

**SOME OF THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE CHRISTIAN MISSION  
METHODS AND CONTEXTUAL EVANGELISM AMONG THE  
OROMO OF ETHIOPIA WITH SPECIAL FOCUS ON  
THE ETHIOPIAN EVANGELICAL CHURCH  
MEKANE YESUS (EECMY) 1880-1974**

**BENTI UJULU TESSO**

**Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the Degree of Master of Theology  
in the School of Theology at the University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg**

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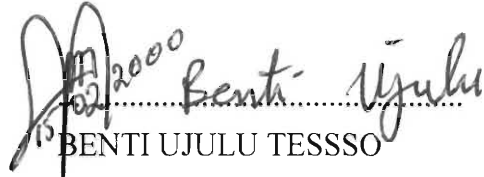
**Under Supervision of Dr. Anthony Balcomb**

## **DEDICATION**

This thesis is dedicated to the memory of my father, Ujulu Tesso Lubo, who died when I was about five years old and to my mother, Walalitu Cewaaqa Iteyyaa, who under difficult conditions sacrificed a lot to educate me and died on 05 May 1996 at the age of sixty-four.

## DECLARATION

Unless specifically indicated in the text, this thesis is the original work of the writer.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Benti Ujulu Tesso'. The signature is written over a horizontal dotted line. To the left of the signature, there is a date '17/02/2000' written vertically. Below the dotted line, the name 'BENTI UJULU TESSO' is printed in a simple, uppercase font.

BENTI UJULU TESSO

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## **ABSTRACT**

The thesis focuses on the problem of Oromo Christianity's lack of indigenous character with special focus on the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus (EECMY). It examines the methods of mission used by the Ethiopian Orthodox Church (EOC) that introduced Christianity to the Oromo people for the first time. It also examines the methods of mission used by three Protestant mission societies who followed the EOC, evangelised the Wollaga Oromo and established the EECMY. These mission bodies were, the Swedish Evangelical Mission (SEM), the United Presbyterian Mission (UPCNAM) and the Hermannsburg Mission (HM).

The Study seeks to investigate whether the four above mentioned Christian mission bodies' methods of mission contributed to the Oromo Christianity's lack of indigenous character. Moreover, the study examines whether the apparent language of worship problem within the EECMY has historical root linked to the mission methods. It is the emphasis of the researcher of this study that the Christian mission methods used to evangelise the Wollaga Oromos were generally inadequate due to missionaries' lack of sensitivity to the culture.

The study calls the EECMY to revise her traditional methods of mission that she inherited from the missionaries and root her message within the culture of the Oromo people. Christianity must identify with certain norms and values of Oromo culture. This can be done through contextual model of evangelism. Out of different sub models of contextual theology, this study suggests inculturation model as a method for incarnating the Church in the culture of the Oromo people. It is the writer's belief that inculturation model may be answer to the Oromo Christianity's lack of indigenous character and the apparent problem within the EECMY. Also inculturation can be helpful method in reaching out the non-Christian Oromos with the Gospel.

Though the study focuses on the Oromo Christianity and the EECMY, the question and the problems concerning Christianity's being foreign to the culture might be similar in many Churches in the entire Ethiopia and also in Africa.

Unless otherwise indicated the Scriptural quotations are taken from the GOOD NEWS BIBLE: The Bible in Today's English version, copyright Thomas Nelson, Inc., 1978,1986. Printed in the United States of America.

## ABBREVIATION

AE	African Enterprise
AICs	African Independent/ Indigenous Churches
ATR	African Traditional Religion
BEC	Bethel Evangelical Church
BESS	Bethel Evangelical Secondary School
CIM	China Inland Mission
CSM	Church Missionary Society
DM	Dorothea Mission
EECMY	Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus
EOC	Ethiopian Orthodox Church
HM	Hermannsburg Mission
MYTS	Mekane Yesus Theological Seminary
OTR	Oromo Traditional Religion
PCUSA	Presbyterian Church of United States of America
RSV	Revised Standard Version
SEM	Swedish Evangelical Mission
TEE	Theological Education Through Extension
UPCNAM	United Presbyterian Church of North America Mission
WWBS	Western Wollaga Bethel Synod
ZCC	Zion City Church

## GLOSSARY

Abba Gadaa	Gadaa leader in Oromo
Abaa Bokku	President (in Oromo traditional political system)
Abbaa Chaffee	Chairman of the Assembly
Abbaa Dubbi	Spokes Person
Abbaa Seeraa	Prosecutor
Abbaa Alangaa	Judge who executes the decision
Abbaa Duula	In charge of the Army
Abbaa Sa'a	In charge of the economy
Abbaa Muuda	Father, dispenser of anointing
Abun	Archbishop of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church
Abba Salama	Father of the light; name given to Frumentius
Abbayya	Blue Nile river
Abdari	Festival related to agriculture
Afaan Oromo	Oromo language
Amarinya	Amhara language
Ameharic	Amhara language
Atete	An exclusively Women's ritual
Ayana	divinity in Oromo Traditional Religion
Balambaras	Chief of mountain fortress; military title, administrative officer
Buna Qala	Fried coffee beans mixed with spices and butter; prepared by married women for ritual of blessings
Butta	Gadaa ritual; festival which takes place every eight years
Cirreessa	Traditional Healer
Cubbu	Sin
Dajazmach	Commander of the Gate'; general, provincial governor
Dalaga	Traditional style of worship; also means work

Ekeraa	ghost; spirit of the dead person.
Farso	Oromo local beer
Faaga	Trumpet
Finfinnee	Oromo name for Addis Ababa; (it is Original name)
Fitawrary	Commander of the vanguard
Gadaa	age groups of traditional Oromo society
Galla	derogatory name given to Oromo people
Galma	Traditional Oromo prayer house
Geez/Ge'ez	Old Ethiopic language, still in use in the Orthodox Church
Gifti	Oromo princes or lady; now Mrs
Gola	Part of house
Guma	Murder; Ransom payment for murder
Halu	Trouble sin
Haraamu	trouble sin such as incest
Hayyu	leader
Horra/Hora	Mineral water used as medicine (for cattle and people)
Injera	Bread in Amharic
Irressa	Oromo thanksgiving festival
Jaarsa	An old man over 80 years; last Gadaa grade
Jari gatu	A sacrificial ritual after rainy season; done by women so that wild animals be satisfied
Kallacha	Metal which is used for blessing by Gadaa leader
Karifo	Rain-maker, name given to Qallu (traditional Oromo priest)
Kebre Nagast	Glory of the King; national Script
Kuusaa	Fourth Gadaa grade
Lij	'Child, son'; honorific title mostly used for members of the higher aristocracy and the royalty
Luba	Gadaa leaders who are in power; also called priest

Maram	Motherhood divinity
Matcha/Macha	Oromo clan who live in Western Ethiopia
Mekane Yesus	The Dwelling place of Jesus
Moti	King in Oromo language
Nigus	King in Amharic
Ooda	Prophet
Ogessa	diviner
Oromia	Oromo country
Qallu	Oromo traditional religion ritual expert; or priest or bishop
Qallicha	Sorcerer among the Amhara tribe
Qidase	Liturgy of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church
Qilla	Container of buna qala
Qondala	Third Gadaa grade; Army officer
Raaba	Fifth Gadaa grade; Potential leaders
Raaji	Prophet
Ras	‘Head’; duke, governor, second only to a nigus
Saffu	Custom of respect
Sanbata Guddaa	Great Sabbath, Sunday
Seifanablbai	Name of Newspaper in Amharic
Timqat	Ethiopian Epiphany
Ulfin	Glorious, Another name for God
Uuma	Creator, Another name for God
<b>Waaqa</b>	God in Oromo language
Yarabi	Women thanksgiving festival at the end of harvest season in OTR
Ye-nisihaabbat	‘Father of confession’; Father confessor
Yuba	7 <sup>th</sup> , 8 <sup>th</sup> and 9 <sup>th</sup> Gadaa grades

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# CHAPTER ONE      FOCUS FRAMEWORK AND OBJECTIVES

## 1.1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of this thesis is to show that Oromo Christianity has not been sufficiently inculturated into the Oromo culture and if possible, assign reasons for such an occurrence. Some important aspects of Oromo culture such as the *Gada* system became a thing of the past. The Oromo language was suppressed and elements of Oromo Traditional Religion (OTR) such as *Irressa*, *Atete* and others were destroyed or became domestic practices among the Western Christian Oromo people. A majority of the Oromo people rejected Christianity and became Muslims. Currently the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus (EECMY), a Protestant Church in Ethiopia, is in a crisis because of the conflict within her two congregations. The Gulale and the Entoto congregations of the EECMY refused to allow the Oromo Christians to worship in Oromo language. These factors show that depriving of the Oromo Christianity of an indigenous character may raise some important questions. For instance, what are the underlying causes for Oromo Christianity's lack of an indigenous character? What are the causes for the language of worship problem within the Gulale and Entoto congregations of the EECMY? How did the missionary methods affect or contribute to the present dilemma? Could inadequate missionary methods be a contributory factor for the conversion of the Oromo people to Islam rather than to Christianity? These are some of the questions this study will try to answer.

## 1.2 Aim of the Chapter

In this chapter, I will explain my motivations for choosing the subject, offer an overview of the field of research and clarify terminology. I will also explore the significance of the period 1880-1976, define the limitations of the study, state the hypothesis and describe the research methodology. I will outline the theoretical framework, which I will use as a tool for this study, give an account of resources for the research, and an outline for the subsequent chapters.

### **1.3 Overview**

This research will examine the methods of evangelization used by four Christian mission agencies among the Oromo of Ethiopia from 1880-1974. The study seeks to investigate whether the methods used by Christian missionaries to evangelise the Oromo people in the past contributed to the present problem within Oromo Christianity in general, and within the EECMY in particular. Having done this, I would like to propose contextual evangelism as a method of making Christianity feel at home in the culture of the Oromo people, with special focus on the EECMY. I do not intend to give “a ready-made contextual model” that can be proposed without a critical approach. The researcher is aware of the defects of the contextual model, yet believes that it could be helpful if a critical and selective approach is adopted. Here the researcher will recommend the inculturation model that is contextual theologies proper to use Bosh’s words.

### **1.4 Motivations**

Since 1992 the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus (EECMY), has been dealing with the conflict on the language of worship in her two congregations, the Gulale and the Entoto congregations in Addis Ababa. In these two congregations the Oromo people requested the congregations to conduct the service in the Oromo language. However, the elders of these congregations turned down the request because their Congregations’ tradition is to worship in the Amharic language only. This has become a source of conflict in the Church. Rev Yadesa Daba, (the president of the EECMY in his opening speech at the symposium on *Church, Culture and Ethnicity in Present Ethiopia*, held in Addis Ababa in October 1997) disclosed that the Church is in a dilemma, because some people accuse the Church for destroying culture and traditions while others blame her for tolerating them in the Church (quoted in Gobana 1997:6).

Rev. Ittefa Gobena, the director of the EECMY Gospel Ministry Department, in his speech at the opening of the above mentioned Symposium, also explained the present confrontation between Christian and cultural values among the Oromo Christians as follows:

The political change in Ethiopia in May 1991 has not only brought the downfall of the super-culture ideology and the power of atheism, but it has also brought change in the

country such as a renewed spirit for reviving cultural values, the use of one's own language and a whole discovery of one's own ethnic identity. Already in 1992 some of our Church units have started reporting on the situation of their areas, noting that some of their congregations have begun to ask how they can accommodate some of their cultural practices in their Christian personal and communal daily lives. They found themselves struggling with their cultural values and Christian values, which in some cases were in conflict. Especially the Oromos, when the openness to recognize, the country, Ethiopia, as multinational and by the government understanding, took the lead so that the Oromo political rationale began to focus on re-establishing the Gadaa socio-political system of governance in the Oromia Region. Thus the issue for Christians has become a confrontation between Christian values; to which one should one (sic) surrender as a way of accommodation (in Gobana, 1997:4).

On the other hand although Christianity arrived in Ethiopia in the fourth century, the majority of the Oromo people responded to Islam rather than Christianity. These and other reasons motivated me to study the subject.

## **1.5 Hypothesis to be Tested**

The Oromo Christianity lacks an indigenous character because of inadequate mission methods that were the result of the missionaries lack of sensitivity to the Oromo culture. Although the mission methods used by pioneer missionaries may not explain all the current problems in Oromo Christianity, the mission methods account for many of the problems that are manifested in the EECMY.

The conflict within the Gulale and the Entoto congregations of the EECMY, and the accusations that Christianity destroyed the culture and traditions of the Oromo people are the symptoms of the main problem within Oromo Christianity.

I believe that to respond constructively to the present crises in Oromo Christianity, we have to review our Christian mission methods and construct a contextual theology to tackle the existing problem and to reach the vast Oromo people with the Gospel.

## 1.6 CLARIFICATION OF TERMINOLOGIES

### 1.6.1 What is Christian Mission?

David Bosch (1991:9) states that mission remains non-definable; the most we can hope for is to formulate some approximations of what mission is all about. Christian mission gives expression to the dynamic relationship between God and the world, particularly as this was portrayed first in the story of the covenant people of Israel and then, supremely, in the birth, life, death, resurrection and exaltation of Jesus of Nazareth.

People who criticize mission, usually limit mission to what the Western missionaries were doing by way of saving souls, planting Churches and imposing their ways and wills on others. But Bosch (1991:519) argues that mission goes beyond observable missionary enterprise, yet, it cannot be completely divorced from the mission enterprises. For Bosch (1991:519) mission is

*Missio Dei*, which seeks to subsume into itself, the *missiones ecclesiae*, the missionary program of the Church. It is not the Church which “undertakes mission”; it is the *mission Dei* which constitutes the Church... Mission is not competition with other religions, not a conversion activity, not expanding faith, not building up the kingdom of God; neither is it social, economic or political activity. And yet, there is merit in all these projects. So, the church’s concern is conversion, church growth, the reign of God, economy, society and politics-but in a different manner! (Kholer 1974:472). The *mission Dei* purifies the church. It sets it under the cross- the only place where it is ever safe... As a community of the cross the Church then constitutes the fellowship of the kingdom, not just “church members”; as a community of the exodus, not as a “religion institution”, it invites people to the feast without end (Moltmann 1977:75). Looking at it from this perspective mission is, quite simply, the participation of Christians in the liberating mission of Jesus (Hering 1980:78), wagering on a future that verifiable experience seems to belie. It is the good news of God’s love, incarnated in the witness of a community, for the sake of the world.

Mission does not belong to any particular nation, denomination or group. It is God’s mission, God’s relationship with the world through the work of Jesus Christ. Jesus’ mission to this world was holistic. He served both the spiritual and physical needs of human beings. Any person who wants to be a missionary should understand that the Gospel of Jesus Christ must serve the whole person. In other words, I understand Christian mission as reaching out to the whole person with the whole Gospel to improve the quality of life of both the individual and

the community.

To serve the whole person includes respecting the person's cultural identity such as language and traditional values that could be adapted by Christian Churches. Considering the above understanding of Christian Mission, I am going to evaluate the mission methods used to evangelise the Oromo people.

### **1.6.2 Mission Methods**

Mission methods in this study are defined as the methods used by selected Christian agencies (to be introduced fully below) to reach out to the Wollaga Oromo people with the whole Gospel. It includes all the ways and means used to evangelise the people. For instance, mission methods include sending mission personnel as mission agents, translating the Bible into the vernacular, Church planting, worship and liturgy, as well as the building of schools and health institutions for the purpose of reaching people with the Christian message. Together with my tentative definition of Christian mission in the previous section, the mission methods used by selected missionary agencies will be used as a means of evaluating the Ethiopian Orthodox Church (EOC), the Swedish Evangelical Mission (SEM), the United Presbyterian Church of North America Mission (UPCNAM) and the Hermannsburg Mission (HM).

### **1.6.3 Models of Mission**

In their important work, Saayman *et al* (1992) identify six models of Christian mission over the ages and across various denominations and these models have been selected as a framework for the analysis of Christian mission work among the Oromos. The six models of mission will be introduced below. There are overlaps in these models. The method of mission can be similar among models, but the models are categorised mainly according to their most distinctive emphases.

### **1.6.4 Who are the Wollaga Oromo?**

Wollaga is one of the provinces of Ethiopia located in the Western part of the country. It is bordered by the Sudan in the West, by the Gambella region and Iluu abba Booraa province of

Ethiopia in the South, the Benishangul Gumuz and Amhara regions of Ethiopia in the North, and the Shawa province in the East (see Map 9.3 ). The Oromo people of this area are called the Matcha Oromo (one of the Oromo clans). The major religions of Wollaga province are Christianity, Islam and Oromo Traditional Religion. Various types of Churches exist in Ethiopia, including Ethiopian Orthodox, Catholic, and Protestant Churches. The Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus (EECMY) is one of the strongest denominations of the Protestant Churches in Wollaga.

### **1.6.5 The significance of the period 1880-1974**

There are important events relevant to our theme, which took place from 1880s to 1974:

- (A) Christianity was introduced to the Wollaga Oromo in 1882 and six Ethiopian Orthodox Church centers had been built in Wollaga by the year 1900 (Aren 1978:394).
- (B) Towards the end of 1898, the first indigenous Swedish Evangelical missionaries led by the priest Gebre-Ewostateos arrived at Bojjii, central Wollaga and began the evangelism work (Aren 1978:396).
- (C) In 1904 Onesimos Nesib, the translator of the Oromo Bible, arrived to take over the work of the evangelical pioneers (Aren 1978:419).
- (D) The year 1916 is important, because it is the year that permission for an evangelical enterprise was obtained from the Ethiopian Government (Aren 1978:439).
- (E) In 1919 the United Presbyterian missionaries arrived in Sayo, Western Wollaga and commenced the evangelism work (Birri et al 1997:5).
- (F) The SEM missionaries from Sweden arrived in Naqamte in 1923 and in Najjo in 1927 and started mission stations (Eide 1996:59).
- (G) In 1935 Italy invaded Ethiopia and all missionaries went back to their home countries, leaving the work in the hands of the indigenous missionaries (Birri et al 1997:9).
- (H) The first evangelical Church was built at Dembi Dollo in 1937 by indigenous evangelists. Accompanying this Church building, the Gulale Congregation was established by the UPCNAM missionary in Addis Ababa. By the time missionaries returned in 1942, there were 9 congregations of Presbyterian background (Birri 1997:12).
- (I) From 1942 to 1959 more evangelical Churches were built in Wollaga and other parts of Ethiopia including the Entoto Congregation in Addis Ababa (Eide 1996:62).
- (J) In 1942 the Protestant missionaries, who left for their Countries due to the invasion of Italy began to come back (Tucho 1999:10)
- (K) In 1944, the indigenous leaders (of diversified evangelical mission background) met for the first time to establish one United Evangelical Church of Ethiopia (paper on



EECMY 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary 1999:5).

- (L) The Congregations founded as a result of UPCNA mission were organised into Presbyteries in 1954 and later in 1960s formed the Bethel Evangelical Church (Tucho 1999:13).
- (M) In 1959, the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus was established as a national Church (Eide 1996:52).
- (N) In 1974, the Bethel Evangelical Church joined the EECMY (Eide 1996:64).

Given these significant events, the period from 1880 to 1974 is important in this study. In other words, although the period is long covering ninety-four years, it is only the selected events in this period that are of interest to us in this study. Furthermore, the study was undertaken in a missiological rather than a historical perspective. This means that we will tease out significant issues and events that have missiological significance in this period.

## **1.7 Limitations**

This research is not a comprehensive evaluation of all missionary methods used among all the Oromo of Ethiopia in 94 years. Rather it is an analysis of some mission methods used in Wollaga, one of the Western Oromo provinces. The researcher assumes that the causes for the crises of Oromo Christianity are the inadequate mission methods that go back to the time when Christianity was introduced to the Oromo people. The focus is on the analysis of practical mission methods used to introduce Christianity to the Oromo people. The period 1880-1974 is selected because of some of the important events relating to Christian mission methods. Unless the study requires to mention other places and time, it is limited to the Wollaga Oromo from 1880-1974.

## **1.8 Research Methodology**

The method of this study was a library research, in which books, journals, periodicals, minutes, newspapers and any other relevant written materials were consulted. There were few written materials on Ethiopia in the Natal University library. Some books were gathered through interlibrary loan and others were brought from Ethiopia, Sweden, America and Germany. Additional related materials were ordered from Ethiopia to facilitate the study. Sixteen years work experience in the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus, gave me

an insight during the study.

## 1.9 Theoretical Framework

The following theories, insights and approaches from Willem Saayman and Robert J. Schreiter were used as main tools for this study.

### 1.9.1 Saayman

Willem Saayman *et al* (1992) propose of six models of Christian mission methods. They are: the Kerygmatic, the Sacramental, the Voluntarist, the Liberation, the Pentecostal and the African Indigenous models.

(A) Kerygmatic Model: The word Kerygmatic is derived from the Greek word 'kerygma' that means preaching or proclamation. According to Bosch (in Saayman 1992:18), the Churches or mission agencies that subscribe to this model place a very heavy emphasis on preaching or verbal communication of the Gospel. However, the Kerygmatic model is not limited to preaching only. The proclamation of the Gospel is always accompanied by the expression of missionary concerns such as healing and education ministries. Those Churches and mission organizations categorized under the Kerygmatic model also build schools and hospitals as part of their Christian outreach. The majority of Protestant mission agencies and larger Churches in operation in South Africa subscribe to this model. These Churches are: the Dutch Reformed Church, Presbyterian Church, Congregational Church, Baptist Church and Lutheran Church (Bosch in Saayman 1992:21). Some aspects of the mission methods of the Swedish Evangelical Mission (SEM), the United Presbyterian Church of North America Mission (UPCNAM) and the Hermannsburg Mission (HM) comply with the Kerygmatic model of mission. The SEM and the HM belong to the Lutheran Church whereas the UPCNAM was from the Presbyterian Church. For this reason this model of Christian mission is going to be an important framework in our quest to understand the methods of the SEM and UPCNAM among the Oromo people.

(B) Sacramental Model: Hayes (in Saayman 1992:72) attributes this model to those Churches that place much emphasis on the sacraments. Most Christian Churches use the sacraments of baptism and holy communion. In addition the Roman Catholic Church recognises five more sacraments: confirmation, marriage, ordination (as a bishop, priest or deacon), reconciliation (a formal confession of sins, and forgiveness) and anointing the sick.

The sacramental model can be seen mostly in the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and is influential in the Roman Catholic Church as well as in some sections of the Lutheran Church. The mission agents of the sacramental model are mainly monks. However, the sacraments themselves became “agents” of mission since they are used as the basic “engine” and rationale for mission outreach.

(C) Voluntarist Model: Botha and Saayman (1992:107-8) describe this model by referring to those missionary societies that came into being as voluntary enterprises. For example, China Inland Mission (CIM), African Enterprise (AE), and Dorothea Mission (DM) fall under this model. This model has many good methods of mission such as proper training of mission agents, Bible courses in various languages, the inclusion of socio-political realities in the liturgies, etc. This model is helpful in measuring the SEM methods of mission among the Oromo people, because the SEM started as a Voluntarist enterprise that was later linked to the Lutheran Church of Sweden.

(D) The Liberation Model: According to Kritzinger (in Saayman 1992:249-251) the Liberation model is subscribed to by those groups or movements concerned for liberation. For example, the Black theology movement in South Africa, Black theology in North America, Feminist theology and others come under this model. This model presents good methods from which our project will benefit. For instance, the Liberation model’s adult education system used for consciousness-raising, the contextual liturgy and worship, and the approach to culture will provide information about our quest in this study.

(E) The Pentecostal Model: The Pentecostal Churches, which emphasize baptism in the Holy Spirit are some of the churches that subscribe to this model. This model also contributes helpful ideas to our project. Saayman (in Saayman *et al* 1992:163) notes the cultural relevancy of this model’s liturgy: “The Pentecostal liturgy, integrating body and soul, sacred and profane, spoke very directly to African people.” The Pentecostal model is helpful to check whether the methods used by the SEM, the UPCNAM and the HM, in their liturgy and worship had cultural relevancy or not.

(F) The African Indigenous model: This model refers to the African Independent Churches, which have been founded in Africa by Africans, and primarily for Africans (Daneel in Saayman 1992:193). Makhubu (1988:5), defined “African Independent Church (AICS) as, a purely black-controlled denomination with no links in membership or administrative control with any non-African Church.” This model is helpful in terms of missionary activity and the indigenization or contextualisation of the Christian message and practice.

The EOC, SEM, UPCNAM, and HM may not fall completely under the Liberation, Pentecostal, and African Indigenous models of mission. Nevertheless insights gained from

them can be used to criticize aspects of the mission methods used by the EOC, SEM, UPCNAM and HM among the Oromo.

### **1.9.2 Schreiter**

I also used Robert J. Schreiter's theory of the "Translation Model" in the construction of local theology and any other relevant aspects of his work for my topic. Schreiter (1985:6-7) claims that the translation model is the most common model for local theology. It calls for a two-step procedure. The first step aims to make the message of Christianity free from its previous cultural accretions. The second step seeks to translate the message into the new situation. This model is helpful in evaluating the Christian mission methods used among the Oromo people. I used this model to consider whether the methods used in the evangelization of the Oromo meet the criteria of the translation model.

### **1.9.3 Bosch**

Bosch (1991:368-507) defines mission in different dimensions. He sees mission as Church-with-others, as mediating salvation, as quest for justice, as evangelism, as contextualizations, as liberation, and inculturation. It is also common witness, a ministry by the whole people of God, a witness to people of other living faiths and as Theology as action of hope. Thus most of Bosch's theories of mission are useful to this study.

## **1.10 Sources**

As mentioned above this research is based only on written materials, both published and unpublished, including books, journals, periodicals, etc. Among the materials consulted the following were the primary sources. For the historical information, Aren (1978), Bakke (1987), Melba (1988), Birri et al (1997), Eide (1996), Huqqa (1996) and others were used. For methods of mission Saayman *et al* (1992) were used. For Oromo Traditional Religion, Bartels (1983) was used. For the current EECMY crisis, unpublished materials such as papers presented at symposia, newspapers, minutes of the Church, EECMY Information bulletins and other relevant materials were used as source for this study. For contextualization or inculturation, Schreiter (1985), Bosch (1991), Waliggo *et al* (1986), Turkson *et al* (1994)

Hillman (1993), Cox (1991) and others were the primary sources.

## **1.11 Summary**

In this chapter, Christian missions and mission methods have been defined. The EECMY crisis has been shown to involve the refusal to use the Oromo language, accusations of destroying culture and tradition. The EECMY's failure to incarnate itself in the culture of the Oromo people were illustrated. These issues provide the motivation for choosing the theme. The scope of this study will be limited to the Wollaga Oromo from 1880 to 1974. A brief introduction to Wollaga Oromo has been provided.

The models of mission proposed by Saayman *et al*, Schreiter's translation model theory and Bosch's different dimensions of evangelism that will be theoretical tools in this study were explained.

## **1.12 Outline of the Next Chapters**

Chapter two will introduce the Oromo of Ethiopia; the origin of the Oromo people, their geographical location, their culture and traditional religion. In order to analyse the effects of the mission methods one needs to appreciate the original culture and tradition of the people. Also one needs to question the culture to identify the elements of the culture that could be compatible with Christianity. The third chapter will discuss the four Christian mission agencies who were actors in evangelising and establishing the Church in Oromo land. Their origin, how they came into contact and some of their achievements among the Oromo people will be discussed. The chapter will explore how the work of evangelical missionaries led to the establishment of the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus (EECMY). The EECMY activities and present size will be highlighted. Chapter four will analyse three mission methods: mission agents, Bible translation, Church planting and administration. Chapter five will analyse the mission methods such as Liturgy and Worship, healing ministry, education ministry, interaction with authorities and mission in context. Chapter six will be proposal of contextual evangelism as a method of indigenization of Christianity among the Oromo people. Problems and prospects of Oromo Christianity will be explored. Then methods of constructing local theologies will be recommended. Chapter seven will summarize the findings of the previous chapters and attempt to conclude on them.

## CHAPTER TWO BACKGROUND TO THE OROMO PEOPLE

### 2.1 Origin of Oromo

The Oromos of Ethiopia were until recently known as the Galla. The name *Galla* is a derogatory name given to them by outsiders. The Oromo people make up half of the population of Ethiopia and are a single national group in the Horn of Africa. They belong to the Eastern Cushetic speaking group who have lived in Ethiopia for thousands of years. The Oromo people are settled in various areas in the Horn of Africa (see Map 9.1). All Oromos speak only one language called *Afaan Oromo* (Hassen 1992:75).

### 2.2 Oromo Land

The Oromo country is known as Oromia. Today Oromia, which is the biggest state in the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, is called the Oromia region or region four. The Capital city of Oromia is called Finfinne (Addis Ababa in Amharic). Oromia is located in the horn of Africa, Ethiopia, between about 20 degrees and 120 degrees North, 340 degrees and 440 degrees East (see Map 9.2). The landscape varies from rugged mountain ranges in the centre and the North, to flat grassland to the South East. Its climate is mild on higher altitudes, warm and wet to the West, warm and dry to the East. The agricultural products of Oromia are, wheat, barley, *xaafi*, and various agricultural products. Its main cash crop is coffee and Oromia claims that it is the original country where coffee was found for the first time. Oromia's natural resources are gold, platinum, sulphur, iron, and silver. According to Melba (1988:23), the area of Oromia is 600,000 square kilometers, or about the total size of South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, and Alabama, or about twice the size of Italy. There are some historical facts and events about the Oromo country and its people. As cited in Antricles on African studies Gen-/Oromo.html 3/27/99, Oromia is home for the oldest fossils: *Homo Sapiens* from Arba, Omo, and Bodo; *Homerectus* from Malka Kunture; *Homehabilis* from Awash, and the oldest (*austalopithecus afarensis*) fossils from the middle Awash. Oromia is also host of pioneering human achievements such as the earliest pebble tools (70,000 B.C.), domestication of animals (circa 5000 B.C.). The regional trades in antiquity of Oromia were in gold, ivory, myrrh, etc. Oromia of the upper Nile was at times referred to as Punt, Cush (Kush), or Ethiopia. With universal male training in warfare, the Oromo remained

independent until the last decade of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

## **2.3 Oromo Language**

According to Melba (1988:8-10), the Oromo nation has a single common language called *afaan Oromo* or *Oromiffa*, which belongs to the Eastern Kushitic group of languages. *Oromiffa* is one of the five most widely spoken languages among the approximately 1000 languages of Africa, (Gragg 1982 in Melba 1988:9). According to Melba, considering the number of speakers and the geographic area it covers, *Oromiffa*, most probably rates second among the African indigenous languages. Excluding the Northern part of Ethiopia, *Oromiffa* is a *lingua franca* through the rest of Ethiopia. Roman, Arabic and Sabeian Scripts are all foreign to *Oromiffa*. None of them fit well to the peculiar features of the sounds (phonology), in *Oromiffa*. However, the Roman Script is relatively best suited for transcription of *Oromiffa*. That is why Roman script is chosen to be used in the present Oromia Region of Ethiopia. Melba (1988:10), accuses the Ethiopian authorities for not only neglecting *Oromiffa*, but also suppressing it.

## **2.4 Oromo culture**

### **2.4.1 The Gadaa System**

When we discuss the Oromo people's culture the Gadaa system will come up frequently. Although it is difficult to give a clear definition of the Gadaa system, Melba (1988:10-11) has given the following explanation.

It is a system that organizes the Oromo society into groups or sets (about 7-11) that assume different responsibilities in the society once in eight years. It has guided the religious, social, political, and economic life of Oromo for many years, moreover their philosophy, art, history and method of time keeping. The activities and life of every member of the society are guided by Gadaa. It is the law of the society, a system by which Oromos administer, defend their territory and rights, maintain and guard their economy and through which all their aspirations are fulfilled.

Gadaa is defined as a traditional, highly developed democratic system based on age group with a defined role. It is similar to the Grecian Polis, elected officials assume public office for

non-renewable eight year terms. Similar civilisations have been recorded in China, Maya, and Hindu (taken from African studies/Articles Gen-/Oromo.hotml 3/27/99).

Other social scientists of diverse background also studied Gadaa. According to Plowden, Gadaa is the superior among the republican systems. Legese (1973) described it as “one of the most astonishing and instructive turns the evolution of human society has taken.” According to Hulting (1990:157-8) the “Gadaa system was concerned with the reproduction of stock, crops and regeneration of life... Its *Buttaa* (a Gadaa ritual) is very important for fertility and truth among the Oromo people” (1990: 157-8).

The Gadaa system served the Oromo society as the basis of a democratic and egalitarian political system. Under Gadaa there is power to administer the affairs of nation and the power to make laws belong to the people. There are eleven Gadaa grades (stages of development through which a Gadaa class passes). Every male Oromo is categorised according to his age. The names could vary in different part of Oromia. Melba (1988:11) explains the Gadaa grades as follows:

Dabballe	(0-8 years of age)
Follee or Gamme Titiqaa	(8-16 years of age)
Qondaala or Gamme Gurgudda	(16-24 years of age)
Kuusa	(24-32 years of age)
Raaba Doorii	(32-40 years of age)
Gadaa	(40-48 years of age)
Yuba I	(48-56 years of age)
Yuba II	(56-64 years of age)
Yuba III	(64-72 years of age)
Gadamojjii	(72-80 years of age)
Jaarsa	(80 and above years old)

Each of the grades has duties. For instance at the age of 16 they enter the age of *Qondala*. At this age the boys may go long distances for hunting or perform heavy duties. Three years before the end of the *Qondala* grade, they come together and nominate the future group leaders (*hayyu* council), who eventually constitute its presidium and thereby the executive, judicial, and ritual authorities. At the age of the *Kuusa* grade, the previously elected officials are formally installed in office although they do not yet assume full authority except in their own group. At the grade of *Raaba Doorii*, members are allowed to marry and at the end of this class the members enter *Luba*, or Gadaa.

The most important class of the whole system is the *Gadaa* or *Luba* class. It is at this grade



that the group “attains full status, and takes up their position as the ruling Gadaa class” (Melba, 1988:12). The former ruling class, or the *Luba*, hands over the position peacefully to the coming one and they enter the *Yuba* class where they act as advisors. Melba (1978:13) describes the Gadaa officials and their duties among the *Tullama* Oromo as follows:

- |                 |   |
|-----------------|---|
| 1. Abbaa Bokku  | President   |
| 2. Abbaa Bokku  | First vice president  |
| 3. Abbaa Bokku  | second vice-president   |
| 4. Abbaa Chaffe | Chairman of the Assembly (Chaffe)                                     |
| 5. Abbaa Dubbi  | Speaker who presents the decision of the presidium to the Assembly    |
| 6. Abbaa Seera  | Memorizer of the laws and the results of the Assembly’s deliberations |
| 7. Abbaa Alanga | Judge who executes the decision                                       |
| 8. Abbaa Duula  | In charge of the army   |
| 9. Abbaa Sa’a   | In charge of the economy  |

The Gadaa system has been undergoing evolutionary changes like any other cultures adapting to changing conditions. However, the most fundamental changes of the Gadaa started at the end of the eighteenth century mainly by events set in motion from outside the Oromo society that cannot be considered as a natural development. Melba (1988:15-16) stated three major factors that contributed to the collapse of the Gadaa system among the Oromo people. The first factor is the protracted wars that preceded the onset of colonisation. Because of the insecurity imposed by the wars on the Oromo people, the Abbaa Duulas (fathers of war) stayed at their posts for a much longer period than required by the Gadaa rules. Then later they declared themselves as *Mootii* (kings).

The second factor was the coming of new beliefs and religions. The politico-religious aggressions that took place in the expansion of Islam and Christianity severely affected the culture of the Oromo people. The invasions of the Oromo land by Muslims in the East and south and by Christians in the North have left their mark on the Oromo culture.

The third factor could be the changes in the mode of living of the several Oromo communities. The change from nomadic pastoralism to mixed agriculture, and the introduction and expansion of trade could be another factor.

The fourth factor that had tremendously reduced the political and the usefulness of the Gadaa system was Amhara colonization. The colonizers took the administrative affairs and management of the national economy. Astem noted that “Menilek outlawed the major Chaffe meetings in the Oromo areas he conquered”. Another writer, Bartels (1973:15) noted that Gadaa, “was gradually deprived by Amaras of most of its political and judicial powers and

reduced merely to ritual institution." The Boran and Guji Oromo of south Ethiopia still today have Gadaa practices. However, the Gadaa practice has become a thing of the past in Wollaga.

#### **2.4.2 The Oromo Calendar**

Time is important in the Gadaa system. Gadaa itself categorises the people according to age, and the Gadaa ritual Buttaa has a fixed time in which it is celebrated (every eight years). The Gadaa system therefore typifies the importance of time to the Oromo society. Some scholars agree that the Oromo invented a scientific method of time keeping and their own calendar. This calendar has been in operation much earlier than the commencement of the Gadaa practices. It has been postulated that the Oromo calendar was invented in 300 B.C. (Melba 1988:18). This calendar is based on Lunar and Solar Cycles. Day time begins and ends with the rising and setting of the Sun. Days of the months are given names.

#### **2.4.3 Oromo Marriage**

According to the Oromo culture, marriage must be done outside one's clan or lineage. Marriage is not allowed within one's lineage, because people of the same kin should not mingle. A man has to court a girl from outside of his lineage counting down to seven generations. Among the Matcha Oromo, where this study focuses, marriage is seen as shedding of blood and shedding of one's own blood is not allowed. This means during the first sexual intercourse with the groom the lady sheds her maiden blood for the sake of motherhood (this idea of blood shed connected with female fertility remains with sexual intercourse). No doubt, incest is considered as taboo and is called *haramu* (trouble sin).

It means incest is a great sin. The Oromo people say

having sexual intercourse with your own sister, a daughter of your own father or mother is worse than killing your brother. Incest is a great sin. It is worse than stealing. It is bad as murder...A man who kills another person and a man who lies with his sister, that is the same. It can only be washed away by blood, It is bad, very bad (Bartels 1983:208).

To avoid incest, and to keep the *Gadaa* rules that limit age of marriage, the traditional Oromos prefer arranged marriage. There are different kinds of marriage in the Oromo society,

and the three common ones are: arranged marriage, which is done through parents' negotiations; the flight marriage, which is done in agreement with the couple without informing the parents and the abduction marriage. Abduction marriage is condemned by the society, but can be accepted only if elders settle the case through reconciliation. Marriage is not a matter for individuals, but concerns the immediate families, extended families and the community. Therefore, in any marriage the involvement of families, extended families, and prominent Oromo elders is so important and is intended to explore whether the union is culturally acceptable. After marriage the couple is guarded by the two families of the husband and the wife. Most of the time the elders intervene and solve the disputes that may occur within a marriage. Consequently, divorce is very rare among the traditional Oromo people.

## 2.5 Oromo Traditional Religion

### 2.5.1 Oromo Concepts of God

Most scholars agree that Oromo People are not heathens but believe in the existence of God. They believe in one God called *Waaqa*. According to Bartels (1983:89), an anthropologist and Catholic priest who lived in Western Wollaga for more than ten years and who studied the Oromo Traditional Religion (OTR), the word *Waaqa* has a double meaning. The first is "sky" and the second approximates what is meant by the English word "God". An African scholar, John S. Mbiti (1969:29), who studied 300 African societies (the Oromos included), points out that African knowledge of God is expressed in proverbs, short statements, songs, prayers, names, myths, stories and religious ceremonies. Further he concludes that God is no stranger to African peoples and in traditional life there are no atheists. The Oromos express their belief in God in different ways. John Ludwig Krapf, a missionary from Church Missionary Society (CSM) visited the Oromo people in 1839 and wrote about OTR in his personal diary as follows:

As to the rest, I must oppose those who are of the opinion that the Gallas have no religious ideas whatever (sic) certain it is, that they have an idea of an invisible Being, which they call *Wake*- that man exists after death, receiving the wages of his bad or good life- that they pray to *Wake*, and sacrifices to the Deities *Ogha* and *Atete* - and that they have a kind of priest, called *Kallitshotsh*, and some civil order. It is remarkable that they very much esteem the Lord's Day, which they call *Senbata Gudda* (Great Sabbath), on which day they do not labour. Very early in the morning they pray to the *Wake* (Krapf 1840 :121-2).

Like Krapf, M.de Almeida (1628-46) also writes that “The Galla (Oromo) are neither Christians, moors nor heathens, for they have no idols to worship” (quoted in Melba 1988:19). With these facts in mind, it is appropriate to examine some elements of Oromo traditional religion that overlaps with Christianity.

### 2.5.1.1 Name of God

The Oromos have different names for God. They call *Waaqayyo*, *Waaqa*, which means “God”. The same God is also called *Uuma* meaning “Creator”. Another name for same God is also called *Ulfín* that denotes the *Waaqa*'s greatness. The Oromo People say *Waaqa* is Holy and in olden days they do not call *Waaqa* by name but call Him *Ulfín* meaning “honour.” They also call him *Aabba* (father). “There was much more blessing in those times when people did not call *Waaqa* by His name. This is similar to Jewish people who say 'Lord' instead of “Jehovah.” Onesimos Neisb, who translated the Bible into the Oromo language used *Waaqayyo* (*Waaqa*) to replace the word “God.” This means the OTR played significant role in supplying vocabulary to Christianity.

The Oromos say nobody has seen God but we know by His nature. Bartels describes how the Oromos justify the existence of the unseen God recording the conversation of a young man with his grandfather as follows:

“I had spoken with my grandfather about *Waaqa*. I told him I wanted to see *Waaqa*, or at least something of him. At that (*sic*) my grand father said to me: “To *Waaqa* we are only very small ants. How then can we see him? Did you ever look at ants, my grandson? - ‘Yes, I did,’ I said.- ‘Do you think they saw you?’- ‘I do not know. They did not seem to care about me. I was looking at them and they all went their own way.’- ‘So it is with us and *Waaqa*, my grandson. You were to those ants as *Waaqa* is to us. You saw them, but they did not see you. In the same way, *Waaqa*, sees us but we do not see *Waaqa*. However, because of many things he is there”(1983:91-92).

Thus the Oromos understand that God exists. They have different expressions of God and here are some of their expressions.

### 2.5.1.2 Nature of God

The Oromo people express the nature of God at least in four ways: The first is that they see Waaqa as giver of good things. According to Bartels, the Matcha Oromos say *Waaqa irraa nuuf ha tolu lafa irra nuuf ha tolu* meaning: may Waaqa give us good things from the sky and good things from the earth. This shows that they believe that God is the one who gives good things. This idea corresponds with what Paul wrote saying “My God will supply all your needs” (Phil 4:19).

Secondly, Waaqa is the creator. The Matcha Oromos say Waaqa, who is Supreme Being, is the giver of life through His work of *Umu* (create) in a sense of causing something to exist. For example they say “children are born from the blood of father and mother if Waaqa wishes” (Bartels 1983:91). Sometimes the name given to a child expresses that God is creator. For instance they name a baby boy “Waaquma” meaning Waaqa is creator. This implies that God is seen as a source of life and is similar to what is recorded in Colossians 3:4 that Paul says “Your real life is Christ...”.

The third, Waaqa is whom one can be depended on. The Oromos express dependency on God through their proverb. *Mana Waq ijaaretu ijarama* means “a house that is built by Waaqa will be completed”. This is similar to what Jesus said “you cannot bear fruit unless you remain in me” (John.15:4) and “God is our Shelter” (Ps.46.1).

The fourth expression, Waaqa knows all things. The Oromos illustrate that God is the one who knows every thing by their proverb: *Waaqni garaa dhagaa keessayu beka* “Waaq even knows the heart of the stone”. Here “heart of stone” means seeing inside a stone without breaking it. This expression corresponds with Peter’s saying to Jesus “... Lord You know everything...”(John.21:17).

### 2.5.2 Oromo Concepts of Divinities

Oromo people believe in many Saint-like divinities called *Ayyana*, and each is seen as a manifestation of one waaqa (one God). The *Ayyanas* are like helpers and messengers for God. The *Ayyanas* hold responsibility for caring for the earth. Angels also exist with some responsibilities given to them by God. For instance, the Guji Oromos of South Ethiopia say

“in old times God was nearer to earth and people, but for some reason He left for heaven leaving the responsibilities of caring for the earth and people in the hands of messengers and helpers.” Van De Loo, 1991:285). Recognising the difficulty of defining Ayyanas, Bartels (1983:118) tries to describe *Ayyana* that:

Comprise more than just an idea of superhuman power dwelling in a person, an animal or plant...it also can have the connotation of a guardian spirit who protects and guides. It is something of *Waaqa* in a person, an animal or plant making them the way they are: a particular manifestation of the divine, of *Waaqa* as creator and source of all life...They are something of *Waaqa*. It is in the many, many *ayana* that *Waaqa* himself comes close to us and that we are united to him.

The Guardian spirits protect human beings from the evil spirits. Evil spirits are considered as those that attack people.

### **2.5.3 Oromo Concepts of Evil Spirits**

The Oromos believe that evil spirits (devils) work to the disadvantage of the people and are independent spirits, enemies of *Waaqa* and man (Bartels 1983:120). According to the Guji Oromo the evil spirits called *setana* (satan) came during Egyptian attack of Harar in 1875 with the influence of Islam and attacked their cattle (van de Loo, 1991:288-9). They consider *Setana* as hungry, thirsty and always in need of a goat sacrifice. It is an enemy and will attack with disease if it does not get a sacrifice.

### **2.5.4 Oromo Concepts of Life after death**

The Oromo people believe that individuals who die exist in the form of spirits called ‘*ekera*’ and stay within the vicinity where the deceased lived. His or her son will give offerings such as slaughtering of an animal to one’s parent *ekera* (Melba 1988:21). The son of the deceased person brings an offering to the *ekera* of his father. Unlike other African societies the Oromo *Eker*a does not have any kind of mediation role. The Oromo also have the idea of heaven and hell. Alan R. Tippett noted that “the Galla did have the idea in pre-Christian time that an upright person goes to paradise and a sinful man into a deep hole” (Tippett 1970:272). Paradise is like to heaven in the sky while a deep hole is the suffering place underneath the

Earth.

### 2.5.5 Ransom

In the Oromo culture, the elders are mediators to settle even cases of 'Guma' [murder], paying ransom (Tippett 1970:239) and performing the ritual of purification after a homicide. Their Gadaa culture holds that the person who killed another person shall pay a ransom to be reconciled to the relatives of the dead person. There should be a ritual of washing the blood from one's hands called *halu basu*. If not done, *Waaqa* is angry with him as is the *ayyana* of man he killed and the *ayyana* of that man's lineage. They will seek to harm him by striking him with blindness or leprosy (Gammachu Megersa quoted in Bartels 1983:232). This ritual is done by killing a sheep called '*qupha*' (has minor value) to show that the killer is sorry for his sin before *Waaqa*. By killing the sheep and washing hands with the sheep's blood he calls his kinsfolk and asks them to pray for him. Bartels records the prayer:

*Waaqa* , take his '*halu*' away from him. We ourselves have forgiven him his deed. O. *Waaqa* do you forgive him also, because we ask you for this (1983:235)

After they have done all these things they throw the sheep away, moreover the knife with which it was killed; and they go away without turning to look (Baqqala Lamu quoted in Bartels 1983:235). This ritual helps the Oromo people to accept the death of Jesus as the ransom payment for the sins of the people. Because in their tradition there are rituals of forgiveness, even for a big sin such as killing a person.

### 2.5.6 Worship

The Oromo people are also a praying society. John S. Mbiti (1969:62) noted that, "the Galla make frequent prayers and invocations to God in the morning and evening, asking Him to protect them, their cattle, their crops and their families." Hulting (1990:157) also states that the Oromo elders communicate with God through prayers and sacrifice. They are constantly concerned with the maintenance of peace that is the necessary condition for the flow of God's blessings and the continuity of life. The Oromo elders give blessings during weddings, meetings, child-naming rituals, yearly festivals such as *Irressa* (thanksgiving festival) and similar occasions. The Oromo traditional house of worship or of ritual is called *Galma* where

the followers of the religion meet every Thursday and Saturday nights. Here they dance, beat drums, sing and pray. There are other places of worship where the *Qallu* leads for example under trees, beside large bodies of water and at the side of a big mountains.

*Galmas* are similar to Synagogues in Old Testament time. Their prayer beside the hills and bodies of water has similarity with Jesus' sermon on the mount (Matt.5), his prayer up the hill (Matt.13:23), and his teaching of crowd by the Lake (Mark.3:7-12). In other words there is similarity between Jewish Christian worship and the OTR worship style.

### 2.5.7 The Qallu Institution

In Oromo traditional religion there are ritual experts called *Qallu* (male) or *Qallitti* (female) who keep the relationship between Ayyana and the Oromo people. The *Qallu* institution is one of the most important in the Oromo culture. It is considered to be the protector and preserver of Oromo culture more or less in the same way as the Ethiopian Orthodox Church is the preserver of Abyssinian culture (Melba 1988:19-20). It is possible to say that the *Qallu* office is very respected because it has three significant roles in the society.

The first role is that *Qallu* acts as High Priest. *Qallu* is as a Bishop in a Christian world and it is usually hereditary but open to anyone who can provide sufficient evidence that he has contact with *Ayana* (divinity). A *Qallu* is considered as clean and pure, one who respects Oromo traditional taboos or *safu*, who avoids sin and follows the truth (Tippet 1970:243). This is very similar to the Jewish High priest who is considered a holy person and mediates between God and Israel. The Guji Oromos believe that *Qallu* comes from divine origin. This is similar to that of the belief of Israelites high priest Melchizedek (a priest of the Most High God who brought bread and wine to Abram.Gen.14).

The second role of *Qallu* is that of a prophet. According to the study of Tippet (1970:178), the word given to *Qallu* as a witch-doctor is not accurate and he describes *Qallu* as follows:

The English speaking foreigner in South west Ethiopia speaks of witch-doctor although in a point of fact he or she has nothing to do with witchcraft. I met no witches and no witch-finders...These 'witch-doctors' are accepted as socially essential. There is nothing involuntary or imaginary. They are real persons, firmly established in their business, sometimes part of the hierarchy, usually the most affluent persons in the community...



even where the word *kalu* is used for general talk one can be more precise by saying *Ogessa* (diviner), *radu* (seer), *Karafor* or *irressa* (rain maker).

Some times a *Qallu* is called *Raaji* or *Ooda* (Prophet) to whom the Oromo people go and consult about their problems. For instance, an old man went to the prophet to ask about his farm field and said,

I asked a prophet (raaji) what I should do. He told me saying “every time you plough, take some beer in a little calabash and pour it out in the earth as soon as you have opened it. If you do this your harvest will be good” All my life I have done as he told me, and my harvest has always been good (Bartels 1970:110).

The third role is that *Qalu* acts as a Political leader. Politically *Qallu* does not possess office. However, *Qallu* has political importance in the *Gadaa* system. According to Melba (1988:20) the *Qallu* village is a spiritual centre, where political debates are organised for the candidates of the *Gada* offices. It is the *Qallu* himself who organises and oversees the election of *Gadaa* leaders. The important ceremonial articles (collective symbols) such as *bokku* (sceptre), the national flag and *Kallacha* are kept in the *Qallu* village.

The *Gadaa* class in power honours the *Qallu* by taking gifts and making pledges of reverence during ceremony called the *Muuda* or anointment ceremony. Until the last decade of the nineteenth century, the Matcha Oromo (whom the study focus on) went on pilgrimage to *Abba Muuda* (father or dispenser of anointment). *Abba Muuda* was the most great and ancient of all *Qallus*.

### **2.5.8 Sacrificial Rituals**

The Oromo people have different kinds of sacrificial rituals such as *Jari gatu*, *Abdari*, and *Yarabbi*. *Jari gatu* is a sacrifice performed at the end of the rainy season. Cooked food is thrown on the garden so that the animals eat it and stop destroying the crops. They believe that once this ritual is done the animals do not destroy the crops. *Abdari* is men’s ritual of thanksgiving to *Waaqa* for the harvest. During this time, men bring pure black sheep and then praise *Waaqa*, whereas during *Yarabi* (women’s ritual) women offer cooked bread from the harvest also as a praise to *Waaqa*. During the *Yarabi* sacrificial ritual the Oromo women pray

for plenty and peace (Bartels 1983:347-355). These Sacrificial rituals are usually done once a year as part of the year's festivals.

The Oromo *Qallu* also brings sacrifice to God whenever there is a problem or need. Tippet (1970:181) stated how a *Qallu* sacrifices and prays during drought,

The Galla witch-doctor also appears to have been involved in the process of rain-making. This involved his journey to a sacred mountain and the sacrifice of a bull as a burnt offering with a prayer.

The Oromo people have another thanksgiving offering called *Irressa*. Every year, before harvest season, they take the first harvest, cook and take it to the place where the offering is done, most of the time near the river (Melba 1988:21).

The other important sacrificial ritual is the offering done for the forgiveness of sins. The Guji Oromos have a belief that every transgression of *Seera*, the law of *waaqa* as proclaimed by *abba Gadaa* (*Gadaa* leader), is *Cubbu* (sin). Failure to respect the customs (*saffu*) of the society, is also sin and sin causes misfortune such as disease, in cattle and humans, or ecological catastrophes. The relationship between clans or between families can be disturbed through *cubbu* and a mediator must intervene. To restore the good relations with *waaqa*, to get peace and to avoid calamities sacrifices must be offered (Van de Loo, 1991:287). This is similar to the Old Testament offerings in Leviticus chapter 4.

The Oromos have a concept of human sacrifice. Bartels (1983:74), records an incident of a clash occurred between two clans of Sayo Oromo (the Galaan and Awu) on the ownership of Hora Gorba (Mineral water used as medicine for cattle) and went to the *Gadaa* judges. The judges decided that a clan who sacrifices a white bull will get the mineral water. At this moment, the Awu clan leader approached the judge to sacrifice himself. The incident was noted:

"I have something to ask you," he said. "*Korma namamo korma sa'atu tchala?*-which is greater: a human bull or a real bull?"- "A man bull is greater," they said. "I am the bull the leader said. He went to the horra, cut his throat and made his blood flow into the *horra*. In this way the Hora Gorba passed into the ownership of the Awu (1983:74).

This story implies that human sacrifice was being practiced by the Oromo people. This means

they do not have a problem of understanding the sacrificial work done by Jesus.

## **2.6 Summary**

This chapter, has attempted to introduce the origin of the Oromo people as the Kushetic people. They lived in East Africa for thousands of years and they make up half of the population of the present Ethiopia. It was noted that the Oromo people have only one single language, *Oromiffa*, and a very rich culture. Some significant aspects of the Oromo culture include the Gadaa system, which is the highly developed democratic system, that guides the social, political, economic and religious life of the Oromo society. We have also seen how the Gadaa system was banned in some areas and suppressed in the other parts of Oromia.

This chapter has also introduced the ancient scientific discovery of the Oromo calendar and the Oromo traditional marriage patterns. We have explored some elements of the Oromo traditional religion that include the concepts of God, nature of God, Oromo worship and sacrificial rituals. This chapter has also illustrated the important office of Qallu in the Oromo traditional life. It was my intention to show that some of the OTR and Oromo culture can be compatible with Christianity. The Chapter that follows will introduce mission agencies that were responsible for bringing Christianity to Oromia.

## CHAPTER THREE CHRISTIAN MISSION AGENCIES IN OROMOIA

### 3.1 Aim of the Chapter

The aim of this chapter is to introduce the Ethiopian Orthodox Church (EOC), the Swedish Evangelical Mission (SEM), the United Presbyterian Church of North America Mission (UPCNAM) and the Hermannsburg Mission (HM). They were the key agencies in the evangelization of the Wollaga Oromos. The country of origin for these agencies, their brief historical background, how they came to Wollaga and some of their achievements will be highlighted

### 3.2 The Ethiopian Orthodox Church

#### 3.2.1 The Origin and Size of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church

Christianity was introduced to Ethiopia in the fourth century A.D. while much of Europe was still unevangelised and the native peoples of America still pursued primal religions. According to Isichei (1995:32), Frumentius of Syria became acting regent of the Aksum Kingdom, when King Amida died leaving his infant Ezana (the future King). Frumentius converted Ezana and other Ethiopians to Christianity. Later Frumentius was appointed as the first Bishop of the Ethiopian Church. The Ethiopians gave him another name *Abba Salama* (Father of the light). It took more than a century before the growth of Christianity became evident the kingdom of Aksum. It was with the coming of nine monks from Syria in the fifth century, that Orthodox Christianity was encouraged and spread to other parts of Ethiopia. These nine monks, whom Ethiopia remembers as nine saints, “undertook evangelism, built up permanent centres for learning, and translated the Bible and other religious books into *Geez*” (Bakke 1987:51). It is possible that these monks were monophysites (Isichei 1995:33) and through them Orthodox Christianity spread far and took the name Ethiopian Orthodox Church (EOC).

Orthodox Christianity is divided into the Russian, Greek, Syrian and Ethiopian Orthodox Churches (Parker 1995:53). The EOC differs from other Christian Churches in the use of the old Judaic religious calendar, in accepting eighty one books in the Bible and in its rituals. Parker (1995:54) states that:

The Ethiopian Orthodox Church has incorporated elements of Judaism and even, possibly, ancient Egyptian religious ceremonies into the Christian faith. Its practices are arcane, complex, and almost unfathomable to the uninitiated. It is a severe and ascetic faith. Judaic laws on diet and circumcision are followed strictly.

He also writes that during persecution, most of the Churches were built on cliff tops, on islands and mountains. However at the height of its power the Church amassed huge wealth; it owned fifteen percent of the land, and collected tax from its tenants (Parker 1995:54). Today the EOC is the largest Christian denomination in Ethiopia. Isichei (1995:52) says, "No country in the world is so full of Churches, monasteries, and ecclesiastics as Abyssinia." Parker (1995:54), writing about the size of the EOC, its clergy and mode of worship says:

It is estimated that there are 20 million Christians in Ethiopia. The Church itself claims 38 million. Today the clergy number about 200,000 scattered in 15,000 Churches. A Sunday Communion Ceremony (*Qidase*) needs two priests and three deacons to officiate. Much of the Church liturgy is conducted in Geez, the parent language of the Ethiopian high land-the Latin of Ethiopia.

### **3.2.2 The Ethiopian Orthodox Church Mission in Wollaga**

Some scholars allege that the EOC established itself in Wollaga along with the colonisation of the Oromo people. Melba (1988:53), argues that the EOC built its mission and Church planting upon the conquest of the Oromo.

While Minelik was busy invading the Oromo lands around Shawa, Tekle Haimanot of Gojam was fighting in the West, across Abbaya (Blue Nile) for his share in the scramble for the Oromo lands. In the 1870s the Gojamites crossed the *Abbaya*, pillaged and devastated parts of Guduru, Horo, Gindabarat and Jimmaa Raaree, etc. They forced Oromo to build Orthodox Churches and pay tribute.

Aren (1978:374) and Bakke (1987:108) seem to agree with Melba. This shows that the introduction of Christianity to Wollaga came hand in hand with the Amhara colonisation of Wollaga Oromo. Accompanying this, Bakke (1987:51) comments that the EOC did not seem to have any organised programme of missionary outreach. However, under the assistance of the local governors, some monks and priests did their best to establish the EOC in Wollaga.

Aren (1978:373) elaborates on some of the EOC mission achievements stating that the first Church to be founded to the West of Wollaga was founded by a monk from Gojam in 1890. In 1889 Moroda, the governor of Wollaga died and his son, *Dajazmach* Gebre-Egziabher or Kumsa, became the governor of Wollaga. Like his father, Kumsa became loyal to Emperor Minelik and enjoyed local autonomy. He began to establish Orthodox Churches in other parts of Wollaga, where he appointed his local governors. Aren (1978:394) further elaborates on the establishment of the EOC in Wollaga, in the period 1890-1900:

Gebre-Egziabher, who moved his residence from Neqamte to Najo, had built *Kidane Mihiret* at that place about 1893 and the same year another Church at Mendi, a trading centre further west towards the Dabus. A Church had also been founded at Gimbi around the mid-1890s, whereas Ogio Giorgis in Sadi, in Southern Wollega, where *Fitawrary* Yadessa Guma (1849-1926) was governor, is presumed to have been established around 1900.

Thus the Christianity that arrived in Ethiopia in the fourth century was introduced to Wollaga Oromo within the period 1882 to 1900. This period is therefore recognised as particularly important in the history of the expansion of the EOC in Wollaga. In the same manner more Orthodox Churches were built by monks and local governors, who remained loyal to Emperor Minelik and Emperor Haile Sillasse. Given this understanding we shall proceed to the next section, which introduces the SEM, another key agency in the evangelization of Wollaga Oromo.

### **3.3. The Swedish Evangelical Mission**

#### **3.3.1 The Origin of the Swedish Evangelical Mission**

Aren (1978:114) points out that the Swedish Evangelical Mission (SEM) grew out of the Revival Movement in the Church of Sweden under the influence of the Evangelical Revival in the British Isles and in Europe. This revival movement had a centre in Uppsala, where university students met for Bible study and prayer under the leadership of Rev. Hans Jakob Lundborg who had a vision of nation-wide revival (Aren 1978:118). Therefore, on 7 May 1856, Lundborg gathered people with similar ideas at his house in Stockholm. He formed a Society for promoting the Gospel in Sweden that was later called the Swedish Evangelical Mission (Aren 1978:119). The Swedish Evangelical Mission in its fifth annual conference on 18 June 1861 widened its aim of service and resolved to “form a special department for foreign mission with a view of sending out missionaries and farmers who shall settle at

appointed places in heathen parts and train indigenous mission workers through the work of the Gospel” (Aren 1978:120).

Considering this resolution they continued praying and looking for mission fields for four years. Then Dr Waldemar Rudin, the SEM Secretary for overseas mission, asked Bishop Gobat of Jerusalem for his opinion about mission fields. Gobat in his reply stated that he had always taken a lively interest in the Oromo people. In one letter he expressed this by saying: “From what I know of their character I have the conviction that if a mission could be established among them it would prove eminently successful” which created an interest in the SEM Board. However, due to the religio-political climate, Gobat had a sudden change of mind and advised against sending missionaries to Ethiopia (Aren 1978:121).

### **3.3.2 The Swedish Evangelical Mission initial Attempt to Reach the Oromo**

Regardless of much discouraging advises from others, the SEM Board followed the advice given by Johann Ludwig Krapf, a famous German missionary in the service of the Church Missionary Society of England. Krapf knew about the Oromo people during his stay in Ethiopia between 1839-1842. Accepting Krapf's advice, the SEM started an outreach to the Oromo people, which formed an integral part of their missionary vision. Also, much valuable information was collected and Oromo language study was initiated (Aren 1978:123).

The first SEM missionaries arrived at Masawa on the Red Sea in 1866 and started to preach the Gospel to the Kunama people, while waiting for the opportunity to cross to Oromo land. Later in 1869, a group of nine other missionaries that included Rev. Bengt Lundahl came to Kunama village to reinforce the work. However, they withdrew from Kunama and went back to Masawa on 26 February 1870, due to the Egyptian attack, illness and the death of some missionaries. This ended their attempt to reach the Oromo people through the Sudan (Aren 1978: 127-48). However, the SEM did not give up and continued exploring other possibilities to reach the Oromo people.

### **3.3.3 The Swedish Evangelical Mission in Wollaga**

A priest named Gabra-Ewostateos was among the young EOC priests, who learned the New Testament from the SEM in Eritrea and became member of the Lutheran Church in Eritrea. Gabra Ewostateos wanted to be a missionary to the Oromo people. To qualify he secretly

learned the Oromo language from Onesimos Nesib. Daniel Dabala was among the liberated Oromo slaves who received the Gospel and was trained by the SEM at Masawa school. These two nationals were sent by the SEM during the fifth Oromo expedition.

Gabra-Ewostateos and his wife Gumesh, an evangelist named Daniel and his wife Tiru, left Asmera on 11 February 1897 (Aren 1978:388). They took the New Testament and hymn books that Onesimos translated into the Oromo language. They arrived in Bojji, Wollaga in 1898, preached the Gospel in Oromo, built a school and laid the foundation for the evangelical Church in the Oromo country. This group became the evangelical pioneers by achieving the goal of the HM and the SEM.

Daneil died on 13 August 1904 due to poor health and Gabra-Ewostateos died by accident on 10 April 1905 (Aren 1978:410). After the death of evangelical pioneers, other indigenous missionaries led by Onesimos arrived in Wollaga on April 15, 1904. Onesimos continued the work by opening a school, preaching the Gospel in Oromo and distributing the Oromo Bible. In 1923, the first missionary from the SEM, Dr Erik Soderstrom arrived in Wollaga and settled in Neqamte. Rev. Martin Nordfeldt followed and opened a mission station in Najjo in 1927 (Eide 1996:59). The SEM opened a Hospital in Naqamte and clinics at Bojjii, Najjo and Bakko. They also introduced modern education to the Oromo people in Wollaga and started Najjo Bible school, where evangelists and pastors were trained.

### **3.4. The United Presbyterian Church of North America Mission**

#### **3.4.1 The Origin of the United Presbyterian Church of North America Mission**

The United Presbyterian Church of North America (UPCNAM) is a Protestant Church Organisation. There were two Presbyterian Churches in the USA: the Presbyterian Church USA, which was functioning in the Southern part of the USA and the United Presbyterian Church of North America (UPCNAM), which functioned mainly in the northern part of the USA.

From their headquarters in Philadelphia, the UPCNA opened up the Board of Foreign Missions, with the aim of reaching out with the Gospel to the heathen world. The Board of Foreign Missions, which was answerable to the General Assembly of UPCNA, began to send out missionaries to Asia, Europe, Latin America, Africa and other places. They sent trained



pastors, teachers and medical professionals as missionaries to Egypt and started mission stations.

It was John Ludwig Krapf (1818-1881), who in 1868 brought Ethiopia to the attention of the UPCNA Mission in Egypt as a mission field (Birri *et al* 1997:1). The UPCNA mission in Egypt accepted the invitation, and requested permission of the General Assembly of UPCNA through the Board of Foreign Missions. The Assembly resolved to recognise Abyssinia as an extension of the Egyptian Mission in May 1869. But this resolution could not be realised because of the difficult political situation in Ethiopia then. While waiting for the opportunity to enter the Oromo land, the UPCNA mission in Egypt extended its work to the Sudan and opened a station at Nassir in 1913. Five years later *Dejazmach* Birru Wolde Gabriel, the governor of Sayo district, invited Dr Thomas Alexander Lambie (1885-1954) to come and serve in Ethiopia as a missionary. The governor invited the missionaries so that they teach and give medical treatment.

### **3.4.2 The United Presbyterian Church of North America Mission in Wollaga**

Dr Lambie received the invitation and requested permission from the Board of Mission in Philadelphia. The request was granted. Dr Lambie and his group arrived in Sayo on July 11, 1919. This was the beginning of work of the United Presbyterian Church of North American Mission (UPCNAM) in Ethiopia. The work of the UPCNAM later led to the birth of the Evangelical Church Bethel as a national Church. This mission was recognised as an independent body by the Board of Foreign Missions and the General Assembly of the United Presbyterian Church of North America in 1947 (Birri *et al* 1997:4).

## **3.5 The Hermannsburg Mission**

### **3.5.1. The Origin of the Hermannsburg Mission**

The Hermannsburg mission (HM) is one of the Lutheran Mission societies formed in Germany in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. A German Pastor, Ludwig Krapf studied Ludolf's history of Ethiopia before he came to Ethiopia to serve as a missionary with the Church Missionary Society (CMS). In his study, he read what Balhazar wrote about the Oromo of Ethiopia (then called *Galla*) in comparing them to the Germanic tribe. "The idea kept Krapf spellbound. Numerous

virile divided into tribes, yet one people with a great potential-that was a picture he retained in his mind” (Aren,1978:72). In 1839 he was sent to Ethiopia by the Church Missionary Society (CMS). The year 1839 was especially remembered as the time when the Abyssinian king Sahile Sellasse invaded the Oromo tribe in the Southern Showa province.

Krapf accompanied the King when he invaded the Oromo people. It was during this time that Krapf came into contact with and properly studied the Oromo people. Through his study, Krapf was attracted to the Oromo people and introduced them to his friends in Europe which led to the formation of the HM. Aren states this as follows:

The more he learnt of the Oromo people, the more he was taken by them. He went so far as to predict that they “in time might become for Africa, what our Germany became for Europe”. In saying this he was largely influenced by the description of the Oromo that his Jesuit precursor had given. His words made a great impact on friends in Europe. “The Germany of Africa” became a catchword. Converted to Christ the Oromo would have an important mission to fulfil in the Horn of Africa by forming a mighty bulwark against Islam. The idea kindled a fire in soul of Louis Harms at Hermanssburg and eventually led to new enterprise of missionary pioneering (Aren 1978:73).

Louis Harms wrote in one of his reports stating as follows: “In the last week the country of the Galla in East Africa downwards from Abyssinia has become so very important to me and I believe there is no country in Africa more promising for mission than this one.” (Harms 1999:16). With the aim of reaching the Oromo people, he bought a house, requested his brother Theoder to be a teacher and started a mission school, admitting twelve young men in October 1849. That was the beginning of the Hermanssburg Mission (Harms 1999:15).

### **3.5.2 The Hermanssburg Mission Attempt to Reach the Oromo People**

Louis Harms believed that the Oromo country is where God called them to witness the Gospel. Then he began to plan sending missionaries to the Oromo people. Through the support of some friends he built a ship, named it “Kandaze” a name after Queen Candace of Ethiopia. The idea was that the ship was to serve the Black people in Africa. The ship with sixteen young missionaries on board, launched in September 1853 and reached Mombassa after about seven months in 1854. Eight of the sixteen missionaries were trained theologians and the other eight were craftsmen and farm workers. After reaching Mombassa, they met with great disappointment: The Arab governors prevented them from entering the Oromo land. Another disappointment was that Krapf, who was supposed to wait for them, left for Germany. There are two possible reasons why they were forbidden. The first was the Arabs

did not want the missionaries in that region because they did not want observers of the slave trade. The other possible reason could be that the European traders feared competition in their trade with liquor and arms. Three of the missionaries made a secret expedition but this expedition worsened the situation and they were ordered to leave. Sadly, they returned to Durban where they found friends who helped them to settle in Natal, founded Hermannsburg Mission station and began evangelism among the Zulu people.

Four years later, in 1857, six out of the next group of missionaries (three ordained and three colonists) were commissioned again for the mission to the Oromo. The second group bypassed Mombassa, landed at a place further North, made a short exploration trip through the Somali territory but soon convinced themselves that it was nothing but desert. Two of the men soon fell seriously ill and a missionary by the name J.E Klasen died on the Indian ocean. The other missionary, a sailor, had to be left in Mauritius because of a storm. The other four tried, but failed, to reach the Oromo people and that was the final attempt for the mission to the Oromo people in Louis Harms' time. His successor, Theodor Harms also made another attempt, but failed for similar reason. Louis Harms' plan was fulfilled by the Swedish Evangelical Mission (Harms 1999:17-20).

### **3.5.3 The Hermannsburg Mission in Wollaga**

The indigenous missionaries sent by the SEM began evangelism work among the Western Oromo people in 1898. The work of Evangelical pioneers grew among the Wollaga Oromo and laid the foundation for the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus. According to Eide (1996:59), the first Hermannsburg missionary, Bahlburg, together with the craftsmen, Grabe and Muller, reached in Aira, (South West Wollaga), on 16 July 1928. This date therefore marks the beginning of the work of the Hermannsburg Mission in Western Ethiopia.

The Hermannsburg Mission sent more missionaries and enforced the work that was started by the evangelical pioneers in Wollaga. They found mission stations, built schools and the Aira hospital, introduced modern education and health systems to the Oromo people. The work of the HM grew and more Lutheran congregations were founded in Western Oromia. The congregations were organised and the Western Synod was founded in 1960. This synod had a membership of 91,920 by 1973 (Eide 1996:63).

## 3.6 The Establishment of the Ethiopian Evangelical Church

### Mekane Yesus

Italy invaded Ethiopia in 1935 and the evangelical missionaries left for their respective countries before evangelical Christianity gained ground in Ethiopia. In most places the emerging evangelical Church members stayed in the EOC and began a separate worship after Church service in homes. However, the number of believers grew in Sayo, Aira, Chalia, Bojjii, Naqamte and many other places such as Addis Ababa, Kambata and Sidamo. In places like Sayo the believers broke away from the EOC and started the evangelical Church.

When Italy left Ethiopia in 1941, the EOC continued persecuting and imprisoning the evangelicals. The persecution of the evangelical Church was wide-spread throughout Ethiopia; so, some of the leaders came to Addis Ababa to appeal to the Emperor. This gave them the opportunity of knowing each other and planning the future of their congregations. They came to the realization that they needed to work together than individually, hence they organized themselves to face the challenge and planned future meetings.

According to Birri (1999:8), in 1944, “the evangelical Christians in Wollaga and together with those in Addis Ababa gathered in Neqamte in an attempt to constitute the Ethiopian Evangelical Church as a nation-wide organization for promoting spiritual fellowship, mutual counsel and uniform practice”. Although the missionaries came back the indigenous leaders did not invite the missionaries. Soderstrom, the SEM missionary who was in Neqamte at that time sent the following letter to the director of the SEM concerning the meeting.

A cause for joy is that the national evangelical Christians on their own initiative have issued an invitation to a meeting to be held here in Laqamt on the 10<sup>th</sup> of December and the following days. Various evangelical groups have been requested to send representatives. The purpose of the meeting was spiritual fellowship and to plan the formation of a United evangelical Church. The missionaries have not been invited, which I think was good. May God grant His guidance and blessings to the meeting and the deliberation (quoted in Birri 1999:8).

The meeting resolved that “no Church should be referred to as American, Swedish or English.” In this meeting (1944), the Ethiopian Evangelical Church saw no doctrinal obstacles to overcome in their effort to build up a united Evangelical Church. However, in the meeting

of 1947, when the missionaries were invited, the necessity of common confessional basis was raised. Therefore, the meeting appointed a committee consisted of ten Ethiopians and five missionaries to propose the common confessional book. “The committee proposed that the basis for the United Church should be the Holy Scriptures and the three ancient creeds; and that the teaching of the Church should be in accordance with Luther’s Catechism, but the word ‘Lutheran’ should not necessarily be part of the name of the Church” (Birri 1999:8). This was not acceptable to the missionary representing the American Presbyterian mission and the Ethiopians representing the Bethel in the Committee, and the proposal was not even presented to the conference. “It became evident that the idea of a United Evangelical Church with a common doctrinal basis was doomed to fail” (Birri, 1999:8).

The Presbyterian group came together, organized itself into presbyteries with eighteen congregations and got official permission as a Church from the court of Emperor Haile Sillasse of Ethiopia in 1954 (Tucho, 1999:13). The Church took the name Bethel Evangelical Church (BEC). According to the BEC constitution, the congregations are organized into Presbyteries, presbyteries into Synods and Synods form the BEC.

On the other hand the Lutheran group also continued with the idea of being organized into one national Church. The leaders of the different Lutheran congregations in Ethiopia met in Addis Ababa in April 1958 with the aim of forming one national Church. Two SEM missionaries, Dr Herbert Schefer and Rev Manfred Lundgren prepared the constitution of the Church to be founded. However, the delegates from Gimbi district did not sign to approve the constitution, because they did not have a full delegation from the congregations. Consequently, the meeting was postponed to the following year. Before the meeting was dispersed, they agreed on two things. The first was to have the next meeting in January 1959, and the second was to accept Rev Badima Yalew’s proposal of naming the Church to be *Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus (EECMY)*. Mekane Yesus means the dwelling place of Jesus in the Amharic language.

After nine months, on January 24, 1959, the delegates from Addis Ababa, Adwa, Desse, Naqamte, Gimbi and Sidamo met in the Mekane Yesus congregation building in Addis Ababa. They discussed the constitution, adopted Lutheran doctrine and officially founded the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus (EECMY) as a national Church. Two things need to be noted. The first is that the congregations were not yet organized into synods; the second is that the numbers of members were only 20000. The delegates of this meeting were 25 and this was the first EECMY General Assembly. The Assembly elected Dr Emmanuel

Gabre Sillassie, as the first President, Dr Schefer Vice President, Rev Manfred Lundgren, Treasurer, Ato Hagos Lagasse, General Secretary and Ato Gabrab Biadigilign as Associate General Secretary of the Church (Deres, 1999:6).

According to her constitution, the EECMY organized her congregations into different synods. The congregations established by the SEM and the HM in central Wollaga were organized into Western Synod in 1960 and made its head office at Bojjii. The work of the SEM in Eastern Wollaga and partly Western Shoa province gave rise to the Central Synod that was founded in 1961 making its head office in Naqamte. The Norwegian Lutheran mission and the Danish Evangelical mission began their work in the Southern part of Ethiopia: Bale, Sidamo and Gammu Gofa provinces. These congregations were organized into the South Ethiopia Synod in 1967 with head office in Awasa. The work of the Finnish Missionary Society gave birth to the Kambata Synod in 1977. This Synod was later renamed as South Central Synod. Different mission societies came to Addis Ababa and established congregations. These congregations were organized into Addis Ababa Synod in 1974 (Eide 1996:63).

With the formation of the EECMY, the number of independent evangelical Churches in Ethiopia increased to two (BEC and EECMY). The indigenous leaders, who wanted an indigenous type of Church did not give up but continued with the idea of forming one united evangelical Church. Thus the leaders of the two Churches continued to meet once a year. In 1974 the BEC and the EECMY merged and became one Church adopting the name EECMY. Today the EECMY has 2.5 million members structured into ten Synods, two presbyteries and two work areas.

### **3.7 Summary**

This chapter introduced the EOC as founded through the work of Syrian missionaries, Frumentius and the nine monks. The EOC differs from other Orthodox Churches because it has incorporated elements of Judaism such as circumcision and certain laws concerning diet. Certain ancient Egyptian religious ceremonies have possibly been incorporated into the Christian faith also. It was explained that the EOC is the largest Christian denomination in Ethiopia and has many monasteries and clergy. The EOC came to Wollaga, in 1882, through the colonisation of the Oromo people by Amhara colonisers.

In this chapter, it was discussed that through advice given to them by Krapf, the Swedish

Evangelical Mission reached the Oromo country after many difficulties. They established the first evangelical enterprise in Wollaga. It was stated that the UPCNAM, came to Western Wollaga and started evangelism and subsequently formed the Bethel Evangelical Church in Oromo land. Further it was explored that Krapf's missionary visit report about the Oromo people created interest in his friends in Germany. Louis Harms was among the people who were interested and later founded the HM in 1849 with the aim of reaching the Oromo people with the Gospel. The HM made attempts but were forbidden to enter into the Oromo country. However, after the SEM fulfilled the dream of Harms, the HM sent group of missionaries and strengthened the work of the evangelical pioneers. The work of HM and SEM led to the establishment of the EECMY. The identity of the EECMY and its historical development over the years was also mentioned.

It has been my intention in this chapter to provide a historical backdrop to the evangelization of the Oromo people by introducing the Christian organisations who were the key actors. The subsequent chapters will explore the theme of this thesis, which is the study of the mission methods of the above mentioned Christian missions among the Oromo people.

## **CHAPTER FOUR CHRISTIAN MISSION METHODS PART I**

### **4.1 AIM OF THE CHAPTER**

In this chapter, I will analyse three mission methods used by the EOC, SEM, UPCNA and HM to evangelise the Wollaga Oromo. I will analyze mission agents, Bible translation, Church planting and administration. It is important to discuss the mission agents because they were agents of change in the Oromo society. This study will discuss the types and level of training of the mission agents and will evaluate their suitability to introduce an inculturated Christianity to the Oromo people. Translating the Bible into the Oromo language is part of the process of inculturation. So our interest will be on the mission society that translated the Bible, the type of translation and the scope of utilisation of the Oromo Bible. An analysis of this method will reveal how far the culture of the Oromo people was promoted. This study will proceed to examine how these mission societies started the EECMY, Church building design, the structural organization of the Church and Church leadership style. This is helpful to investigate the extent to which the Oromo culture was assimilated in the Church.

### **4.2 MISSION AGENTS**

Mission agents in this thesis refer to persons involved in the mission work in Ethiopia in general and among the Wollaga Oromo in particular. They were men and women of different professions, ordained ministers (monks, priests, pastors, evangelists), medical doctors, nurses, agricultural experts, civil engineers, and others who participated in the evangelical work. They were both foreigners and indigenous people. In order to analyse the mission methods, it is important to know who these agents were, what their training was, how they approached the Oromo culture and traditions. The study of the mission agents is valid in our quest for inculturation because they were agents of change among the Wollaga Oromo.

#### **4.2.1 The Ethiopian Orthodox Church**

The mission agents of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church seemed to follow the Sacramental Model. "Two groups of monastics arrived from Syria and greatly influenced the shape of the



Ethiopian Church" (Hayes in Saayman 1992:83-4). The main agents of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church mission were monks and priests who did their best to evangelise the non-Christian societies of Ethiopia (Bakke 1987:51) with the assistance and co-operation of the Amhara governors. According to Aren (1978:373), the EOC in Western Wollaga was established by a monk from Gojam named *Abba Wolde-Mikael*, presumably in the 1890s. He further elaborates that: "Every Amhara governor would be accompanied by his father confessor (*ye-niseha abbat*), who saw to it that Churches were founded and the people urged to become Christians" (1978:373).

The father confessors were priests, who had double duties, one was to see that Churches were founded and people became Christians. The other was to serve as the spiritual father of a family. He was normally consulted when major decisions were to be taken. "Family members come to him when they are troubled, or know they have broken regulations concerning fasting, have committed adultery, or fallen into other serious sins" (Bakke 1987:67).

According to Isichei (1995:49-50) the large number of priests have been of limited education. Bosch (1991:232) stated that monasteries were centres of culture and education where monks got adequate education. However, Bakke (1987:74) explains that Ethiopian monastic life does not follow a uniform pattern. "A monk in Ethiopia may be ordained or lay, young or old, celibate or widower or married. He may be illiterate or have studied." He further notes that "The priests were poorly trained and not equipped to transmit even the bare elements of Christianity to the new converts" (1987:52).

This does not mean all the EOC monks and priests were poorly trained. There were the EOC monks and priests who were in the Ethiopian monasteries where the Geez and Amharic languages were taught along with Bible reading and Church Liturgies. Such educated priests were effective in the service they rendered among their own people, the Abyssinians with whom they were able to communicate. They, however, did not qualify to be missionaries among the Oromo people, whose culture, language and religion were completely different, because they were foreigners. Some of them did not even learn theology. Their work was often hindered by differences of language and culture, poor communication and internal conflict in the Church (Bakke 1987:52). Thus these agents of change could not introduce Christianity that has indigenous character to the Oromo people.

## **4.2.2 The Swedish Evangelical Mission**

### **4.2.2.1 Foreign Agency**

The foreign mission agents of the SEM had formal training in theology and other fields of studies such as medicine, agriculture and education. For instance the first SEM foreign missionary Erik Soderstrom was a qualified medical doctor whereas the founder of Najjo mission station Rev Martin was a qualified theologian. The SEM missionaries could be from eighteenth century Pietism who demanded individual conversion, influenced lay people and gave them the opportunities for Christian witness, initiative and leadership (Aren 1978:115). That is why the SEM sent people who had diversified educational background as missionaries to the Oromo people.

### **4.2.2.2 Local Agency**

The SEM also trained the local missionaries at Masawa School. With the exception of Onesimos, most of these local missionaries were given little training. Some of the local missionaries who were trained by the SEM will be introduced in the following three sections.

#### **4.2.2.2.1 Onesimos and the Oromo Bible**

The SEM opened a school at Masawa on the Red Sea coast in 1872 and began to train liberated slaves who were made to serve as indigenous missionaries to the Oromo People. It was at this time that Nesib, who happened to be an Oromo from Iluu Abba Boora (South West province), was among the liberated slaves to be admitted to the Masawa SEM school. Nesib was baptised on March 31 1872 and became the first convert at the mission school and was given a Christian name Onesimos (Aren 1978:164). After his baptism, Onesimos got five years training in Sweden and became a qualified theologian.

While Onesimos was in Sweden, the SEM continued to train and send other indigenous missionaries to Oromo land. However, they were unable to reach the area because emperor Minelik refused them to go to the Oromo land. After returning from Sweden, Onesimos began to translate the New Testament, hymns and the small catechism into the Oromo language. He was then assisted by Aster Ganno, a liberated Oromo girl and completed the

translation of the whole Bible. The Oromo Bible played a significant role in the evangelization of Wollaga Oromo that resulted in the birth of the EECMY. While the translation was under way, the fifth Oromo expedition led by another local missionary named Gebre-Ewostateos was organized by the SEM.

#### **4.2.2.2.2 Gebre-Ewostateos, a Priest and Evangelical Pioneer**

The fifth Oromo expedition was led by a priest named Gebre-Ewastateos, who was from an old priestly family of Hamasen in Eritrea. His father was a priest and head of the village Orthodox Church in Eritrea. Like his father Gebre-Ewostateos also became a priest of his village Orthodox Church. He received a New Testament from Lundhal and became a devoted student of the New Testament (Aren 1978:374-5). Eventually he became a member of the Evangelical Church in Eritrea. He was given brief training to be an evangelist among his own tribe Tigre. However, he felt a call to be a missionary to the Oromo people. To fulfil this call, he secretly learned the Oromo language from Onesimos, who was teaching at Imkulu girls' school in Eritrea. Considering his insistence, the SEM missionary conference held in the autumn of 1893 reluctantly recommended that his request be granted now or later (Aren 1978:378).

To implement this resolution, the fifth expedition led by Gebre-Ewostateos left Asmara on 11 February 1897 and arrived at Naqamte, the capital city of Wollaga province in 1898. At Naqamte, he met *Fitawrari* Dibaba, whom *Dajazmach* Gebre Egziabher appointed as the governor of Sibu Oromo. It happened to be that Dibaba was looking for more priests for his Church at Bojjii Karkarro, central Wollaga. Gebre Ewostateos, produced his books in Oromo, read some portions from the New Testament and sang some hymns, because he had a beautiful voice. Dibaba marvelled. He had never imagined it would be possible to use his own native language for sacred scriptures and Christian poetry. Excited, he offered the priest from Hamasen instant employment. He arrived at Bojjii Karkarro by December 1898, where he “lit the fire” of the Gospel for the first time in Wollaga. Gabre-Ewostateos and his group started a school and evangelism work at Bojjii and evangelical Christianity was planted in Wollaga (1978:396).

Gebre-Ewostateos died in an accident on 10 April 1905 in Wollaga. However, Onesimos together with his companions from Eritrea, arrived at Naqamte on 15 April 1904 and proceeded to Najjo (25 kms west of Bojjii) where they started a school. By September 1904 the school had enrolled twenty students (Aren 1978:419).

The evangelism begun by Gebre-Ewostateos in Wollaga, grew through the work of Onesimos and his compatriots despite severe persecution by the EOC clergy and Amhara governors in Wollaga. In 1916, Karl Cederqvist, (a SEM missionary who was a medical doctor), obtained permission for setting up an evangelical enterprise from the Ethiopian government (Aren 1978:437-439). This permission facilitated the work of the indigenous missionaries in Wollaga and led to the birth of evangelical Church.

#### **4.2.2.2.3 Women Local Missionaries**

Along with the Gebre-Ewaostaoes, his wife Gumesh, Oromo evangelist Daniel Dabala and his wife Tiru came to Wollaga. Daniel and these two women were the ones who started the first mission school in Wollaga. These women might have been trained at Imkulu Girls school in Eritrea.

The other important person who was trained at this mission school was an Oromo Girl named Ganno Selban, who took the name Aster after baptism. Aster played a significant role in the Oromo Bible translation by assisting Onesimos. She was a talented girl with regard to the Oromo language. When she was sent by the SEM to Wollaga, she became a teacher at the schools in Najjo and Naqamte. She also wrote Oromo Folk tales, proverbs, riddles and songs of love.

Most of the local missionaries either knew Oromo or learned it from Onesimos and Aster. That was why they were able to communicate the Christian message in Oromo. However, using the Oromo language alone could not inculturate Christianity. The training that local missionaries had was not enough to understand the historical background of inculturation. They did not learn the culture of the Oromo people. Like the foreign missionaries they also assumed that the Oromo culture has nothing to offer to Christianity. Unconsciously they became agents of the western missionaries in changing some aspects of the Oromo culture. For instance Aren points out how polygamous men divorced some of their wives as a result of the work of the pioneer evangelical missionaries.

*Fitawrary* Dibaba had married six women. When he heard what was written in Holy Scripture about God's order of creation, he abstained from all marital relations with five of them (1978:400).

This implies the pioneer evangelist's interpretation of the Bible compelled him to divorce his

beloved wives. The Bible never condemned polygamy. Polygamous men like Abraham (Gen.16), Jacob (Gen 29), David (2Samuel 3) and others were not condemned by God. Since polygamy and monogamy co-existed in the Western culture it is not certain why monogamy was imposed. In the west Christians including pastors divorce their wives and remarry other wives at an alarming frequency. The result then is that men have many wives at different times whereas in Africa men have many wives at the same time. The local missionaries could not understand such issues because of their limited training.

It is therefore certain that education and mission training provided to local missionaries was not enough for them to handle issues of inculturation. They can appropriately be described as agents of cultural imperialism who were equipped with just enough knowledge to be able to condemn their own culture. Therefore, one can argue that the limited training could partly explain why the local missionaries were unable to establish a Church that incarnated in the Oromo culture

#### **4.2.2.2.4 Language Training of SEM Agents**

We do not have information about the non-Oromo missionaries study of the Oromo language and culture. Aren states that missionary training commenced while looking for mission field among the heathen world which took four years (1978:120-121). Therefore, it appears that the first group of missionaries did not study the Oromo language. Even after the SEM accepted the Oromo country as a mission field in 1965 and sent the first group of missionaries to the Oromo country they distributed the Amharic Bible widely with the aim of encouraging Bible study in Oromo land. This was done “to promote a reform of the ancient Ethiopian Orthodox Church and eventually give rise to an Orthodox mission to Muslim and non-Christian groups” (Aren 1978:123). However, this missionary strategy failed because there was strong reaction from the EOC leading Churchmen.

While acknowledging their service, I would like to argue that the SEM mission agents were not given adequate missionary training. Two vital subjects were not included in their training. Luzbetak (1970:308), proposes that, “cultural anthropology and descriptive linguistics are vital in the missionary training.” However, the SEM mission agents did not learn the Oromo language and culture.

Aren (1978:123), claims that the SEM’s initial vision was to evangelise the Oromo people and the study of the Oromo language was initiated. But this cannot be true because of the

following reasons:

- (1) If what Aren said was true, why were the first SEM missionaries sent to the Oromo in 1965 taking the Amharic Bible along with them? (see Aren 1978:123).
- (2) The children born to the SEM families in Najjo (Wollaga) could not speak the Oromo language but are fluent in Amharic. Moreover, the SEM foreign missionaries who lived in Naqamte could not speak Oromo but Amharic. To serve the Oromo people why did the SEM missionaries prefer learning the Amharic language instead of the Oromo language?
- (3) As discussed in 4.2.2.2 when Gabra-Ewostateos wanted to be a missionary to the Oromo people he had to learn the Oromo language secretly from Onesimos on his own initiative. Why learning the Oromo language was done in secret? Why could the Oromo language not be taught at Massawa school?
- (4) The Naqamte congregation conducts its worship service in the Amharic language. The Naqamte Bible schools that train the rural Oromo evangelists use only the Amharic language as a medium of instruction (See Aren 1978:301). Why did the SEM missionaries prefer Amharic instead of the Oromo language? These questions need adequate answers and we will come back to them when we discuss mission interaction with authorities.

Considering the above points, it can be concluded that the SEM foreign missionaries failed to establish a Christianity with an Oromo identity due to inadequate training and cultural bias. Could the UPCNAM mission agents qualify to establish a Church that has indigenous character among the Oromo people?

### **4.2.3 The United Presbyterian Church of North America**

#### **4.2.3.1 Foreign Agency**

The UPCNA foreign mission department sent qualified pastors, medical doctors, nurses and teachers as missionaries to Africa. On the basis of the profile of their mission agents, the UPCNAM followed the Kerygmatic model of mission. Bosch (in Saayman 1992:25) writes that in the Kerygmatic model of mission,

The emphasis was generally on *ordained missionaries*, which is not to suggest that *only* ordained missionaries were sent out. Usually lay missionaries, trained for variety of professions (nurses, medical doctors, farmers, and carpenters and the like) were sent alongside the ordained missionaries (*italics in the Original*).

Likewise, the first group from the UPCNAM came to Wollaga in 1919, comprising Dr and

Mrs Lambie, Dr and Mrs J. Kelly Giffen and Rev R.G. McGillan. These missionaries were simultaneously involved in health, education and evangelical activities (Birri *et al* 1997:4).

Dr Thomas Lambie served both as a physician and an evangelist at the very beginning until sufficient ordained pastors were made available to pursue evangelism. Lambie was known for his daily reading of the Bible and praying with and for the patients before he began his routine medical work. Such service contributed to the birth of the Evangelical Church. According to Birri *et al* (1997:5-6) the second group of missionaries, comprising Mr and Mrs Fred Russell and Ruth C. Beathy arrived in Sayo in June 1921. The following year another group of missionaries led by the Rev Duncan Chester Henery, who founded the Gulale Bethel Church in Addis Ababa, arrived in Sayo. On October 1, 1923, the Rev and Mrs Bruce Brownlee Buchanan arrived in Sayo and took full responsibility for evangelism. Rev Buchanan came and trained local agents.

As discussed in 3.4.1 above, the UPCNAM agents in Egypt received an invitation from Krapf, (a German pastor) and from Birru, who was an agent of Amhara colonial government. The UPCNAM Board of foreign mission did not have a plan of sending the mission agents to the Oromo people. This could explain why their first group of missionaries were ill prepared to serve the Oromo people. However after starting work among the Oromos they could have studied the Oromo culture including the language and traditional religion to facilitate evangelism. Neither their home mission nor the missionaries among the Oromo made any attempt to learn the Oromo language. There were missionaries who served in Dembi Dollo for more than twenty years, yet they were unable to speak the Oromo language. School teachers, pastors, Nurses, Doctors, engineers etc. were unable to work without interpretation. They rather learned the Amhara language which was the language of the ruling ethnic group. This suggests that these mission agents had no interest in the language and culture of the people they served and thus were unable to introduce Christianity that is inculturated in the Oromo culture.

#### **4.2.3.2 Local Agency**

The UPCNA mission in Sayo was strengthened by more staff and training of indigenous evangelists, such as Gidada Solan, Kumsa Boro, Gute Kashe, Tarfa Mosa, Daqa Uga and others (Birri *et al* 1997:7). These indigenous evangelists went out to the villages and started village schools and proclaimed the Gospel at the same time. More people began to believe in Jesus Christ and joined the evangelical group in the mission station.

These indigenous evangelists received very little training. The main aim of the UPCNAM in training the indigenous people, was not for leadership qualities, but for them to be able to reach out with the gospel. It was very similar to what Bosch (in Saayman 1992:26) had to say: "Early evangelists usually had just a few years of schooling, followed by some months of Church training. As their title implies, evangelists were commonly employed to 'evangelise', that is to preach the gospel to non-Christians and thus to assist the ordained missionary." Because of the limited training, they did not know the elements of their culture that could be compatible with Christianity. This may explain why they contributed to destroy the Gadaa system including its rituals and customs. The issue will be revisited in chapter five.

## **4.2.4 The Hermannsburg Mission**

### **4.2.4.1 Foreign Missionaries**

The mission agents of the HM were men of different professions such as qualified pastors, craftsmen, farmers, builders, etc. Louis Harms followed the Anglo-Saxon model of mission to Germany, who came from England and settled in Germany, preached the Gospel, built monasteries, tilled the land with their own hands and supported themselves.

Rev Dr Hartwig Harms (the HM missionary who served in Wollaga), in his lecture presented on the occasion of the Centennial Celebration of the Oromo Bible translation and the coming of evangelical preachers to Wollaga, pointed out that two kinds of missionaries were sent to the Oromo land. They were trained pastors and lay missionaries such as farmers and crafts men who were known as 'colonies.' This was done to "evangelise the country not by isolated and well educated missionaries who would need constant support, but by bands of missionaries with basic theological training, but still willing and able to support themselves by manual work" (Harms 1999:15).

Harms argues that the word "colonies" does not have the implication of European colonialism. It implies that they settle among the people and would share crops and income, having all things together. Therefore, "the mission work did not have as a 'hidden agenda' an extension of European influence, but rather its opposite: the limitation of it" (Harms 1999:15).

However, it is possible to argue that the idea of sending farmers as missionaries could have its



own agenda. According to Rev G. Scriba (1999 class lecture on the History of the Lutheran Missions in Africa) when the HM was constituted in Germany many unemployed farmers became volunteer missionaries. Due to population increase, there was not enough land to farm in Germany and many farmers became unemployed. Because they could not compete for jobs, they volunteered their services and were accepted as missionaries that could be viewed as a means of job creation for redundant farmers. The strategy of using self-supporting missionaries was unsuccessful and the mission agents depended on the HM for their living. Sending only farmers and craftsmen who had limited education could not promote the work of HM mission in Wollaga, because the mission work in Oromo demanded qualified teachers, medical professionals and engineers. That is why the first HM foreign mission agents led by Bahlburg together with two craftsmen, Grabe and Muller, arrived in central Wollaga, opened a school and begun medical work. To run the Hospital and the schools in Wollaga, the HM was obliged to send qualified missionaries.

Unlike the EOC, SEM and UPCNAM, the HM foreign mission agents took time to learn the Oromo language. Pastors, physicians and Nurses were able to communicate with the Oromo without interpreters. Some of the missionaries who stayed longer in Wollaga were fluent in spoken and written Oromo. However, they neglected the study of other aspects of the Oromo culture. Perhaps they were not prepared to identify and adopt some of the traditional values of the Gadaa System.

#### **4.2.4.2 Local Missionaries**

The HM gave short term training for Dafaam Jammoo and Ashanaa Nagaade to be local evangelists. “Dafa Jammo was the first fruit of the German Missionary effort in Western Wollaga. He was confirmed in 1935. Rev. Wassmann, ordained Dafa Jammo as a pastor, prior to his departure for Germany in 1941” (Eide 1996:59). Rev Dafaam Jammoo was involved in leadership of the Church, evangelism, medical and education work under the auspices of the HM. He was evangelist, teacher, and health practitioner at Aira. Later Ashanaa Nagaade was also ordained as a pastor and preached the Gospel. The work of these two local missionaries among their own Oromo people led to the establishment of the Western Synod, which is one of the strong synods of the EECMY. These indigenous leaders played an active role in bringing change among the Wollaga Oromo. However, they were unable to distinguish between the Oromo *Qallu* and *Qallichas* who robbed the people. They generalised all *Qallu* as agents of the devil and destroyed them through their preaching. Together with *Qallu* some of the traditional Oromo symbols kept at the *Qallu* villages

disappeared. The missionaries could notice the importance of the Oromo symbols such as *Bokku* (Sceptre) and *Kallacha* (metal for blessing) and Oromo flags which were kept by the *Qallu*.

Both foreign and local mission agents made a campaign against *Qallu* and those valuable symbols and the true scenario is summarised by Mercy Oduyoye.

...missionaries were ... ruthless in their destruction of African way of life and African culture...like a bull in a 'China shop'-they dismissed aspects of African culture as primitivity, and their spirituality as so much superstition, fetishism, animism (in Hinga 1994:12).

Thus the HM mission agents were never interested in forming an indigenous type of Christianity among the Oromo people.

### **4.3 BIBLE TRANSLATION**

Most scholars agree that Bible translation is a crucial step in accelerating evangelization so that each group of people have the opportunity of finding Christ in their own language. Sanneh (1989:170) indicates that "each people must be afforded the opportunity of discovering Christ in its own idiom". One of the ways each group of people gets the opportunity of discovering Christ is by translating the Bible into its language. There is no language specially designated for God. Every language is God's language. That is why Sanneh (1989:174) says "God has no linguistic favourite". Based on this understanding this section seeks to investigate how far the Bible translation was used by the four Christian mission organisations.

#### **4.3.1 The Ethiopian Orthodox Church**

The Ethiopian Orthodox Church (EOC) neither translated the Bible into the Oromo language nor used the Oromo Bible which Onesimos translated to evangelize the Wollaga Oromo. The liturgy was in Geez (an old Ethiopic language) and Bible reading was in Amharic throughout the Oromo country. Some scholars alleged that the use of Geez and Amharic languages in the EOC among the Oromo people was a means of promoting the language of the colonizers. Tippet (1970:243), notes that "the use of Amharic Bible in the Orthodox Church throughout the Galla (Oromo) country is the latest strong factor in the process of Amharaization". Eide

also agrees with Tippett and says "the spread of the Amharic language was an integral part of the process of cultural transformation in the Oromo society" (1996:28). Some scholars have concluded that Christianity was not only alien to the Oromo people but was also the promoter of the culture of the colonizers and suppresser of the Oromo language.

The EOC failed to translate the Bible into the Oromo language and imposed the Amharic language on the Oromo people. This makes the EOC mission method to be viewed as complicity with colonialism. Bosch (1991:38) says: "A point arrived where mission and colonialism would, for almost all intents and purposes, be merely two sides of the same coin." In a similar way the EOC mission in Wollaga became the other side of Amhara colonialism that suppressed the Oromo language for the purpose of promoting the Amharic language.

#### **4.3.2. The Swedish Evangelical Mission**

While they were waiting for the chance of penetrating the Oromo country, the SEM missionaries translated the Bible into the Oromo language. They involved indigenous missionaries like Onesimos Nesib and Aster Gano, who played a significant role in the translation. This translation work had a great impact on the Oromo people's response to the Gospel. According to Aren (1978:398),

It was Onesimos and Aster who had furnished the team at Bojji with the tools for their work: the New Testament, the reader, and the hymn book - all of them in Oromo. These books appealed to the feelings of the people everywhere and much contributed to the response to the gospel.

It also contributed toward the promotion of the Oromo language and Oromo consciousness. Eide (1996:89) puts it very well:

The vernacular Bible was a monumental achievement and laid the foundation for an indigenous interpretation of the Gospel. Scarcely any other external factor has had the same impact on Oromo ethnic consciousness, or on the Oromo religious experience.

The Wollaga Oromos were reluctant to accept Christianity for many years mainly because of the Orthodox missionaries' use of the *Ge`ez* and Amariyna (Amharic) languages in the Church. They regarded the two languages as instruments of Amhara culture and Shoan domination (Aren 1978:398). But they responded faster and more enthusiastically to Christianity when the SEM missionaries used the Oromo Bible and hymn books.

Some scholars argue that the translation of the Bible into the Oromo language makes

evangelical Christianity indigenous among the Oromo people. For instance Eide (1996:89) argues that the use of the Oromo Bible and indigenous preachers such as Gidaadaa Soolan and Ahsanaa Nagaadee implies the continuity of Oromo world-views.

Eide's argument can raise some important questions that need answers. Can Bible translation alone make Christianity indigenous in the society? To answer this question, we need to know the role of the language in the culture. Language is the vehicle to understand the culture, and can not represent the entire culture. Translating the Bible into vernacular is recognizing the language of that particular society. Translation can be part of the process of indigenisation if it follows the translation model theory.

Schreier (1985:7) points out that in order to construct local theologies or indigenize Christianity, translation model needs to call for two steps:

In the first step, one frees the Christian message as much as possible from its previous cultural accretions. In so doing, the data of revelation are allowed to stand freely and be prepared for the second step of the procedure, namely translation into the new situation. For instance the translation model has been utilized in Christian history. In the last century in Europe and North America, there was a call for the "de Hellenization" of Western Christianity, by which meant removal of Greek categories from the Biblical revelation. The guideline for liturgical renewal among the Roman Catholics following the Vatican council are directed by the translation approach: taking the basic Roman liturgy and adapting it to local customs in those matters not deemed essential to the rite.

Although Onesimos' effort of translation is what needs to be appreciated, the translation work did not follow the procedure of the translation model. There are many flaws in that translation itself. For instance the word "Oromo" was translated as the heathen, or people who have no idea of religion and also the word "trumpet" could have been replaced by the Oromo word "*Faaggaa*." Probably Onesimos did not want to Christianize Oromo traditional objects (Diga 1999:41). The translation model demands some kind of adaptation to local circumstances in ritual, in catechises, and in rendering of significant texts into local languages. However, some of the Oromo traditional rituals and objects were not accepted by the SEM during the translation of the Bible into the Oromo language.

In relation to Bible translation, the other factor that makes the SEM foreign among the Oromo people is the singular use of the Amharic language as a medium of teaching and preaching (Aren 1978:301). Only the Amharic language was used in Bible schools. The Liturgical service in the congregations such as Naqamte in Wollaga and the Entoto congregation in Addis Ababa was (still) only in Amharic. The Oromo Bible would have been

used to reach the Oromo people wherever they were. Every Oromo resident either in the rural, urban areas, within or outside country has the right to hear or read the word of God in his/her language. However, the SEM restricted the use of the Oromo language in worship only to non-educated rural Oromo people. No wonder that the current problem on the issue of language of worship within in the Entoto-EECMY congregation has some historical connection with early mission methods used by the SEM. This suggests that Bible translation when appropriately done has and must be associated with other cultural issues in order to inculcate Christianity into culture.

### **4.3.3 The United Presbyterian Church of North America Mission**

The United Presbyterian Church of North America Mission (UPCNAM) was similar to that of the EOC mission in that they did not translate the Holy Scriptures either before coming to Ethiopia or after embarking on evangelism. There is no evidence that they studied the Oromo language and culture. Most of the UPCNAM missionaries who served the Oromo people rather learned the Amharic language. They only communicated with the Oromo people with the aid of translators or interpreters. The lack of interest in the Oromo language had to do with their affiliation with the Amhara governors and the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. Both the Amhara Governors and the EOC were working to promote the Amhara language and culture in the process of Amharaization. This view is substantiated by Tippett, [who was invited by the UPCNAM to study the cause of changes in the tribes (including Oromo) where UPCNAM was working], who argues that:

...a missionary has to learn and teach in Amharic, because the Amharic language is declared to be one of the bonds of nationhood, even though he well knows that an effective gospel to the Gulebs, say, must be from a Guleb not an Amharic Bible. Well he knows that using Amharic identifies him with the overlords and decreases his empathy with the tribe. This is only one of the 'straight-jackets' he has to wear(1970:276).

Thus the UPCNAM mission agents' inclination to study the Amharic instead of the Oromo language contributed to the process of Amharaization. Books written in Amharic were being used to train local Oromo evangelists, who could hardly read and write the Amharic language. Both the teacher (the missionary) and the student of the Sayo Bible Training Institute (STI) struggled with the Amharic language. The author's own interaction with some retired missionaries who visited the Oromo land to give short term training points out that these missionaries acquired very little of the Oromo language. Presenting the Christian message in vernacular is not only the best method but is also the right of the Oromo people to whom the UPCNAM addressed. However, the UPCNAM missionaries denied this God given right and

favoured the use of the Amharic language to the Oromo people. This is one of the causes of current conflict in the Gulale congregation in Addis Ababa. Thus the UPCNAM also failed to introduce inculturated Christianity to the Oromo people.

#### **4.3.4 The Hermannsburg Mission**

The Bible translation into the language of the Oromo and learning the Oromo language was part of the HM mission policy. It includes the missionaries learning of the language of the people prior evangelization. Such mission strategy guided the HM to learn and use the Oromo language for mission work. All the mission agents learned the Oromo language and were able to communicate with ordinary Oromo people without any helper.

Some of the missionaries became fluent in the Oromo language within a short time. I remember two nurses by the name Sister Tine, and Sister Marie who travelled to numerous rural Oromo villages to give family planning course to uneducated Oromo women. The Rev. Manfred Zach who served as a missionary in Wollaga for fourty years, became an excellent speaker of the Oromo language and was able to write in Oromo. Together with Rev. Tasgara Hirpho an Oromo scholar, Rev. Manfred Zach completed the latest Bible translation into Oromo in 1997.

The HM contributed immensely both in Bible translation and the using Oromo language in the evangelization of the Oromo people. The Bible translation laid a foundation for the Oromo literature and thus for the process of Oromo consciousness that led to today's cultural revitalisation. Against this background it can be argued that Bible translation alone could not inculturate the Church founded by the HM. Their recent translation also did not follow the translation model. Some of the concepts in the translation still remain foreign to the Oromo people. Some of the Christian education materials were transcribed to the Oromo language. The liturgy, Catechism and hymn books were only literally translated. These materials need further translation that includes contextualization of the message. There is a long way to go to incarnate the EECMY that was established by active participation of the HM.

### **4.4 CHURCH PLANTING AND ADMINISTRATION**

In this section, "Church planting" stands for the process of structural organization of the believers into a visible community of faith. The Church can only be a Church if there is a

concrete community of believers in which the Word of God is preached, baptism is performed and holy communion is administered. “Church administration” refers to the Church polity such as structure of the Church and order of leadership.

#### 4.4.1 The Ethiopian Orthodox Church

As mentioned earlier in 2.2, three different scholars alleged that the EOC was established in Wollaga by force. Bakke (1987: 108) is one of those scholars who made the allegation:

The EOC returned to the area together with the Amhara troops sent by *Negus* Minelik of Shoa (1844-1913). The year 1882 is recognised as the inception of the EOC in Wollaga. *Moti* Moroda Bakare accepted overlordship of Minelik and built the first Orthodox Church in Naqamte.

Aren (1978:374) and Melba (1988:53) make the same allegation. As mentioned earlier in 2.2 from 1882 to 1900 more than six EOC centers were built in Wollaga. Melba (1988:72) says in some areas one had to belong to the Abyssinian Coptic Orthodox Church (EOC) to own a piece of land.

The administration of the EOC took the structure of the Sacramental model of mission and the monks are the ones who lead the Church and who ordain priests. Among the EOC Church planting methods, only the shape of the building is contextual. It has a round shape which is similar to an Oromo traditional house. The other methods of Church planting were unhelpful due to the following factors. (1) The EOC Churches were established in Wollaga by the imposition of the Abyssinian colonial governors. (2) The Church leadership lacked an indigenous character. The Oromo Christians had no say on the election of the church leaders. Monks from Abyssinia were appointed and imposed on the people by the Abun. (3) In the history of the EOC, no Oromo clergy were appointed as Bishops. Currently there is no Oromo bishop in the entire EOC that claimed to have over 20, 000,000 members. (4) The colonial government seized land from the Oromo peasant and gave it to the EOC Priest. The clergy therefore were in a position to collect taxes and were seen as part of the power structure of the provincial hierarchy, added to the feelings of submissiveness of the Oromo peasants (Eide 1996:51). (5) The Oromo traditional religion leader is a married man who knows about the family issue whereas the EOC Archbishop (Monk) is not allowed to marry. (6) The EOC bishop is a life-long appointment which is contrary to the Gadaa system that limits the year of service only to eight years. These and other related factors make the EOC foreign to the Oromo people.

#### 4.4.2 The Swedish Evangelical Mission

The SEM did not have a concrete plan of Church planting in the area where they worked. Initially they desired to promote a revival within the EOC, not to plant a separate Church. In 1872, the students of the Masawa school together with other people believed and wanted to be confirmed. However, the missionaries on the field did not know what to do as the status of the emerging congregation was not clear. They had to request the home Board for recognition as a Swedish Lutheran congregation in Ethiopia (Aren 1978:221-2). They obtained recognition from the Church of Sweden and planted the Lutheran Church in Ethiopia. The new Church was established according to the missionaries' home Churches in Europe. The question to be asked is why did the SEM send missionaries to Africa if there was no plan of Church planting?

More people in Wollaga were converted to Christianity and mission stations began to be established. Eide (1996:59) writes that the first missionary from SEM to settle in Wollaga was Dr Erik Soderstorm in Naqamte in 1923, followed by Rev Martin Nordfeldt, who opened a station in Najjo in 1927. At the same time the SEM opened a mission station at Entoto in Addis Ababa to train evangelists and teachers, to enforce the evangelism work in Wollaga. Later the Oromo believers in Addis Ababa were organised into a congregation and formed today's Entoto EECMY congregation.

The administration of the EECMY was based on the structure of the Swedish Church.. For example, parish, district and Synod (diocese) followed the model of the Lutheran Church of Sweden. It was similar to what Bosch stated: "in most cases the mission agencies set-up structures very similar to those in their countries of origin, and these expensive and sophisticated structures could often only be maintained with the help of the western money and expertise" (Bosch in Saayman et al 1992:55).

The SEM method of Church planting seemed to be weak for three reasons. (1) The SEM sent agents of change to the Oromo people without a clear plan of organising the believers into Church. (2) When the missionaries were forced to organize the Oromo people into Church they imposed their home Church building design which was foreign to the Oromo culture. Therefore, the engineers and materials had to be imported from Sweden whereas local materials and builders could have been used for Church building. (3) The administration structure of the SEM Church is very expensive and irrelevant to the Oromo culture. The EECMY is structured under the following offices: head, synod, district, parish and congregation.



The SEM failed to adopt what McGee calls the New Testament methods, “which is the planting of self supporting, self-propagating and self-governing native (indigenous) Churches” (in Saayman et al 1992:176). It appears then that the SEM method of Church planting lacked inculturation.

#### **4.4.3 The United Presbyterian Church of North America Mission**

##### **4.4.3.1 Initial Plan**

The Board of the UPCNAM in Philadelphia, USA, did not support the idea of planting an evangelical Church by the missionaries on the field as noted by Birri *et al* (1997:6).

The mission outlined its evangelistic policy with regard to the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. The following two points are worthy of our note. That we should seek the reviving of the Abyssinian Church rather than the establishing of a new denomination or sect in Abyssinia. That for a time at least we do not baptise or effect a Church organisation. Exceptions may be permitted under extraordinary circumstances.

The UPCNAM was against planting a Protestant Church in Ethiopia, but to support the EOC. However, in Sayo (West Wollaga) the indigenous evangelists went out and preached the Gospel to the people. According to the report of 1924, there were 132 believers who were said to have confessed their faith in Jesus Christ. And this led to the establishment of a separate Protestant Church which will be discussed in the following section.

##### **4.4.3.2 The Establishment of the Bethel Evangelical Church**

Although believers were found, the UPCNAM was not allowed to establish an evangelical Church. Birri *et al* (1997:7) says "the Mission persisted in its policy of co-operation with the Orthodox Church and did not organise a separate evangelical Church" (Birri 1997:7). Thus the UPCNAM continued its work up to 1935 and when Italy invaded Ethiopia. The invasion led to the departure of the missionaries.

When the Italians arrived in Sayo (Dembi Dollo) they took the mission chapel but the indigenous people were given a large plot of land half a mile away from the mission station. Attempts to establish a separate Evangelical Church did not materialise until the EOC refused to bury the corpse of one of the evangelical group in the EOC cemetery in 1937. The corpse was

then buried in a separate location in which the indigenous leaders began to organize the evangelical Christians. From then on the evangelicals were separated from the EOC and built their own Church in the absence of the UPCNAM missionaries which was named Bethel Evangelical Church (BEC). Eight congregations were founded before the UPCNAM missionaries came back.

In connection to the establishment of the Bethel Evangelical Church in Sayo (Wollaga), the other important event was the establishment of the Gulale congregation in Addis Ababa. The new evangelical church, born in Sayo lacked two things, a pastor and an official name. After choosing a name, the people elected Mamo Chorqa, (graduate of Sadi Guma School) and sent him to Henery for ordination. Henery was a missionary of the UPCNAM, who happened to remain in Addis Ababa, when all missionaries left. When Mamo arrived in Addis Ababa in December 1938, Henery faced two problems. (1) According to the UPCNAM rules, the ordination had to be approved by the Foreign Missions Board but the Sayo case was most urgent. (2) According to the PCUSA book of government, ordination can be allowed only if there is an organized Church. However, there was no organized congregation in Addis Ababa and therefore, there were no ordained elders to assist him to make the ordination official. However, due to the urgent need of Oromo congregation in Sayo, he invited the Oromo converts (mainly people from Wollaga, who lived in Addis Ababa for various reasons) and started a Church. Those invited were Gutama Rufo, Negari Sima, *Balambaras* Joar, Daba Wase, Gebremichael Daga, Milki Gobano and Abba Magal. These Oromo elders, were the founding members of the first Presbyterian Church in Addis Ababa. This congregation was later named the Gulale Bethel Mekane Yesus.

Mamo Chorqa was ordained on 6 February 1939 at Gulalle Bethel Mekane Yesus congregation and came back to Dembi Dollo. From there, the Bethel Evangelical Church spread out to Gambella, Illubabor, Kafa and Addis Ababa through the leadership of the American mission using indigenous workers. When the UPCNAM missionaries came back, the BEC was structured according to the UPCNA style of administration. Whether it was done in purpose or not the BEC remained similar to the missionaries home Church.

It was similar to what Bosch (in Saayman 1992:55) argued: "whether intentionally or not Churches were established in Africa and Asia, and invariably these Churches tended to resemble those to which missionaries belonged in the west". Thus the BEC took administration structure of the UPCNA. In 1974 Bethel Evangelical Church merged with Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus (Eide 1996:64).

The UPCNAM method of Church planting is very similar to that of the SEM. Like the SEM, the UPCNAM did not have a plan of building a separate Church but to strengthen the EOC. When the Oromo people established a separated Church the UPCNAM imposed their home Church structure. The BEC established by the UPCNAM lacked indigenous character. Tippet (1970:281) beautifully stated that:

...the Galla Church in Dembi Dollo...has a denominational -that is, a foreign -structure for its decision-making assembly, and is torn apart by factors that stem from Amharaization, acculturation and the Italian occupation. In one of the recent disputes the discord continued without solution until the congregation reached an impasse which led them to discard the foreign Christian representatives decision-making body, and return to an old Galla pattern. They called in all the pastors, all the elders, and all who had any questions to ask and debated the matter for several days until they reached a consensus. The tragedy is that the indigenous pattern was not built into the Church structure from the very beginning.

Thus the Church planting method of the UPCNAM is not incarnated. Could the HM method of Church planting be inculturated?

#### **4.4.4 The Hermannsburg**

The HM had a plan of planting the evangelical Church in the Oromo land. However, the HM method of Church planting contributed to the EECMY's lack of indigenous character. Aren describes the HM method of Church planting as follows:

...in the thinking of Louis Harms, planting Christianity on Oromo territory meant extending and transplanting the Christian Church, not merely converting the single souls. Yet it was not the world-wide Church he primarily had in mind. As might have been expected, it was the Lutheran Church of Hannover to which he himself belonged. Such was the missionary program that Harms wished to realize when he embarked upon his Ethiopian enterprise (1978:109).

The HM mission strategy was to evangelise a country sending a group of missionaries who settle among the indigenous people to establish mission stations with the expectation that the "inhabitants of the country would become part of the settlement, follow the example of the missionaries, and later join them also when they went on to start new settlements" (Harms 1999:15).

This means the HM method of Church planting was "in-taking" rather than "out-reaching". Tippet argues that an in-taking method did not help the Church growth and planting the

indigenous type of Church but out reach does. In the rural congregation far from mission station the Church meetings were simple. Morning prayers were conducted during cultural meetings of neighbours for coffee and *injera* (bread) without dressing up. In the evenings they met for songs and prayers, and Bible readings in Oromo. The Oromo Bibles were passed “around from one group to another and played a significant part in building up the rural congregations as they broke away from the station complex and became indigenous congregational entities” (Tippett 1970:247).

However, the HM method of planting a Church was inviting people to come and worship in a Church located at the mission station that is “a small German village” in Oromo. Thus the HM method of Church planting including the Church building itself was not relevant to the Oromo culture.

#### **4.5. SUMMARY**

In this chapter, I have argued that: (a) the EOC mission agents were both clergy and lay people who had neither adequate academic education, nor did they learn the Oromo culture and tradition. They could not speak the Oromo language; (b) the SEM and UPCNAM mission agents who served in Wollaga, learned the Amharic language rather than Oromo; (c) the HM mission agents did learn the Oromo language but did not learn the culture and tradition. Most of the local missionaries who evangelized the Wollaga Oromo did not have adequate academic and theological training. Thus all the mission agents sent to Wollaga by the four Christian mission organizations were not qualified to introduce inculturated Christianity.

It was further argued that, the EOC and the UPCNAM did not translate the Bible into the Oromo language. Rather they used the Amharic Bible to evangelise the Oromo people that enhanced the process of Amharization of the Oromo people. The UPCNAM use of the Amharic language as the only medium of teaching and preaching became the root cause for today’s crisis on the language of worship within the Gulale EECMY congregation. The SEM was the first to translate the Bible into the Oromo language. However, they limited use of the Oromo Bible to the uneducated rural Oromo people. They made the Amharic language the only medium of teaching and preaching in cities. Limiting the use of the Oromo Bible only to the rural areas became the cause for the ongoing conflict on the issue of using the Oromo language within the Entoto EECMY congregation in Addis Ababa. The HM also translated

the Bible into the Oromo language and used it widely. The Oromo Bible (translated by SEM and HM) played a significant role in the Oromo people's fast response to the Gospel. It is also the base for the Oromo literature that led to the current cultural revitalization. However, the Oromo Bible translation did not follow the translation model. There are many concepts that remain foreign to the Oromo people. It is thus possible to conclude that the translation was not adequate.

It was also argued that, the way the EOC planted the Church in Wollaga was by force. Though its building style was contextual, its administrative structure and leadership did not follow the Oromo Gadaa system of administration. The SEM, the UPCNAM and the HM Church planting method entailed inviting the indigenous people to the mission station to follow the example of missionaries. In other words, it was an in-taking rather than an outreaching method. The Church building structure, the Church administration and leadership was modelled on the Churches in Europe and the USA. It therefore lacked inculturation.

It can therefore, be deduced from this chapter that the mission agents, the Bible translation, Church planting and administration methods used to evangelise the Wollaga Oromos were inadequate.

## CHAPTER FIVE CHRISTIAN MISSION METHODS PART II

### 5.1 Aim of the Chapter

The aim of this chapter is to analyse five of the methods of mission used by the EOC, the SEM, the UPCNAM and the HM to evangelise the Wollaga Oromo. These methods were: the liturgy and worship, the healing ministry, the education ministry, the mission organisations' and missionaries' interaction with the authorities, and mission in context. This chapter will analyse each of these mission methods to investigate how they contributed to the Oromo Christianity's lack of inculturation.

All the Christian mission societies used liturgy and worship in the evangelization of the Oromo people. Liturgy and worship includes prayers, songs, wedding and funeral ceremonies, festivals, etc. This section will examine whether some of the elements of the Oromo traditional religion were adopted into the liturgy and worship of the Churches established among the Oromo people.

This chapter also analyses the healing ministries provided by each mission society that served the Oromo people. In the Oromo tradition, healing includes human beings and their environments. This chapter will therefore explore whether the healing services rendered by the Christian missions were holistic or not.

The other important method of evangelism was the education ministry. The missions provided education ministry through building of schools, literacy campaigns, training Church leaders at different levels. The chapter will analyse the medium of teaching, the curriculum and teaching methodologies of the schools that trained the Church leaders. This is helpful to examine how the education method became a contributory factor to the destruction of the elements of Oromo culture.

The missionaries and their organisations' interaction with the authorities can be another factor in suppressing the Oromo language and eliminating some of the old values. This section will also analyse how their interaction with authorities made an impact in the process of eliminating some important aspects of Oromo culture. Finally, this chapter will discuss the missionaries approach to the Oromo traditional religion and the Oromo culture. We do this, because the attitude of the missionaries towards the Oromo culture could be another factor for

the Oromo Christianity's lack of incarnation.

## 5.2 LITURGY AND WORSHIP

The word "liturgy" denotes an act of worship, more specifically the Eucharist. It is originated from the Greek word *leitourgia* that was used in Hellenistic Greek of an act of public service. In the New Testament it is employed of an act of service or ministry (Davies 1972:222). According to Rembert G. Weakland (in Moroney 1990:78), liturgy is defined as a "way in which baptized, as persons and as members of covenanted faith community, relate their prayer and worship to the whole mission of the Church, both to creating of its inner communion (*koinonia*) and to mission to the world." Further more he defines it as "a bridge that acts as a conduit that integrates the whole of life. The elements that must be joined together are the altar, the pulpit, the faith community, and the market place" (Weakland in Moroney 1990:79). According to Mary Collins "Liturgy, rather than doctrine or theology will become the place where the whole community of believers will attempt to give expression to its experience of saving relationships" (in Huck 1994:168).

Susan J. White describes worship as something that

involves more than simply entering into specific set of rites and ceremonies. It involves entering into a world bounded by Scriptures (of various kinds) and by their interpretation; by class, race and culture; by theological and doctrinal presuppositions; and by historically significant persons and places...Worship happens in an economic, social, historical, theological, racial and cultural context and is indispensable to the work of liturgical ecumenism (in Journal of liturgical conference V.10 number 1992:45-6).

Worship can be defined as a strong feeling of respect and admiration for God which is often shown through praying or singing (International dictionary 1995:1686).

J. G. Davies defines Christian worship in a broader way as follows:

Christian worship is man's expression of the worth of God and of his environment within the dimension of God's action. It is concerned with understanding of communication in the context of the divine. Worship involves the pattern of culture: language, ritual, art, buildings, time. It is a ritual action for projection and objectifying one's position in relation to the environment within the divine context....Worship has three dimensions. First, the work of God in Christ towards man and creation revealed finally and most completely in the ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Secondly the life of the Church embodying within itself God's action. Thirdly, the life of the Church as representative of the world, where God is active in creation and redemption, and as pointing to this action (1972:159).

With this understanding the section analyses the Liturgy and worship of the four Christian missions that introduced Christianity to the Oromo people.

### **5.2.1 The Ethiopian Orthodox Church**

The EOC used only Geez and Amharic in the liturgy and worship among the Oromo people. Aren (1978:397) explains that the Wollaga Oromos were unable to appreciate the liturgical service of the EOC "since all texts and chants were in Geez." Through liturgy and worship people communicate with God and divine communication has to be that "all of us hear in our own language the wonders of God" (Bediako 1995:60). However, the EOC failed to accept this principle of using the Oromo language for worship. Aren (1978:424) points out that Onesimos preferred to preach in Oromo and provoked the envy of EOC clergy. "Thus, when Onesimos began to preach in Oromo, which they did not understand, the EOC priests complained to Gebre-Egziabher (the governor of Wollaga) that Onesimos had libelled the virgin Mary." Thus many Oromo people were unable to participate enthusiastically and meaningfully in the EOC liturgy and worship.

It seems the EOC clergy inculcated into the people's minds that Geez and Amaharic were to be used for Church services every time everywhere. It is obvious that most of the EECMY members come from the EOC background. Thus, the reluctance of the elders of the Gulale and Entoto congregations to use the Oromo language in the Church has a historical link to the EOC mission methods. It is thus possible that the EOC liturgy and worship are parts of the methods that contributed to the Oromo Christianity's lack of inculturation.

### **5.2.2 The Swedish Evangelical Mission**

The liturgy and worship adopted by the SEM lacks inculturation into the Oromo culture due to the following factors:

Firstly, the SEM adopted the liturgy and worship of the Lutheran Church of Sweden that was prepared in the context of Europe. According to Aren (1978:222-3) the main Sunday worship service for the first congregation at Masawa was modelled on the contemporary order of the public worship within the Church of Sweden. The worship order of the Masawa congregation was also adapted for daughter congregations at Asmara, Addis Ababa and several



congregations planted in the Oromo land. This liturgy is not related to the Oromo culture. It could not include some aspects of the OTR that were compatible with Christian liturgy and worship.

For instance, in the OTR liturgy there are prayers and blessings for public meetings, for weddings, for funerals and so forth. In each occasion one or two elders lead the blessings and worship. It includes prayers for peace, for the cattle, for the rain, fertility, etc. It is a responsive prayer in which the congregations fully participate. In one of the Gadaa meetings held among the Boran Oromo of South Ethiopia in 1996 Huqqa (1996:31-33) recorded the prayer as follows:

Leader says: Gadaan nagaa (the age grade is peace)  
People respond: Nagaee (may it be peace)  
Leader: Yaa'i nagaa (the meeting peace)  
Response: Nagee (may it be peace)  
Leader: aaqa galata kan nagaan kan walitti nufidee (praise to God who brought us here)  
Response: Ejenne (Praise be to God who brought us here)  
Leader: Gadaan sadeen nagaa (the eight gadaa peace, includes all Boran sub clans) Response: Eejenne (May there be peace to the gadaa sadeen)  
Leader: Marra bisaan mijuu (may pasture and water be plenty)  
Response: Mijuu (May pasture and water be plenty)  
Leader: Sa'aa namii ha-horuu (let livestock and people multiply)  
Response: Ha horu (let them multiply)  
Leader: Nu marraf bisaan qofa qabna (may we have nothing but rain and peace)  
Response Eejen (yes may we have nothing but rain and peace)

Such liturgy and worship were not included in the EECMY liturgy book and therefore, lacks relevancy to the Oromo culture. A liturgy unrelated immediately to the culture of the celebrating community is apt to become what George B. Wilson calls “a totemized ritual- a lifeless shell fashioned out of somebody else’s theology and priorities and aesthetic preferences, laid over the life of this community in a way that all but smoothers (*sic*) its inner movements of the spirit” (Dules, 1978:24).

Absolute preference for the Amharic language is the second factor that makes the liturgy and worship of the SEM out of tune with the Oromo culture. Like the EOC missionaries, the SEM also made Amharic the medium of teaching and preaching as noted by Aren (1978:301).

In order to benefit by the various books that were available in print, the Swedish missionaries retained Amharinya as the medium of teaching and worship. Whereas Isenberg’s text books long served the needs of the classroom, Lundhal early tried his hand at composing hymns for devotion and worship services.

At Naqamte Congregation in Wollaga, the liturgy was done in the Amharic language for the

sake of a few elite including the missionaries who spoke Amharic. Even today the sermon preached in Amharic is interpreted **into the Oromo language**; the other parts are still in Amharic.

This explains why the worship of the Entoto congregation continues to be in Amharic even though its founders were Oromo people, who had gone to Addis Ababa for business. The pastors and evangelists were also from Wollaga Oromo. This is the background to the present EECMY crisis regarding the medium of worship in the Entoto congregation. It is pretty obvious then that the SEM liturgy and worship contributed to the Oromo Christianity's lack inculturation.

### **5.2.3 The United Presbyterian Church of North America Mission**

The UPCNAM liturgy and worship are also similar to that of the SEM mentioned above. Tippett's research reveals that the liturgy and worship of the first evangelical Church at the mission station in Dembi Dollo was **foreign to the culture of Oromo**.

I went to an evangelical service. It gave me quite a different feeling, which I described in my private journal that day in the following manner: This service was a bit of an anticlimax. You could recognise the foreign type of worship one sees in many mission lands. The organist was trying to play the hymns on an old organ with a sticking note, the hymns were Western, the collection bags, also the order and elements of worship (Tippett 1970:256-7).

This means the OTR music instruments, Oromo melody, and order of worship were not adapted by the UPCNAM missionaries. In the Western Wollaga Bethel Synod (WWBS) that was established by the UPCNAM, the general assembly officially banned the Oromo traditional music. Any member who was found attending or who allowed his family to attend the traditional music ceremony was most likely suspended from Church membership. Participation in an Oromo cultural songs and ceremonies were seen as sinful in the WWBS. On the day of my wedding that took place on 08 December 1985, we did not allow Oromo songs, because of the theology that puts pressure on the traditional music. I can still picture the sad expression of the faces of **my mother, my uncles and other extended family members** as the ceremony did not tolerate cultural song.

Some are songs of advice to the couple who are going to lead their independent life. There is also counselling in the Oromo songs specially for the women. Such songs mean no evil but are rather helpful for the Oromo society. One cannot help but wonder why the Oromo songs and rituals were not transformed and incorporated into the Church song and worship. Due to

the UPCNAM method of mission the western culture played an overwhelming role that there was little or no room for Oromo cultural expressions. Thus the theology of the Church played a significant role in the destruction of the Oromo traditional music.

Though the first members of Gulale Bethel Church were Oromo people, Henery never considered giving an alternative structure to the Oromo language. And this became the root cause for the ongoing EECMY crisis in general and for the Gulale congregation in particular. Therefore, the UPCNA liturgy and worship are a contributory factor to the Oromo Christianity's lack of indigenous character.

#### **5.2.4 The Hermannsburg Mission**

As discussed earlier in 4.4.4, the HM mission strategy was that of transplanting the Hannoverian Lutheran Church of Germany to Oromo land. Transferring the Church includes transferring the German heritage to the Oromo people. The Hermannsburg mission society "closely allied with ideas from the Middle Ages to send out colonies of missionaries who should establish a chain of mission stations on the mission field. The mission should be a counterpart of the Church at home in doctrine, in liturgy, in discipline and organization. Harms emphasized its Lutheran and German heritage" (Scriba, 1999:12, Lecture notes).

The HM liturgy and worship service among the Oromo people are in the Oromo language. The liturgy book, the hymn book and many other Christian chants were translated into the Oromo language. One may argue that this translation made the liturgy relevant to the Oromo culture. However, the inculturation of liturgy and worship should go beyond offering liturgy in the vernacular. Hillman (1993:68-9) argues saying,

It is not enough to present Christianity to the people in their language, understood in a merely semantic or literary sense. A more comprehensive language in the "anthropological sense" employed by Pope Paul VI must also be appreciated, assumed and used. This language consists of the people's indigenous cultural symbols, signs, myths, rites images customs and gestures. Also included here are the "aspirations, riches, limitations, ways of praying, loving, looking at life and the world which distinguish this or that human gathering." These are appropriate means of religious communication with any people.

However, the HM liturgy and worship could not be inculturated into the Oromo culture because it could not adopt some of the important Oromo rituals of prayers. There are good Oromo rites and rituals that could be adapted to inculturate the Christian liturgy.

During the Oromo rituals of prayer there is a symbol called *dhaaba* (things put apart). There are three essentials for *dhaaba*: Qilla with *buna qala* (small container with fried coffee beans mixed with butter), two jars of beer (one bigger than the other), and a calabash with milk and a jar of honey wine (Bartels 1983:299-300). The Oromos take their symbol during the prayers and blessing rituals. The following are some of the examples of the Oromo blessings and rituals:

**(1) The Oromo ritual of thanksgiving prayer at the birth of a calf:** After a birth of a calf the women bring *dhaaba* (things put apart) and put them together in the presence of the invitees. “The *dhaaba* should touch one another: people too, do not pray separately from each other. They should also touch one another because people should be one. They pray saying: “O Waaqa, give me the support of people, give me the support of (fertile) cattle” (Bartels 1983:301).

**(2) Wedding prayer ritual:** During a wedding, *buna qala* (fried coffee beans mixed with spices and butter prepared by a married women) is prepared as a symbol for blessing. They use this symbol because the Oromo believe that coffee is a great medicine blessed by God’s tears. They say “all plants grow by rain, the coffee plant sprout from the tears of Waaqa” (Bartels 1983:306). Thus *buna qala* is seen as a symbol for blessing. Bartels recorded the wedding ritual of blessing that takes place at the home of the bride. The parents and elders bless the bride. These elders answer the prayers of the parents. Most of the speaking is done by the bride’s father, but her mother may add some blessings of her own. Such blessings are recorded as follows (P= parents; E = elders and other people).

P.: “Sprout Blossom”  
 E.: “SPROUT BLOSSOM”  
 P.: “Produce grow rich”  
 E.: “PRODUCE GROW RICH”  
 P.: “May the mare in your gola (part of the house) blossom (grow pregnant).  
 E.: “MAY IT BLOSSOM”  
 P.: “May the cow within your fence Blossom”  
 E.: “MAY IT BLOSSOM”  
 P.: “Have offspring”  
 E.: “HAVE OFFSPRING”  
 P.: “O Waaqa make them fertile for us”  
 E.: “MAKE THEM FERTILE”  
 P.: “Grant them good health”  
 E.: “GRANT THEM GOOD HEALTH”  
 P.: “Grant them lasting prosperity”.  
 E.: “GRANT THEM THIS”.  
 P.: “Grant them peace”  
 E.: “GRANT THEM PEACE.”

**(3) Prayers for child birth and child rearing:** These are specifically women’s rituals. The

old women prepare the *buna qala* when a woman is about to give birth. They come together and pray for good delivery. After the birth of a child they give thanks to God saying “O Waaqa you helped us, you gave our daughter a good delivery. Praise to you” (Bartels 1983:303). The first day the child brought outside to the sun, the mother sits outside in front of her house. The mother-in-law or another old lady takes the little finger of the child’s mother and says: “Rise up.” She answers “I am tired.” Then the old woman replies: “Be weak to curse and be strong to bless.” They say these three times. And this is “a symbolic expression of the mother’s acceptance of her child with all the troubles child-rearing brings with it” (Bartels 1983:304).

The HM liturgy and worship could have adopted this important Oromo heritage such as prayer rituals during birth of calf, wedding, child birth and rearing. However, because of the missionary legacy all these values were totally neglected. This supports the notion that the HM liturgy and worship have a great contribution in the EECMY’s lack of inculturation among the Oromo people.

### **5.3 HEALING MINISTRY**

Healing is defined as becoming well again after being sick. It refers to both physical and spiritual illness. Healing also includes human beings and their environment. Considering this understanding this section will analyse the healing ministry that was used as one of the methods of mission among the Wollaga Oromo.

#### **5.3.1 The Ethiopian Orthodox Church**

The EOC has a rural integrated development programme among the Amhara tribe. Some aspects of this programme could fall within the category of healing, understood broadly. According to Hayes, in the Sacramental model all forms of healing are seen as coming from God. Therefore “prayer, medicine surgery or other means of healing can all be legitimate for Christians” (in Saayman et al 1992:93). That is why they establish hospitals and clinics, undertook community development projects, and occasionally taken political action to remove the causes of ill-health. However, the EOC mission agents failed to establish health institutions in Wollaga.

According to Isichei (1995:50), the EOC "monks were healers and missionaries; they did

battle against the forces of Satan." Based on this belief the EOC focused only on a spiritual healing among the Wollaga Oromo. In the OTR, healing includes human beings and their environment. For instance they will not acknowledge good health even when they are healthy and their cattle been sick. The *cirreessa* (traditional healers) therefore, take care of the people and their livestock (Huqqa 1996:42).

It is alleged that the EOC has made the Ethiopian people unproductive, by imposing fasting which makes human beings weak. For instance, Shenk (1972:290), who studied about the EOC relation with the Ethiopian government points out that,

the clergy were criticised for being economically unproductive and living as a parasite on the masses. Compulsory fasting days for Christians are approximately 120 per year..... Fasting causes tiredness, lethargy, and indifference to work. Numerous holy days celebrating great religious festivals or honouring saints, angels, or Mary, and ceremonial occasions such as baptism, marriage, burial, and *teskar* are economic liability. Not only is the Christian forbidden to work on holy days, he is obliged to consume his savings in the preparation of feasts. These consumption-oriented religious activities are an economic drain on a large segment of the Ethiopian people (1972:292).

Thus it is possible, in my opinion, to argue that one of the causes of poverty and famine in Ethiopia is the EOC's method of Christianising the Ethiopian people. Long fasting can cause malnutrition and low resistance to disease that could precipitate poor health, low productivity and economic crisis. It is therefore unfortunate that the EOC concentrated on spiritual healing while imposing fasting on the Oromo people. This approach by the EOC to healing contributed to Christianity's lack of inculturation for the following reasons: (1) The Oromo concept of healing is holistic that includes the physical, spiritual, economic, political and social aspects of human beings. However, the EOC healing involves only the monks who allegedly engaged in spiritual battles that are not remotely relevant to the Oromo culture. (2) In the OTR religious fasting is not obligatory whereas the EOC requires the Oromo Christians to fast 180 days of a year that involves total abstinence from one's cultural foods such as milk and meat. This kind of excessive fasting particularly from cultural food items is not encouraging and would have contributed systematically to discourage inculturation of Christianity among Oromos.

### **5.3.2 The Swedish Evangelical Mission**

The pioneer of the EECMY, Gebre-Ewostateos, who began evangelism in Wollaga went to the SEM mission station at Masawa for treatment of a wound. At this place, he read the New

Testament, accepted the Gospel and later became one of the leading evangelists and the pioneer of the EECMY.

The SEM missionary, the Rev Karl Cederqvist, served as a medical doctor in Addis Ababa. His profession made him popular and he was able to maintain good relations with the Ethiopian government officials. Through his permission for an evangelical association was obtained in 1916 (Aren 1978:437-8). Through the hospital that the SEM built at their mission station in Naqamte town and the Najjo Clinic in Wollaga, they were able to attract many people to the Church.

However, the SEM modern healing ministry lacked integration with Oromo traditional healing methods. The Oromo people have traditional healers such as mid-wives, traditional doctors and those who do minor surgery. These traditional healers were not accepted by the mission health institutions. The Naqamte hospital that was established by the SEM never accepted the work of Mr. Shafi (traditional specialist in Orthopaedics). Until very recently, rural Oromo people did not have much trust in the “white man’s medicine” in some areas of treatment. They preferred traditional healers because of their apparent effectiveness. That is why a great number of people would go past by the Naqamte hospital to convey their patients to Mr. Shafi for orthopaedic treatment.

The SEM healing ministry emphasis on providing hospitals, dispensaries, drugstores with qualified physicians and nurses. However, in Africa sickness cannot be healed with such treatment alone. Semopre (in Turkson 1994:42) points out the healing method that the Church should follow: “Sickness puts to question the relation to God, to the Ancestors, to the Spirits, to the Family and to the society. Taking charge of this crucial sector of the life of Christians requires of our Church not only building of hospitals, dispensaries, drugstores, and health centres, but also the instalment of a Christian healing ministry within the pastoral work”. It is rather glaring that the SEM healing ministry did not integrate with the traditional Oromo healing ministry.

### **5.3.3 The United Presbyterian Church of North America Mission**

As mentioned earlier the UPCNAM began their mission work through medical service that resulted in the erection of some of the first modern health institutions in Wollaga. The American missionaries built one hospital and five clinics in Qellem district. The evangelical work through medical services contributed to the rise of the Bethel Evangelical Church in

Ethiopia. However, the expansion of the BEC congregations was not perpetual to the initial investment of health service, because within forty years (1930s to 1970) the number of communicants were only 4000, in a population of about half a million. The spontaneous growth of the BEC during the later years was an initiative of the indigenous people themselves (Tippett 1970:247).

The missionaries understood healing as the curing of physical diseases whereas the Oromo understood healing in a wider sense. As mentioned above in 5.3.1, healing includes all aspects of human life. The mission Churches did not understand a holistic healing approach as the AICs. For instance the Zion City Church (ZCC) among the Shona of Zimbabwe seems to be contextual. In the ZCC, in addition to physical and mental affliction “healing is a curative ministry for all maladies of society, including marital conflicts, finding spouse, securing and maintaining a livelihood” (Daneel in Saayman et al 1992:212). Healing in the AICs is therefore meaningful to the Shona tribe. The UPCNAM healing ministry lacked such inculturated healing ministry.

The ministers of the Bethel Evangelical Church visited, prayed and witnessed healing in some sick people. Such ministry of healing attracts people. I am a concrete example of those who joined the Church through such ministry. My elder sister was possessed by an evil spirit and was healed through prayers and ministries by the elders of the BEC in 1970. Then our whole family believed in Jesus Christ and joined the Church. Today there are four strong EECMY Congregations in the village where I was born. The Oromo healing methods were not recognized by the missionaries.

#### **5.3.4 The Hermannsburg Mission**

The HM built a mission station at ~~Aira, South-central~~ Wollaga in 1927. At this mission station they began medical services that later led to the establishment of the Aira hospital. Today Aira rural hospital is one of the best rural hospitals in Ethiopia. The HM extended their medical work and established fourteen clinics in other parts of Wollaga, Iluu Abbaa Booraa province and in Asosa Region. In these health institutions, the pastors conduct prayers, Bible reading and brief sermon every morning. Evangelism through hospitals was effective in Ethiopia. Through the health institutions, the HM missionaries preached the Gospel both to the sick persons and their families, and to the visitors of the sick people. However, the HM healing ministry also lacks indigenization among the Oromo people. The Oromos believe that disease is caused by the attack of different spirits that could be the result of the anger of



*ayana abba* (the ghost of the father), or the spirit that descends on a man with power to possess him or the *ayana* (divinity) that cause misfortune. Tippett (1970:242) points out that the Oromo believe that

*ayana* may be good or evil. This mysterious force of divinity may operate either to the one's advantage or disadvantage. Thus a farmer finds that every thing goes well today. His labourers work well. Nothing goes wrong. He has *ayana*. Or it may be the opposite, with nothing going right all day as if some mysterious force is working against him.

To obtain full healing and protection there are rites of worship that need to be performed. There are rites associated with “*ayana abba* (ghost of the father) and the desired fertility and protection are due to the presence of *ayana* (Tippett 1970:243). However, the evangelists rejected the rites performed for the *ayana* that was spiritual healing. The approach by the HM that focused on the provision of biomedical healing while neglecting the traditional Oromo rites of healing was similar to what Saayman has to say about the western concept of healing. “The Western concept of biomedicine underlying the healing service in hospitals and clinics was alien to the African understanding of healing and very little was done by the missionaries to integrate the two concepts” (Saayman 1991b:41-46 in Saayman et al 1992:185). The HM healing ministry embraced nothing to which the Oromos could identify into their healing ministry.

## **5.4 EDUCATION MINISTRY**

Education ministry refers to the building of schools, literacy campaigns for adults and the training of Church leaders. In this section, the system of education and medium of instruction shall be examined.

### **5.4.1 The Ethiopian Orthodox Church**

Although the system of education in the EOC is called the oldest unbroken system in the world (Bakke 1987:76), it was primarily meant to train the clergy. The subjects were selected to meet the needs of the Church. The EOC education ministry was unhelpful to the Oromo people due to the following factors.

(1) It was designed to meet the needs of the colonisers. Prior to the time of Emperor Minelik,

the only learning institutions were the EOC schools that were designed to serve the needs of both Church and state (Bakke 1987:77). The state refers to the Abyssinian governments who colonised the Oromo people.

(2) It was designed to serve the cultural and administrative needs of the Amahara society and to oppress the Oromo people. Some scholars allege that the EOC education system served the cultural and administrative needs of the Amhara society but suppressed other ethnic tribes including the Oromo. This took the form of teaching only Amharic in the schools. The system contributed to the spread of the Amharic language (Eide 1996:28) in the Oromo society and other non-Amhara tribes in Ethiopia. Some scholars write that the use of Amharic in the schools favoured the Amhara tribe as regards further education.

A survey conducted in 1966 revealed how language proficiency and school policy favoured the Amhara. At the time the Amhara accounted for 55% and the Tigrians 25% of all the students entering University. During the 1970s students who came from indigenous backgrounds constituted less than 10% of the University enrolment. As a result of this the most important posts in the State apparatus were occupied by Amharas (Eide 1996:29).

(3) It served to preserve the Amhara culture and traditional values. Erikson who studied the Eastern Mecha Oromo also pointed out that “in the Ethiopian the formal institution of elementary Church school is an important means of preserving the traditional values of the Amhara” (1972:65). It was through the EOC school that the Amhara culture and Amhara-influenced education penetrated (and will continue to penetrate) most areas of Ethiopia (Erikson 1972:93). This glaring bias indicates that the EOC education ministry is the strong method that contributed to the Oromo Christianity’s lack of indigenous character.

#### **5.4.2 The Swedish Evangelical Mission**

The SEM local missionaries who came to Wollaga, opened schools at Bojjii, Najjo and other places. When Onesimos came to Najjo he began his work by opening a school that enrolled twenty students in September-October 1904. Graduates of these schools also continued to open village schools in different parts of western Oromo country. In 1907 when these indigenous missionaries met at Naqamte to discuss common policy, the evangelism work through schools had started at seven places (Aren 1978:431). The method of evangelism through schools became one of the significant factors for the Oromo people’s response to the Gospel and the emergence of EECMY.

The introduction of modern education and planting the evangelical Churches in Oromo land,

by the SEM did not promote Oromo culture. Like the EOC, the medium of teaching in the SEM schools was Amharic and did not include the Oromo language. The SEM had a Bible School at Naqamte where the Oromo evangelists, who had minimal formal education, were trained using Amharic as a medium of communication.

According to Aren (1978:427-8) the Orthodox Church clergy, who wanted to secure Amhara culture and suppress Oromo consciousness, denounced Onesimos for preaching in Oromo (Aren 1978:427-8). However, the SEM Bible schools were in Amharic and this makes their method of mission similar to that of the EOC.

The SEM played a great role in the establishment of the Mekane Yesus Theological Seminary (MYTS) in 1960. However, the MYTS curriculum was designed according to that of the seminaries in the West. Considering the author's four years experience of the curriculum when he studied at MYTS, there is no subject meant to prepare the leaders so that they can appreciate their African values. It is the only Christian higher education within the EECMY and much was therefore expected from this institution. According to James L. Cox:

Christian higher education can become a primary missionary strategy for achieving a contextualized theology among the indigenous peoples with respect to traditional religions, political and social inequities, and reflection among local Christian communities. Operating sometimes as an extension of the Church or in conjunction with it, Christian colleges, theological seminaries or schools, faculties of religion, and training institutes can address these issues in culturally appropriate ways (1991:228).

In the same way the MYTS should have addressed the religious, social and political problems of the people it served. Suggesting that only Oromo people were affected by irrelevancy of the curriculum is understatement: other nations and nationalities in Ethiopia were also faced with similar problems.

The MYTS would have addressed the Oromo realities in the following three ways which Cox prescribes for contextual Christian higher education. (1) Christian higher education can provide the needed research to assist the Church in understanding and defining its mission among primal religions. (2) Christian higher education can be a source of empowerment for those who have been oppressed politically, socially or economically. It does this by producing leadership from the people and becoming a centre for social involvement and political action. (3) Christian higher education can provide service by acting as a centre for reflection and research on Christian ministry among the indigenous people and by providing opportunities

for group sessions, individual study and hosting conferences.

Some of the MYTS graduates who became pastors within the Oromo congregations regarded the involvement in politics as a sin and opted to abstain themselves from any political involvement. It seems then that the MYTS did not prepare these Church leaders to face the human reality.

The MYTS has a department of Theological Education Through Extension (TEE) which trains Church leaders in the town and rural areas of Ethiopia. In Western Wollaga Bethel Synod of the EECMY about 360 students have been undergoing training through TEE since 1994. The materials were prepared only in the Amharic language. The majority of the students were elders of rural congregations who had limited academic training and thus did not speak Amharic. Difficulty in understanding and appreciating the programme has resulted in many drop-outs. The MYTS did not include Oromo culture and OTR in the curriculum.

One need to appreciate the effort of the SEM for introducing a modern education system to the Wollaga Oromo. Yet, they can be criticized for not providing contextual education especially in the Christian higher education system such as MYTS. The SEM education system can be the major factor that contributed to the EECMY lack of incarnation among the Oromo people.

### **5.4.3 The United Presbyterian Church of North America Mission**

The first modern educational institutions in Qellem district (West Wollaga) were started by the UPCNA missionaries. The students of mission schools became the founders of the rural congregations in the absence of the missionaries. Every village school was serving as a prayer house and vice versa. This evangelism through schools played a significant role in the literacy campaign. Like the SEM system of education the UPCNAM schools also promoted the Amharic language and culture among the Oromo people. For instance there were many students who replaced their names with Amhara names. Quite a number of people thought that an Amhara name was civilised and gave their children Amhara names. However, Eide, argues that the mission literacy campaign in schools resulted in Oromo consciousness in its long-term effects in the following ways.

The long-term effect of education is interesting. Its immediate aim was to promote integration into the Amhara way of life. Its long-term effect, however, was a new awareness of the individual's life situation which gradually developed into a social

and political consciousness and ultimately a critique of political structures and conditions (1996:110).

For Eide, the Oromo struggle is the result of modern education, and he gives the illustration that "One of the first signs of a rising Oromo consciousness was Oromo students at the University beginning to take back their original names and the distribution of occasional pamphlets in the Oromo language in the beginning of 1970s" (1996:111). However, I would like to argue that only a few Oromos were affected positively by Amharaization. The overwhelming majority opted to abandon their culture and traditions.

The other important issue that needs to be mentioned about the UPCNAM education policy is the level of education they wanted to offer to indigenous Church leaders. The UPCNAM did not open theological seminaries and thus did not prepare Church leaders who were to replace them; this affected the Church when all the missionaries left during the communist regime. The Sayo Bible Training Institute (STI) in Dembi Dollo was closed because the principal and the teachers, who were all the UPCNA missionaries left and no indigene was prepared to take over the leadership position.

Though, the UPCNA mission schools played a great role in exposing the Oromo students to modern education and development, it contributed to the Oromo Christianity's lack of inculturation in the following ways:

- (1) Medium of teaching in the UPCNA mission schools including the Bible school and literacy programme was done inclusively in Amharic. In addition, the Oromo students at the mission schools in Dembi Dollo were not allowed to speak their mother tongue in the school compound even to their fellow Oromos.
- (2) There was a struggle between the missionaries and the indigenous BEC leaders on the level of training the Oromo students. Some of the UPCNA missionaries argued against establishment of the Bethel Evangelical Secondary School (BESS). Some of them even dared to argue that the Oromo people could turn away from God if provided with secondary school education. But the indigenous leaders challenged the missionaries on the basis that "if the further education make people to deny God, missionaries should not have obtained two or more degrees?". It was after such struggle that the BESS was established.
- (3) The Bible schools curriculum did not include the studies of the Oromo language, Oromo traditional religion and Oromo culture study.

The indications are then that the UPCNAM education ministry was one of the factors that contributed to the EECMY's lack of incarnation.

#### **5.4.4 The Hermannsburg Mission**

Like the SEM and the UPCNAM, the HM also used school as a method of evangelising the Wollaga Oromo. They built elementary schools in different parts of Wollaga and one senior high school at Aira that had a dormitory for students who come from distant places. Bible was taught as a subject in all schools and hostels had a worship programme. Through such ministry they reached many Oromo people in central Wollaga.

The HM also opened Bible Schools at Mendi, Najjo and Aira with the aim of training evangelists for one or two years. The curriculum of these Bible schools was very similar to that of theological schools opened by the SEM and the UPCNAM that excluded the Oromo culture and traditional religion.

One other factor that deserves a brief discussion is the use of non educated lay Church leaders. The HM gave a short Bible course for non educated lay rural Oromo elders and used them as preachers and teachers in the congregations. Eide (1996:104) claims that “the lack of formal training in Lutheran theology of these influential groups explains in part how concepts and ideas from the traditional culture as well as from the EOC gained access” to the EECMY spirituality. However, Eide fails to specify which concept of the Oromo culture gained access. These uneducated elders used the Lutheran Church liturgy books for the order of worship, they used the Lutheran Church Christian education materials such as Augsburg confession and Luther’s Catechism book to teach the Congregations. It is obvious that these materials did not embrace Oromo heritage. I do agree with him that the EOC tradition could gain access to the EECMY as these elders were converted from the EOC. The Western Church traditions also got access to EECMY because of the missionaries’ imposition of their own traditions on the Oromo people. However, the Oromo traditional culture was not consulted and did not get access to the EECMY due to a missionary legacy.

It is true that the HM local lay missionaries did not get adequate training and therefore unconsciously became agents for the Western theologies. Given that medium of school instructions including the literacy schools were only in the Amharic language one may conclude that the HM education ministry did contribute in the EECMY’s lack of incarnation among the Oromo people.

## 5.5 INTERACTION WITH THE AUTHORITIES

This section will discuss the relation of the Churches, mission organisations and mission agents with secular authorities. Bosch (in Saayman 1992:32-33), states that the majority of missionaries face two sets of secular authorities. The first would be the government of their country where the mission agency is based and the second is the authorities in the country where the missionaries work.

### 5.5.1 The Ethiopian Orthodox Church

There were strong connections between the EOC structures and the Abyssinian governments. For instance:

- (1) Frumentius, the first archbishop of the EOC was head of the Abyssinian Kingdom of Aksum (Isichei 1995:32).
- (2) The EOC monk Zera Yaiqob became the King and established the monasteries (Bakke 1987:52-3).
- (3) Shenk (1972:328) points out the relation of the EOC with the Government:

throughout Ethiopian history, the Church was close to the seat of political authority by anointing kings and dispensing blessing on royal family; many kings succeeded or failed because of the relationship they had with the Church. By action of *Abuna* Mattewos, *lij* Iyasu was deposed in 1916, preparing the way for Zawditu to become empress with Ras Tafari as regent and heir...when Zawditu died the clergy agreed to crown Tafari Emperor, if he would support the Church. Bakke (1987:60) also says the deputy archbishop was elected by the King. Abun (archbishop of the EOC) was called King-maker.

- (4) Whenever a part of Oromo were conquered the land was given to the EOC priests (Eide 1996:12; Melba 1988:39).
- (5) According to Shenk, during the reign of Emperor Haile Selassie the Church reviewed a draft of the 1955 constitution of the country before it was officially accepted.

In this constitution the Ethiopian church was declared the established Church of the Empire supported by the state. Previously it had been implied that the monarch would be the member of the Church, but the 1955 constitution stated that Emperor shall always profess the Ethiopian Orthodox Church faith. Members of Imperial family are required to be members of the Church. Bishops and other Churchmen are representatives in the senate. Private cabinet, established in 1959, included a department of Ecclesiastical Affairs (Shenk,1972:331).

- (6) The “civil code of 1960 defined the legal rights of the Ethiopian Orthodox church with respect to its dioceses, parishes, and monasteries. It also recognises monogamous marriage as the only legal form of marriage for the whole Empire” (Shenk 1972:332).
- (7) According to Eide (1996:32) "The national script *Kebre Nagast* (Glory of the Kings) conceives Church and State as one organism, without a clear separation between the religious and the secular."
- (8) The Church has supported Tafari in his ambition to become Emperor and transmitted legitimacy to him in his coronation as Haile Sillasse. By upholding the Solomonian legend the Church bestowed an additional source of legitimacy upon the Emperor (1972:335). The Archbishop's signature of 1931 Ethiopian Constitution was a symbol of the Church's importance and its loyalty to the regime (Shenk 1972:3360). Abuna Basileyos was ordained Archbishop and later elevated as patriarch. He swore oaths of loyalty to the Emperor and likewise other Ethiopian bishops pledged loyalty to the Emperor at their ordinations. The Church stood with the state in its claim to Eritrea. According Shenk (1972:338) “ a Churchman, Melak Selam Demetrius Gebremariam, was the president of the Eritrean parliament who effected union by making Eritrea a province of Ethiopia." The leader of the abortive coup of 1960, Girmame Neway, was critical of the church and advocated nationalization of all land, especially that of the Church, and the dis-establishment of the Ethiopian Orthodox church (Shenk 1972:339).
- (9) Part of the government's budget was allocated for clergy wages, Church buildings, monasteries, and religious schools; bishops' salaries were regulated but in the event of deficiencies the palace was prepared to provide a subsidy. The Emperor encouraged Amharic preaching, promoted theological education, and arranged for Amharic translation of liturgy, baptismal service, theological books, and the Bible. Haile Sillasse ordered the collection of old religious books and their translation into Amharic, provided money towards expenses, and appointed a committee to review the Amharic Bible. He also established a special commission to study ways of improving worship and encourage preaching by more able and educated clergy (Shenk, 1972:358).
- (10) The Churchmen served on the Board of governors of Haile Sillasse I University, the National Education Board, the Board of the Ministry of Education, The National Literacy Advisory Council, and the National Commission for Education. The Church sometimes represented the state in foreign relations (Shenk, 1972:332).

In general the EOC gave the ideological and functional support to the crown. It served the monarchy by providing a link between the people and the King; through its prayers, speeches



and services it encouraged loyal obedience to the Emperor. The Church may denounce opposition to the regime, bless or excommunicate members for political purposes and serve as peacemakers or political arbiter (Shenk, 1972:341).

In his concluding summary, Shenk claims that the “EOC contributed to political stability by uniting the country and helping preserve its independence” (1972:368). I beg to disagree with this assertion for the following reasons: (1) Shenk himself points out (point 8 above) that the EOC forced Eritrea to unite with Ethiopia, a unification that brought Ethiopia into perpetual fighting with Eritrea for about thirty years resulting in the loss of millions of lives and property.

(2) The EOC got a share of the land conquered by the Abyssinian governors a practice that rendered many Oromo people to the status of tenants in their own land (see point 4 above).

(3) With so much land in the possession, it was not surprising that the Church stood against land reform in support of the Kings and the rich people while many poor Ethiopian farmers were starving as a consequence of lack of sufficient arable land. This kind of oppression was responsible for the 1974 revolution that caused severe destruction.

Throughout the history of Ethiopia there was no time when the country was without war or without internal and external conflicts. What then motivates Shenk to conclude that the EOC contributed to political stability of the country? What kind of stability is he talking about? The opposite is rather true. The EOC cannot be free from all the problems occurring in Ethiopia, because it had participated in the Administration of the Ethiopian empire. The EOC was being used by all rulers to control Ethiopian society. It is similar to what Hayes had to say about such Christian Churches that subscribe to the Sacramental model.

In Rome and other places the Church itself took control of civil authority to fill the vacuum. In the East the aim was to achieve a symphony of the emperor and patriarch in a single Christian society (Hayes in Saayman et al 1992:96).

The EOC interaction with authorities was very similar to the one described in the quotation above. Considering these facts it is possible to argue that the interaction of the EOC with authorities played a great role in the Oromo Christianity’s lack of incarnation. Moreover it can be concluded that this could be one of the causes for the current political and social crises of the Oromo people.

## 5.5.2 The Swedish Evangelical Mission

The SEM was born out of the Church of Sweden which is a state Church. When the missionaries established a congregation at Masawa, "recognition as a diaspora congregation of the Church of Sweden required an act by the Swedish government" (Aren 1978: 221). This indicates a strong interaction between the Swedish government and the SEM.

The relationship between the Swedish and the Abyssinian governments was strengthened through the work of the SEM in Ethiopia. For example during the reign of Emperor Minelik II, the SEM missionary Maier asked the Swedish government for guns on behalf of Minelik. Aren (1978:170-1) indicates that:

Maier wrote to Lundahl and pointed out that recruitment of qualified technicians was an indispensable prerequisite of a missionary undertaking. In a letter to Stockholm he specified Minelik's demands. They included a physician, a master gunsmith, a metal founder able to cast cannons and bombs, and a skilled carpenter. Krapf and Waldmeier joined Maier in pleading Minelik's cause.

This shows the strong bond between the SEM, the Abyssinian and the Swedish governments. In section 4.2.2 I promised to address the issue on why the SEM preferred Amharic rather than Oromo language. Perhaps this strong relationship with the Abyssinian government forced the SEM to choose Amharic over Oromo. It is possible that the SEM did not want to offend the Abyssinian government by using the Oromo language as a medium of teaching and preaching. The effect of this decision was the suppression of the Oromo culture and the genesis of the present crisis with in the EECMY. It could be the same reason that obliged them to compromise their previous plan of reaching the Oromo with the Gospel and adjust their mission strategy with that of the EOC as described by Eide (1996:60).

The aim of the SEM in coming to Ethiopia was to reach the Oromo with the Gospel. When evangelical envoys at last managed to reach the Oromo, they discovered to their surprise that the EOC was already in the process of establishing itself in the area. The mission therefore had to adjust its strategy accordingly. Their mission ought, however, to be understood as a parallel mission to that of the EOC and not primarily aimed at reforming the old Church.

Minelik had a vision of colonising the Oromo people. Knowing this plan the SEM missionary, wrote a letter to the Swedish government asking gun for Minelik. To sum up this section the SEM interaction with authorities contributed to the EECMY's lack of incarnation among the Oromo. The SEM relation with their government might have created nationalism sentiment in the minds of the missionaries and made an impact on them to establish the Church that accepts the Swedish heritage. One might argue that the SEM relation with both

governments contributed to the establishment of the EECMY that had no indigenous character among the Oromo people.

### **5.5.3 The United Presbyterian Church of North America Mission**

The UPCNAM's relation with the government of the United States of America was very strong in many ways. Most of the missionaries were forced to leave the country when Emperor Haile Sillase was overthrown by communist government while other missionaries were allowed to stay. The communist leaders antagonism to the missionaries from America stem from two possible reasons. Their past strong relation with Monarchies and feudal lords and secondly the communists suspected the UPCNA missionaries for being agents of the American government.

The UPCNAM also had a strong relationship with the local and central governments of Ethiopia. They were often invited by the Qellem district governor *Dajazmach* Birru Wolde Gabriel (Birri 1997:1) and were well received whenever they arrived. The reason the UPCNAM focused to strengthen the EOC rather than to plant separated Protestant Church and preferred Amharic language as a medium of communication was due to their strong relationship with the Abyssinian government. Indeed the UPCNAM became an agent of the Abyssinian colonisers in spreading the Amharic language among the Oromo people and therefore failed to establish the Church that is inculturated.

### **5.5.4 The Hermannsburg Mission**

The HM came out of the Lutheran Church of Germany which is a state Church. The German government offers running budget for the Church and the Church to the HM. This means there was positive interaction of the HM with their governments.

The Abyssinian governments never trusted the HM because they adopted the Oromo language and developed the Oromo people. In addition, the HM sustained strong relation with the local Oromo governors (such as Gammada Urgessa of Chalia and Gagn Rorro of Aira). Such relations helped them to have freedom of spreading the Gospel in the whole Gimbi district of Wollaga.

The Lutheran missionaries who lived in Africa were very much concerned about the German

culture. For instance in South Africa the German Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Hermannsburg was constituted with the idea of strengthening the German language at the German-speaking schools. Similarly the German Evangelical synod of Transvaal was constituted on two pillars: the German custom and Lutheran faith (Scriba 1999:21 unpublished lecture notes).

This could account for why the HM in the Oromo land did not want to adopt the Oromo custom and traditional worship style. The good relations of the HM with the German government might have made the HM so faithful to their culture that they neglected the culture of the society in which they worked. And this contributed to the EECMY's lack of inculturation.

## **5.6 MISSION IN CONTEXT**

In this thesis, mission in context refers to "the way to interpret the gospel as being compatible with traditional culture and religion of the people" (Bosch in Saayman 1992:41). This section will analyse whether the Christian mission among the Wollaga Oromo interpreted the gospel according to Bosch's criteria.

### **5.6.1 Approach to Oromo Traditional Religion**

#### **5.6.1.1 The Ethiopian Orthodox Church**

The EOC approach to the Oromo traditional religion (OTR) was unhelpful because it destroyed some of the OTR aspects in Wollaga. According to Melba (1988:21), (1) the *Galmas*, (Oromo traditional or ritual prayer houses) were destroyed and replaced by Orthodox Church buildings, and (2) the Oromo prayer ceremony *irressa* (thanksgiving festival) declared illegal. Some of the places that the Oromo used for *irressa*, are now being used by the Orthodox Church for their yearly festival called "*timqat*"(Ethiopian epiphany). However, Tippet (1970:240) argues that "much animistic thought and performance still remains, especially in Islam and Orthodox Christianity in the form of syncretism, and in domestic rituals". The Oromo people who were members of the EOC, were able to celebrate some traditional festivals and perform some of the old customs. This does not mean the EOC became liberal in the formation of indigenous Churches among the Oromo people. The EOC

never wanted to tolerate OTR. “Throughout its history, the Ethiopian Orthodox Church has been confronted with non-Christian beliefs and practices” (Bakke 1987:54). It was the Oromo people who went back to their traditions to fill their religious needs that the EOC failed to fulfil. Therefore, the EOC did not have positive approach to the OTR.

### 5.6.1.2 The Swedish Evangelical Mission

In the eighteenth and nineteenth century the Western Churches sent the missionaries to Africa with a clearly defined purpose. According to the synod of Dordt, the purpose of sending missionaries abroad was three-fold; (1) *Coversio gentium* (the conversion of pagans), (2) *plantio ecclesiae* (planting of the Church) and (3) to glorify God and the manifestation of the divine grace of God (Mission Guide1 1975:26). Western Churches (who sent missionaries to Africa) and the 19<sup>th</sup> Century missionaries had wrong perceptions about Africa. According to Hinga (in Turkson et al 1994:12) they perceived Africans as “incapable of religion, even superstitions is beyond them. Africa was presented as a spiritual and cultural desert whose hope lay in the imposition of Christianity and Western civilisation.” With this kind perception the SEM missionaries came to Wollaga and began to preach the Gospel. As a result of the pioneer missionaries’ work in Wollaga a woman who was among the first converts was forced to stop the Oromo traditional customs. Aren (1978:401) stated that:

Walate Giorgis, the wife of the prince reads her New Testament in Galla. She has broken with the evil customs of the women and believes in Jesus Christ (Aren 1978:401).

The evil customs mentioned here were the Oromo women’s traditional worship practices such as *Maram*, *Atete* and *yarabi*. In OTR *Maram* is the divinity of motherhood. She is evoked and addressed in song at any birth-ritual. Another ritual at which she is evoked is the one called *Atete*, which in former times, was performed by every woman in the neighbourhood who wished to be pregnant. *Yarabi* is the women’s thanksgiving and prayer ritual, in which the women offer sacrifice to *Waaqa* (God) under a tree every year. Here they pray to *Waaqa* for their cattle, crops and wild animals. In general they pray for plenty, and peace for Oromo people (Bartels 1983:124,352-5). Such practices even today are not acceptable in the congregations founded by the SEM and members are likely to be excommunicated from the Church if they practice them. All practices of the traditional cults became illegal and “All items which had played the slightest part in the cult were taken out and destroyed” (Bakke 1987:126). Their approach was to destroy the OTR and replace with Christianity and Western culture. It can be argued that the SEM approach to the OTR was negative from the very

beginning and this could be one of the reasons why the EECMY lacked indigenous character among the Oromo people.

### 5.6.1.3 The United Presbyterian Church of North America Mission

The UPCNAM is among the 19<sup>th</sup> century missionary movement group. Their approaches to the African traditional religion (ATR) could not be different from other Western missionaries approach. They destroyed the OTR from the Sayo (Western Wollaga) where they began the mission work. In the OTR, *Qallu* was the ritual expert (Bartels 1983:41). However, he/she was regarded as a witch-doctor by the UPCNAM missionaries. According to Tippet (1970:178) "the English speaking foreigner in Southwest Ethiopia speaks of the witch-doctor, although in point of fact he (or she) has nothing to do with witchcraft." He further points out that the *Qallus* were sometimes called *ogessa* (diviner) or *Karifo* (rain-maker). However, the indigenous missionaries like Gidada Solan generalised and called the *Qallus*, the ones who had the spirit of Satan and were subsequently persecuted. Through the preaching of these indigenous missionaries the *Qallu* at Samate in Sayo had to leave the village before the evangelical church was built (Eide 1996:90). With this all the *Qallu* offices were eliminated from Sayo and "the basic animism of the country weakened" (Tippet 1970:257). The Oromo festivals such as harvest and sacred events of the year became a thing of the past in Wollaga. The evangelical Church could not continue with some of those rituals such as festivals during the small rain (March and April), the start of the big rain (June), and before that harvest (September and October) and the like.

Whenever *Qallu* left the area, it was possible to transform some of the OTR rituals such as Atete, Yarabi and Irressa festivals, in such a way as to fit them into Christianity. Monica Wilson argues that "to abandon ancient festivals" is to change the value of the whole manner of life of African people (quoted in Sanneh, 1989:175). The UPCNAM abandoned all traditional worship practices and festivals. This was not done by mistake, but in purpose to cleanse the Oromo mind from traditional practices. In other words cleansing the Africans from traditional belief system and inculcating egotic forms of Christianity was the Western missionaries main task. Hinga puts the western missionaries task very well.

The task of the missionary was largely not perceived as one of converting Africans from one religion to another....The task was perceived as one of cleansing the African minds of the effect of their 'primitivity'(sic), 'ignorance' and 'superstition' and inscribing the same minds with new ideas not only in the form of Christianity, but also with Western cultural beliefs and practices from the civilised Western world, in order

ostensibly to benefit them with the benefits of Western civilisation (in Turkson et al 1994:12).

The same approach was used by UPCNAM when they destroyed all the Qallus (OTR ritual experts) and OTR practices such as festivals. The UPCNAM biased their approach to establish the Church that had foreign character.

#### 5.6.1.4 The Hermansburg Mission

The HM's approach to the OTR was not different from that of the SEM and the UPCNAM strategies. The campaign against the OTR was the HM's primary approach. Considering pre-conceived wrong ideas the HM missionaries taught their local missionaries that the Oromo worshipped Qallu who had evil spirits. The HM local missionaries, Rev Daffaa Jammoo and Rev Ashanaa Nagaadee preached against all Qallus, labelling them to be the agents of Satan. However, Bartels (1973:120) points out that the Matcha Oromo say,

it is the Muslims and especially the Christians who provided the matcha with a new concept of superhuman evil powers: the devils (Setan) ... These devils, unlike the traditional ayana, were somehow independent spirits, enemies of Waqa (God) and man.

However, the HM missionaries who trained Daffaa and Ashanaa to be evangelists did not know the difference between the *Qallu* [Oromo Traditional Religion (OTR) expert] and the *qallichas* who deceive the people. Melba (1988:20) makes the distinction between them.

The Oromo *Qallu* must not be confused with the Amhara Qaallicha, who has a very different, much lower social status. He is a vagabond who resorts to conjuring and black magic for his own benefit, (Knustson, 1967). He is notorious for extracting remuneration by threats or other means. On the other hand, it is beneath the dignity of an Oromo *Qallu* to ask his ritual clients for gifts or payment. The Abyssinian ruling class has confused the term, thus disparaging the *Qallu* socially and religiously by using the term depreciatingly.

The HM missionaries were confused by these concepts and a propaganda against Oromo *Qallus* was launched, destroyed all its rituals and institutions. Missionaries who had such a negative approach established the EECMY, forced it to adopt western cultural heritage at the expense of the Oromo culture, which was perceived as incompatible with Christianity.

## 5.6.2 Approach to Oromo culture

To give the proper definition of a culture is not an easy task. Many anthropologists give different kinds of definitions. E.B. Taylor says "Culture or civilisation is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, moral law, customs and any other capabilities habits acquired by man as a member of society" (in Luzbetak 1970:59). According to Davies (1972:158), the word culture

is derived from the Latin word "colo" which denotes "I devote, or apply myself to." It is concerned with man's attempt to understand himself in relation to environment, personal and impersonal. Through this confrontation, patterns of culture emerge: language, ritual, forms of art, buildings, structure of time.

According to the Cambridge International Dictionary of English (1995:334) culture is defined as a way of life, general customs and beliefs of a particular group of people at a particular time. It is also the continuing traditions of art, music, literature etc. Schreier (1985:55), sees culture as "memory, the stored and retrievable information that guides the selection and exclusion of new information for the development of identity." Combining different definitions Luzbetak also defines culture as follows:

Culture is a way of life; culture is a total plan for living; it is functionally organised into a system; it is acquired through learning; it is the way of life of a social group, not of an individual as such...culture is a design for living. It is a plan according to which the society adapts itself to its physical, social, and ideational environment. A plan for coping with the physical environment would include matters as food production and all technological knowledge and skill. Political system, kinship and family organisation, and law are examples of social adaptation, a plan according to which one is to interact with his fellows (1979:60-1).

Culture in the context of this thesis should be seen as the identity of any society in which Christianity can be incarnated. There is no good or bad culture which Christianity either rejects or accepts. This is because every culture involves human beings, whom God created in His own image. Thus every culture is God's culture in which Christianity can be incarnated and which can be transformed in such a way that it pleases God. With this understanding, an analysis of the Christian mission methods used to deal with Oromo culture will be given.



### 5.6.2.1 The Ethiopian Orthodox Church

The EOC missionaries were liberal in their approach to a few aspects of the Oromo culture. Traditional marriage custom was able to survive and was not disqualified despite that the EOC introduced canonical marriage in Wollaga. The priests sometimes attend traditional wedding and offer prayers. The EOC neither encouraged polygamy nor refused the polygamists from participating in holy communion. It is also possible to have Oromo cultural dances during weddings although people often mix Oromo songs with some Amhara songs. In this aspect, the EOC mission method was more accommodating than the Protestant missionaries. Against this background it can be argued that the EOC adapted an unhelpful approach towards the Oromo culture. The decline of Oromo culture coincided with the arrival of the EOC in Wollaga (Aren 1978:394). The Qallu institution made an attempt to resist the EOC but failed because the ruling class favoured the EOC. The people had no other alternative than to accept the EOC evangelism that was accompanied by forced cultural transformation.

Shorter, (1988:55) pointed out that,

in the process of evangelization the people are presumed to retain their cultural autonomy, to make their own choices and their own selections. The herald of the gospel makes an offer which the hearer is free to accept or reject. It is also presumed that the message of the Gospel undergoes no loss of continuity in meaning.

The EOC missionaries did not give the Wollaga Oromo the freedom of retaining their culture and the Oromo culture suffered post arrival of the EOC in Wollaga. The following facts indicate how Oromo culture suffered under the EOC.

(1) Tippet (1970:230) pointed out that the old Gadaa system government was destroyed due to two powerful forces. Christianity destroyed the old religious aspect of the Gadaa and the power of the Amhara rule supplanted the political and social aspect of the Gadaa. This means all the Christian missionaries, who came to Wollaga contributed to the destruction of this important aspect of the Oromo culture.

(2) The EOC changed the Oromo names during baptism. According to Aren (1978:373), Kumsa, the eldest son of the Wollaga governor was baptised by the EOC and given the name Gebre-Egziabher. The EOC is still doing the same thing during baptism. The so called Christian names given during baptism are actually Amhara names. This is done in purpose to promote the Amhara culture at the expense of the Oromo culture.

(3) The Oromo established their own calendar approximately 300 years before Christ (Melba:1988:18). With the coming of the EOC the Oromo calendar was replaced by the EOC calendar. The Oromo calendar is helpful for the Oromo society in many ways including period of Butta ritual (when the new Gadaa leaders are elected and given authority) and other Oromo festivals. Non educated Oromos were unable to use the new calendar that was in Amharic.

(4) The Oromo people lived on cattle farms and were used to drinking milk. However, when they were baptised by the EOC priests they were obliged to abstain from certain foods because it is part of the EOC belief. Isichei (1995:49) explains the EOC fasting days as follows:

There are 180 fast days in the year for the laity, and 250 for the clergy with every Wednesday and Friday being fast days. On a fast day one meal is eaten, after noon, and there is total abstention from meat, fat, eggs, and all dairy products. In the nineteenth century, Ethiopians exported coffee, but the Church forbade them to drink it.

(5) According to Hayes (in Saayman 1992:81) "the sacramental model can be seen most clearly in the Orthodox Churches." He further points out that the Bible and liturgy were translated into local languages by sacramental model Churches (in Saayman 1992:97), but the EOC could not render significant Christian texts in the Oromo language.

Considering the above five points it is likely that the EOC adapted a destructive approach towards the Oromo culture that resulted in a crisis of the Oromo Christianity.

### **5.6.2.2 The Swedish Evangelical Mission**

It was discussed earlier that the SEM translated the Bible and hymns into Oromo, however, it is inappropriate to assume that translation of the scriptures can automatically render the gospel indigenous. But the procedure of the translation model (4.3.2) was not followed.

The SEM translation of the Bible and hymn books was mainly interpretation work. The hymns used by the mother Church at Masawa was translated from Swedish texts and Onesimos translated those hymns into the Oromo language. Aren (1978:301) says that "it may be regretted that these hymns were not adapted to indigenous rhythms and tunes; but such a thing could hardly be expected at that time". One may argue that adapting the Swedish

rhythm was done consciously because of the 19<sup>th</sup> century missionary legacy.

Kraft (1979:341) agrees that conversion to Christianity was accompanied by conversion to Western culture.

Many persons possessing inadequate views concerning culture find their way into pastoral and missionary work, where they advocate a conversion of Christianity which, like that of the Judaizer is concerned primarily with purely cultural issues. The big thing is to get those who convert to conform to the moral ideals of their variety of Western culture (on the assumption that is nearly synonymous with "Christian culture"). The organisational and worship patterns (including music) of the home denomination are also pressed. And, including theological formulations, anti-polygamy and anti-common-law-marriage rules', etc."

This argument seems valid in the case of the SEM approach to Oromo culture. Not only the hymns were Western, but also Church administrative structure and theology were formulated according to that of the Swedish Church with the result that some of the aspects of Oromo culture suffered.

Out of many aspects of the Oromo culture that suffered as a result of direct or indirect SEM work in Wollaga, I would like to highlight four of them as follows:

**(1) The Oromo Gadaa system disappeared** from Wollaga partly due to the impact of Christianity, which includes congregations founded by the SEM.

**(2) Because of the SEM theology of monogamy, divorce was encouraged.** In chapter four we discussed that Dibaba, the governor of Wollaga had to divorce his five wives after he heard the message of the Bible and remained with his first wife. Though, Aren (1978:400) states that it was Dibaba's discision, I argue that the missionaries obliged him to divorce his wives. They did this because of their own European cultural bias. They failed to understand the context of African polygamous. Luzbetak (1970:247) stated some of the reasons for the polygamy in Africa. (a) It is a prestige derived from the fact that a man has several wives while the majority of men must be satisfied with only one wife. (b) It is a prestige that is derived from the fact that a man has a large potential offspring. (c) It is derived from a prestige and the satisfaction of fulfilling a social or religious obligation. (d) It is a means of supplying strong labour force for the family e.g., necessary for cattle raising. (e) It is a means of reducing the work load for the women. (f) It is a way of providing a defence for the family, for example, in areas where feuding is common. (g) It is a way of providing social security for

widows. (h) It is a way of providing companionship for women where there is a strict separation of sexes. (i) It is means of sexual adjustment, for example, if taboos require long abstinence; (j) It is a way of fostering intertribal and interfamily friendship. (k) Lastly it is for personal reason such as lust, incompatibility, revenge, etc.

Since monogamy can not fulfill many of these needs, polygamy will most likely not be displaced until ways are found to fill the needs in some other manner or until the functions themselves loss their values and disappear. Schreiter (1985:97), argues that forcing a polygamous marriage to divorce is doing an injustice.

Must a man (the examples in Africa are all of polygyny) send away all of his wives but the first in order to receive baptism? When such is required, long-standing and faithful relationships are some times severed. And worse of all a grave injustice is done to those women sent away, since they are now excluded from the only social-welfare system the society has. They are condemned to a life without social relationship in a society where such is the equivalent of death.

**(3) The Oromo traditional marriage custom was destroyed or domesticated.** Customary marriage in which blessings take place in the homes of the bride and the bridegroom was replaced with Church marriage. Gobana (1996:44), argues that Church marriage is more expensive in the context of Wollaga, because more people need to be invited, expensive cars need to be hired, whereas the traditional one is done according to the resources of the couple.

**(4) Like the EOC, the SEM also changed the names of the people during baptism.** The Oromo name of Onesimos was "Hika" meaning translator. Coincidentally this name later matched his job as Bible translator, however, the SEM had changed his name at baptism and he was given a Christian name (Aren 1978:165). This means the SEM assumed that the Oromo names could not be Christian. Today there are numerous Oromo Christians including theologians who gave Jew's or European names to their children thinking the Oromo names are secular. This could be the reason why the Oromo child naming ritual became a thing of the past in Wollaga. All the above explanations prove that the SEM approach to the Oromo culture was a contributory factor to the establishment of EECMY in foreign character.

### **5.6.2.3 The United Presbyterian Church of North America Mission**

Bosch (in Saayman 1992:27) stated that in order to communicate the Word of God intelligibly to the listeners, "the Protestant missionaries...emphasised the priority of learning the languages of the people to whom they went and of translating the Bible into those languages." Language is the vehicle to understand the culture of any society. However, the UPCNAM

missionaries did not consider learning the language of the Oromo people and this tells us that their approach to the Oromo culture was not positive.

As a result of the UPCNAM missionaries' evangelization among the Sayo people the Oromo culture suffered a point of destruction, a few of which are discussed:

(1) According to Tippet's (1970:230) interview to an old man, whom the UPCNAM converted to Christianity, the Gadaa System was rejected by the people because of this conversion experience. The researcher of this study got a similar answer during an interview on 30 April 1992 with Mr Baalcha Deenta, who was one of the founders of the Bethel Evangelical Church in Sayo.

(2) Like the SEM, the UPCNAM also imposed divorce on the polygamous family in connection with which a specific event took place in Sayo area, in Western Wollaga Bethel Synod (WWBS). An old man named Gabbisaa Baraarti had to divorce his second wife to participate in the holy communion. Some scholars state that the requirement of a polygamous man to divorce his wives and remain with only one is "asking him to commit the sin of divorce to remedy the offence of polygamy" (Sanneh 1989:176).

(3) Hastings (1976:38) writes that "there were missionaries who absolutely condemned the payment of 'bride wealth' in marriage, all African dancing and participation in every traditional custom from cradle to grave." In a similar way cultural dance and cultural drink *Farso* (local beer) is forbidden in the Western Wollaga Bethel Synod (WWBS) of the EECMY. This was the outcome of the UPCNAM missions approach to the Oromo culture.

#### **5.6.2.4 The Hermannsburg Mission**

Directly or indirectly the presence of the HM missionaries in Wollaga contributed to the destruction of some of the old Oromo values.

- (1) Oromo Qallu institution was destroyed by the effect of the HM local missionaries work (Eide 1996:90-91). When the Oromo OTR expert Qallu was destroyed then the Oromo Gadaa also became a thing of the past in Wollaga since there was no person to perform the Gadaa rituals.
- (2) The Oromo festivals such as Irressa, yarabi and Abdari also disappeared from Wollaga

as a result of evangelical preaching.

- (3) The HM missionaries' concerns were about their German heritage when they introduced the Lutheran style of worship and liturgy that did not allow the use of Oromo music in worship service. This contributed to the destruction of Oromo music in Wollaga.

Thus it is possible to come to the conclusion that the HM approach to the Oromo culture was also negative and contributed to the EECMY's lack of inculturation.

## **5.7 SUMMARY**

In this chapter, it was argued that, (a) the Oromo people could not participate enthusiastically and meaningfully in the Liturgy, and worship of the EOC. Because they were unable to understand the Amharic and Geez languages used in a Church. Usage of only the Amharic language for worship has historical links with the current crisis in the Gulale and Entoto congregations. (b) The liturgy and worship adopted for evangelical Churches in Wollaga by the three mission societies (the SEM, UPCNAM and HM) were all foreign to the Oromo culture. The musical instruments, hymns, collection bags, orders of elements of worship were Western. They were adapted from the missionaries home Churches in Europe and the USA. The OTR rituals of prayer such as birth of a calf blessing, child birth and child rearing prayers, wedding blessings, etc. were not included in the EECMY liturgy and worship. It lacked incarnation in the culture of the Oromo people.

It was argued that: (a) the EOC healing ministry neglected the physical healing and dealt only with spiritual healing; (b) the SEM, UPCNAM, and HM introduced modern health institutions to Wollaga that attracted many Oromos to the Church. However, traditional healers were neither recognised nor encouraged by the mission health workers. The evangelical missionaries failed to understand that healing in Africa includes curative ministries from all maladies of society, that includes protection from evil forces that attack human beings and their environments. This may be part of the reason why evangelical missionaries healing ministry failed to integrate the Oromo traditional healing with modern healing ministry. Rendering only the Western missionaries healing ministry was foreign to the Oromo culture.

In this chapter it was also argued that, (a) the EOC education ministry was designed to serve the Amhara cultural and administrative needs. It helped to spread the Amharic language/culture and Amhara influence in the Oromo society and suppressed the Oromo

culture. Their school curriculum excluded the study of the Oromo language. (b) The SEM, UPCNAM and HM introduced a modern education system to the Wollaga Oromo. It developed many of the Oromo people and created consciousness among few educated Oromo people. However, it also contributed to the process of Amharization, because the medium of teaching in schools was in Amharic. The study of the Oromo language and culture was not included in the curriculum. The level of training of Church leaders was very low. The Christian theological schools did not include OTR, Oromo culture and the Oromo language in their curriculum. The tool of education used in the evangelization of the Wollaga Oromo was inadequate and contributed to the EECMY's lack of inculturation.

A discussion of the interaction of the Christian missionaries with authorities justified the claim that: (a) the EOC became a symphony of the Abyssinian Emperors, shared the secular administration with the governments throughout the Ethiopian history. The EOC played an active role when the Abyssinians colonised the Oromo people towards the end 18<sup>th</sup> century. The EOC made a significant effort in the process of subjugation and Amharaization of the Oromo people. Thus the EOC interaction with authorities made the EOC to comply with colonialism. (b) The SEM and the UPCNAM interaction with the Abyssinian government made an impact on the missionaries in order to enhance the Amhara language and adopt it. The SEM and the HM interaction with their European governments might have made them nationalistic and hence imposed their country's culture and heritage on the Oromo people. The interaction of all the four Christian mission societies with authorities contributed to the Oromo Christianity's lack of indigenous character.

It appeared that the EOC seemed to be liberal in tolerating cultural dance, customary marriage and domestic OTR practices. This does not mean they allowed it, but the Oromo people went back to their tradition to fulfil their religious needs that were lacking in the EOC. The EOC missionary approach to the OTR and culture was to destroy the OTR and culture and then replace it with the Amhara form of Christianity and the Amhara culture. This is why the *Galmas* (OTR prayer house) was destroyed and replaced with the Church building, the *irressa* (Oromo thanks giving festival) was replaced by the EOC timqat (Ethiopian epiphany), the Gadaa practices began to decline after the arrival of the EOC in Wollaga and the EOC failed to communicate the Christian message in the Oromo language.

It is obvious that the three Protestant mission societies' approach to the OTR and culture was very similar to the 19<sup>th</sup> century missionary movement. It was a *Tabula Rasa* (starting from a vacuum) approach to the African Traditional Religion (ATR) and cultures. The SEM,

UPCNAM, and HM belong to the movement. They had the assumption of cleansing the Africans minds from primitive, 'superstition' and inscribing the same minds with Western form of Christianity, cultural beliefs and 'civilisation'. That was why these mission societies began to preach against all Qallu institution and destroyed them. They forced the polygamous men to divorce, and destroyed the Gadaa practices in Wollaga. All these facts show that their approach to the OTR and culture was **negative**. They established the EECMY which did not incarnate itself in the culture of the Oromo people.

The EECMY that was born in the Oromo land and survived for the last hundred years, is being challenged by the same Oromo people because it lacked inculturation. Can she continue with the same approach in the future? Should she continue with the traditional missionary method or plan a new method? I do not think so. It is time that she should review her traditional methods of mission and devise methods of inculturating herself in the culture of the people. If Christianity is to continue with the Oromo people it has to be part of the Oromo people's lives. Strategies to inculturate Christianity in the life of the Oromo people will be advanced in the next chapter.



# **CHAPTER SIX: CONTEXTUAL EVANGELISM AMONG THE OROMO AS A CHALLENGE AND PROMISE TO THE EECMY**

## **6.1 Aim of the chapter**

This chapter will discuss the challenges of the EECMY in evangelising the Oromo people. It will also recommend contextual model as a promise to overcome the challenges. There are different kinds of contextual models but we will recommend inculturation model which Bosch (1991:421) calls "contextual theologies proper." Contextual and inculturation models will be defined. Inculturation in the Bible and in the history of the Christian Church will be explored. The source, limits, principles and the methods of inculturation will be discussed. The last section will recommend possible areas of ministries that the EECMY may need to inculturate in the Oromo culture.

## **6.2 Challenges of the EECMY in Evangelising the Oromo People**

Currently the EECMY has two basic challenges in the process of evangelising the Oromos. They are: (1) Islam, being seen as a resistant ideology among the Muslim Oromo people, is a challenge for her outreach programme. (2) Lack of inculturation is an internal and external challenge for her future service among the Oromo people. As a result of cultural revitalisation, the educated Oromos are organising traditional festivals and calling many people to participate in the traditional practices. As mentioned earlier in chapter one, there are some followers of traditional religion who requested the EECMY for membership without abandoning their cultural practices. The EECMY is in a dilemma because she is not ready to answer to such challenges. This study attempts to suggest some possible methods of overcoming the above mentioned challenges.

### 6.2.1 Islam as a Resistant Ideology Among the Muslim Oromo People

Among the Muslim Oromos, Islam is seen as an ideology that helps them to resist Abyssinian colonialism which accompanied Christianity. Some scholars write that the Oromo people accepted Islam to escape from Abyssinian colonial powers.

Spencer Trimingham, who studied the expansion of Islam in Ethiopia, noted that Abyssinian King Theodore had the aim of uniting Ethiopia by using Christianity as a main tool for unification. For Theodore “Christianity and Abyssinia were synonymous and he ordered that the Falasha, the Agao and the Oromo be converted to Christianity by force” (1965:118). In the same way Emperor John IV of Tigre ordered half a million Oromos to be baptized by force (Trimingham 1965:123). Such compulsory conversion led the Oromo people to hate Christianity and forced them to accept Islam. The Amhara monk Asteme wrote: “the Galla became Muslim for his hatred of the Amhara Priests” (Melba 1988:22). Further Melba cites Bereket who noted that,

Oromos in Arsi province accepted Islam in large numbers as a demonstration of Anti-Amhara sentiment and a rejection of all values associated with imperial conquerors. A somewhat similar situation in the west was the acceptance of Islam by many Afro-Americans in 1950s and 1960s, as a reaction to the racial discrimination and oppression they faced from the white community and in search of an identity different from that of the oppressor group (1988:22).

This implies that the acceptance of Islam by the Oromos was not because of its philosophical teaching nor because of its relevancy to the Oromo culture. But it was seen as the religion that was hostile to the Amhara colonisers. Trimingham puts it beautifully:

*Islam force of expansion amongst pagans in Ethiopia was helped by the fact that it was the religion hostile to that of the Amharic race who lorded it over them...Amharic Christianity was not fixed and sterile...It had become more and more fossilized to embody the spirit and form of Ethiopian nationalism. It was regarded by pagan tribes as the tribal religion of their enemies. Islam on the other hand, opening its arms to embrace all and sundry who cared to join its brotherhood by the repetition of simple formula, and accommodating as it was to their indigenous practices (1965:101).*

Trimingham further states that (1) the Oromo of the eastern highlands (Wallo, Yajju and

Raya) accepted Islam as a bulwark against being swamped by Abyssinian nationalism (1952:9). (2) The shock of the ruthless military conquest of the Abyssinians broke up much of their tribal constitution and customary sanctions, opened the way to Islamic filtration Among the Arsi Oromo (Trimingham 1965:189).

This means the Oromo in different parts of Ethiopia accepted “Islam as a social bulwark against Amharic nationalism” (Trimingham 1965:103). For Muslims it is difficult to separate Christianity from Abyssinian culture. This is a challenge ahead of the EECMY when she attempts to reach the Muslim Oromos with the Gospel. To evangelise the Muslim requires a special strategy. It is up to the EECMY to find means of presenting Christianity in such a way that it convinces the Muslim Oromo people.

I would like to argue that the Oromo did not have a basic problem with Christianity as a religion. Mohammed Hassen, an Oromo historian, and himself being a Muslim, points out that the “Oromo did not reject Christianity as a religion, but Abyssinian domination that preceded and followed the spread of Christianity” (Hassen 1992:84). It is possible to argue that Oromo people did not relish the Islam religion. The different fights between the Islamic kingdoms and the Oromo people in the Horn of Africa is the good example for their hatred to Islam expansion. According to Melba (1988:41-2),

between 1527 and 1542, a Muslim leader Imam Ahmed Ibn Ibrahim El-Gazi (nick named Grany meaning left-handed, by Abyssinian and Somalis respectively), in an all-out Jihad war, invaded most of Oromia, Abyssinia, and Sidama land, which comprises much of the territory of the present day Ethiopia and changed the balance of power in favour of Muslims...Imam Ahmed Ibn Ibrahim's Jihad war, that weakened the Abyssinians ...had to pass through the Oromo country,-which was not friendly at all... This army devastated the Oromo country and destroyed the economic basis of the Oromo communities, their livestock and Agriculture. After its defeat at the hands of the Portuguese army, Imam's army retreated through Oromo country and again caused much loss in human lives and properties....Oromo oral tradition and history clearly indicate that the Oromo fought both the Imam's and Abyssinian armies and that Imam's war devastated several Oromo communities.

Later in 1567-8 when the Arabs invaded eastern Oromo provinces, the Oromo people rejected Islam and killed the Arab leader by the name Amir Nur (Trimingham 1952:94). However, the Arabs invaded the South-Eastern Oromo people and forced them to accept Islam. Trimingham states how the Egyptians forced the Harar Oromo to accept Islam:

Although the Egyptian occupation of the Harar region was but by transitory, it had

considerable effect upon the diffusion of Islam. The Galla of the region had tried to resist the invaders, but after various fights in which their primitive lances were very little avail against the firearms of the Egyptians they had to submit. The Egyptians managed to decoy their chiefs into Harar and threw them into prison, then forced them to dissolve their parliament, deliver up their *Abba Bokku*, cut off their *dufuras* or long hair, and submit to circumcision. A great number of them preferred to be killed rather than be thus humiliated,...Fekis were encouraged to travel in all directions to teach the social discipline of Islam, and the performance of the Islamic prayer was made obligatory under the confiscation of property (1965:121).

The methods used by both Christian and Islam missionaries were similar in destroying the Oromo culture and traditions. Islam destroyed the culture and imposed the Arab culture on the Oromo people. The Oromo names were changed to Arabian names during conversion to Islam. In a similar way Christian missionaries changed the Oromo names to Amhara and European names during baptism. Just as the Abyssinian colonials killed those who refused to be baptised, the Egyptian Islam missionaries also killed the Oromo people who refused to accept Islam and confiscated their properties. Thus the majority of the Oromo people's response to Islam rather than Christianity was just 'choosing between the two evils.' Indeed if Christianity is inculturated in the Oromo culture there is a promise of converting the Muslim Oromos to Christianity.

### **6.2.2 Lack of Inculturation as a Challenge to the EECMY**

In the previous chapters we argued that the EECMY has no indigenous character because of the mission methods used by the Christian missionaries. The missionaries did not accept traditional Oromo values. The current EECMY leaders are also following the foot steps of their predecessors. The EECMY theologians are the products of Western theologies that did not accept the African values. Some of the EECMY theologians are more concerned for the Lutheran traditions than the Germans or for the Presbyterian traditions than the Scottish people in Europe. That is why the Oromo people's quest for indigenization of Christianity is not yet answered.

On the other hand there are educated Oromos who grieve at the decimation of Oromo traditions and accuse the Church for destroying Oromo culture. The time has come for the Oromo people to commence the reconstruction of their own culture. Any Church that does not incarnate itself in the culture of the people is going to be left behind. The EECMY is

ministering to the Oromo people in this specific challenging context. In order to continue with the Oromo people, the EECMY needs to review her traditional missionary methods and should be ready to correct the past mistakes occurred because of the missionary legacy. This is a promise for the EECMY to incarnate herself among the Oromo people. I suggest that the EECMY use a contextual model that embraces inculturation model as a method of evangelising the Oromo people.

## **6.3 Contextual Evangelism as a Promise**

### **6.3.1 What is the Contextual Model?**

Different scholars have given different definitions of the contextual model. Robert J. Schreiter, a professor of theology and Dean of Catholic Theological Union in Chicago, defines the contextual model, “as the name implies, concentrates more directly on the cultural context in which Christianity takes root and receives expression” (1985:12). Anthony Balcomb, lecturer in theology at Natal University in South Africa, gives a wider definition of contextualization as,

rooting the message within a local culture. It means constructing the message within the material from the local culture. The local cultures already have a “salvation history” of their own. This means the recognition that God has been working in local cultures in some way by the Holy Spirit. The task is to introduce the message of Christ in such a way that it is in accordance with the working of the Holy Spirit already in the society. The felt needs of the receivers of the message are met. If the message is going to be good news then the needs of the recipients must be met. The focus of analysis is on the local situation and how this situation is going to effect, interpret and alter the message. The recognition that situation (context) must determine what must be emphasised in the message. Whether it should be in a dimension of healing, justice, or evangelism. The recognition that there must be a dialogue between the receiver and the sender and it must be an equal dialogue that leads to mutual enrichment and correction. The dialogue of contextualization follows two patterns. It may focus on the identification of certain norms and values of a culture, and attempts to make the message harmonize with the culture. This means the message is continuous with the culture. It may focus on the transformation of a local culture by confronting some norms and values of a culture. In other words it may liberate the culture itself. This means the Christian message is discontinuous with the culture (lecture note 1999:3).

Another scholar, Justin Ukpong (cited in Schreiter, 1985:6-16) identifies two major types of contextual theology, namely, the indigenization model and the socio-economic model. Each of these can again be divided into two subtypes: the indigenization motive presents itself either as a translation or as an inculturation model; the socio-economic pattern of contextualization can be revolutionary (liberation theology, black theology, feminist theology,

etc.). This study will lay emphasis on the inculturation model.

### **6.3.2 Weakness of the Contextual Model**

To recommend the contextual model as a method for incarnating the gospel, first I would like to discuss its weaknesses. Schreiter (1985:14), states four weaknesses of contextual theology: (1) The development of contextual local theology is often set out as a project and often lacks continuous dialogue with other cultures. (2) The ethnographic approach of contextual theology in its concern with identity and stability overlooks its conflictual factors for the sake of maintaining harmony and peace. (3) The ethnographic approach of contextual theology can become a prey of cultural romanticism and unable to see the sin in its own historical experience. (4) The cultural analyses of the ethnographic approach of the contextual model are often done by experts excluding the community. However, “when a close working dialectic between gospel traditions and local cultural traditions is maintained, many of these difficulties can be overcome” (Schreiter 1985:14).

Among different kinds of contextual models, Bosh (1991:421) argues that “only the inculturation model in the first type and only the revolutionary model in the second qualify as contextual theologies proper”. I would also like to agree with Bosh and recommend the inculturation model as the good method of evangelism among the Oromo of Ethiopia. Hereafter the term “inculturation” replaces “contextualization”.

## **6.4 Inculturation of the Oromo Christianity**

### **6.4.1 The Meaning of Inculturation**

The East African Scholar Waliggo defines inculturation in a wider content. He points out that the term “inculturation” originates from Christian theology and language, the reality it signifies has been present in various degrees in the Church since its foundation. The idea was developed after other terms such as “adaptation” has been used as they did not go far enough to express the reality of an indissoluble marriage between Christianity and each local culture. According to Walliggo (1986:11-12) adaptaion,

implied a selection of certain rites and customs, purifying them and inserting them within the Christian rituals where there was any apparent similarity. Then came the

term “indigenization”. It referred to the same process, but underlined the necessity of promoting indigenous church ministers in every locality. Vatican II stressed reformation of the Christian doctrine in the thought and language that are understood by contemporary persons. Soon after the Council, the term “incarnation” of the Christian message came into general use. It is a very expressive term and very theologically sound. It means that as Christ himself chose to become man in order to save humanity, Christianity has not alternative but to do the same in every culture and time in order to continue the salvation brought by Christ. This terminology has never been superseded. Inculturation came to express that same reality while underlining the importance of culture as the instrument and the means for realising the incarnation process of the Christian religion.

Giving this historical background, Waliggo defines inculturation as

the honest and serious attempt to make Christ and his message of salvation ever more understood by peoples of every culture, locality and time. It means the reformulation of Christian life and doctrine into the very thought-patterns of each people. It is the conviction that Christ and His Good News are even dynamic and challenging to all times and cultures as they become better understood and lived by each people. It is a continuous endeavour to make Christianity truly “feel at home” in the cultures of each people (1986:12).

Thus in the African context inculturation should be seen as a movement which aims at making Christianity permanent in Africa. Inculturation can be described as “the effort to adapt the Christian message to the way of thinking and acting of non occidental peoples” (Nkeramihigo in Waliggo *et al*, 1986:67). It is also a particular form of adaptation, which occurs in the historical context among cultures.

Others still give a similar definition of inculturation as a relationship between the Church and variety of cultures. For instance words such as adaptation, contextualization, indigenization and accommodation sometimes substitute the word “inculturation” because they offer a similar meaning. Louis J. Luzbetak’s definition of “accommodation” is quite similar to the definition of “inculturation.” He defines “accommodation” as, “the respectful, prudent, scientifically and theologically sound adjustment of the Church to the native culture in attitude, outward behaviour, and practical apostolic approach”(1970:341). Having given such an understanding of inculturation, we shall see its Biblical base in the following section.

#### **6.4.2 Inculturation in the Bible**

The Bible, as the Sacred Literature of Christianity, is the testimony of God who in many and various ways “spoke to our fathers by the prophets; but in this last days has spoken to us by

His Son”...(Heb. 1:1 RSV). The passage of God’s word into the written form of the Scripture/Bible was subsequent to the formation of the Old Testament people of God and the Christian communities of the New Testament.

Ghanaian theologian Peter Turkson (1994:4) points out how the Bible came into being when he says:

out of a sense of mission, the people formed by the word, sought to preserve and to transmit records to their experience of God’s word, they began to write Scriptures. Thus Scriptures, which are the word of God are also truly the work of man. The people of God is the womb within which the Word of God passes into Scriptures (1994:4).

The people of God, either Israel of the Old Testament or the Christian communities of the New Testament, is the womb, within which the word of God takes shape and is born as Scripture. It is obvious that the Scriptures are also cultural products; that is the work of people imbued with a culture. Thus the Bible is then God’s word incarnate (enfleshed) in the culture of peoples (Turkson 1994:4).

Alyward Shorter, president of a missionary institute in London, also stated that the Bible is inculcated in some of the middle east peoples cultures. He gave some examples:

- (1) Abraham would have entered Canaan from Mesopotamia. More than four hundred years before the beginning of the Ugarit series, the Patriarchs were in Egypt. Undoubtedly, these ancestors of the Jews were a part of the cultural ebb and flow that characterized the region. The stories that were handed down about them were often the common patrimony of several ancient cultures.
- (2) The book of Genesis is not comprehensible without reference to the ancient creation myths and epic legends of Mesopotamia. Equally the laws of the covenant are to be placed in the tradition of Mesopotamian codes, particularly that of Hammurabi, c 1700 BC and the structure of the prophetic oracles of Israel bears a strong resemblance to that oracles discovered at Mari, a centre destroyed by the same Hammurabi.
- (3) Psalm 104 bears strong resemblance to the hymn of Akhenaton, the ‘heretic’ Pharaoh who worshipped the sun-disc Aton. The similarities between the Egyptian hymn and the Jewish psalms (1988:107-8).

Turkson agrees with Shorter when he argued that the Old Testament and the New Testament, as the word of God and the work of man, has taken the cultural heritage of the second and



first millennia B.C. of the people of the Near East. It also took the cultural heritage of the first century A.D. of the Greco-Roman World. Turkson (1994:4-5) lists some of the examples of inculturation in the Bible as follows:

- (1) The creation and fall stories in Gen. 1-11 is adapted from the Mesopotamian Myths.
- (2) The Laws and legal traditions in the Old Testament very much reflect the form of the code of Hammurabi.
- (3) The adultery laws have close ancient Mesopotamian and Egyptian parallels.
- (4) Israel's festivals and feasts provide another illustration of how existing cultural forms (practices and celebrations) were adapted and put to the service of Yahwism. The Sabbath as a day of festive cult and a day of rest, is also attested by, and possibly derived from, Mesopotamian and Canaanite observances. The OT would make it a day blessed by God (Gen.2:2; Ex. 20:8-11; 31: 12-18; Lev. 23:3), as his day, as a sign of holiness of Israel and as man's rest with God, the source of joy and blessing. The "feasts of "Mazzot" and Sukkot" were originally Canaanite agricultural feasts related with the liminal moments of the onset of spring and autumn. These feasts were adopted by Israel and transformed along with the similar but semi-nomadic spring time festival of 'Passover' into celebration of Israel's supreme Salvific moment of Exodus (Ex. 12;23:15; Dt.16:1ff) Turkson, (1994:5).
- (5) The Israelite cultic poetry (hymns and prayers) is related to that of Mesopotamian prayers and songs.
- (6) In a similar way we also see inculturation in the New Testament. Paul used people's piety (the presence of an altar to unknown God), and Greek philosophical concepts to establish points of contacts with Athenians. Paul's reference to God, as a deity in whom we live, move and have our being (Acts 17:28) is a borrowing from the Greek philosopher, Epimenides of Crete. '*Parousia*', the word used by Paul in Thessalonians to refer to the second coming (public manifestation) of Christ, is also borrowed from profane parlance, where it designated the public appearance of the Emperor.
- (7) The use of parables (e.g. the sower, wedding banquets, and hired labourers) reflect the clothing of Jesus' message in a popular practice, habits and ideas of his day.

All the above examples illustrate that God revealed himself through the cultures of the Mesopotamian, Egyptian, Canaanite, Persians and Hellenistic cultures. This means the Word of God was incarnated in human cultures. The Word of God spoken in human languages became the Bible. It means the Bible took some parts of the cultures of the humankind: the

Israel culture is clearly used in the Old Testament and the Greco-Roman culture is seen in the New Testament. The Scriptures are not only the ‘incarnate Word of God’, but also the ‘inculturated Word of God’(Turkson 1994:6). In the same way the Word of God can be inculturated in the culture of the Oromo people. The Word of God is for all human beings, if God’s Word was able to be inculturated among the ‘heathen’ of the middle east, there is no reason why the same Word of God can not be inculturated among the Oromo people.

### **6.4.3. Inculturation in the History of the Church**

Waliggo (1986:14-16) noted three facts that the history of the Church is one of the strongest arguments in support of inculturation.

The first is when the centre of Christianity moved from Jerusalem to the Gentile world in the second half of the first century, the presentation of the Christian message and the organization of the Church were adapted to the existing milieu. The passage of the Church from three centuries of severe persecution to Constantine’s era of peace, witnessed an adjustment of the message and Church order to the circumstances of the times. “One can assert that, whatever genuine movement has taken place in the Church, it has been a result of an honest attempt to inculturate Christianity to the times and cultures of contemporary peoples” (Waliggo 1986:14). In the same way the EECMY can adjust its message and Worship order to that of the Oromo culture. The Church’s strict hierarchical and monarchical structures owed a lot to the adaptation to the secular realities and the mentality of the people then. Among those realities the medieval period devotions were genuine expressions of the faith of the contemporary Christians and their cultural aspirations. Thus the Church constantly sought to adapt itself to the human realities and aspirations, localities and cultures of the people. This is the basis for today’s understanding of the inculturation movement (Waliggo 1986:15). So, for example, the EECMY can adjust its management structure to the Oromo Gadaa administration structure.

The second historical fact of inculturation is the official documents and instructions of *propaganda fide* (propagation of faith) established by the Church in 1622 and the constitution and regulations for missionaries from their founders. *Propaganda Fide* gave guiding principles and instructions to specific mission Churches in response to the numerous questions of missionaries. It insisted on the need for evangelizers to respect the cultures of

the peoples evangelized, so that they might accept Christianity and be able to regard it as their own. The founders of the missions told the missionaries “to take time to study the languages and cultures of the people they were evangelizing and to avoid as much as possible turning their converts into Asians-or Africans or Europeans, but rather make them Asian and African Christians” ( Waliggo 1986:15).

The *propaganda Fide* and official instructions stand out today as impartial judgement of the success and the failure of inculturation. They remind us of the continued commitment of the Church as a whole to incarnate the Christian message in every culture. The same instruction can be adapted by the EECMY to guide the evangelists who witness the Gospel to the Oromo people.

The third historical fact that is most relevant to the understanding of the inculturation movement is the long coexistence of two opposing camps in this regard. We find both camps in the council of Jerusalem. The group of the Pharisees party who had become believers objected, insisting that the pagans should be circumcised and instructed to keep the law of Moses. This group was defeated. Towards the end of the second century the group of Tertullian opposed any Christian being actively involved in secular matters, such as military and civil service. In this view Christians were considered as citizens of the other world. This group was also defeated. In the seventeenth century the inquisition and those who advocated a narrow view of mission objected to the inculturation methods of Matteo Ricci in China and Roberto de Nobili in India. This time the camp that opposed inculturation got victory and stressed the necessity of uniformity in all Churches. However, the tension brought about by inculturation was never solved. The Greek or oriental Church gradually developed its own liturgy, theology, and spirituality in 1054. Thus each Church inculturated itself so deeply in the cultures of its people. When we speak of inculturation, it is necessary to trace it back through the development of the history of the Church (Waliggo 1986:17).

According to the above two sections, we can understand that there is no pure Bible or pure Christianity that did not embrace human culture and traditions. The world-views of the peoples of the middle east (the Mesopotamians, Hamorabi, etc.) were assimilated into the Old Testament. The New Testament writers also included the Greek world-views. This means that the Bible embraced some of the middle east ancient primal religious elements. The early Church had to inculturate herself into the cultures of the Jews first and then to the Gentiles. In

the same way Oromo Christianity should be ready to embrace some of the Oromo-world views and incarnate the Church into the Oromo culture.

#### **6.4.4. Sources of Inculturation**

According to Waliggo (1986:20), the Bible remains the first and the most powerful source and principle of any inculturation. Waliggo argues that nobody can usefully expound the richness of the Bible to African Christians without serious consideration and study of their world-views, their cultures, their institutions, their stories, their wisdom, their thought-patterns and their aspirations.

The other source of inculturation are the pastoral realities and relevance that provide the strongest argument in favour of inculturation. If we evaluate the presence of Christianity in Oromia we find hundreds of thousands of baptized Christians, mission schools, hospitals and other infrastructures. We also find local Church leaders: trained pastors, lay leaders and Christian literature in Oromo language. These are the potential sources for inculturation of Christianity among the Oromo people.

#### **6.4.5 The Limits of Inculturation**

Some of the mainline Churches such as the Catholic and the Lutheran Churches in Ethiopia still do not accept the idea of inculturation because it threatens the unity of the Church. Even those who make attempts to inculturation have superficial understanding. It is the same with what Waliggo (1986:18) noted:

A common but rather limited view has been formed in the ordinary circles of the Church that inculturation means simply the liturgical rites and ceremonies which have been adapted to local cultures, Church music of local melodies, Christian art inspired by local vestments and instruments for the celebration of mass, sacraments and sacramentals and similar visible or tangible elements.

The EECMY has similar superficial understanding. For instance the EECMY 1997 Gospel Ministry Department activity report reads as follows:

In order to contextualize the book of Liturgy, the Church has continued to encourage the Units to translate it into different vernaculars. Accordingly, the translation work is completed into the Oromo, Latin Script Kambata and Hadiya languages (Gobana, I. b 1997:5).

This means that for the EECMY contextualization is limited to the translation of liturgy to the Oromo language. Translating the EECMY liturgy alone cannot inculturate the Church into the Oromo culture. The limit of inculturation goes beyond presenting liturgy in vernacular. According to Waliggo (1986:19) the scope of inculturation extends

to the totality of the Christian life and doctrine, the central ministry of Christ from which all other ministries derive, the very nature of witnessing to Christ, proclaiming His message and worship. The *Kerygma* proclaimed by the Apostles and the Rule of faith developed by Church fathers in the Nicene creed has to be presented in language concepts and theology that are well understood by Christians of every culture...The Christian doctrine as it has developed, the Christian liturgy, spirituality, ministry and ministries need to relate to the cultural aspirations of each people.

All means of communicating the message of the Gospel must be done according to the culture of the people. All efforts that assist the Christians of each cultural group to grow towards Christian maturity must be done by the Christian missionaries on one hand. On the other hand everything must be done to destroy a dichotomy in the lives of Christians and to build towards an integration of mind and heart. Thus the EECMY needs to go beyond offering Christian ministries in the Oromo language. Oromo Christianity needs to be accommodated by adopting some of the elements of Oromo culture.

The important question to ask is how far Christianity is to be adapted to the Oromo culture? Are all elements of Oromo culture compatible with Christianity? Like any culture Oromo culture is subject to change, therefore, can Christianity keep on changing with the culture or must it keep its identity? These and similar other questions can be asked by critics of inculturation. The questions are valid and need to be answered. Luzbetak has a valid answer to such questions. He uses the term "accommodation" instead of inculturation. Although the two terms could have different connotations, when it comes to the Church's relation to local cultures it is possible to use them interchangeably.

According to Luzbetak (1970: 347) accommodation does not require the Church or her missionaries to "go native." For him the policy of accommodation does not imply that everything Western or non-native is a taboo for the African or Asian Churches. The Kingdom that was founded by Christ and His Gospel needs to be preached by the Church. It is true that Jesus did not establish His Kingdom on earth in a vacuum, but among the chosen people, in a given circumstance. His doctrine, although universally valid, was clothed in a Judaic and Hellenic garb. That should not be understood to mean that everything associated with Christianity is foreign and must be outlawed. If Christianity, when introduced among people

were to be stripped of all that was foreign, the Bible itself would have to be outlawed, bread and wine could not be used in the mass, and the Church could not have a visible head residing in a foreign country. Luzbetak (1970:348) describes the objectives of accommodation as follows:

Accommodation calls merely for nativization. It requires the Church and her missionaries perfect understanding or empathy and, as far as possible, identification with local cultures. As “Christ emptied himself” (Phil. 2:6-7) ...so the missionary must be willing to sacrifice his ways and values in favour of those of his people. In the process of inculturation the Church must go as far as possible in adjusting her demands and expectations to the ways and values of the new Christian community, for that is the meaning of “identification”... The limits set by Christian Faith (which includes the nature of Church), prudence, reason, and the goals of the Apostolate - are the limits of accommodation. Whatever is imprudent or unreasonable can never be the object of accommodation...To restrict one’s medicine to folk medicines where sophisticated medicines are available would not be prudent; never to wash simply because the local people never care to wash would likewise be unreasonable. Nor would it be prudent for a missionary to adopt native ways or to insist on traditional practices if the people themselves would object. The local culture will generally tell the American missionary how American or un-American he would be in his external adoption of native ways and values as far as his own behaviour is concerned...The expectations of people are an important norm of prudence to be considered in judging the limits of accommodation.

Thus when I speak of the limits of inculturation, I do not mean that the EECMY has to compromise in her basic Christian faith. She has the strict obligation of preserving the deposit of faith in its entirety and purity. This means the Church may not tolerate any beliefs or practices that are contrary to revealed truth; nor may a double standard be tolerated. I argue that the EECMY should know that “accommodation is never justified in regard to the worship of nature spirits, promiscuity, or polygamy” (Luzbetak 1970:349) as it was done by the missionaries. The Gospel must be incarnated in every culture and at the same time the cross of Christ has to “judge all human cultures” (Osborn 1995:152). The EECMY has to go as far as possible to adjust herself to incarnate in the culture of the Oromo people. At the same time the Gospel has to transform some of the elements of the Oromo culture and use them for the glory of God.

#### **6.4.6 Principles of Inculturation**

Inculturation is a way of making the Gospel incarnate in different cultures. Eugene Hillman, a Professor of liberal studies at Salve Regina University in Newport describes incarnation of the Gospel as “the full acceptance of the people where they are, in their own time and place,

in everything except sin” (Hillman 1993:84).

The incarnation of Jesus Christ which made him become a perfect man while remaining perfect God, will always remain the clearest guiding principle for inculturation. Comparing the incarnation of Christ with the incarnation of Christianity in every culture can yield fruitful theological reflection. The failure to incarnate Christianity is the failure to make Christ appear in all His splendour to the peoples of each culture. It is where Christianity has been deeply incarnated that the Church is assured of a bright future. Thus the more the EECMY inculturates itself among the Oromo, the more it keeps together and attracts more to itself.

Waliggo (1986:21) mentions the African Independent Churches (AICs) as an example of Churches which attract many Africans because of their effort to incarnate Christianity into African cultures. They wanted to pray to God in the language and symbols they could be able to understand. They wished to pray to God with all their being: body, soul and mind.

This reminds me how the Full Gospel Church in Dembi Dollo attracted thousands of the EECMY members in the Western Wollaga Bethel Synod (WWBS), where I come from. The second generation Christians (the youth and the women) could not appreciate the style of the EECMY worship which was a copy from the Western Churches. The Church music, chants, pianos, guitars and the melody were not appreciated by the present generation. Songs of the EECMY were only from the hymn books and members were not allowed to show movements of bodies when they sing. The traditional Oromo music instruments such as drums and flutes that fit to the cultural songs were considered as instruments of pagan and banned during worship. Healing prayers, prophecies and speaking in tongue were not allowed in the WWBS. In general there was no free worship style as everybody was bound to follow only the EECMY liturgy book.

On the other hand the Full Gospel Church in Dembi Dollo allowed the use of traditional music instruments and free worship style. It was possible to clap hands and jump when they sing and each individual can participate in the worship service without any restriction. Everybody was allowed to express his/her faith the way he/she feels. By allowing such free worship services the Full Gospel Church in Western Wollaga province attracted thousands of the EECMY - WWBS members. Within two years (from 1992 to 1993), five of the WWBS congregations joined the Full Gospel taking the EECMY properties including the Church

buildings. The Full Gospel Church in Dembi Dollo seems to be another agent of Amharization process, because like the EOC they use the Amharic language to evangelize the Oromo people. However, their worship included dance, clapping, and prophecy which seemed to be similar to that of the OTR worship. Melba noted the OTR worship where,

the believers visit *Galma* for Worship once or twice a week, usually on Thursday and Saturday nights. At this time the followers dance, sing beat drums to perform a ritual called *dalaga* in order to achieve a state of ecstasy, which often culminates in possession. It is at the height of this that the possessing *ayyana* speaks through the *Qallu's* mouth and can answer prayers and predict the future (1988:21).

The Full Gospel worship of allowing the people to dance, speak in tongues and prophecy is similar to the traditional Oromo worship. This implies that the people who had a quest for an indigenous type of Christianity went to the Full Gospel Church. Though the Full Gospel Church also does not have an indigenous character among the Oromo its worship style was more relevant to the Oromo traditional religion than that of the EECMY.

The EECMY congregations in the WWBS began to realise the quest of the Oromo Christians and allowed the use of traditional musical instruments. Those who claim to have Spiritual gifts such as speaking in tongue and prophecy were able to exercise it during worship services. Then many of the EECMY members who left the Church came back to their Church. This was a clear indication for the Oromo people's quest for inculturated Christianity.

The EECMY needs to learn a lot from the AICs to inculturate Christianity into the Oromo culture. She has to go beyond providing the Gospel in Oromo language. The Oromo cultural symbols need to convey the Christian message. The Oromo people should have the right of worshipping God with their whole being including their symbols and cultural traditions. There is no reason why the Oromo people need to be Europeans or Abyssinians to become Christians. They have the right to be Christians and Oromos at the same time. This is the principle of inculturation I recommend for Oromo Christianity.

The other important principle why I support inculturation is to prevent the Oromo Christians from living in dualism. The African Christians find themselves divided into two personalities, an African and a Christian. During the time of joy they can live as true Christians. However,



when crisis comes, whether illness, suffering, misfortune or barrenness they easily move back to their African personality. They engage in ceremonies, rites and world-views that have been constantly condemned by the Church. I will try to give a brief story of a widow who was condemned by my home congregation at Dembi Dollo because of visiting a sorcerer at Minko. Her husband was among the first elders of the congregation and was a rich man in the area. After his death the widow lost all her property and became poor. She believed that this was her misfortune and went to a sorcerer for consultation. The Church identified that she visited a sorcerer and suspended her from membership. The widow did not stop looking for someone who would tell her the cause of her misfortune. She was looking for someone who will replace the *Qallu* and able to deal with such crisis. The widow went back to her traditions to get answers to her questions, which the EECMY seemed to be unable to answer. Also there are many Oromo Christians who go to Christian Prophets of our day and ask reasons for their misfortunes. This is a simple example of many Oromo Christians who live in dualism because Christianity has not yet become part and parcel of the Oromo people. Oromo Christianity is similar to what Waliggo noted:

Christianity has not yet been incarnated in the world-view. Thus the central mission of inculturation is to make Christianity enter the very blood and vein of the people; to make it answer their aspirations and anxieties; to make African Christians to discover their identity rather than live in dualism, with one foot in Christianity and with the other in the African world view (Waliggo 1986:22).

Thus the EECMY ministry should not leave the Oromo Christians in the reality of dualism. Christianity should be able to answer the Oromo people's aspirations and anxieties similar to the problem of the widow mentioned above. In Lalo Qile, (One of the EECMY-WWBS Presbyteries), there is a prophetess by the name Gaaddise to whom many Christian Oromos pay a visit for consultations. I see the importance of such prophets who seemed to replace traditional Oromo Qallu. Such things need to get recognition and guidance from the Church. Oromo Christianity should become a better religion that is meaningful to the Oromo peoples' lives.

#### **6.4. 7 Inculturation for Liberation**

The other basic aim of inculturation is to make Christianity relevant to the existing situation. Christianity can be meaningful to the Oromo people if it is able to speak to their socio-economic and political situation. Waliggo (1986:24) points out the situation of the people of Africa and what the Church's response should be:

In Africa people suffer from poverty, ignorance, disease, exploitation, war, dictatorship, economic inequalities, hunger, underdevelopment, apartheid and other forms of racial discrimination. These realities have been instrumental in swelling the number of refugees, exiles, widows, orphans, unemployment, criminals, and dispossessed peoples throughout the continent. It is the inculturated Christianity that can attempt to give an answer of hope, to anxieties, and anguishes of peoples of Africa. The Christian liturgy, and catechesis, the Church's priorities and pastoral methods must address themselves to such realities. The future of the Christian Church will be slippery if Christianity fails the African people in their hour of dire need. The future generation will want to know where the Church was when people were suffering; what message was given to bring hope, challenge, reprimand. When the church was persecuted, the catechesis for martyrdom dominated. When the Church faced within its ranks, the catechesis that was developed stressed unity. When Christianity recovered missionary awareness, again the catechesis, was adapted to the prevailing growth of Christians. The same must be done within the movement of inculturation in present day Africa. The socio-economic and political realities should dictate the priorities of inculturation and should provide the content for the necessary catechesis and methods of pastoral implementation. Otherwise any inculturation which ignores such realities and divorces itself from liberation theology has already made itself irrelevant.

Like Waliggo, Smangaliso Mkhathshwa (1994:27-28) also claims that Africa's history is characterized by colonialism and conquest, living the legacy of a dominant culture closely associated with Western Europe and North America. He argues that:

this dominant culture influenced education and training of future leadership, that determines liturgy, the administration of parishes and dioceses, as well as financial viability. Side by side with this, we have the culture of the majority of people. That culture is Black, and it is angry. It feels besieged as well as under attack from dominant Western European culture. It is a culture that is struggling all the time for self expression. It looks for its own identity. It strives for liberation.

A well known Theologian from Cameroon Jean-marc Ela, (quoted in Shorter 1988:247) argues that,

Africans themselves cannot carry out inculturation as long as they are in cultural and socio-economic bondage to non-Africans. They are not free to be themselves...the Church in Africa may be growing in number, but it is not growing in awareness.

There is a need to create awareness which can be done through genuine inculturation. In his concluding argument Mkhathshwa (1994:28) also stated that,

culture needs to be freed by the Gospel, not enslaved by it. This implies liberation from the political, social, and economic oppression to which Africa is still subjected. Politics, social facts, economics, all affect culture in one way or another.

Thus the Oromo Christianity should address the social, economic, and political issues of the Oromo people. It is not enough to speak only spiritual liberation. The Oromo people need to be liberated from all kinds of oppressions. The Oromo people are poor because the elite are rich. They are poor because of exploitation, injustice and corruption. Thus Oromo Christianity needs to be inculturated to address such issues. It is the duty of the Church to be the voice for the voiceless. Thus the EECMY need to develop a theology of inculturation that incorporates a theology of liberation and become voice for the voiceless Oromo people.

#### **6.4.8 Methods of Inculturation**

According to Waliggo (in Waliggo *et al*, 1986:25), there are four methods of advocating the movement of inculturation. The *first* is that Christianity is for people of every age and culture. No culture can monopolize Christianity. The *second* is that God welcomes all people through His son Jesus Christ at all times. Anybody who fears God has the right to be welcomed in the kingdom of God. The *third* is any good in the minds and hearts of people, whatever good lies latent in the religious practices and cultures of diverse people is not only saved from destruction but is also healed, enabled and perfected unto the Glory of God. The *fourth* is the Catholicity of each individual part of the Church that contributes through its special gifts to the good of other parts and of the whole Church. There should be respect for other religions. The EECMY can use these four methods as methods of inculturating Christianity.

The missionary legacy that assumed Africans as a cultural desert should not be reflected when the EECMY inculturates herself among the people she serves. Africans “had their cultures which reflect their philosophy of life, their world view and their aspirations. All these and many more good elements have been a preparatory root for the Gospel” (Waliggo, 1986:25-6). With this teaching the assertion that outside Christianity all was mere paganism was destroyed. “The method of evangelization which aimed at building Christianity in a vacuum, having destroyed all that provided the preparatory roots in local cultures was completely discouraged ” (Waliggo 1986:26). Thus the EECMY has to respect the Oromo culture and religion. In the movement of inculturation, there is a call for all young Churches to study cultures, the traditional religions, the world views, and the aspirations of the people to whom they speak.

The same call applies for the EECMY so that she can inculturate herself in the Oromo culture. She needs to use every good aspect of the Oromo culture when she evangelizes the

Oromo people. The EECMY may use the following four principles of inculturation which Waliggo (1986:26-29) suggests.

The first, deep understanding of Christianity and local cultures is the base for inculturation. It is only when the two are well known that the synthesis that is salvific will emerge. The second, inculturation should be done within the ecclesial community with full support of the local Bishops. It should not be the work of an individual theologian or a pastor. It has to be the work of the entire people of God in that community. The third, any meaningful inculturation should respect the common rule of Faith, the central doctrine of Christianity and the necessary relationship between the local Church and the universal Church. The fourth, no inculturation should be put into use without the prior pastoral and catechetical education of Christians.

Following such principles, Waliggo offers five prerequisites for fruitful inculturation of Christianity in Africa.

*The first is the existence of a local language.* It is through this medium that Christianity must reach the local people. The local language must be seriously studied and developed to be able to convey the totality of the Christian message. The mere literal translation of the Christian doctrine, Bible and liturgy into local language is only the first step of inculturation. Translations that leave passages and doctrines obscure merely for the purpose of keeping the literal sense of the original are defective. Translation always involves interpretation. They aim at clear communication. A lot has been done in the area of translating the Bible into the Oromo language. What is required of the EECMY is to go further in translating some foreign concepts into the Oromo concepts. Oromo Christianity must use some of the OTR words, symbols and rituals so that the Oromos get full meanings. The Oromos of the Horn of Africa are communicating in one single language that is still in use. So it can be a vehicle for inculturation.

*The second prerequisite is the existence of the local culture:* The time has passed when some scholars thought that there were some societies devoid of culture and history. According to Waliggo (1986:27), some Scholars were confused by the wrong assumption of certain African societies' lack of culture and history. This assumption confused the inability to write down those traditions, and histories with the reality of not possessing them. However, even if it is not written down, every society has got its own culture and history. Waliggo defines culture as

the sum total of all people's traditional religions, customs, traditions, rites, ceremonies, symbols, art, wisdom and institutions...It is based on a people's world view, the way they relate to the Supreme Being, to the supernatural powers and phenomena, to their fellow men and women, to the world of their living beings and the world underground. All these must be studied and the cosmology on which they are based, scrutinized, in order to be able to use them in the presentation and consolidation of Christianity. Not all that was formerly seen as superstitions was, in fact superstitious...A non-Catholic seeing a priest incensing the altar, a mother blessing herself with holy water, a child with a rosary around its neck and other symbols may be regarded as "superstitious". To a Catholic all such symbols are clear. They do have meaning for him. The same applies to the foreigner looking at other people's cultures and customs. Unless he is humble enough to ask and learn the meaning attached to the symbols or each rite, he is in grave danger of passing a wrong judgement on what he sees. In the study of local cultures, Christian evangelizers, whether local or missionary, have a task to learn, to listen, to observe, to dive in for deeper meaning, and to avoid passing a quick and easy judgement on a culture, or aspects of it, until they have grasped the authentic meaning intended by the people who practice that culture (1986:27-28).

In the case of the Oromo people, this is not a problem, because there are many places where the Oromo culture and traditional religion are still being practised. We have discussed that some aspects of Oromo culture and traditional religion became a thing of the past in Wollaga. However, Oromo clans such as the Eastern Macha, the Guji and the Boran Oromos are still practising their traditions. Thus the EECMY can study such available resources and select those elements that may or may not continue with Christianity. Inculturation has to move at the pace on which the Oromo Christians seriously study their local cultures. Oromo Christians need to study their culture to discover those fundamental elements that must be purified, those which need substitutes, those which have to be rejected without a substitute and those which can be incorporated in Christianity without any change.

*The third prerequisite is the promotion of a maturing, responsible and actively participating laity.* Inculturation is not only the duty of Pastors or theologians. The movement of inculturation needs the participation of the entire local Church members. It must be directed to all people of God. The people of God must be a judge of what should and what should not be inculturated, and what should be the manner of the procedure. It is only if lay people are fully involved that they feel that what is being done is theirs and is for their own edification and sanctification. Already the lay people are taking part in the EECMY leadership at various levels. The only thing that is needed is to involve them in the process of inculturation.

*The fourth prerequisite is the presence of Church leaders who genuinely understand, support and promote the movement of inculturation.* Church leaders, especially local Bishops, are the

animators of the inculturation movement. Together with the Christians, they judge what would be done and how. If their support in this movement is lukewarm, very little can be done. But if their support is enthusiastic much will be achieved. What is required is more enthusiasm, recognizing the importance of the issue and the courage to promote studies, experiments and fully inculturated rites and catechesis. For it is one thing to support the project in words, and quite another to show that support in practice. The EECMY has many trained Oromo people who are in leadership positions. These people can be encouraged to participate in the inculturation movement.

*The fifth and last prerequisite that Waliggo suggests is the presence of local experts, research centers, and the means of carrying out such researchs.* There is very important work to be done. What is needed is to find people who are committed to do the work that demands various fields of specialisation. Apart from a few experts who are doing Bible translations, composing local Church music, studying a few elements of adaptation into liturgy, working on projects of Christian African art, Africa has not yet obtained the necessary number of experts for the global and total incarnation of Christianity. In the case of Oromo Christianity there are many people who are either trained by the Church or trained at Church schools. Perhaps, the EECMY can pull together the resources she has and encourage them to make research on the Oromo culture. The Mekane Yesus Theological Seminary can help as a research centre. Likewise, the Church can also ask the Ethiopian Institute for Cultural Studies to carry out such projects.

#### **6.4.9 Inculturation as An Ongoing Process**

Inculturation is not something to be completed in a specific time, but is an ongoing process. In section 6.4.5 we have discussed that culture is subjected to change, but Christianity can adjust itself as far as possible without losing its identity. Because of the dynamism of a culture, inculturation is an on going process. The Church needs continuous dialogue with the culture. The Bishops of Asia at their meeting at Taipei in 1974 noted that

the local Church is a Church incarnate in a people, a Church indigenous and inculturated. And this means concretely a Church in a continuous, humble and loving dialogue with the living traditions, cultures, religions- in brief, with all the realities of the people in whose midst it has sunk its roots deeply and whose history and life it gladly makes its own (Crollius in Waliggo *et al* 1986:37).

The Anthropological concept of inculturation denotes a process that is not limited to the first

years of the individual but which continues throughout his life. It means not only the introduction of an individual into his own culture, but covers every situation in later life where adjustments have to be made in ways of thinking and acting. In a similar way, it can be said that for the EECMY, the process of inculturation among the Oromo people continues throughout their life time.

Inculturation does not mean that the Church accepts all aspects of the culture without any questioning. The change that takes place in the local culture, in its customs and values, represents new choices for the Church. Inculturation brings out the relevance of the evangelization of the culture for all local Churches and for the entire Church (Crollius in Waliggo *et al* 1986:39). Therefore, the process of inculturation of a Church has the characteristics of an acculturative encounter between cultures. Crollius (in Waliggo *et al* 1986: 41-42) distinguishes three stages of the process of inculturation.

At the first stage the Church comes into contact with a new culture, while presenting the Christian message and life in the form of another culture. Though minor adaptations are made and translations are prepared, the Church has a foreign outlook, and so becoming a Christian often implies leaving behind one's own culture. In this first stage, a process of acculturation takes place in which missionaries and local Christians assimilate elements of each other's cultures. The second stage is when the larger number of the local population join the Church, and especially when local clergy develops, the Church is bound to assimilate more of the culture of the surrounding society. At this stage the proper inculturation begins, of which the principal agents are those who belong to the local culture. The third stage is the stage that the local Church plays an active role in transforming the culture of the society.

The above mentioned stages can be characterized respectively as *translation*, *assimilation* and *transformation*. The entire process of inculturation is one of integration, both in the sense of integration of the Christian faith and life in a given culture. It is also an integration of a new expressions of the Christian experience in the life of the universal Church.

The EECMY has to follow the same model in the process of inculturation of Christianity into Oromo culture. Her message needs to be translated into Oromo language that is already done. This same message needs to be translated into Oromo concepts and world-views following the translation model which is not yet done. She needs to assimilate some of the traditional values and transform others. With this understanding I would like to recommend some areas that need immediate action in the process of inculturation of the Oromo Christianity.

## 6.5 Possible Areas of Inculturation in Oromo Christianity

### 6.5.1 The Need to Study Oromo Culture

The first step of the inculturation process has to begin with the study of the Oromo culture. Two non-Oromo anthropologists, Asmarom Laggesse (1973) and Lambert Bartels (1983) made a study of Oromo culture among the Born and Macha Oromo clans. To my knowledge nobody has attempted to study the Oromo culture for missiological purposes. Thus I suggest that the Church must be involved in the study of the entire Oromo culture from a missiological perspective.

There are various methods of studying a culture, but I recommend the method which Schreiter calls “Listening” approach. This approach has its own difficulties yet it is one of the best methods to study culture. Pointing out four difficulties of this approach, Schreiter raises four questions and gives answers to them. The first question is, how can one listen in such a way to hear Christ already present? His answer to this question is that a local theologian has to listen to cultural realities that cluster around theological concepts of creation, redemption and community (Schreiter 1985:40). The second question, how does one grow in understanding foreign culture or to what extent can a person ever fully understand someone else’s culture? Schreiter answers this question by saying, “if the cultural description can be affirmed as true by a significant segment of the culture itself, and can be understood by a significant number of persons from other cultures, then the description can be considered valid” (Schreiter 1985:41). The third question, how can one reflect fruitfully on one’s own culture? Or to what extent can members of a culture adequately describe their own cultural processes? In cultural anthropology this is known as the problem of native exegesis or emic analyses. However, Schreiter argues that “for the purpose of local theology...native exegesis is important to listen to a culture and plays a leading role in the analysis of a culture (Schreiter 1985:41). The fourth question is how does a community become a fertile ground for a local theology? Schreiter answers this question by stating that a concern for local theology has to embrace the move from a cultural analysis to the study of a communication process (Schreiter 1985:42).

Schreiter (1985:43-4), suggests three approaches as tools for listening to a culture. The first approach must be *holistic*. This means in the study of a culture one cannot concentrate on one part of a culture and exclude another part. For instance a missionary cannot concentrate only



on language, or religious aspects and exclude the social, political and economic aspect of the culture. The study must include every part of the culture. For the Oromo culture the Gadaa system is important because it embraces religious, social, economic, and political aspects of the culture. Thus to some extent the study of the *Gadaa* system can be holistic.

The second approach to a culture must address the forces that shape *identity in a culture*. Schreiter points out two important dimensions of culture that shape identity. They are group-boundary formation and world-view formation. For instance identity can be formed by marking the boundaries of the group (a “we” verses “they”). The way people view the world (the belief system, and their relation with their environment, etc.) in the culture must be listened to. The Gadaa system groups the Oromo boys according to their age grades. There are certain rituals that group the Oromo according to sex. We have discussed that the festival of *Abdari* is men’s thanksgiving and it has to be done by men alone, whereas *Yarabbi* is women’s thanksgiving in which only women participate. This is the group boundary in Oromo culture. Also there are some of the group boundaries which shape the identity. The child naming ritual, the marriage ceremonies, initiations etc. are part of identity shaping elements in the Oromo culture. Thus in the process of the study of the Oromo culture, the EECMY needs to concentrate on such elements of the culture.

The third approach to a culture must be able to address *the problem of social change*. As time goes on and technology is invented, change affects all societies. Telecommunication, urbanization, education, etc. bring change in the lives of people. Sometimes change brings improvement. It is impossible to generalise that every change can be good or bad. One has to see the change that improves the lives of the people and the change that destroys the identities of the people.

According to Schreiter (1985:45), these three approaches: “*holism, identity and social change* are of key importance to local theology because of the very tasks that local theology has most often to undertake in its service to the local community: integration, maintenance of stability, and transformation.” Thus the study of the Oromo culture must be done using the three approaches.

### **6.5.2 The Need to Recognise the Oromo World view**

Any missionary who wants to inculturate Christianity among the Oromo people needs to

recognize the Oromo world views. According to Sempore (in Turkson et al 1994:30), the marriage between the Bible (Gospel) and Africa gives birth to a popular Christianity whose African roots plunge into a vision in the world that can be described around four poles: God, Ancestors, Spirits and Family.

1. *God*: the richness of the religions and cultural heritage of Africa appears by the way people express themselves concerning God and their relationship with the Supreme Being. The missionaries did not bring God to Africa. Africans believe in one Supreme Being, who has no residence on earth and who does not impose any special worship on human beings. Most of the African societies call God during the time of difficulties. God is the Master of human destiny, who controls every living thing to his good pleasure. The Oromo people believe that everything is done if it is God's will. For instance they say "if Waqa (God) wishes, he causes a child to sprout in the mother's womb" (Bartels 1983:91). The Church has to recognize such Oromo world views.
2. *Ancestors*: Most of the African societies believe that the role of the Ancestors is mediating between God and his family. They are very much concerned about the tradition of the ancestors. Sempore (in Turkson 1994:41) states that

African Christians find themselves in the same situation as the Pharisees and Scribes in the time of Jesus: must one observe ancient traditions? The risk to which one succumbs usually is to juxtapose ancient traditions and precepts of the Gospel in a double application. Furthermore the figure of the Ancestors tends to cover up or supplant that of Christ. In vain do some of the African theologians make Christ the Ancestor par excellence; all the same in situations of trial and crisis, it is the ancestor who will be invoked, consulted and feared.

Thus the Ancestors seem to constitute a parallel authority of salvation beside that of Christ and his Church. This is the real challenge that the mainline denominations are facing. The Christians should know the distinction between the role of the Ancestor and that of Christ. "The primacy of Christ in the work of regeneration and salvation of the Africans can be recognized and affirmed in practice only if it integrates, in subordinating them to the Gospel, the place and the role of the (roots and trunks of life that constitute the) Ancestors" (Sempore in Turkson 1994:41).

I agree with Sempore because Abraham, Jacob and Moses cannot be ignored by the Jewish Christians. They have a place of recognition in the Church but are not worshipped. The recognition of the Ancestors such as Abraham and Moses are to the level of making them subordinate to Christ. In the same way some good Ancestors of Africa can get recognition

among Christian Africans. The Jews do not recognise every Jew who crossed the Red Sea, but only important figures. In the same way not every dead person becomes an Ancestor in the African societies. Only those who were good to the society have the status of an Ancestor. Therefore, the Christian Churches in Oromia should find ways of recognizing some of the good Ancestors so that the Gospel be inculturated in the Oromo culture. It should be understood that it does not mean worshipping them. In the African Independent Churches (AICs), some of their leaders such as Simon Kimbangu of Kimbangu Church in Congo and Isaiah Shembe of Zion City Church (ZCC) in South Africa are recognized as prophets. The Christian Churches can learn from the AICs. In the case of the Oromo of Ethiopia, Ancestors are not worshipped as gods, but are remembered as the ones who live near the area and protect them from the attack of the evil forces. The EECMY can arrange prayer meetings on the days that Ancestors are remembered among the Oromo people. For instance the first Monday after the Easter Sunday is the day when the Ancestors are remembered among the Sayo Oromo. On this day the Church can integrate the ritual of remembering ancestors with the teaching of the doctrine of resurrection.

3. *Invisible forces*: both traditional Africans and Christian Africans have a mentality that is occupied by the impact of the world of invisible forces, spirits. Therefore, they have a great fear of the spirits. According to Sempore,

the human being is not the only master of the world, but coexists with a multiple army of invisible spirits... the Africans believe not only the existence of these spirits, but also their influence on human existence and destiny to a point of affecting life in its physical, moral and social dimensions. In the case of incurable or mental diseases, calamities or epidemics, tenacious hatred or animosities, successive failures or fatal accidents, one suspects the implication of these fearful and irascible forces Sempore (in Turkson 1994:32).

Similarly the Oromo people have great fear of these spirits for they may attack them any time and seek protection. Sempore argues the challenge of mainline Churches when he asks, “can the Christian religion assure its followers an efficient protection against the ‘inflamed features of the wicked one’ and his henchmen?” (in Turkson 1994:42). To ensure the protection against the attacks of these spirits the EECMY needs to recognize them and deal with them within the Oromo cultural context.

4. *The Family*: It is difficult for western missionaries to understand the value of African families. In Africa every body is related to somebody and life is made up of a tight and close links the family life. Sempore (1994:38) points out that,

realities like marriage, polygamy, initiation, excision, ideas such as liberty, responsibility, culpability, solidarity can be understood only if one cares penetrate into the labyrinths of the institutions of the African family. The rule of the family is so essential in the life and harmonious growth of the individual in Africa.

In Africa today traditional family structures are going through serious crisis because of the idea of individualism being introduced to African society. The Christian Churches have contributed to bring a crisis in the family rules of the African societies. For instance Church marriage is not inculturated in Africa and this could be one of the factors that creates family crisis. Therefore the Church needs to understand the rules of the African family.

Thus the above four major Oromo world views need to be recognized by the EECMY so that her message be understood and become part of the Oromo people.

### **6.5.3 The Need to Inculturate Liturgy and Worship**

I have argued in chapter five that the Christian missionaries who came to Wollaga brought with them their home Church liturgical traditions and adapted for Oromo Christianity. This is one of the factors that made the EECMY foreign to the Oromo people. Therefore, there is an urgent need to revise the EECMY liturgy and worship and adapt some elements of the Oromo culture. Contextualization of liturgy has to go beyond translation of the Lutheran or Presbyterian Churches liturgical books. For instance the EECMY can learn from the AICS and incorporate some of the traditional aspects. The Southern African Scholar, M.L Danneel states how the healing ministry is incorporated into the liturgy and worship of the Zion City Church (ZCC).

Faith healing is actually part of the liturgy, as is confession of sin which, with prophetic encouragement is fitted between the sermons. Sometimes the prophet may interrupt proceedings to announce some message that the Spirit has revealed to him. Especially in cases where sorcery in the village is suspected as service may be dominated by prophetic revelations about the threat and the combating of evil powers (Danneel 1987:224).

De Wet (1989:380-387, cited in Saayman et al 1992: 162-163) also distinguishes four features of liturgy and Worship of the Pentecostal Church and its relevancy to the African peoples. The first, in the Pentecostal liturgy there is distinctive African roots such as oral liturgy; narrative theology, the inclusion of dreams and visions in private as well as public worship. Also there is expression of the importance of body as well as mind in liturgy and

worship, especially by the way of healing. Second, in the western Churches Catholic as well as Protestant worship and liturgy alienated many members, especially the African-American members of American Churches whereas the Pentecostal liturgy and worship made room for ecstatic encounters with the Spirit. Thirdly, in the mission Churches' liturgy, western culture played an overwhelming role whereas the Pentecostal liturgy, integrating body and soul, sacred and profane, spoke very directly to African people. Fourthly, the Catholic Church service is altar-centered, the Protestant services are pulpit centred which gives only the clergy to play active role whereas the Pentecostal service is pew-centred in which members play the most important role by speaking in tongues, prophecy, witness and so forth.

The East African scholar Laurenti Magesa (in Turkson et al 1994:67), agrees with De Wet when he says the AICs have taken more significant steps in inculturating worship than the mainline Churches. Public worship and rituals are primarily peoples' action. It is to bring about transformation in people's lives. The structure, context and content of public worship has to be based on, address and reflect popular needs and predilections.

The EECMY has to adopt some of the traditional worship style that allows everybody to participate. Worship should include humans and their environment. The reason why the Pentecostal Churches are growing at the expense of the mainline Churches in Ethiopia is because of the relevancy of the worship service. Such ministries in the Church are part of inculturation of Christianity in the African culture that gives meaning to the African peoples. The liturgy and worship that includes prophecy, healing and dance allows the members to have full participation in worship and is very similar to the OTR worship. Therefore, the EECMY has to learn from the Pentecostal and the AICs in adapting culturally relevant liturgy and worship in the process of inculturation. She needs to encourage those congregations who allocated special days of a week for healing ministry service.

The spiritual songs should also be sung according to the context of the Oromo society. The EECMY can learn from Black theology in this respect. Kritzinger (in Saayman et al 1992:269) points out that the comfort and joy generated by "singing of freedom songs has been a major factor in keeping alive the hope and the courage of the Black community in South Africa through the dark days of apartheid".

Celebration of the Holy Communion was also contextual in South Africa. The story of Jesus' suffering is linked to the stories of all suffering sisters and brothers today. A genuine celebration of communion will lead to actual participation in the struggles of workers for decent life (Kritzinger in Saayman et al 1992: 271).

The prayer in the Church must be related to socio-political realities. For example the African Enterprise (AE) typical prayer can be added to the EECMY liturgy. Botha & Saayman (1992:125-6) recorded two examples of such prayers. In South Africa during apartheid Michel Cassidy the director of the AE prayed as follows: "Lord, have mercy, please upon our land. Grant us a little more time before you decree your judgement." Here Cassidy speaks about God's judgement on social injustice. In the same way the sermon also needs to address the problems of the people. It should warn the people from doing injustice and give message of hope to the oppressed.

#### **6.5.4 The Need to Recognize Customary Marriage**

The Oromo Customary marriage includes not only the couple who is married but also the family and extended family members. According to Sempore (1994:39), in Africa,

customary marriage is considered by many as being the true marriage, one that does not rely on a 'yes' between a man and a woman who agree to marry each other. It depends on the dealings, oaths (dowry) and alliances arrived at between families, with the blessing of the ancestors, and after proof of the fecundity of the married couple.... In the case of difficulty or crisis, the couple calls on the family and the community to find solutions preventing any breach of marriage. On the other hand, the children born do not only belong to the parents: uncles, aunts, grandparents and other close relatives have the role in raising up the children, take part in the education and life option of their collaterals.

Such good values should be adopted by the EECMY. The EECMY should encourage such types of marriage and incorporate it with the Church marriage. The wedding ceremonies of the EECMY should integrate the traditional Oromo blessing into Church blessing. The wedding ceremony should not be bound to be conducted only in the Church buildings. Blessing in the homes of the bride and the groom must be another alternative because it allows many housebound elderly people to participate in the blessing. Pastors should be allowed to perform the marriage ceremony integrating the traditional marriage with Church marriage.

The EECMY has a plan of outreach among Muslim and traditional Oromo people who are by and large polygamous. She should understand this context and deal with it in a positive way. In the Bible there is no condemnation of polygamy. The early Church also never excommunicated them from participating in the Sacrament. I am not encouraging polygamy, but I argue that there is no Biblical ground or fairness in suspending the polygamous from

participating in the sacrament as is being done in many of the EECMY congregations.

### **6.5.5 The Need to Recognize Oromo Names and its Rituals**

The EECMY has to know that there are people who criticize Christianity as a foreign religion that came from Europe. The Christian names the Africans receive during baptism are often referred to as a European names. The EECMY cannot escape from such criticism because Oromo names were being changed during baptism. One may argue that today the EECMY is not changing the names during baptism. However, I would like to argue that there is a tendency to consider Oromo names pagan or secular even among Oromo theologians. There are substantial number of Oromo Christians who named their children after Jewish or European names, claiming that only these names qualify to fit Christianity. It is wrong to think that conversion needs change of names. For me conversion is a change of mind not of name. Thus the EECMY needs to create awareness among the Oromo people that God can accept the Oromo names.

Every Oromo father has a child naming ritual when his son turns sixteen. This is the time when the son begins to be a man. He enters the age of walking long distances to hunt and perform heavy work. During this period of transition, the father has to prepare a feast and invite the neighbours and concerned elders to perform the ritual of child naming. In this ritual the father gives a name to his son. Such ritual is an official declaration that the boy has the right to inherit his father and is identity of being accepted in the community. The EECMY can integrate this ritual with Christian confirmation of teenagers. The ritual of child naming is a symbol of becoming heir of his biological father. The same ritual can be incorporated with the Christian confirmation rite that declares the boy's acceptance to a Christian fellowship with the hope of inheriting eternal salvation prepared by Jesus Christ.

### **6.5.6 The Need to Recognize Oromo Festivals**

The Oromo people have yearly festivals that take place in different seasons. For instance *irressa*, *Abdari*, *Jaari* and *Masqala* (spring feast) are among few Oromo festivals. Some of these festivals are becoming very important among the educated Oromo people. The *irressa* festival at Bishoftu, run by Dr. Gammachu Megarsa, a Professor of Addis Ababa University, is a good example. Such festivals can be integrated with Christian festivals, spiritual

conferences and thanksgiving days.

### **6.5.7 The Need to Inculturate Church Administration**

The hierarchism prevalent in the mainline Christian Churches, which limits the level of popular participation in shaping the community's spirituality, appears to be lacking in popular Christianity. Therefore, there is a need for an inculturated Church government among the mainline Churches in Africa. For instance the leadership of the Church should follow the pattern of traditional leadership.

The EECMY administrative structure is parallel with that of the government. Such structure is not only foreign but also expensive. This is one of the factors that made impact on the Church not to be self-supporting. There is a need to inculturate the Church administration structure. The EECMY can adapt the Gadaa administration structure for the Church Units in Oromia.

### **6.5.8 The Need to Contextualize Theological Education**

#### **6.5.8.1 The Need to Study Oromo Ethnolinguistic**

Erikson, a Baptist missionary made a study of the theological education of Evangelical Churches in Ethiopia and pointed out the need for relevant theological education for Ethiopians. Especially he noted that the 1971 EECMY theological consultation held in Addis Ababa discussed how to encourage the development of relevant expression of theology for Ethiopia including the problem of communication (Erikson 1972: 143). The same consultation challenged the EECMY theological education stating "the cry for indigenous theology has all too quickly and unfairly, been followed by the complaint of syncretism and condemnation of it" (Erikson 1972:143).

This means the EECMY Bible schools and Seminaries did not offer a theology that has an indigenous character due to unfair condemnation . The Mekane Yesus Theological Seminary (MYTS) was initiated in 1960 with the aim of training pastors at higher level. According to Erikson's (1972:120) study, the curriculum of the EECMY theological schools including the MYTS included the following subjects:



Bible subjects 54%, History (Church) 8%, Theology 14.5%, Practical theology such as preaching, evangelism, music, Christian education 11.5% ; other subjects such as book keeping, Amharic and English languages 12%.

This explains that the idea of contextual theological education was out of focus. That is why there is continuous call for relevant theological expression.

There is a great need for the EECMY theological Schools to revise their curricula and include some subjects that can be relevant to the Oromo people. For the current Oromo context, I suggest that ethnolinguistic study (Oromo language, Oromo Myths/ folklore, Oromo Riddle, and Proverbs and Oromo Music) be included in the theological education curriculum.

Ethnolinguistic methodology is defined by Charles Kraft as, “a combination of approaches developed such disciplines as linguistics, anthropology, semantics, folklore, and the like with some more or less original techniques of their own” (in Erickson 1972:154). The missionaries, teachers in the Bible schools and in seminaries and evangelists need more than the ability to speak the language of the Oromo people. They need to learn the following means of communications:

**(1) Oromo myths/ folklore has to be studied:** According to Loewen (cited in Erickson 1972:168) there are six functions of myths. Firstly, myths function as explanatory in answering such questions as “why.” Secondly, they integrate, provide a reference system evaluating, classifying and relating all life’s new experiences. Thirdly, they validate rules, mores, taboos and attitudes. Fourthly, myths sanction social behaviour (for instance a child absorbs the values and ideals of culture through myths and tales). The fifth is that they can help human beings transcend their limitations (It is through myths that they can share their inner experiences with each other). Six, myths can provide a vehicle to preserve and transmit truth. The Oromo people have myth of creation, how human being became dominant over other creatures and myths for sin that separated God from human beings. Thus any one who wants to reach the Oromo with a meaningful Christian message needs to know Oromo myths/folklore.

**(2) Oromo riddles and proverbs have to be studied:** Barry (quoted in Erickson 1972:171), states that proverbs and riddles are important in African societies. They are used in greetings and nicknames. They are helpful in informal education to train the memory of the children and to sharpen their wits. Riddles and proverbs are known methods that the Oromo people

use to transmit their messages. A pastor who uses proverbs during preaching can attract the attention of the people and pass the message easily. Most of the young Oromo pastors do not know these good tools of communication. I recommend that EECMY theological Schools should encourage the learning of Oromo proverbs and riddles and incorporating them in practical theology.

**(3) Oromo music has to be studied:** Music is one of the best tools in communicating the Gospel, because it speaks to the heart. However, in most of the EECMY theological schools there is no formal music training. The MYTS had a missionary teacher who began to offer a music course when I was in the seminary. However, after the teacher left, the MYTS stopped teaching music. On the other hand the youths who go to Oromo secular dances are not accepted by the Church and there is no means whereby the Oromo music is learned. In the Western Wollaga Bethel Synod (WWBS) of the EECMY, where I come from, the traditional Oromo wedding songs, and similar dances were banned by the Synod's general assembly. The traditional music instruments were also regarded as instruments of the devil. In many of the EECMY congregations, the old songs with European melodies are being put on the shelves. The time has come when the Oromo people are claiming their past. People are yearning for their own Oromo traditional music, because it touches their feelings and speaks to their hearts. Among non-educated rural congregations of the WWBS, the Choir members do not use hymn books. They sing from their memory in a similar way to that of traditional Oromo songs. I suggest that all the EECMY theological institutions include music teaching in their curriculum. Furthermore, I suggest that the EECMY should encourage the traditional Oromo songs during weddings, cultivation, etc.

### **6.5.8.2 The Need to Study Oromo Traditional Religion**

Shorter (1975:55) points out that elements from African Traditional Religion (ATR) have to be included into religious education in Africa. He argues that the idea of complex processes by which the book of the Old and New Testaments have come down to us must be taught to school children at their particular level. If this is not done they will experience a crisis as adults when they realize that the whole truth was withheld from them as children. The same thing is true for attitudes towards traditional religion. It would be extremely dangerous to inculcate simplistic negative attitudes into them, and then leave them to discover as adults that in reality the Church's approach has now become more subtle and discerning. The youths should be given an up to date account of the Church's thinking with regard to ATR as they themselves are situated at the very flash point of the existing conflict.

The student is perplexed by the differences between Christianity taught in the classroom and the latent traditional values to which he himself subscribes and which are lived by his own circle of relatives and friends at home (Shorter 1975:156). Otherwise there will be a crisis of conflict in his life and ministry. Shorter further argues that a student who lives in a community in which Christian values are far from being explicit. He reads modern African writers who idealize the religious values of the African past, who lament the passing of the traditional cultures, whose attitude to Christianity is critical, if not frankly hostile (1975:156). The same thing could be true with an Oromo student who lives in his community and studies anthropology in the University. Oromo academics such as Dr Gemechu Megersa are lamenting for their traditional cultures and are calling many young Oromos to attend Irressa festival at Bishoftu every year. Such festivals are attracting many young Oromo people. Therefore, the MYTS needs to include the OTR in its curriculum before it is too late.

Further the MYTS has to encourage the work of dialogue in religious education. The idea of an anti pagan approach must be completely ruled out in the class rooms. The OTR should not be introduced to the students to show that it is pagan religion and condemn it. The instructors of the Christian education might be tempted to emphasize the superiority of Christianity over traditional religions. OTR could be insufficient for salvation. However, one should not forget also that Christianity in the western form may not be the answer to some of the real needs of the Africans. To inculturate Christian education one needs to include the study of the OTR in the EECMY theological education curriculum.

### **6.5.8.3 The Need to Adopt Gadaa Teaching Methods**

The EECMY Theological Schools in Oromia need to adapt Gadaa training methodology to train the Church leaders. Erikson (972:92-3), describes Gadaa leadership training that begins in the community and given according to age level. This includes apprenticeship and methods of election that follows democratic process, preparing the leaders for specific tasks.

Melba also points out that during the Gadaa grades, individuals learn different kinds of education at different grades as he passes from one stage to the next. For instance,

during the grades of *Qondaala*, *Kuusa* and *Raaba Doorii* the individuals learn war tactics, Oromo history, politics, ritual, law and administration over a period of 24 years. When they enter the Gadaa class or *Luba* at the age of about 40 years, they have already acquired all the necessary knowledge to handle the responsibility of

administrating the country and the celebration of rituals. It ends with partial retirement of the whole group of elders to an advisory and judiciary capacity (1988:12-3).

The EECMY theological schools can use these methodologies to prepare the future Church leaders. The leadership training for the future Church needs to begin at the Sunday school age, teen age and above. The achievements of the individual during his/her past life in the Church should be the criteria for selecting candidates for theological education. The absence of such methodology of training can lead the leaders to power corruption. The Church leaders must be inculcated that people should have absolute power than the bishop. Had the leaders been prepared from the very beginning and made democracy their culture, much of power corruption in Africa would have been tackled. Barney Pityana, South African Human Rights Commission chairperson pointed out that “Theological education, over time, shapes the nature of the Church leadership in many ways” (in Walker and Cochrane 1996). The EECMY theological education needs to adopt the Gadaa training methodology that shapes leaders over time. The EECMY theological education has to play a leading role in inculcating Christianity in the cultures of the people.

## **6.6 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER**

In this chapter, it was my intention to show that Islam is seen as a resistant ideology among the Muslim Oromos and the EECMY lacked inculturation. And these are the current challenges of the EECMY in her ministry among the Oromo people. It was argued that like Christianity, Islam was also imposed on the Oromo people and it lacked an indigenous character among the Oromo people. Islam does not have a character of translatability, but Christianity does. I believe that an inculturated form Christianity may attract many Muslim Oromo people to Christianity. This chapter defined inculturation as rooting the Gospel in the culture of the people. It was argued that the Bible is the word of God and the work of man at the same time. Thus the Bible is the inculturated word of God. It was also discussed that the early Christian Church had a dialogue with cultures of people and inculturated itself. The Bible and history of the early Church can be sources and models for inculturation among the Oromo people. It was also stated that the limit of inculturation should go beyond presenting the Christian message in the language of the Oromo people. It has to penetrate into the lives of the Oromo people and should be an ongoing process. Possible areas of inculturation of Oromo Christianity were recommended. The need to revise liturgy and worship of the EECMY was discussed. Some aspects of Oromo traditions such as using traditional music instruments, traditional songs, contextual prayers that refer to the socio-political realities need

EECMY was discussed. Some aspects of Oromo traditions such as using traditional music instruments, traditional songs, contextual prayers that refer to the socio-political realities need to be assimilated into Liturgy and worship. Suggestions were also made to include traditional Oromo wedding blessings, customary marriage celebrations, child naming rituals and some of the Oromo festivals in the EECMY liturgy. The Chapter also discussed needs and methods of contextual theological education in the EECMY. Inclusion of Oromo ethnolinguistic study and Oromo traditional religion into the curriculum was suggested. The chapter proposed that the Gadaa teaching methodology be adapted in the training programme of future Church leaders. To inculturate her administration style into the Oromo culture, the EECMY needs to adopt the Gadaa administration system.

## 7. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

### 7.1 General findings

This study emphasized that Oromo Christianity is in a crisis, because it lacks sufficient inculturation. Also it explored how the Gadaa system was destroyed from the Wollaga province and showed how elements of Oromo traditional religion were either destroyed or became domestic practices in Wollaga. Christianity partly contributed to the suppression of the Oromo language. For instance, the Entoto and the Gulale EECMY congregations refusal of the Oromo people to worship in the Oromo language was mentioned. The study discussed that Christianity complied with colonization of the Oromo people. Consequently, the majority of the Oromo people rejected Christianity and became Muslims.

Based up on the above illustrations, the study argued that the conflict within the Entoto and the Gulale EECMY congregations is only a symptom of a deeper problem of Oromo Christianity; which is a lack of an indigenous character. To investigate this, three important questions were posed: (1) what are the underlying causes for Oromo Christianity's lack of indigenous character; (2) what are the causes for the apparent language of worship problem within the Entoto and the Gulale congregations of the EECMY; (3) could missionary methods be a contributory factor for the majority of the Oromo people rejecting Christianity and becoming Muslims?

The study attempted to answer these questions: Firstly, the problem of Oromo Christianity's lack of an indigenous character lies with inadequate missionary methods specially their lack of sensitivity to the Oromo culture. Secondly, the majority of the Oromo people rejected Christianity and responded to Islam because of the inadequacy of the Christian mission methods. Third, the conflict within the Entoto and the Gulale EECMY congregations on the issue of language of worship has historical link with early Christian mission methods.

Based on this hypothesis, four Christian bodies (the EOC, the SEM, the UPCNAM and the HM) were studied. These four Christian bodies played an active role in introducing Christianity and evangelizing to the Wollaga Oromo. The study focused on seven mission methods used by the above mentioned Christian bodies in evangelizing the to Wollaga Oromo in the period between 1898 to 1974 and found the following facts:-

- (1) *The mission agents*: The study argued that the mission agents sent by the four Christian bodies were not qualified to merge Christianity into the Oromo culture. Among non-Oromo missionaries, only Gebre-Ewostateos and the HM missionaries studied the Oromo language. None of the mission agents was taught the Oromo culture and traditional religion. As a result of the work of the mission agents the Qallus were destroyed with Qallu institution. Along with the elimination of the Qallus all OTR elements and the Gadaa practices disappeared from Wollaga.
- (2) *Bible Translation*: The study discussed that the EOC and the UPCNAM did not translate the Bible into the Oromo language. Two mission societies: the SEM and the HM made a great effort in translating the Bible into Oromo. But the Bible translation did not follow the translation model. The SEM made the Amharic language the sole medium of teaching and preaching. They limited the use of the Oromo Bible to the rural Oromia. They used the Amharic Bible in towns and cities of Oromia. Thus the study argued that such limitation of the use of the Oromo language was the cause for the current problem within the Entoto and the Gulale EECMY congregations.
- (3) *Church Planting and Administration*: The study pointed out that the EOC was established in Oromia through imposition of Abyssinian colonizers. The majority of the Oromo people, therefore, rejected Christianity because it was associated with colonial powers and instead joined Islam. It was also argued that the SEM, the UPCNAM and the HM structured the EECMY according to the western church structure. The Church building style and the administration structures were all foreign to Oromo culture.
- (4) *The Healing Ministry*: It was pointed out that the mission health services attracted many of the Oromo people to the EECMY. However, the healing ministry failed to integrate the traditional Oromo healing ministries and concepts.
- (5) *The Education Ministry*: The study argued that church-schools played a significant role in the evangelization of the Wollaga Oromo. The SEM, the UPCNAM and the HM introduced modern education to the Wollaga Oromo that had a significant role in developing the Oromo society. Against this background, it was argued that the Church schools (EECMY theological schools included) contributed to the suppression of the Oromo language and culture. Medium of instruction in schools were in the Amharic language only. Oromo language was not included in the school curriculum.
- (6) *Interaction with Authorities*: It was argued that the mission organizations and mission agents interaction with authorities were unhelpful method of mission. The study showed how the EOC was seen as an agent for Abyssinia colonial powers. It was also stated that the SEM, the UPCNAM and the HM interaction with their respective governments and

the Abyssinia governments contributed to the suppression Oromo culture. Some of the mission agents requested fire arms from their governments for Emperor Minelik who invaded Oromia.

(7) *Approach to Oromo culture and traditions*: It was argued that the four Christian bodies approach to Oromo culture and traditional religion was generally negative. All had wrong assumptions about the Oromo culture and traditions. The Oromo people were seen as uncivilized pagans who worship idols. These Christian bodies believed that the Oromo people needed Christianity and civilization. With such assumptions Christian missionaries evangelized to the Wollaga Oromo and wiped out some important aspects of Oromo culture and traditions. When they established Christian churches in Oromia, they did not consider the Oromo ways of life.

After analyzing the above mentioned methods, the study came to conclude that the EOC, SEM, UPCNAM and HM methods of mission used to evangelize the Oromo people were inappropriate. They established Churches that have no indigenous character. The EECMY which played a significant role in developing the Oromo people for the last hundred years is being challenged for lack of inculturation. Oromo intellectuals, politicians and writers are asserting that Christianity is responsible for the destruction of the Oromo culture and traditions. Since 1992, the Oromia state is trying to reconstruct Oromo culture. Pentecostal Churches are fishing from the EECMY net by making an effort to present the Gospel message in more relevant way. Unless the EECMY revises its methods of mission to the Oromo people the challenge will continue.

To respond to the current challenge and to continue with the Oromo people, Oromo Christianity needs to be part of the Oromo people. The main concern of the study is for the ministry of the EECMY among the Oromo people and therefore suggested the inculturation model that the EECMY may need to consider. Here, I would offer some methods inculturation of the EECMY among the Oromo people in the following section.

## 7.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

The Bible is the guidance for the faith that the EECMY manifests. This study attempted to show that there is no pure Bible that is not influenced by the culture of people. The Word of God incarnated in the culture of Middle-East societies and became the Bible. In other word the Bible is the inculturated word of God. There is no specific culture that is favored by God



nor rejected by God. All cultures have the right to interact with Christianity to glorify God. In order to be understood meaningfully the gospel of Jesus Christ must be presented in a way that it is relevant to any society. There should be continuous dialogue between the Gospel and culture. Any culture must be judged by the gospel. This can be possible if the inculturation model is accepted by the Christian Church that takes God's mission to the people. The EECMY is among the Christian Churches entrusted by God to carryout God's mission among the Oromo society. The traditional method of mission is not favored by the Oromo people. Thus the EECMY needs to inculturate herself among the Oromo of Ethiopia and this study recommends the following:

- (1) The EECMY needs to accept that Christianity is for every person in every context and that no culture is more superior than any other. Christianity needs to be humble enough to accept the good aspects of Oromo culture and this notion must be accepted by the EECMY.
- (2) The EECMY needs to establish an institute of missiology which should take the responsibility of studying the cultures of people to which the EECMY is ministering and aiming to minister to.
- (3) In order to respond to the Oromo people's quest for indigenous type of Christianity, the EECMY needs to study Oromo culture and Oromo traditional religion for missiological purposes.
- (4) Oromo ethno-linguistic study needs to be included into the curriculum of the EECMY theological institutes that train future Oromo Church leaders.
- (5) The theological institutes who prepare the Oromo Church leaders should adopt the Gadaa system teaching methodologies. In the Gadaa system training no one can reach a position of authority without having passed through the lower positions and demonstrated his aptitude in them. The training of the church leaders must start at the early age in the village of the candidate. Seminary education alone is not enough to qualify a person to be the leader of Oromo Church. His or her past aptitude has to be evaluated.
- (6) To address the social, economic and political issues of the Oromo people, the EECMY needs to develop the theology of inculturation that incorporates the theology of liberation.
- (7) The EECMY liturgy and worship book needs to be revised and be inculturated into the Oromo culture. Translating the Western churches liturgy book into the Oromo language is not inculturation. Oromo aspirations, rites and rituals of prayers need to be adopted by the Christian Church. Traditional Oromo music must be adopted for Church worship. Traditional Oromo prayers and blessings need to be incorporated into the liturgy book.
- (8) Oromo customary marriage blessing ceremonies need to be integrated into Church marriage.

- (9) Oromo child-naming rituals need to be recognized and be integrated with Christian confirmation class.
- (10) Oromo festivals, such as *Irressa*, *Abdari*, *Yaaabbi (Jari)* and *Masqala* need to be recognized and be incorporated with Christian festivals.
- (11) Oromo Gadaa system of administration needs to be adopted by the Oromo Church. Terms of services in the church need to be limited only to eight years.
- (12) An inculturated Oromo Church needs to be part of the universal church.

In this study, it was my intention to point out that the crisis of Oromo Christianity lies with lack of inculturation. To cope with the challenges, I suggested possible areas of inculturation that the EECMY may consider in her ministry among the Oromo people. In the overall analysis Oromo Christianity needs to take off the Jews, Abyssinian, and European garments and be ready to put on the Oromo garment. Oromo Christians should have the right to be Christians and Oromos at the same time. Then one can say Oromo Christianity has indigenous character.

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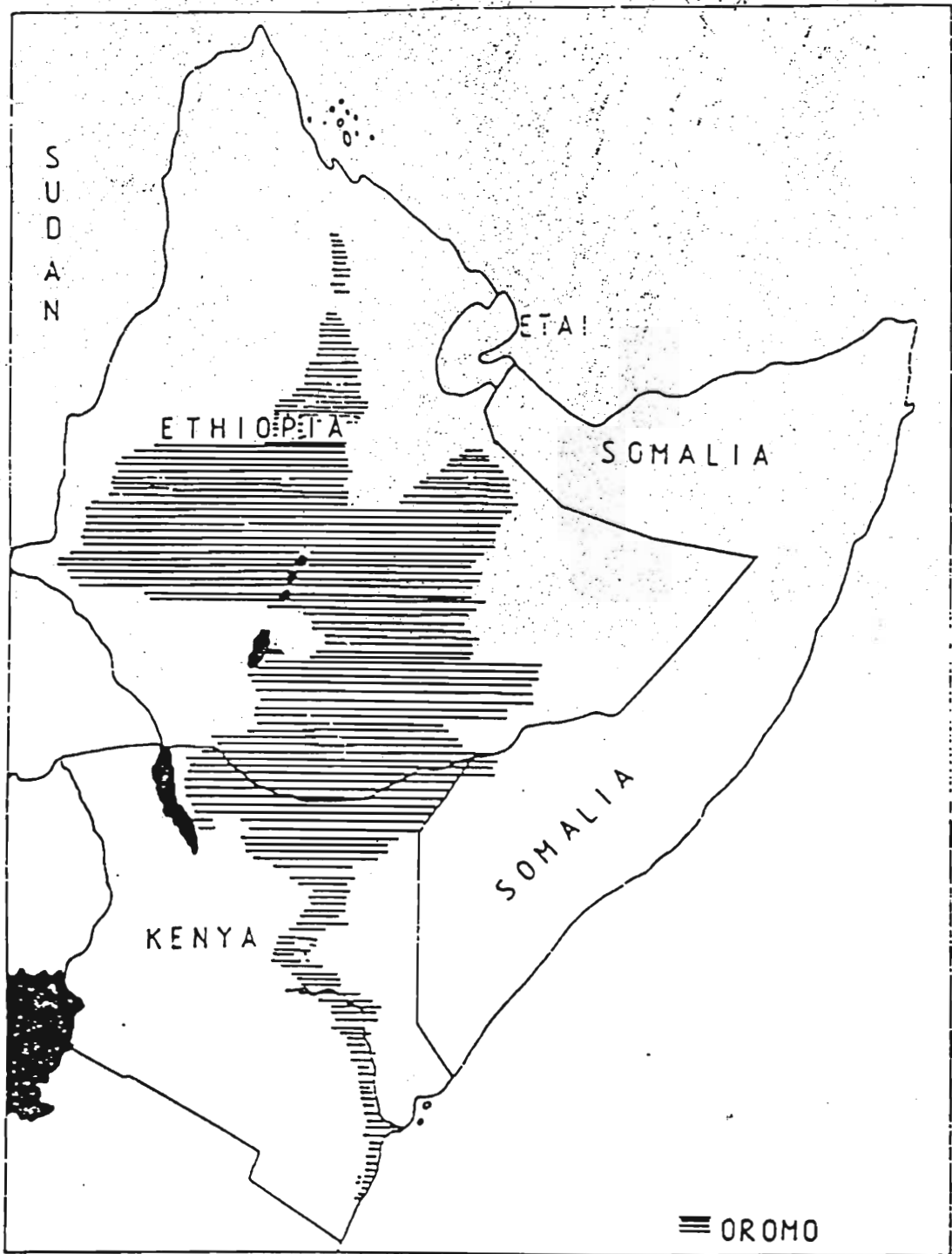
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## **9. MAPS**

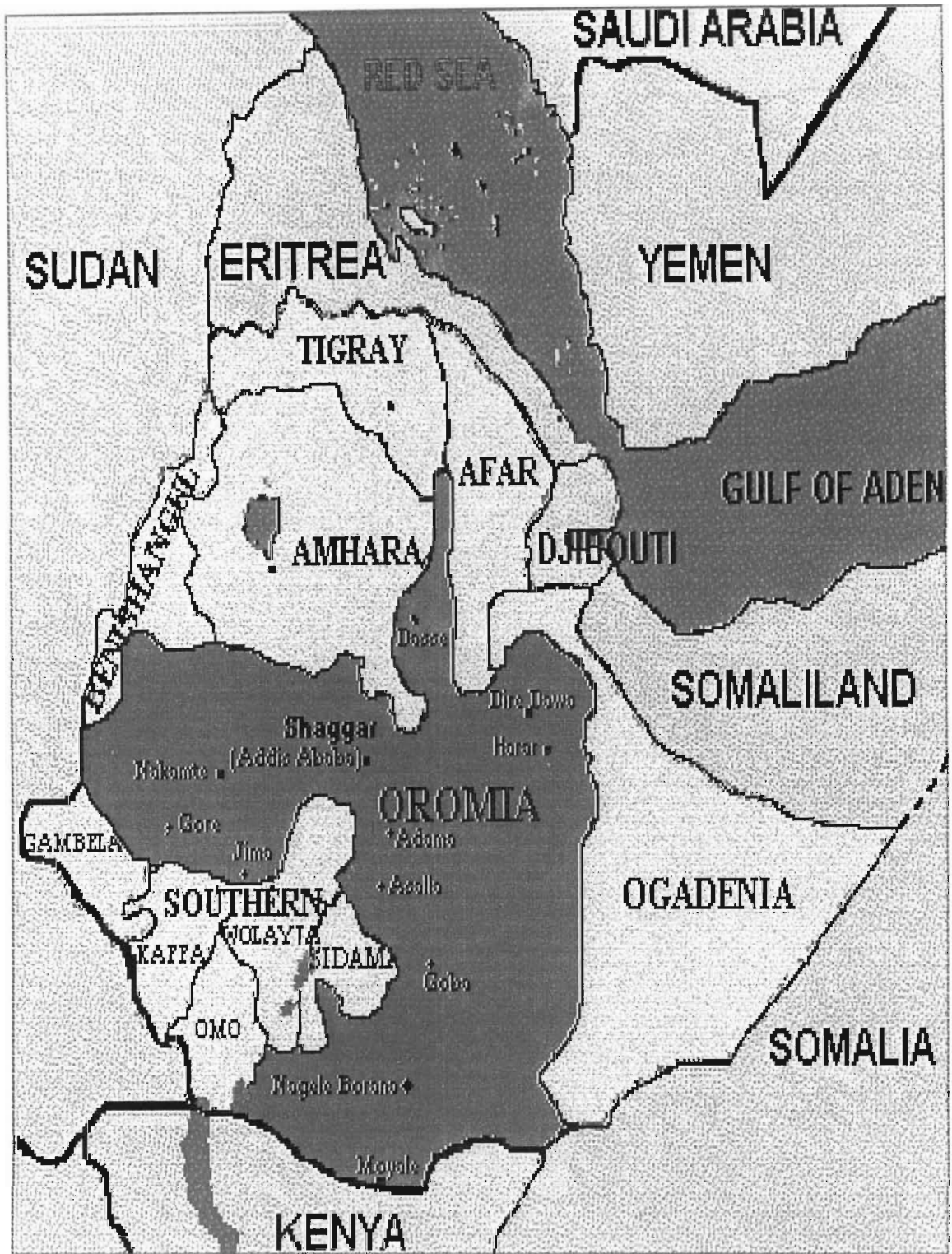
### **9.1 Approximate Oromo Settlement Areas in the Horn of Africa**

### **9.2 Oromia in Ethiopia**

### **9.3 Settlement Areas of Various Oromo Communities**

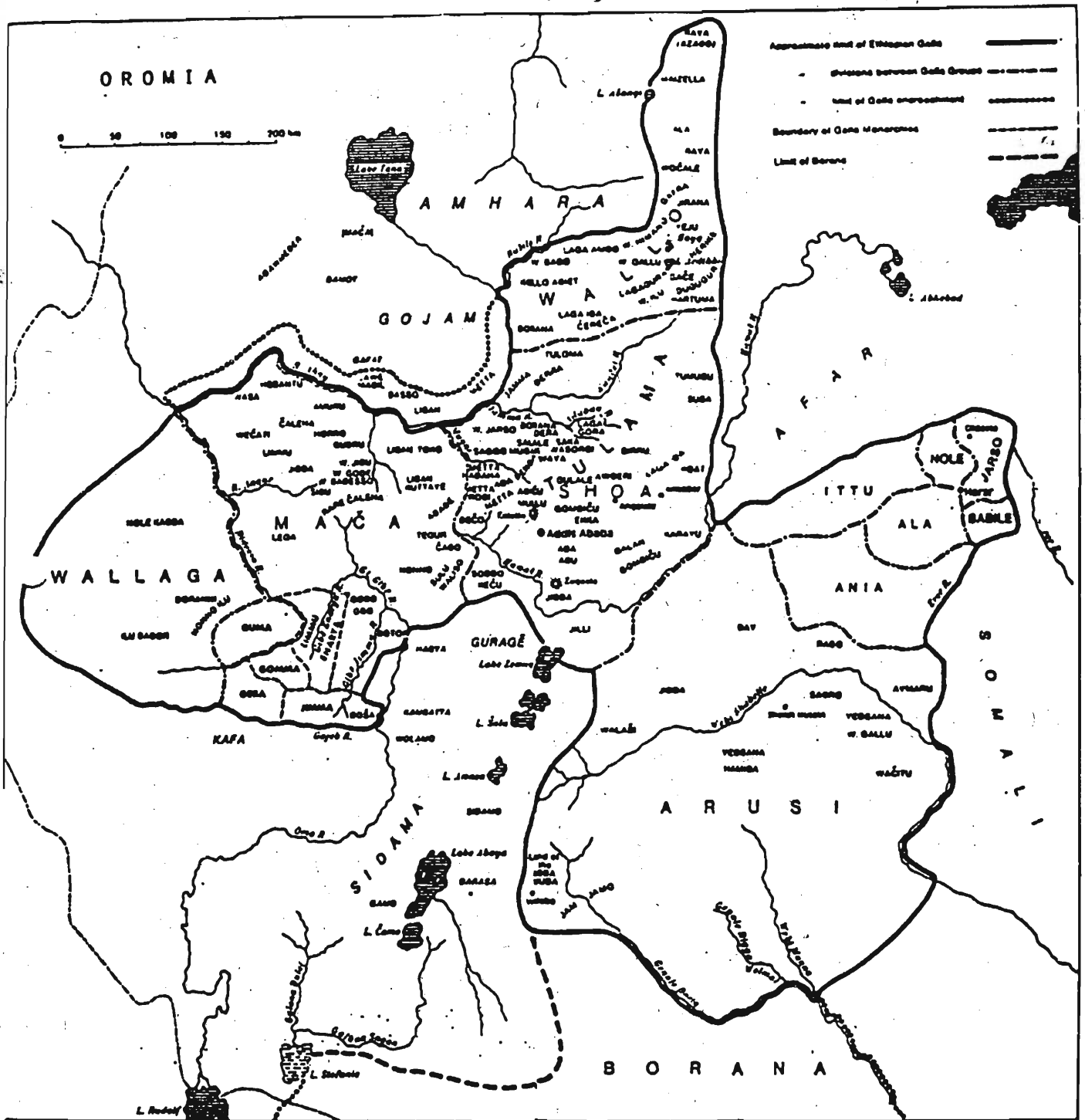


9.4 *Approximate Oromo Settlement Areas in the Horn of Africa*  
(Source: Stroemer, 1988)



9.2 Map of Oromia in Ethiopia

<http://www.oromo.org/osg/oromap2.htm>



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Settlement Areas (Approximate) of Various Oromo Communities  
(primary source: Huntingford, 1955)