Service is used to mean:

The body of government officials who are employed in civil occupations that are neither political nor juridical. In most countries it refers to employees selected and promoted on the basis of a merit and seniority system, which may include examinations (Encyclopedia Britannica, 15th ed., 1993).

Another dimension of the Civil Service is related to the activities and processes involved in the implementation of general policies and priorities of a government set by higher political authorities. According to this dimension, Civil Service is,

The process by which decisions and policies are implemented,... or the process by which resources and personnel are organized and coordinated to formulate, implement and manage public policy decisions (Chandler and Plano, 1982: 29).

It is through the Civil Service that government performs its development activities, and in this notion, Civil Service is regarded as the operational arm of any government. Without the Civil Service, any other actors in development, community based organizations (CBOs), private businesses and NGOs could face numerous difficulties in their performance. Therefore, there is agreement among researchers that “both private and NGO sectors are heavily dependent on the Civil Service” (Olowu, 1999: 16).

In this research, Civil Service is defined as a process through which general policy directives and guidelines are implemented into meaningful activities.

The phrase ‘Civil Service’ was first introduced in India in the late 19th century by the British Indian Company, in reference to the management and administration of the government functions in Indian Imperial Rule (Drewry and Butcher, 1988:13; Mohiddin, 1996: 5). At that time, it was introduced to distinguish the activities of those servants or employees with non-military capacity from those of the military. Gradually, it was transferred to the mother country’s public administration, but with different meaning, i.e. “to convey the crucial

distinction between holders of permanent posts and those whose jobs changed when there was a change of government” (Drewry and Butcher, 1988:13). The term has since become common and is widely used by countries which have either colonized by British or somewhat influenced by the British system of government (Mohiddin, 1996: 5).

2.1.1 Meritocracy in the Civil Service

Civil Service is often considered as synonymous with the merit system. This is due to the fact that ideally:

Civil Service implies the system under which employees are hired on the basis of their qualifications, as determined by examinations and not because of their political affiliations (Encyclopedia Americana, Vol. 6, 1995).

Pertinent to this fact, in most literatures, meritocracy and the Civil Service are raised as two sides of a coin. However, there are some differences between them. Civil Service is wider in its scope as compared to merit and contains issues other than the principle of merit that is raised only in connection to the employment or administration that are involved in the Civil Service.

Therefore, meritocracy refers to as:

The recruitment, appointment, retention and promotion of government employees based on ability, education experience and job performance,... it emphasizes demonstrated fitness as the key personal factor; recruitment and selection of the best qualified application to fill a vacancy (Chandler and Plano, 1982: 263-264).

As the responsibilities of the Civil Service are diverse, multifaceted and complex, there is a logical argument to retain and attract the best-qualified manpower to undertake the Civil Service administration. In order to guarantee such an issue, the principle of merit ensures that “the most competent are not only recruited but rise to leadership levels in the levels in the Civil Service” (Olowu, 1999: 3). Therefore, the principle of merit is one of the most required core values of the Civil Service which serves as motivation mechanism.

In most countries, merit system is applied through the administration of examinations, which vary depending upon the job positions being tested for. The system, hence, serves as a mechanism through which qualified applicants may inter into the Civil Service at job levels for which they best qualify. The examinations could be oral, written, or some other kinds like education, training etc.

However, there is also a situation where placement of civil servants in job positions based on the principle of rewarding members of the winning political party, which is usually referred as Spoils system (Chandler and Plano, 1982). The spoils system presupposes the inappropriateness of the strict adherence of the merit principle. There are some job positions which cannot be secured through competence and experience. In such circumstances the recommended solution is the application of spoils system as opposed to merit. Spoils system is applied usually in senior job positions.

2.1.2 Efficiency in the Civil Service

Efficiency is a very general term and could mean many things. It has quite different essence in different organizations depending upon the nature of the business. However, it is in general related to better performance than what has already been done. Doing better things than before by itself embraces various aspects ranging from cost reduction, sound organization structure, and doing right things at the right time.

Efficiency in the Civil Service implies better achievement of state goals, raising the performance level of the Civil Service institutions, reducing the dissatisfaction of citizens etc. (Olowu, 1999). Efficiency in the Civil Service, therefore, requires cost effective and essentially desirable organization structure with the required level of tasks to perform, systems and procedures necessary for the organizational set up, the availability of adequate and qualified staff (managerial and technical). The fulfillment of the above factors, of course, does not guarantee maximum efficiency in the Civil Service. There are other external factors or requirements necessary for efficiency, like development of government activities outside the Civil Service, political willingness and commitment of politically dominant groups, conducive cultural and social contexts.

2.2 The Concept of Decentralization

There are numerous meanings for the term decentralization. However, most authors agree that it involves the transfer of authority to perform government functions from central government to lower levels of administrations that are closer to the public to be served (Turner and Hulme, 1997: 152).

There are at least two bases for decentralization. The first is territorial, where authority, power and responsibilities are transferred to lower levels in territorial hierarchy, while the second is functional, where authority and responsibilities are transferred to lower agencies that are functionally specialized (ibid).

In essence, decentralization does not imply that all powers, authorities and responsibilities should be delegated or devolved to lower levels. However,

The central government must retain core functions over essential matters and ultimately has the authority to redesign the system of government and to discipline or suspend decentralized units that are not performing effectively (ibid: 154).

There are a number of functions, which are in the nature of general policy and therefore reserved for the center (Eshetu, 1993: 140). This is so due to the argument that if the economy is to perform as an integral whole and not merely as the sum of its parts, then there are several tasks that cannot be undertaken by any level of authority other than the central government. Such types of activities that fall under the domain of the central government include, public services whose benefits are considered national in scope, like defense and national security; activities that are characterized by significant economies of scale such as transportation, water development, electricity etc., and other activities with substantial cost and benefit spillovers etc. (Kibre, 1994: 4).

2.2.1 Forms of Decentralization

Depending on the following factors, decentralization can take different forms. These are:

the organization perform a better job. In deconcentration, the center still retains substantial amount of authority in terms of resource provision and it also revokes the authorities and responsibilities given to lower levels.

Devolution

Devolution is also known as political decentralization, where the lower levels have more authority and responsibility to independently decide upon many matters that are in their sphere of influence. It is “the transfer of authority to sub-national governments electorally accountable to sub-national populations” (Turner and Hulme, 1997: 154). Devolution, hence, requires legally and constitutionally defined basis upon which the level and kinds of decision-making powers, authority and responsibility would be transferred to lower regional/national levels. In devolution, the resources to undertake activities in the region are obtained mostly from within the lower level regions. Devolution, in most cases, emanates from the demands of ethnic or regional groups for greater autonomy or self-governance or from the inability of the central government to resolve regional or local problems (Haddis, 1995: 123).

Privatization

Some authors (Gasper, 1991; Turner and Hulme, 1997) incorporated the replacement of government agencies by private businesses or privatization, as one form of decentralization. Privatization refers to as the transfer of responsibilities for specified functions from the government agencies to NGOs, voluntary organizations, community associations, or private enterprises (Gasper, 1991: 9). This form of decentralization is based on the free market economic system.

2.2.2 Reasons for Decentralization

There are numerous reasons for decentralization. The following are some of the reasons:

- i. Political reasons, and
- ii. Efficiency reasons.

Political Reasons for Decentralization

In most countries, decentralization as a policy is implemented because of political reasons. One of such political arguments for decentralization is related to the fact that it promotes self-reliance, and self-determination objectives of decentralized units (Kibre, 1994: 1). Decentralization gives different groups in various regions of a country a greater ability to participate in planning and decision-making, and thus increases their stake in maintaining their political sovereignty. In this situation, decentralization makes it possible to guarantee the confidence of different communities.

The other political argument for decentralization is the fact that it reduces the likelihood of the concentration of power in the hands of central government officials. In decentralization,

Political power will be more broadly distributed to lower levels through voting and other mechanisms which strengthen trust in government so that social harmony, community spirit and political stability are achieved (Turner and Hulme, 1997: 157).

The other political benefit of decentralization is related to the fact that it increases accountability and transparency of government officials. Accountability and transparency are enhanced because the local representatives are more accessible to the local people and can

thus be held more closely accountable for their policies and outcomes than distant central political leaders (Tegegne Gebregziabher, 1998).

Efficiency Reasons for Decentralization

There are a number of justifications, which are put forwarded that decentralization increases effectiveness and efficiency of government functions. Some of these justifications are indicated in the following paragraphs.

One of the benefits of decentralization with respect to efficiency and effectiveness is related to the possibilities it grants to formulate “more realistic and locally relevant plans” (Mangiza and Conyers, 1996: 78). Regional and local priorities may not be the same as national ones and in such conditions, regional development priority identification could be more served through the process of decentralization. This is so because, in decentralization “planning is undertaken by people who are familiar with local environment and are more likely to represent local interests than central planners” (Conyers, 1990: 17).

The other justification for decentralization is that it enhances inter-jurisdictional competition and innovation in the provision of public services. Cost effective and efficient provision of government services can best be adopted among constituent decentralized units through diffusion process.

Among other things also, through decentralization, it is possible to find timely and reliable data and information regarding the local needs and conditions of a given population and areas to make the plan relevant and technically implementable (Haddis, 1995). In most cases,

decentralization has been considered as a mechanism to remedy the inefficiencies associated with centralization, where most authority being vested in small number of centralized entities, which lack the required level of information about the local conditions.

2.2.3 Preconditions for Decentralization

In order for decentralization to be successful, certain conditions must be fulfilled in advance.

The following are some of the necessary preconditions.

- i. enabling environment, and
- ii. sufficient resources.

Enabling environment

Enabling environment for decentralization includes a host of things that are involved in the creation of conducive political, socio-economic, and cultural grounds. Some of these conditions are indicated in the preceding paragraphs.

The availability of political willingness and commitment on the part of the politically dominant groups in such a way that the dominant groups be convinced to the effect that the peripheries or local levels could be granted the necessary discretionary power (Haddis, 1995).

The degrees to which national political leaders throughout the country are committed to decentralize activities determine the effectiveness of decentralization.

The other aspect of enabling environment is related to the availability of social, economical and cultural basis upon which the self-organized and self-managed development policies and programmes have been undertaken. The ways in which popular participation initiated and local resources mobilized affect the achievements of decentralization to a larger extent.

The availability of Resources

Decentralization in its essence involves more duties, activities and responsibilities to be undertaken in lower levels. This by itself therefore, requires more resources to effectively perform activities. Lack of resources implies incapacity. As a result, the availability of the necessary skilled manpower, financial and material resources are some of the decisive factors for the implementation of the decentralization policies.

2.3 Civil Service in Decentralization

Civil Service takes different forms and structures with different systems of governance. Therefore, the Civil Service in a centralized system of governance is quite different from a decentralized one.

Accordingly, one of the most important features of the Civil Service in decentralization is related to the fact that it is the responsibility of the decentralized units as opposed to a small number of consolidated central agencies. Centrally positioned Civil Service is commonly perceived to be geographically and socially remote from the people and is characterized by taking decisions without the knowledge or concern about actual problems and preferences. The popular remedy, hence, is a Civil Service with decentralized system, which provides:

Greater opportunities for inputs from the public to the decision making process, it ensures a more equitable sharing of government investments, and it provides opportunities for people to criticize government operations (Olowu, 1999: 19).

Closer contact of the people with government officials ensures people to have a say with respect to the dissatisfaction they encounter and other problems they feel concerning the delivery of services by the officials. This fact enables the Civil Service to take corrective measures quickly whenever problems or inefficiencies arise.

The other feature of the Civil Service in decentralization is related to improved accountability for activities in the Civil Service. In decentralization, therefore, it is easier to hold Civil Service institutions and civil servants accountable for their activities. This is due to the fact that in decentralization, Civil Service institutions are organized at the local level to undertake manageable and definite size of tasks in their locality.

The other characteristics of the Civil Service in decentralization is related to the fact that lower level constituent entities enjoy greater autonomy to determine the type and mix of Civil Service activities in light of their specific circumstances. Different geographical territories are not identical in resource endowments and other social, political and economic conditions. Provision of homogeneous public services in these territories is not economical and desirable. As a result, Civil Service institutions providing different services that take into consideration the prevailing local conditions are regarded as efficient.

The other aspect of the Civil Service in decentralization is the fact that it is possible to promote confidence and commitment of civil servants at the lower levels. Under decentralization, lower levels are empowered to undertake their activities by themselves in

their jurisdiction. They are granted the necessary power and authority, and this eventually would mean one aspect of motivation

Civil Service in decentralization also benefits with regard to mobilization of local resources in achieving government objectives. Olowu (1999: 19) indicated that decentralized Civil Service helps to synergise formal and informal structure of governance and enhances opportunities for co-production of services. In such conditions, it is possible to devise cost effective and efficient and efficient services to the public.

3. OVERVIEW OF DECENTRALIZATION AND THE CIVIL SERVICE IN ETHIOPIA

3.1 Background

Ethiopia is a vast country with 1,089,000 square kilometers area and 61,672,000 population (CSA, 1999). Nearly 86 percent of the total population is rural based (Befekadu and Berehanu, 1999/2000: 67). The sex ratio at national level seems to be moving towards parity, from 1.02 male/female ratio in 1984 to 1.01 in 1994. In rural/urban dichotomy, the male population exceeds the female population in rural areas, while the opposite is true for the urban, where female out-numbers the male.

There are about 80 ethnic groups in the country as identified by the Central Statistical Authority (CSA) in 1994 Population and Housing Census. Out of the 80 ethnic groups, only seven ethnic groups (Oromo, Amhara, Tigray, Sidama, Somale, and Wolayta) have a population greater than a million. The ethnic of the country's population shows stability with the exception of Tigray whose share declined from nearly 10 percent in 1984 to 6 percent in 1994 due to the secession of Eritrea (Befekadu and Berehanu, 1999/2000: 68). The table below indicates the population, territorial size, the number of Zones, *Woredas* and civil servants in the Regions in Ethiopia.

Table 1Population, area, Zones, *Weredas* and civil servants of the Regions in Ethiopia

No	Region	Population (‘000) ²	Area (‘000km ²) ²	Zones ⁴	<i>Weredas</i> ⁴	Special <i>weredas</i> ⁴	Civil servants ³
1.	Tigray	3,593	60.2	4	35	-	20,480
2.	Afar	1,188	77.0	5	28	-	3,463
3.	Amhara	15,850	188.0	10	102	1	60,296
4.	Oromia	21,694	360.0	12	176	-	95,839
5.	Somale	3,602	215.9	9	47	-	5,020
6.	Benshangul/ Gumuz	523	46.8	2	13	-	5,063
7.	SNNP* ¹	12,132	112.0	9	71	5	55,684
8.	Gambella	206	26.1	2	8	-	4,170
9.	Harari	154	0.3	3	19	-	2,882
10.	Addis Ababa ²	2,424	0.4	6	28	-	21,672
11.	Dire Dawa ²	306	1.6	4	23	-	2,013
12.	Federal	-	-	-	-	-	40,307
	Total	61,672	1089.1	66	550	6	316,889

Source: ³ Federal Civil Service Commission (1999),⁴ CSA (1999).

The large majority of the population speaks and understands Amharic language, which is the national language. About 17.4 million people claim it as their mother tongue and for another 5.1 million it is their second language. The second most widely spoken language is the Oromo language, where about 16.8 million claim it as their mother tongue and another 1.5 million claim it as their second language (Befekadu and Berehanu, 1999/2000: 70).

¹ Southern Nations Nationalities and Peoples Region.² City Administrations.

According to the 1994 Population and Housing Census, 62 percent of the total population of the country professed that Christianity as their religion, out of which those affiliated with the Orthodox Church were about 51 percent of the total population. Muslims also constitute about a third of the population.

Having presented the general features of Ethiopia very briefly, the following sections are devoted to the discussions concerning the historical overview of the decentralization process and the Civil Service in the three political regimes. These are: the Imperial regime, the Military Socialist regime, and the EPRDF regime.

3.2 Historical Overview of Decentralization

The Imperial Regime

In Ethiopia, the request for regional autonomy or local self-administration has a long history. In the old days, regional lords and kings demanded autonomy from the central monarchical rule. Most civil wars, hence, throughout the history of Ethiopia evolved out of the two conflicting interests of self-administration and autonomy by regional lords and the consideration of such demands as something that threatened the absolute power of central kings. The autonomy enjoyed by the Regional lords reached its climax with the era of the *Zemene Mesafint* (1785-1855), when there was no strong central government (Asmelash, 1987: 26; Bahru, 1991). As a result

Ethiopia has been a highly centralized unitary state because the politics of nation building has been anchored on creating a strong, centralist state that jealously guarded its sacrosanct central power (Meheret, 2000: 8).

Emperor Menelik II, who was regarded as the founder of modern system of governance in the history of Ethiopia (Asmelash, 1987: 23), was a pioneer of central administration. But the formalization of the central bureaucracy dated back to the times of Emperor Haileselassie I. Following his accession to the throne in 1930,

Emperor Haileselassie embarked upon a process of centralization hitherto unexperienced. A year after he was crowned, he promulgated the 1931 Constitution, which formalized what had always existed *de facto*, i.e. the power of the government in Ethiopia vested essentially with the traditional authority, the Emperor (Asmelash, 1987: 25).

Even though the Imperial period was characterized by consolidation and strengthening of centralized bureaucracies, there were some attempts of decentralization. Due to popular pressures from different corners of the country for local self-administration, decentralization of power and authority was declared at *Awraja* (sub-province) level in 1966 by order No. 43 of 1966. Fifty *Awrajas* (sub-provinces) were selected from among the fourteen provinces of the country on the basis of their potential to be self-sufficient and the plan was to implement the decentralization process in 17 *Awrajas* on an experimental basis (Meheret, 2000: 8). However, the decentralization process at *Awraja* level was not implemented at all, due to the fierce opposition by a determined group in the then parliament and the weakness of the then Ministry of Interior (Cohen, 1974: 220). Moreover, the Emperor himself and the nobility feared that regional decentralization to the effect of self-administration would eventually resulted in threatening their absolute power over the country.

Even if the Emperor advocated centralized system of governance, there were threats to the center in the peripheries (Cohen, 1974: 22). The long aged civil wars for secession in Eritrea and Ogaden were some of the examples at that period.

The Military Socialist Regime

In the Derg (Military) period, the attempts of decentralization measures were pronounced more than the Imperial Period. One of the measures was the establishment of lower level administrative units in rural and urban areas. Such lower level local administrative units were the Peasants Associations (PAs) and the Urban Dwellers Associations (UDAs) (Fenta, 1998: 21; Tegegne Gebre Egziabher, 1998: 37). Peasants Associations (PAs) and Urban Dwellers Association (UDAs) had councils of their own that were directly elected by the residents of the respective locality and were accountable to their electorate (Fenta, 1998: 21). PAs and UDAs had defined powers and authorities by law and had legal personality.

Even though PAs and UDAs were important for the country, their achievements were in question. This was related to the fact that PAs and UDAs took as their prime objective, the fulfillment of the Workers Party of Ethiopia's (WPE) political agendas rather than the development needs of the people in their respective jurisdictions.

The other attempt of decentralization in the Military period was the establishment of Administrative and Autonomous regions in the country by proclamation No 14 of 1987. According to this proclamation, the country was regionalized into 25 Administrative regions

and 5 Autonomous regions. Autonomous regions were acquired, at least in the proclamation, autonomous status to undertake their own affairs in their respective territories.

However, this attempt of decentralization was futile due to the fact that it was not basically designed to grant self-administration status to Autonomous Regions. But rather, to secure the preservation of peace and stability of the country (Fenta, 1998). This can be evidenced from the fact that the regions with autonomous status, Eritrea and Assab (now in a separate Government), Ogaden, Tigray, and Dire Dawa were unstable and war prone areas. As a result, even though there was much talk of the decentralization process during the Military period, where some of the Regions were designated as Autonomous, they enjoyed very little autonomy in practice, whether in politics, administration or finance (Eshetu, 1997: 31).

Even though the Military Socialist Regime was characterized by centralized system of governance just like the Imperial period, there were some forms of decentralization, that are related to delegation and deconcentration within the confines of a unitary state (Messert, 1996: 12).

The TGE and FDRE Regime

After the EPRDF (Ethiopian Peoples Revolutionary Democratic Front) overthrew the Military regime in 1991 in guerrilla warfare, one of the first measures it adopted was the decentralization of the country along ethnic lines. The Transitional Government (TGE) established by the Transitional Government Charter regionalized the country into 14 Regions, where all except one, Addis Ababa, the capital city, were based on ethnic lines. The Regions

were autonomous in most activities in their territories. The ethnic-based Regions established by the TGE were shown in the table below.

Table 2

Regions of Ethiopia by Ethnic Groups

No	Region	Ethnic Groups
1.	Region 1	Tirgay, Saho, Kunama
2.	Region 2	Afar
3.	Region 3	Amhara, Agaw-Kamirgna, Agaw-Awingigna, Oromo-Kalu
4.	Region 4	Oromo
5.	Region 5	Somali
6.	Region 6	Gumuz, Koma, Berta, Semein Ma' o, Shinasha,
7.	Region 7	Guraghe, Hadiya, Kambata, Alaba, Timbaro, Yem
8.	Region 8	Sidama, Gedeo, Burji, Amaro/Kore, Gidicho
9.	Region 9	Wolayta, Dawro, Konta, Aydi, Gewada, Melon, Gofa, Zeysie, Gobeze, Busa, Konso, Gidole, Gamo
10.	Region 10	Basketo, Mursi, Ari, Hamar, Arbore, Dassanetch, Nyangatom, Tsemay, Male, Dime, Bodi
11.	Region 11	Keficho, Na' o, Dizi, Surma, Zelmam, Sheko/Mocha, Me' en, Chara, Bench, Sheko
12.	Region 12	Anguak, Nuer, Majanger
13.	Region 13	Harari
14.	Region 14	Not defined

Source: TGE (1992a: 7-8).

Later in 1995, when the Federal Government was established, the Regions have been reorganized into nine Regions and two city administrations. The difference of the Federal Government from the TGE lies in the fact that the naming of Regions now becomes the names of the major ethnic groups and the reorganization of Region 7, 8, 9, 10, and 11 into one Region, i.e. the Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples Region (SNNP). Therefore, the

Regions and the City Administrations of the Federal Government are, Tigray, Afar, Amhara, Oromia, Somale, Banshangul/Gumuz, SNNP, Gambella, Harari, Addis Ababa, and Dire Dawa. There are 66 Zones, 6 special *Woredas* (Districts) and 550 *Woredas* in the Regions of the country.

According to article 39 sub article 3 of the Federal Constitution, each of the above Regions has the “right to a full measure of self-government”. The interference of the Federal Government on matters that are only of local importance has now become history. Regions are the one responsible for the government activities in their territories.

3.3 Historical Overview of the Civil Service

In the previous sections, the process of decentralization in a historical perspective has been dealt with. This section, on the other hand, is devoted to the historical development of the Civil Service in Ethiopia starting from the Imperial Period up to the EPRDF period.

The Imperial Regime

Even though the issue of Civil Service in Ethiopia was historically related to the times of Emperor Menelik II, when he appointed 9 ministers in 1907 (Bahru, 1991: 115) to undertake formal government functions, significant development was realized in the times of Emperor Haileselassie I (1930-1974). Some of the developments of the Civil Service are discussed below.

One of the most significant developments of the Civil Service in the times of Emperor Haileselassie I was the establishment of the legal frameworks that govern the Civil Service in the country. The most important of such laws were:

- a) Order No. 23 of 1961, which was designed to establish the Central Personnel Agency (CPA) which undertook the Civil Service administrative activities in the country;
- b) Public Service Regulations No. 1 of 1962, which was designed to provide the regulations of the Civil Service; and
- c) Public Service Position Classifications and Salary Scale Regulations No. 2 of 1972, which was designed to provide the positions and salary scales of the Civil Service job positions.

These rules and regulations are still operational in the Federal as well as in Regional Civil Services.

Apart from the legal framework, Emperor Haileselassie's regime was also the time where modern government institutions took their present shapes in a modern form. Most ministries and other government agencies were developed at that time.

There were also some peculiar practices in the Civil Service during the Imperial period. In that time, Civil Service activities were accountable and supervised by the Emperor himself and very few members of the nobility. Employment and assignment in government senior posts, in most cases, rested in the hands of the Emperor and the nobility. As a result, the nobilities and their relatives occupied most senior posts in the Civil Service. Promotion, appointment and

transfer in the Civil Service were characterized to a larger extent by patronage and personal acquaintances of the Emperor and the nobility (Atkilt, 1998: 75). In addition, lower level administrations and civil servants were not empowered to independently decide on matters that fall under their own influence. Ethiopia, hence, had experienced a centralized political administration with a unitary government at that time (Tegegne Gebreegziabher, 1999: 106).

The Military Socialist Regime

When the Derg (the Military Socialist Regime) took power in 1974, a radical change of ideology took place from the pro-capitalist system to a socialist one. However, the system of governance and the Civil Service administration were without significant difference.

The legal framework of the Civil Service was just like the Imperial Period. The rules, laws and regulations of the Civil Service were mostly those developed in the Emperor Haileselassie I period. Order No. 23 of 1961, Proclamation No. 1 of 1962 and Proclamation No. 2 of 1972 were still the laws that govern the activities and administration of the Civil Service. There were, of course, other rules and regulations devised in the Military period.

Even though some kind of regionalization was introduced in the country with some Regions considered as autonomous, the Civil Service still followed a centralized style. Administrative and Autonomous Regions have very limited discretionary power to undertake activities under their own jurisdiction. Under proclamation No. 8 of 1987, it was declared that branch offices in Autonomous and Administrative Regions “continued to function as part of the concerned

government organ” at the center. The Central Government ministries and agencies were responsible for their respective activities throughout the country.

There were, however, some unique features of the Civil Service in the Military Socialist Regime. One of such features was the centralized staffing of civil servants to government ministries and agencies from all government universities and colleges every year without the requisite demand for manpower. This performance resulted in huge and continuously growing number of civil servants in the Derg period. There were 93,965 civil servants when the Derg took power in 1974. But, at the time of its demise in 1991, the number increased to 236,410 (Asmelash, 2000: 30), which is more than 200 percent growth.

The other feature of the Derg period’s Civil Service was the political interference in the activities of the Civil Service. Numerous posts in the Civil Service were considered as posts of confidence and, hence, placement of civil servants in such posts was done through the Workers Party of Ethiopia (WPE) party. The WPE members and other politically loyal civil servants were preferentially treated, while others that were considered as not loyal were ill-treated. The WPE was the governing party of the country. The priorities of the WPE were given considerable attention than other development objectives of the Civil Service. Moreover, members of the military occupied most senior positions in the Civil Service. As Tegegne Teka and Alemayehu Assefa (1996: 5) indicated,

The military regime in its interest to control the bureaucracy put soldiers with ranks and non-commissioned officers into high positions in the Civil Service. Many of these soldiers continued to serve the system in civilian clothes and civilian titles.

The TGE and FDRE Regime

The Civil Service in the EPRDF (Ethiopian Peoples Revolutionary Democratic Front) period is different from the previous periods. One of the significant differences lies in the decentralized system of the Civil Service. Civil Service in the EPRDF period is a matter that falls under the jurisdiction of each separate Region. Regions throughout the country have numerous powers and authorities to decide on activities that affect them. Under article 52/f of the Federal Constitution (1995), each Region is empowered to,

Enact and enforce laws on the state Civil Service and their conditions of work; in the implementation of this responsibility it shall ensure that educational, training and experience requirements for any job, title or position approximate national standards.

Under the EPRDF period, the powers, duties and responsibilities of the Civil Service in the country are divided between the Federal Government and the Regions. According to the FDRE Constitution (1995), the Federal Government is held responsible for matters that are quite wide in their scope and national in their nature. Pursuant to article 51 of the Federal Constitution (1995), the Federal Government is responsible for activities related to national defense and public security, foreign and international affairs, citizenship, nationality, visa, asylum, interstate and external trade and commerce. The Regions, on the other hand, focussed on activities that are narrow in their coverage like health, education, and other related activities in their territories.

In order to deliver the responsibilities rested upon them, Regions are empowered to establish the required government bodies in their territories. As a result, numerous Regional bureaus

have been established in all Regions without significant control and supervision from the Federal Government ministries and agencies. The Transitional Government (1992-1995) gave the list of 20 bureaus to be established in the Regions together with the tasks under Proclamation No. 41 of 1993. Most Regional bureaus take the names and tasks indicated in the above Proclamation.

The other difference between the TGE and the FDRE's Civil Service and the previous regimes is the application of ethnic and languages aspects in the Civil Service. In some Regions (Oromia, Amhara, Tigray, SNNP), Zones and *Woredas*, the languages of some ethnic groups are used as working and educational mediums. Other Regions which are not using their own ethnic languages are planning to use in the future by first introducing them as mediums of instruction in primary level schools. Pertinent to this fact, in most Regions, the placement of civil servants in senior job positions has been effected based on ethnic backgrounds.

The recent decentralization process undertaken in the country along ethnic lines has quite substantial impact upon the efficient provision of public services and on aspects of implementation of meritocracy. Assessing and indicating these facts are the objectives of the next section.

4. CASE STUDIES: THE CIVIL SERVICE IN OROMIA AND SNNP REGIONS,

4.1 Background of the case study areas

4.1.1 *The Oromia Region*

Oromia is the largest of all the Regions in Ethiopia. It was established in 1992 during the Transitional Government (TGE) period on the basis of language and ethnicity. The Oromo people are one of the most populous nationalities in Africa and are certainly the largest in the Horn of Africa (Baxter, 1998: 50). The population of the Region as of 1998 was estimated to be 21,694,004 and the territorial size 353,006.81 square kilometers (CSA, 1999). Out of the numerous ethnic groups living in the Region, about 85 percent were Oromos, while 9.1 percent were Amhara, 1.3 percent were Guraghe and 4.6 percent were other ethnic groups of the country (CSA, 1999). However, according to the Regional Constitution (1995), the Oromo people are the only ones with full political rights.

The Region is divided into 12 Zones and 180 *Woredas* with diverse territory and population size. The table below indicates the population, area and other information in different Zones of the Region.

Table 3Population, Area, *Woredas* and Civil Servants, in the Zones of Oromia Region.

No	Zone	Population ¹	Area in Km ² ¹	No. of <i>Woredas</i> ¹	No of Civil servants ²
1.	Arsi	2,565,330	23,724.44	20	12,144
2.	Bale	1,410,759	63,917.46	17	8,752
3.	Borena	1,653,788	95,740.23	12	6,096
4.	East Haraghe	2,107,191	24,900.21	15	6,882
5.	West Haraghe	1,467,772	17,552.23	10	5,635
6.	Illubabore	979,857	16,555.36	12	7,794
7.	Jimma	2,269,350	18,412.54	13	9,006
8.	East Shoa	1,968,216	13,624.09	12	10,194
9.	North Shoa	1,336,101	11,376.32	12	5,407
10.	West Shoa	2,695,311	21,551.98	23	9,880
11.	East Wellega	1,152,568	21,863.82	17	8,528
12.	West Wellega	1,787,761	23,788.13	17	7,888
	Regional Bureaus	-	-	-	3,169
	Total	21,694,004	353,006.81	180	101,375

Sources: ¹ CSA (1999),² Oromia Civil Service Bureau.

4.1.2 The Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples Region

The Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples Region was established in 1995 during the Federal Democratic Period. It was the coalition of the formerly five regions, which were a group of five regions, Region 7, 8, 9, 10 and 11 in the TGE period.

The total population of the region as of 1998 was 12,131,997 and the territorial size of the region is 112,343.19 square kilometer (CSA, 1999). Out of the total population, 93.2 percent were rural residents (CSA, 1996). Out of numerous ethnic groups living in the Region, 17.5

percent were Sidama, 11.7 percent Wolayta, 8.7 percent Hadya, 3.01 percent Amhara, 2 percent Oromo and 51.1 percent other ethnic groups (CSA, 1996). However, the 45 ethnic groups (indicated in table 2 in Regions 7, 8, 9, 10, and 11) have full political rights as compared to other ethnic and language groups of the country.

The Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples (SNNP) Region is administratively organized into 9 Zones, 5 Special *Woredas* and 72 *Woredas* (districts). The Zones and Special *Woredas* are established based on the settlement patterns of the language and ethnic groups of the Region and they have equivalent rights as determined by the regional Constitution. The table below shows the population, area and *Woredas* in the SNNP Region.

Table 4:Population, Zones and *Woredas* of the SNNP Region

No	Zones/Special <i>Woreda</i>	Capital Town	Population	Area in km ²	No <i>woredas</i>
1.	Guraghe	Wolkitie	1,816,507	7,992.22	11
2.	Hadya	Hossana	1,227,277	3,978.14	4
3.	Kambata, Alaba, Tembaro	Durame	850,557	2,433.93	5
4.	Sidama	Awassa	2,391,231	6,832.85	9
5.	Gedeo	Dilla	663,045	1,329.39	4
6.	North Omo	Arbaminch	3,045,996	23,911.03	22
7.	South Omo	Jinka	383,284	22,630.79	4
8.	Keficho/ Shekicho	Bonga	848,630	12,739.25	8
9.	Bench/Maji	Mizanteferi	381,168	23,442.76	5
10.	Yem Special <i>Woreda</i>	Fufa	75,377	666.25	-
11.	Amaro Special <i>Woreda</i>	Kele	114,462	1,534.07	-
12.	Burji Special <i>Woreda</i>	Soyama	45,538	1,319.85	-
13.	Konso Special <i>Woreda</i>	Karatie	183,547	2,276.25	-
14.	Derashie Special <i>Woreda</i>	Gidole	105,378	1,526.41	-
	Total	-	12,131,997	112,343.19	72

Source: CSA (1999).

4.2 The Regional Government Structures in the Case Study areas

The government structure in the two case study regions is a four-tier structure consisting from the top to bottom, i.e. the Regional Government, the Zonal Administration, the *Woreda* Administration (the Special *Woreda* Administration in the case of SNNP Region), and the *Kebele* Administration.

The administrative structure of Zones and *Woredas* in the two Regions varies. In Oromia Region, Zones and *Woredas* are established for administrative convenience, while in SNNP

Region, they are established to accommodate the self-governing status of the different language and ethnic groups in the Region.

The powers, duties and responsibilities of each tier of government in the Oromia and SNNP Regions are stated in the respective Regional Constitutions. According to the Regional Constitutions of 1995, the State councils in the two Regions are the supreme authorities (article 46 sub article 1 of the regional Constitutions). The Regional councils in the two Regions are the organs that are empowered to enact laws on the conditions of work and administration of Civil Service employees in the Regions. There are various Regional bureaus established to undertake government functions in the two Regions. There are also Zonal departments and *Woreda* sector offices to perform government activities in their respective territories.

The Oromia and the SNNP Regions Civil Service each is made up of 22 bureaus, which undertake government functions. In the table below, the bureaus together with the number of civil servants are indicated.

Table 5:

Number of civil servants in different bureaus of the Oromia and SNNP Regions

No	Bureaus and Offices	Oromia ¹			SNNP ²		
		Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
1.	National Regional Council	1,890	1,389	3,279	1,045	544	1,589
2.	Finance	2,629	1,417	4,046	1,725	655	2,380
3.	Health	6,316	3,045	9,361	3,877	1,394	5,271
4.	Audit & Control	113	45	158	52	28	80
5.	Planning & Economic Development	246	130	376	243	111	354
6.	Justice	537	463	1,000	636	378	1,014
7.	Supreme Court	925	462	1,387	830	399	1,229
8.	Education	41,019	13,190	54,209	23,712	5,666	29,378
9.	Culture & Information	263	137	400	305	117	422
10.	Sport Office	276	92	368	241	62	303
11.	Civil Service	62	32	94	48	33	81
12.	Labour & Social Affairs	520	354	874	28	20	48
13.	Disaster Prevention	499	178	677	350	87	437
14.	Public Works & Urban Development	1,877	750	2,627	964	319	1,283
15.	Water Resources, Mining & Energy	2,393	873	3,266	327	100	427
16.	Transport & Communication	422	191	613	214	87	301
17.	Trade, Industry & Tourism	476	242	718	326	145	471
18.	Agriculture	13,590	3,082	16,672	8,453	1,979	10,432
19.	Investment	31	19	50	31	16	47
20.	Peasants' Cooperatives	667	122	789	-	-	-
21.	Population	20	16	36	16	13	29
22.	Rural Roads Authority	271	104	375	72	17	89
23.	Women's Affairs	-	-	-	9	10	19
	Total	75,042	26,333	101,375	43,504	12,180	55,684

Sources: ¹ Oromia Civil Service Bureau,² FCSC (1999).

Depending upon the nature and the volume of work, the bureaus and offices in the two Regions have branch departments and offices at the Zonal and *Woreda* levels. In the two Regions, the bureaus of Agriculture, Education, Finance, and Supreme Courts are extended up to *Woreda* levels. On the other hand, Civil Service, Investment, Population, Women's Affairs, Audit and Control bureaus are restricted at Regional levels only. Planning and Economic Development, Justice, Culture and Information, Sport office, Water Resources Mining and Energy, Disaster Prevention and Preparedness, Public Works and Urban Development, Trade, Industry and Tourism bureaus have Zonal departments.

The relationship between Regional bureaus and Zonal departments in the two Regions is quite different one from another. In the Oromia Region, each Zonal department and *Woreda* office is under direct supervision and control of the respective Regional bureau. They are financed and given directions by the Regional bureaus. The Zonal Administrations have little influence on the activities of Zonal departments. Their influence is an indirect one, which is related with the nomination of Zonal department heads only.

On the other hand, the case of the SNNP Region is quite different. Zonal and Special *Woreda* Administrations have more discretionary power to undertake government functions in their territories. The Regional bureaus have supporting and coordinating roles in their areas of activities. According to article 69 sub article 3j of the SNNP regional Constitution (1995), it is the Zonal and *Woreda* council, which controls the government organs in the Zones and Special *Woredas*. This relatively autonomous status of Zones and Special *Woredas* is evidenced by the fact that departments and offices in Sidama, Gedeo, North Omo, and Hadya

Zones use their ethnic language as medium of communication and working languages. Moreover, most Zones and *Woredas* in the Region use their ethnic languages as mediums of education in primary schools. Using ethnic languages in primary education in the region is regarded as a mechanism for gradually changing their working languages to the respective ethnic languages in the future.

The other reason for the difference between the two Regions is due to the availability of numerous ethnic groups with full political rights. In SNNP Region, there are about 45 ethnic and language groups with political rights of self-administration, while there is only one in Oromia Region. According to article 68 sub article 1 of the SNNP Regional Constitution (1995), the Zones and Special *Woredas* in the SNNP Region are designed primarily not for the purpose of administration, but rather based on the self-administration and self-rule status of ethnic and language groups of the Region. But, the Zones and *Woredas* in Oromia Region are established for the purpose of administrative convenience, since the region is specifically delineated as the Region of one ethnic group. (article 8 (a) of the Oromia Regional Constitution (1995)).

4.3 The impact of Decentralization on efficiency of the Civil Service in Oromia and SNNP Regions

In the research it was found that the efficiency of the Civil Service in the two Regions is undermined after the ethnic-based decentralization has been implemented in the country. In order to show this idea, four points are raised in the two Regional Civil Service. These are:

- i. the organization structure of the regional Civil Service,

- ii. cost saving in implementing activities,
- iii. delays in decision making, and
- iv. coordination among different government bodies.

4.3.1 Organization Structure of the regional Civil Service in Oromia and SNNP Regions

The organization structure of government bodies in some bureaus is not efficient. This can be evidenced by the fact that some bureaus in the two Regions are established without the required tasks to justify their existence. For instance, the bureaus of Transport and Communication in the two Regions are functioning on very limited tasks related to road transport only. Activities related to railway, water transport, telephone etc. are out of the responsibility of the Regional Transport and Communication Bureaus. Such activities are the exclusive domain of the Federal Government agencies. The Water Resources, Mining and Energy bureaus also have little operations to sufficiently warrant their existence in the two Regions. The bureaus' activities are concentrated in the provision of drinking water in some urban areas only. The Federal ministries of Water Resources, Mining and Energy, Ethiopian Electric Light and Power Corporation take up the other activities related with large-scale mining, energy and water resource development in the two Regions. Similarly, the bureaus of Trade, Industry and Tourism also have very limited tasks with respect to small-scale trade and tourism activities in the two Regions.

Still some bureaus and offices in the two Regions are not justifiable to be established by their own as separate entities. These bureaus would rather be merged with other bureaus in order to deliver cost effective and efficient public services. The examples to be cited in the two

Regions are the Peasants Cooperatives, Rural Roads Authority and Population Office. Because of the similarity of their responsibilities, Peasants' Cooperatives Office could be merged with the bureau of Agriculture, Rural Roads Authority could also be merged with the bureau of Public Works and Urban Development, and Populations Offices could fruitfully be merged with the bureau of Planning and Economic Development.

In the two Regions, there is some form of dual subordination in performing government activities. This is so particularly in Zonal departments and *Woreda* offices, where they are responsible to two higher government bodies simultaneously, that is, to the respective Regional bureaus and to the Zonal and *Woreda* councils. The Regional bureaus are trying to exercise their control with respect to their areas of activity, while at the same time the Zonal and *Woreda* councils also want to exercise their respective control over every government activities in their territories. This can be seen, for instance, in the Oromia Region by the fact that Zonal department heads are nominated by the Zonal Administration, while they have direct working relationship with the Regional bureaus. In the SNNP Region, dual subordination also happens in quite numerous cases. Even though the Zonal and Special *Woreda* councils have retained substantial control over the activities of departments and offices, there are numerous instances where respective Regional bureaus are operating in a manner of directing and controlling the Zonal departments and *Woreda* offices. According to various discussions the researcher had with officials of the Planning and Economic Development and Transport and Communication bureaus, one of the difficulties they had is the reluctance of Zonal departments and *Woreda* offices to adhere to the rules and regulations of the Regional bureaus.

4.3.2 Cost saving aspect in implementing activities

Because of various reasons, the activities of the Civil Service in the two Regions are characterized by costly implementation of Civil Service activities. Some of the causes for this are discussed below.

One factor for costly implementation of the government activities is related to the fact that some of the bureaus and offices were established without the required level of tasks to perform Civil Service administration and some organizations were created without definite objectives. This is to mean that such bureaus and offices are unnecessarily consuming scarce resources that would otherwise be used in other most urgent needs.

The other reason is related to the inefficient utilization of public finance. This problem stem from the lack of qualified manpower in vital areas like project planning and preparation, financial management and control etc. at the Regional, Zonal and *Woreda* levels. Most people who control and manage public finance particularly at Zonal and *Woreda* levels lack the essential skills and expertise to appropriately undertake financial activities. The problem of mismanagement of public funds is acute at lower levels of administration. In 1994/95 and 1995/96 budget year, 15,746,416.30 birr was embezzled in the Oromia Region (Mohammed, 1999: 118).

There is also duplication of efforts among the government functions in the Regions. The duplication of efforts in the regions can be seen from the fact that the Constitutions of the two

Regions are written in identical words, even if there are numerous differences between the two Regions.

4.3.3 Delays in implementing activities

As far as the implementation of the Civil Service activities is concerned, there isn't quite significant improvement with respect to delays in the two regions as compared to the Imperial and the Military Socialist Regimes. One reason for this is the centralization of Civil Service activities in some Regions. For instance, in the Oromia Region, Civil Service activities still followed centralized system. Zones and *Woredas* have very little discretionary power with respect to government activities in their territories. Most decisions concerning different government matters that are of local importance are decided at Regional bureaus. This situation, hence, implies delay, since the implementation of decisions in most Zones and *Woredas* presupposes the approval of higher bodies at Regional levels.

The other fact related to the delays of decision making is the wide discrepancies that exist between approved and existing staff members in the two Regions. In most Zones and *Woredas* in the two Regions, the number of staff members is below the required level. For instance, in West Shoa, a Zone in Oromia Region, the existing staff is not more than 50 percent of the approved number of civil servants. Information obtained from the Oromia Civil Service Bureau indicated that, in East Wellega Zone, the Agricultural Department including *Woredas* has 994 staff as compared to the approved number of 2,276, which is less than 50 percent of the required figure. There are also lots of unfilled vacancies in different bureaus, Zonal departments and *Woreda* offices in the two Regions. In the Oromia Civil Service Bureau, for

instance, three department heads job positions are unfilled. The limited number of skilled manpower and unfilled vacancies, therefore, means that small number of people are expected to perform huge amount of work, which in fact is impossible. This fact results in unnecessary delay of government functions in the Regions.

4.3.4 Coordination among different Government bodies

There are at least two types of government relationships in the recent decentralization process with respect to the Civil Service. The first is related with the system of relationship among Regional bureaus, Zonal departments and *Woreda* offices. The second is the relationship between the Federal Government bodies and Regional bureaus. In the sections below, the situation of the two systems of relationships in performing government functions have been discussed in the two Regions.

Coordination among regional government bodies

The linkage between Regional bureaus, Zonal departments and *Woreda* offices in the two Regions is different one from another. In the Oromia Region, the linkage of Regional bureaus with Zonal and *Woreda* levels is more of centralized one. *Woreda* offices are directly responsible for Zonal departments, and Zonal departments are responsible for Regional bureaus. The Zonal Administrations and *Woreda* Councils have limited power to undertake and coordinate the functions of departments and offices in their respective territories.

On the other hand, the SNNP Region has different relationship in this regard. The linkage between Regional bureaus, Zonal departments and *Woreda* offices is loose as compared to the

Oromia Region. Regional bureaus do not directly control and supervise the activities of Zonal departments and *Woreda* offices. They are rather engaged in supportive and facilitative activities. The Zonal and Special *Woreda* councils are strong in terms of directing, controlling and supervising the departments and offices in their territories. When some sort of mismanagement by Zonal departments and *Woreda* offices occur, the Regional bureaus can only present their complaints through the channel of the Regional Council. The two styles have their own specific problems. In the Oromia Region, the coordination and relationship among Regional bureaus, Zonal departments and *Woreda* offices is in a manner like the Imperial and the Derg regimes. On the other hand, in the SNNP Region, the relationship between the Regional bureaus, the Zonal departments and the *Woreda* offices is not in a manner that promotes efficiency. According to numerous interviews and discussions the researcher had with Regional bureau officials and other civil servants, the Zones and Special *Woredas* in the SNNP Region are reluctant to adhere to the rules and regulations set by the Regional bureaus on the ground that they feel autonomous as specified by the Constitution. As a result, there is very limited aspect that the Zones and *Woredas* are operating in such a way that the Region is considered as an integral whole. Some officials, particularly in the bureaus of Finance and Planning and Economic Development, believed that some Zonal departments and Special *Woreda* offices are working in an unnecessarily autonomous status which is not in line with the future development of the Region as a whole.

As has been indicated above, there is some form of dual subordination of Zonal departments and *Woreda* offices to two higher organs simultaneously, that is, to the respective councils and

Regional bureaus. Under this condition, there are situations where conflicting instructions passed by higher organs to be performed at the lower levels of administrations.

Coordination between regional bureaus and the Federal Government bodies

The relationship between the Federal Government and the Regions is that in most cases the Federal Government provides assistance to Regions. One aspect of this relationship is related to the fact that most Regional bureaus, Zonal departments and *Woreda* offices apply in their day to day activities the policies and procedures developed by the Federal government bodies. For instance, the Civil Service bureaus of the two Regions apply the rules, regulations, and directives of the Federal Civil Service Commission. The Finance bureaus, and the Planning and Economic Development bureaus also follow the policies and working directions of the Federal Ministries of Finance and Economic development and Cooperation respectively.

The other aspect of relationship between the Federal Government and Regions is related to the huge amount of subsidies extended to the Regions. The Oromia and SNNP Regions obtain from the Federal Government every year more than 70 percent their total revenue. Therefore, the two Regions are heavily dependent upon the Federal Government for most of their activities. Allocation of grants to the Regions is a matter practiced in a federal structure, where there is an imbalance between the provision of public services and the availability of resources (Buchanan, 1997) .

4.4 The Impact of Decentralization in Ethiopia upon Meritocracy of the Civil Service in Oromia and SNNP Regions

In the two Regions, the aspect of meritocracy in the Civil Service is undermined after the adoption of the decentralization process in the country. This can be evidenced by the prevalence of two issues in the Regional Civil Service administration, which operate against the application of the merit principle. These are:

- i. ethnicity and language issues, and
- ii. political issues.

4.4.1 Ethnicity and Language issues

Because of the high regard of the decentralization process on ethnicity and language considerations, meritocracy is at risk after the country adopted the decentralized system of governance. There is a clear preference between the ethnic and language groups of the Regions and other ethnic groups in undertaking government activities. According to the Oromia and SNNP Regional Constitutions (1995), the ethnic groups of the two Regions, the Oromo ethnic and language group in the Oromia Region, and the 45 ethnic and language groups in the SNNP Region, are regarded as the sovereign power in their respective Regions. To this effect, in the two Regions, the majority of senior job positions are filled with people who are members of the respective Regional ethnicities and language groups. In the SNNP Region, there is further ethnic differentiation in job positions among the 45 ethnic groups themselves. This is due to the fact that Zones and Special *Woredas* are established by taking into account the settlement patterns of the ethnic and language groups of the Region (SNNP Regional Constitution, 1995). In these ethnic-based Zones and Special *Woredas*, therefore,

there are accusations to the effect that even if an individual is superior in his qualifications, he is denied of senior job position because of his ethnic background.

Related to the ethnicity issue is the language aspect, which also work against the application of the merit principle. In Oromia Region, starting from the lowest administrative unit up to the regional level, it was constitutionally decided that the working and educational language is the Oromo language. As a result, ability to speak the Oromo language is one of the prerequisites for employment in the Regional Civil Service. Since there were civil servants in the Region who do not have the ability to write and understand the Oromo language, a number of professionals who did not speak the language were largely forced to either get transferred to their ethnic jurisdiction or lose their jobs. According to the assessment made by the bureau of Planning and Economic Development of Oromia in 1996, one of the reasons for the turnover of skilled manpower from the Region is the language problem. As a result, it is an indication of the fact that meritocracy is at risk, particularly in professional job positions.

In the SNNP, because the Region is the one with most diverse ethnic and language groups, the working language of the Regional bureaus and offices is the Amharic language which is the Federal Government working language. However, some *Zones* and *Woredas* in the Region use their respective ethnic languages as working mediums in public offices and courts. So far, Sidama, Hadya, Gedeo, and North Omo have started to use their ethnic languages in departments, schools, courts and other public offices. Moreover, most *Zones* and *Woredas* in the Region are using their ethnic languages in primary schools as mediums of instruction. This is one of the mechanisms for the gradual transformation of ethnic languages to the working

language in the Civil Service. As a result, numerous professionals are also urged to concentrate at the Regional bureaus in Awassa or to lose jobs from different Zones and *Woredas* because of the inability to speak the respective ethnic languages.

4.4.2 Political considerations

There is no quite substantial difference in terms of political interference in the Civil Service between the Derg's regime and the EPRDF. Just like the Military Socialist regime, members of the EPRDF party and its coalitions are favored than other party members and non-members in the Civil Service, especially in senior job positions. In Oromia Region, the OPDO (the Oromo People Democratic Organization) party members occupy most senior job positions. In the SNNP Region also, the SPDF (the Southern Peoples Democratic Front) party members are the one who took most senior job positions. Members of the opposition parties other than the above EPRDF coalition parties in the two Regions encountered numerous problems to be assigned in senior job positions.

Moreover, there is also an evaluation process in the Civil Service of the two Regions, where mismanagement of senior officials and civil servants are publicly reprimanded. Under this process, public officials and civil servants are brought to the audience and condemned of their inefficiencies. Every body has the right to say whatever he feels about the performance of officials being reprimanded. This political process in Oromia Region is called "*koranno*" (an Oromo Word) and in SNNP Region "*gimgema*" (an Amharic word) which is claimed to encourage openness and to reduce corruption. However, there are repeated circumstances that managerial, professional and technical personnel with honest ideas fired, suspended or

reprimanded. Because of insufficient experience, most accusations lack objective grounds, and hence, the process results, in most cases, in mistrust and low morale of professionals.

5. ANALYSIS OF THE FINDINGS

5.1 The Decentralization Process

Most of the country's government structure in the previous regimes has been one of centralization. Power has been concentrated at central government bodies with the local entities having very little discretionary power, and therefore, there was very little decentralization to talk of (Eshetu, 1997).

Even though Emperor Haileselassie I and the Derg regimes followed different ideological frameworks, the government activities in the two regimes were characterized by centralization. There were, of course, some attempts of decentralization in the two periods and the attempts in the Derg's regime were more pronounced than the Imperial period, to the extent that there were some regions with autonomous status.

It was after the Transitional Government of Ethiopia (TGE), which was established by the Transitional Government Charter in 1991 that nation wide commitment towards decentralization have been practiced in the country. The TGE recognized the rights of nations, nationalities and peoples to self-determination and to determine their own affairs by themselves. To this effect, one of the first political measures undertaken by the TGE was the reorganization of the country into 14 regions, where all except one, Addis Ababa (the capital city of the country), were based on ethnic lines. This was followed in 1995 by the

establishment of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE), with very little difference with respect to regionalization from that of the TGE.

The FDRE is made up of nine Regions and two City Administrations, Tigray, Afar, Amhara, Oromia, Somale, Benshangul/Gumuz, SNNP, Gambella, Harari, Addis Ababa, and Dire Dawa. The nine Regions and the two City Administrations are organized into a four-tier structure ranging from the top to bottom, the Regional government, the Zonal, the *Woreda*, and the *Kebele* Administrations.

The process of decentralization is practiced in different manners among Regions of the country. For instance, in the Oromia Region, the substantial power and authority is concentrated at Regional level. Lower level administrative units have limited autonomy in performing government functions in their territories. On the other hand, in the SNNP Region, Zones and *Woredas* have comparable autonomy to perform government functions in their territories. This is because of the fact that Zones and Special *Woredas* in the Region are delineated on the basis of ethnic and language lines.

The sharing of power, duties and responsibilities is Constitutionally declared between the Federal and Regional governments. According to the Federal Constitution (1995), the Federal government is responsible for activities that are quite wide in their scope and collective in their nature. Activities that fall under the domain of the Federal government include national defense, currency, national economic policy, immigration, visa, asylum, international and foreign relations, etc. On the other hand, the Regions are held responsible for activities that are

in their coverage and local in their nature. Activities like education, health, police, etc. in the Regions' territory are covered by Regions. In the Federal Constitution (1995), the Federal Government respects the powers, duties and responsibilities of the Regions and the Regions also respect the powers and authorities of the Federal Government.

Although the necessity of decentralization to the country is beyond doubt, the styles and systems of the process in some cases have resulted some kinds of problems. The following paragraphs are devoted to indicate some of the problems that emerged out of the decentralization process.

The first problem is related to the fact that the decentralization process in the EPRDF period was undertaken in a radical way. The old centralized system of governance of the Military period was replaced at once without the required level of adjustment. It was due to this fact that, particularly at the initial stages, numerous problems and inefficiencies emerged. Among the problems caused in the implementation of the decentralization are:

The tension between minority and dominant groups, inequalities among the Regions in terms of natural resources endowments, lack of clarity in the Constitutional provision that grants total autonomy to the Regions that does not provide for the right of Ethiopian citizens, regardless of ethnic origins, to live and work anywhere in the Federation (Seyoum and Yacob, 1999: 100).

The other problem, which limits the success of the decentralization process is the shortage of skilled manpower. The scarcity of skilled manpower is acute in Zones and *Woredas*. Because

of skilled manpower shortage, Zones and *Woredas* do not have sufficient decision-making implementation capabilities. As a result, the process of decentralization does not achieve the proposed objectives.

5.2 Efficiency of the Civil Service

In the research, it was found that the efficiency of the Civil Service in the country undermined after the ethnic based regionalization has been implemented in the country. There are various aspects that indicate the validity of this conclusion. Some of these indicators are indicated in the following paragraphs.

The structure of some bureaus in the case study Regions is not efficient. There are bureaus in the Oromia and SNNP Regions that are established without the required level of tasks to justify their existence. For instance, the Regional bureaus of Transport and Communication, Trade, Industry and Tourism and Labor and Social Affairs have very limited tasks to perform. The Federal Government Ministries and agencies take up most of their activities. Still other bureaus would rather be merged with other bureaus to deliver cost effective and efficient services. For instances, the bureau of Peasants' Cooperative could effectively be merged with the bureau of Agriculture, the Population Office could organized with the bureau of Planning and Economic Development, and the Rural Roads Authority could fruitfully be merged with the bureau of Public Works and Urban Development.

In addition, the Civil Service administrations in the two Regions show costly implementation. Moreover, there is weak capacity of Zones and *Woredas* in making decisions in their

territories, because of the mismatch between the expanded level of responsibilities and the availability of skilled manpower, material and financial resources.

5.3 The Meritocracy of the Civil Service

This research shows that meritocracy in the Civil Service is undermined after the ethnic based decentralization is put into practice. This can be evidenced by looking at the prevalence of two issues in the Civil Service, which work against the merit based system.

The first is related to the application of language and ethnicity considerations in the Civil Service administration activities. In the Oromia Region, for instance, most civil servants must have the ability to speak, write and understand the Oromo language, which is the working language of the Region, in order to be employed.

In some *Zones* and *Woredas* in the SNNP Region also, civil servants are expected to speak and write the respective ethnic languages. Moreover, there is a clear preference among different ethnic groups to be assigned particularly in senior job positions. In Region, members of ethnic groups other than the Region's ethnicities, have very limited opportunity to occupy senior job positions, even if they are reported to possess superior qualifications.

The other aspect that work against the application of the principle of merit is the political influence of ethnic based EPRDF coalition parties in the Regional Civil Service. In the two Regions, the affiliates of EPRDF parties occupy most senior job positions and members of opposition parties faced difficulties to be retained in senior jobs. In addition, there is a political

process called “*koranno*” in Oromia Region, or “*gingema*” in SNNP Region, where mismanagement of senior officials and civil servants are publicly reprimanded. This political process is advocated to reduce corruption and to increase transparency over the activities of public officials. However, it is doubtful that such activities are valuable.

6. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Even if there were attempts of decentralization in Ethiopia prior to 1991, the system of governance was one of centralization. But in 1991, when the EPRDF took government power, one of the significant measures taken was the regional delineation of the country along ethnic lines. To this effect, the TGE established 14 Regions, where all except one were based along ethnic line. The 14 Regions are constitutionally granted self-administration status to the extent of secession. This was followed by the establishment of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia with very minor difference from the TGE.

The government system in the Federal Government is a five-tier structure including the Federal Government, which comprises from top to bottom: the Federal Government, the Regional Government, the Zonal, the *Woreda*, and the *Kebele* Administrations. In the Federal Constitution, the powers, duties and responsibilities of the Federal Government and the Regions are indicated. Accordingly, the Federal Government is responsible over essential functions that are national in scope, while the Regions are responsible for activities that are narrow in their coverage.

However, experiences have shown that little success stories have been realized in the decentralization process of the country (Seyoum and Yacob, 1999: 100). This issue is attributed to many aspects. One of the issues is related to the limited experience concerning the process. The other factor is related to the insufficient availability of manpower, material and financial resources. There is also the centralization of power, authority and responsibilities at the Regional levels. In some Regions, lower level administrative units are deprived of the required level of autonomy. Power is concentrated at Regional level.

The decentralization process in Ethiopia after 1991 has introduced a new organization of the Civil Service. Regional governments now become autonomous in performing government activities in their territories. There is no direct controlling and supervising relationship between the Federal Government ministries and agencies and the Regional bureaus.

In the Oromia and SNNP Regions, it is found that the efficiency of the Civil Service is undermined after the ethnic based decentralization has been practiced. This can be seen from different grounds. One aspect is related to the organization structure of the Civil Service institutions in the two Regions. Some bureaus in the two Regions are established without the required level of tasks, while some other are not justifiable to be established as separate entities. The other fact is related to the costly undertaking of the Civil Service administration in the two Regions. Because of duplication of efforts by the Regional bureaus, Zonal departments, *Woreda* offices, and even by the Federal Government ministries and agencies, uneconomical performance happens in numerous cases. There are also wide discrepancies between approved and existing staffs in the Regional bureaus, Zonal departments and *Woreda* offices. This fact eventually results in inefficient and delayed provision of public services in the Regions.

The existence of two issues in the Civil Service of the Oromia and SNNP Regions undermines the application of merit. Firstly the huge regard of the current decentralization process on ethnicity and language considerations more than ever before in light of the limited skilled manpower. In the two case study Regions, there is a repeated act where people with better qualification are not necessarily retained in the Civil Service. There are instances where

qualified staffs were urged to leave the Civil Service because of their ethnic background and inability to speak the language. Secondly the political interference by the ethnic-based parties, which formed a coalition with the governing EPRDF party. In the two case study Regions, members of such parties are favored in the Civil Service as compared to non-members.

These facts show that the efficiency and meritocracy of the Civil Service in the Oromia and SNNP Regions are undermined after the ethnic-based decentralization are at risk.

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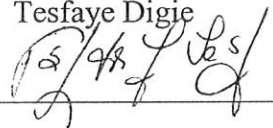
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Declaration

I, the undersigned, declare that this thesis is my original work, has not been presented for a degree in any other University and that all sources of material used for the thesis have been duly acknowledged.

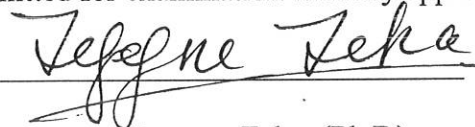
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Place: Addis Ababa University

Date of Submission: June 2000

The thesis has been submitted for examination with my approval as a University advisor.



Tegegne Teka (Ph.D)

May, 2000

