

Ethiopian Churches in Conflict

An empirical study of how the growth of a religious minority group can enforce a change in a religious majority group

Sunniva Hersir Sollid



Master Thesis in History of Religion
60 credits

Department of Cultural Studies and Oriental Languages
Faculty of Humanities

UNIVERSITY OF OSLO

02.12.13

© Sunniva Hersir Sollid

Year: 2013

Title: Ethiopian Churches in Conflict

Author: Sunniva Hersir Sollid

<http://www.duo.uio.no/>

Print: CopyCat

Abstract

This thesis is an empirical study of competition between a religious minority group and a religious majority group. In this thesis, I will study the competition between the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus in order to test my hypothesis that the religious majority group, the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, has been forced to change because of the growth of the religious minority group, the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus. Because the release of *The Statistical Report* from the Census Commission in Ethiopia in 2008 showed a decrease in number of members in the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and an increase in number of members in the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus, there is reason to believe that there is a change in the religious scene in Ethiopia. I will in this thesis examine different topics in order to understand how the religious minority group might have affected the religious majority group and what consequences this might have.

Preface

This work had not been possible if not for the help of some very important people.

First of all, I would like to thank my informants. They chose to open up to me even though I was a stranger, something I am very grateful for. I would especially like to thank my informant known in this thesis as Per, who acted as my guide and mentor in Ethiopia. He was a door opener into a community I would have never gotten to know if not for him. Thank you so much. I would also like to thank the two journalists who allowed me to come with them on their trip to the western parts of Ethiopia. Thank you both for teaching me the true meaning of “*å freestyle litt*”.

I would also like to thank my supervisors: Thank you Torkel Brekke, for pushing me to write about a topic and a country others tried talking me out of. Thank you for always being available on mail and guiding me through an exciting but tough journey to Ethiopia, and teaching me how to handle my material when I got home. Thank you Nora Stene, for being my supervisor during my last semester. You really helped me push myself and put this thesis together. Thank you so much for all your input and encouragement.

I would also like to thank the Norwegian MFA and ILPI for believing in my thesis and granting me the minority project scholarship and The Oslo Center for taking me in as an intern and educating me on democratic processes with special focus on the Horn of Africa.

Of course, I have to thank my fellow students in the reading hall. Kari, you have been my partner in crime through this entire time. Thank you for listening to my frustration and for letting me listen to yours. And Yngvild, I don't think you know how supportive you have been. I would also like to thank the people who graduated before me, who let me listen in on their problems, giving me a heads up on what to expect. And the people who will graduate after me, I owe you a lot, perhaps even a beer or two.

A special thanks to my two flat mates; Hilde and Lene. You are incredible. Thank you for the dinners, the movie nights and for putting up with the zombie-version of me.

I would also like to thank my friends. I'm sorry I have been absent from your lives for the last year or so. It means a lot to me to know you are all still there.

Last, but not least, I would like to thank my mother. You have been a rock through my entire life. Thank you for believing in me and fighting for me. I would also like to mention my father; he is the biggest reason why I wanted to travel to Africa. I followed in your footsteps in my own way. I dedicate this thesis to you both.

Table of contents

- 1 Introduction 3
 - 1.1 My research topic 4
 - 1.2 Prior research on Ethiopia 6
 - 1.3 The structure of this thesis..... 7
- 2 The interviews and methodological problems 11
 - 2.1 My selection of informants..... 11
 - 2.2 My topic guide..... 14
 - 2.3 Language barrier..... 16
 - 2.4 The intervention of a second interviewer 17
 - 2.5 Clothing codes 17
 - 2.6 Triangulation 18
- 3 A historical background for the two churches. 21
 - 3.1 The Ethiopian Orthodox Church 21
 - 3.1.1 Establishment and growth of the church 21
 - 3.1.2 Church structure 23
 - 3.1.3 Holy text and holy life..... 24
 - 3.2 The Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus 25
 - 3.2.1 The establishment and growth of the church 25
 - 3.2.2 Church structure 26
 - 3.2.3 Holy text and holy life..... 28
- 4 Federalism and ethnicity, majority and minority 29
 - 4.1 Ethnic identity..... 29
 - 4.1.1 Defining Amhara..... 30
 - 4.1.2 Defining Oromo 31
 - 4.2 Ethiopia and federalism 32
 - 4.3 The Ethiopian Orthodox Church and the state 36
- 5 Competition between the two churches 41
 - 5.1 Aid and missionary funds 43
 - 5.1.1 Help from foreign missions with funds and projects 43
 - 5.1.2 Personal relationship with members 45
 - 5.2 Theological education for the masses..... 47

5.2.1	The EECMY and theological education.....	47
5.2.2	The EOC and theological education.....	49
5.2.3	The difference between the EECMY and the EOC.....	51
5.3	Church activities	52
5.3.1	Childcare during the service.....	52
5.3.2	The EOC newspaper and magazine	54
5.3.3	Development program and aid work	55
5.3.4	Church choirs	56
5.4	Missionary activity	57
5.4.1	Missionary tactics and strategy	57
5.4.2	Examples of missionary tactics	58
5.4.3	Local missionaries at universities	61
5.5	Conversions	62
5.5.1	Linked to local missionaries.....	63
5.5.2	Stealing members	64
5.5.3	Different age group's view on conversion, other churches and cross-denominational relationships.....	65
5.6	Official church policy and personal opinions.....	69
5.6.1	The EOC.....	69
5.6.2	The EECMY.....	71
6	Summary and conclusion	73
6.2	Summary and discussion	73
6.3	Conclusion.....	79
6.4	Future research	80
	Bibliography.....	82
	Attachment 1: List of informants	85
	Attachment 2: Topic guide.....	87
	Attachment 3: Map of Ethiopia.....	88

Part one:

Introduction, interviews and method

1 Introduction

In 2008 a national statistic from 2007 was released by the Ethiopian Population and Census Commission: the *Summary and Statistical Report of the 2007 Population and Housing Census: Population Size by Age and Sex*, which for the sake of convenience I will refer to as *The Statistical Report* from now on.¹ Up until 2008, the Ethiopian Orthodox Church believed itself to be the largest Christian church in Ethiopia, constituting approximately 50% of the population. *The Statistical Report* was released in 2008 and showed that the Ethiopian Orthodox Church had decreased to 43% of the population, significantly smaller than in 1994 when the previous census was released. The only religious group that had drastically changed its percentage since the last census in 1994 was the Protestants, which had grown from 10% to 18%. This is a growth of over 8 million members and according to the census it could look like something close to 5 million of these members came from the Ethiopian Orthodox Church.

The Statistical Report divides the Christian population in Ethiopia into three separate groups, the Orthodox, the Protestant and the Catholic. They are portrayed as three separate Christian denominations, but these are labels that say little about the different Christian groups in Ethiopia. The two Christian denominations of this study are in *The Statistical Report* referred to as Orthodox and Protestant. The Orthodox is in fact a unified church, The Ethiopian Orthodox Church, with a long history in Ethiopia. The Protestant, however, are made up of several different denominations. I will focus on the biggest Protestant church, which is the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus. For the sake of convenience I will from now on refer to the Ethiopian Orthodox Church as the EOC and the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus as the EECMY.

My interest in Ethiopia is a part of my interest in the Horn of Africa. I knew early on that I wanted to write about religion and conflict in the Horn of Africa. Out of the countries in the horn of Africa, Ethiopia is one of the few countries where it would be possible for me to conduct research and fieldwork on my own as a female. I already had an interest in Ethiopia, and because of the possibility of conducting a fieldwork there it became the best choice. As I

¹ "Summary and Statistical Report of the 2007 Population and Housing Census: Population Size by Age and Sex," ed. The Office of the Census Commission (Addis Ababa: The Central Statistical Agency, 2008).

studied Ethiopia, I became interested in religious leaders and power. I travelled to Ethiopia with this topic in mind. During the first couple of days, I was made aware of the tension between the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and the evangelical church called the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus. I became more interested in the conflict between these two churches than in my original topic of religious leaders and power, and I decided to examine this further. Because I was able to travel to the western part of Ethiopia early on in my stay, I got to interview several people from the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus and hear their thoughts on the topic of conflict between them and the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. The trip to the western part of Ethiopia and the interviews I conducted there became essential in my understanding of the conflict and my collection of empirical data. This brings me to my research question.

1.1 My research topic

In this study I want to look at competition between a religious minority group and a religious majority group. More specifically; I want to see how the growth of a religious minority group can enforce a change in a religious majority group. I will examine this by focusing on an empirically based study of two church communities that coexist in Ethiopia.

Ethiopia is an interesting example because of the new release of *The Statistical Report*. Several Ethiopians around the world have expressed an expectation that the EOC will have a reaction to the decrease of members that the census indicates. Because the decrease in members within the EOC can be said to be similar to the increase in members within the EECMY, there is reason to look further into the relationship between the churches.

My hypothesis is that the EOC has had to change because of the growth of the EECMY. In order to assess this hypothesis it can be beneficial to pose three questions:

1. How has missionary funding influenced the EECMY and what effect has this had on the EOC?

The focus of this study is the competition between the two churches, and as one of the churches is funded by foreign missions and the other is not, it is important to look at how this affects them both. Missionary funding can have a big influence on a Christian church like the

EECMY. Because the EOC is largely based on donations from members, they can, even though they are the majority church, experience it as threatening when other churches receive funds from foreign missions.

2. How is theological education a big part of the EECMY and how has the EOC reacted to this?

Theological education in Ethiopia has been studied before, as I will present in the following sub chapter on prior research, but not in relation to religious competition. Because both the EECMY and the EOC are concerned with theological education and competition is one of the main focus areas in this study, it is important to examine topics like theological education in light of the competition between the churches.

3. How is missionary activity by the EECMY connected to conversion and how has the EOC reacted to this?

Missionary activity is often understood as missionaries working to establish Christianity in a foreign country. In this context I will apply the term on people who want to strengthen Christianity in their own country. Missionary activity becomes something members of a church can be a part of in order to spread their faith and convert people to Christianity. In relation to this it is important to discuss the word conversion and how it will be used in this study. Steven Kaplan defines conversion like this:

Scholars of religion distinguish a wide variety of processes under the rubric of conversion. These include the movement of individuals or groups from one tradition to another, i.e. from Christianity to Islam, as well as movements within a single tradition, such as the move from Orthodox Christianity to Catholicism or Protestantism.²

I will apply the last definition of conversion to this study; movements within a single tradition. In this context, these movements are between the EOC and the EECMY. As this study will illustrate, the decrease and the increase of members that was revealed in *The Statistical Report* can be seen as an indication of the need for a change in the oldest church in Ethiopia.

² Steven Kaplan, "Themes and Methods in the Study of Conversion in Ethiopia: A Review Essay," *Journal of Religion in Africa* 34, no. 3 (2004). p. 374.

These three questions will help me examine my hypothesis that the EOC has had to change because of the growth of the EECMY. They will frame my empirical material and act as a guiding principle in my analysis. As I have chosen to examine six topics that were important in my interviews, these topics will be closely linked to my three questions. These six topics are: aid and missionary funds; theological education for the masses; church activities; missionary activity; conversions; and official church policy and personal opinions.

1.2 Prior research on Ethiopia

Ethiopia has been studied for a long time. However, the main focus has been on historical, theological and political themes. Some of the best known researchers on the historical, lingual and theological research have been Edward Ullendorff, Roger W. Cowley and Donald Crummey, but most of their work has been focused on the EOC and its historical and lingual aspects.³ Other scholars who have focused on religion have primarily studied either the EOC or Islam, as they are two of the biggest religious groups in Ethiopia.⁴ The Evangelical churches have gotten little attention from scholars, but have been studied by missionaries like Gustav Arén who is regularly referred to in more recent scholarly works on Ethiopia.⁵ Because Øyvind Eide is one of few scholars who have studied the growth of the EECMY thoroughly, I have relied heavily on his work in this study.⁶ As for the political aspect of Ethiopia, I found useful the work of scholars who have focused on both the current political situation, like Kjetil Tronvoll and Lovise Aalen, and scholars who have focused on the historical political context in Ethiopia, like Donald L. Donham.⁷ There are several scholars

³ Edward Ullendorff, *Ethiopian and the Bible* (London: Oxford University Press, 1968).; *The Ethiopians: An Introduction to Country and People*, 3rd edition ed. (London: Oxford University Press, 1973).; Roger W. Cowley, *Ethiopian Biblical Interpretation: A Study in Exegetical Tradition and Hermeneutics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).; Donald Crummey, "The Ethiopian Orthodox Tawahedo Church," *Cambridge History of Christianity: Eastern Christianity* (2006).

⁴ Hussein Ahmed, "Coexistence and/or Confrontation?: Towards a Reappraisal of Christian-Muslim Encounter in Contemporary Ethiopia," *Journal of Religion in Africa* 36, no. 1 (2006).

⁵ Gustav Arén, *Evangelical Pioneers in Ethiopia: Origins of the Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus* (Örebro: Libris, 1978).

⁶ Øyvind Eide, *Revolution and Religion in Ethiopia: The Growth and Persecution of the Mekane Yesus Church 1974-85* (Oxford: James Currey Ltd, 2000).

⁷ Kjetil Tronvoll Lovise Aalen, "The 2008 Ethiopian Local Elections: The Return of Electoral Authoritarianism," *African Affairs* 108, no. 430 (2009).; "The End of Democracy? Curtailing Political and Civil Rights in Ethiopia," *Review of African Political Economy* 36, no. 120 (2009).; Donald L. Donham and Wendy James, *The Southern Marches of Imperial Ethiopia: Essays in History and Social Anthropology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

writing about federalism in Ethiopia, and I found Kidane Mengisteab, Roza Ismagilova and Donald N. Levine to be very helpful.⁸ Scholars such as John Binns and Hamdesa Tusso have covered the topic of theological education, but they do not focus on theological education in connection to religious competition.⁹ Religious competition is covered in by other scholars in other contexts. I have found the work on religious minorities by scholars such as Daniel Olson and his theories concerning religious minorities and committed members, and the works of Roger Finke and Rodney Stark concerning religious competition, and Mark Chaves and David Cann's work on religion, pluralism and market structure, to be very interesting in connection to this study.¹⁰

1.3 The structure of this thesis

I want to start my thesis with a discussion of my methodological approach. I performed an intensive fieldwork with interviews in a foreign country I had never visited before. In this chapter I will include a discussion of my selection of informants and my question guide, and whether or not this facilitated for gathering the information I needed to answer my research topic and my hypothesis through my three questions.

In the third chapter I will present the historical background of the two churches in this study, the EOC and the EECMY. I will present the two churches through three different topics to highlight the differences between the churches: the establishment and growth of the two churches, the church structure and holy text and holy life. By portraying the characteristics and highlighting the differences between the two churches, I will open up for a better understanding of the competition. It is important to see how the EOC is a church that claims

⁸ Kidane Mengisteab, "Ethiopia's Ethinc-Based Federalism: 10 Years Later," *African Issues* 29, no. 1&2, Ethnicity and Recent Democratic Experiments in Africa (2001).; Rosa Ismagilova, "Ethnicity and Federalism: The Case of Ethiopia," *Africa: Rivista trimestrale di studi e documentazione dell'Istituto italiano per l'Africa e l'Oriente* 59, no. 2 (2004).; Donald N. Levine, *Wax and Gold. Tradition and Innovation in Ethiopian Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965).; "Ethiopia's Nationhood Reconsidered," *Análise Social* 46, no. 199 (2011).

⁹ John Binns, "Theological Education in the Ethiopian Orthodox Church," *Journal of Adult Theological Education* 2, no. 2 (2007).; Hamdesa Tusso, "Minority Education in Ethiopia," *Africa: Rivista trimestrale di studi e documentazione dell'Istituto italiano per l'Africa e l'Oriente* 37, no. 3 (1982).

¹⁰ Daniel V. A. Olson, "Why Do Smaller Religious Groups Have More Committed Members?," *Review of Religious Research* 49, no. 4 (2008).; Rodney Stark Roger Finke, "Religious Choice and Competition," *American Sociological Review* 63, no. 5 (1998).; *Acts of Faith: Explaining the Human Side of Religion* (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 2000).; David E. Cann Mark Chaves, "Regulation, Pluralism, and Religious Market Structure: Explaining Religion's Vitality," *Rationality and Society* 4, no. 3 (1992).

to be unchanged and constant throughout its history to fully understand the significance of what this study will examine: the possible enforced change within the EOC as a result of the growth of the EECMY.

In the fourth chapter I will discuss the federal state Ethiopia and the ethnic groups that are of importance to this study. In order to contextualize the conflict between the churches, it is necessary to have an understanding of the political history of the country and the relationship between the main ethnic groups in this study; the Amhara and the Oromo. Because of the position the Amhara have had in Ethiopia, it is important to examine their relationship with both the state and the EOC. This chapter will together with the previous chapter provide the necessary information to understand the influence of the Ethiopia society on the religious groups of this study.

In the fifth chapter I will make use of six topics that will structure the six sub chapters. Through these six sub chapters I will examine the topics one by one in order to examine my hypothesis. These sub chapters will correspond with my three research questions. It is useful to start with discussing the funding of the churches as this defines the conditions for several of the subsequent sub chapters. Following up, I will look at the theological education for the masses, as this is a topic that separates the churches both politically and historically. Even though this is an activity provided by the church, I will not include this in the sub chapter on church activity. I choose to do it this way because it became an important topic in several of my interviews and because the topic of theological education is an indication of change within the EOC. In the sub chapter on church activity, I will look closer at some of the different activities the two churches offer their members and how these activities might be seen as tactical in the competition between the churches. The topic of missionary activity is important in relation to the alleged tactical approach from the sub chapter on church activity. If church activities can be used tactically to attract more members it can be useful to look further into other missionary activities. In the sub chapter on missionary activity, I will look at what missionary tactics the two churches have and what missionary tactics they presume the other church has, as this does not always correlate. This topic is discussed in both this sub chapter and the subsequent sub chapter on conversion. In the sub chapter on conversion, I will also examine how *The Statistical Report* has influenced the EOC and perhaps acted as a triggering factor for the EOC to start viewing itself differently. I will end the chapter by looking at the

official church policy of the two churches and how this might have changed due to *The Statistical Report* and the topics discussed in all the previous sub chapters.

In the last chapter I will discuss my findings in my study. I will sum up and discuss my findings in all the chapters above, indicating how they have answered my three questions either in support of or in contrast to my hypothesis. I will form a conclusion based on the discussion of my findings. I will place my study in the current research field on Ethiopia and indicate future research based on my conclusion.

2 The interviews and methodological problems

I conducted my fieldtrip in Ethiopia from 15th of September to 20th of October 2012. I met a large number of people and they were very interested in talking about the situation in Ethiopia. For Ethiopia and Ethiopians, it was a difficult time after the loss of both the Prime Minister and the patriarch in August 2012. A lot of the people I met were therefore eager to talk about the political and religious situation in the country, and I quickly got a sense of an interesting and important research question that would be perfect for my thesis. After talking to several people about this, I decided to perform more in-depth interviews to look closer at the question of religious competition and the implications this could have for two of the churches I had gotten to know best in Ethiopia. I decided to use semi-structured interviews and a topic guide to structure my interviews and collect the data. In this chapter I will look further into the method I used, and the strengths and weaknesses I discovered in both my method and myself as a researcher.

2.1 My selection of informants

During my 5-week fieldwork I did ten in-depth interviews with fifteen different people in addition to the many casual conversations I had before, during and after these formal interviews. Two were group interviews and eight were with only one informant. Five of the interviews were taped, in the other interviews the informant was either reluctant to have the interview taped or we were in surroundings with so much noise that the tape was useless. Five of my informants were women and ten were men. Almost all of them had an education, many through the church they belonged to and some through public school. Four were pastor students who could only speak the most basic English; six were pastors with education from college or university and they all spoke very good English; one was a master student with excellent English; one was an educated journalist with excellent English; one was a regular member with a strong commitment to the church who spoke very little English; one was a

theology professor from England who had moved to Ethiopia; and one was a former Norwegian missionary who was now retired. They can be divided into two main groups: members of the EOC and members of the EECMY. Nine were members of the EECMY and ranged from regular churchgoers to pastors; four were EOC and ranged from regular members to high employees in the EOC theology college; one considered him/herself to be without a religious conviction, but came from an Orthodox family; and one was a Norwegian missionary from the Norwegian Lutheran church. I also had informal talks with Norwegian Ethiopians when I came back to Norway, none of which was recorded. They helped me understand more of the Ethiopian traditions and how some Ethiopians think about their country and how former traditions might clash with a more modern approach to religion and affiliation.

The interviews were conducted in the capitol Addis Ababa, and in Gimbi and Boji in western Ethiopia, and my informants came from very different backgrounds. Some were farmers and some were professors, some came from the city and some came from far out in the countryside. Their age range from 21 to 70 years old.

Many of the interviews held when I was in western Ethiopia, were conducted in a church compound, often in an office after having tea and biscuits in a common area. This probably influenced the interviews both positively and negatively. My informants were most likely more relaxed because they were in a familiar environment, as many of the interviews were held in the informants' office or a room they knew well. This was in a place where I was an outsider and they were insiders, they could tell me where to sit and where my microphone should be placed. It was a situation where they had more control than I had. The negative side to this was also the environment and the influence it had on the informer. Because we were in the church compound, the feeling of obligation towards the church could have been more prominent than it might have been on the outside. It most likely influenced what they felt comfortable answering and how critical they felt they could be towards the church. It is important to be aware of these influences that can limit the informant's answers both while interviewing and when listening and analyzing the interviews in retrospect. I had many informal talks while in the compound as well, often when sharing a meal, and these conversations were also very informative. The interviews I conducted when I was back in Addis Ababa were mostly held in public places like a restaurant or a hotel lobby. The

presence of the church was therefore less prominent, but of course still present, and I felt like my informants were open to argue both for and against the topics I raised. To think that the influence of the church's official policy was not there is naïve, but I did get a feeling of a more outspoken attitude from the informants who were interviewed outside church owned ground. This could also be attributed to the urban/rural setting, as many of the interviews conducted within a compound was in more rural towns and many of the interviews held outside church owned ground was in the bigger cities. All the formal, in-depth interviews lasted from 45 to 90 minutes and most of them were taped. The list of interviews can be found in the appendix, with a description of the context and surroundings.

The group of informants was not planned before I came to Ethiopia. My plan was to stay in Addis, but I got an opportunity to travel west and visit more remote villages and talk to people there. An informant I had met at the guesthouse where I lived in Addis Ababa, was traveling west in Ethiopia with two Norwegian journalists to visit churches in two villages and invited me to travel with them. This had a great impact on my research and is why I have more informants from the EECMY than the EOC. The trip went deep into the western part of Ethiopia, which is mainly an Evangelical Christian area. I met nine of my informants on this trip. The other six were people I met in Addis after my trip west. Because I travelled with the two journalists and the guide who was a former missionary from Norway, they were present in many of the informal talks I had with people while on the road. I will discuss the implications of a second interviewer later in this chapter.

My selection of informants is very much influenced by my trip west in Ethiopia and the people I met at the Norwegian Lutheran Mission's Guesthouse, where I lived when in Addis Ababa.¹¹ I owe a great deal to the people I met who introduced me to their friends and people they thought could be interesting for me to meet. It is through the network I built from the guesthouse that I got my informants. This has, of course, influenced my selection of informants. They are all educated, which can be seen in the fact that almost all of them spoke English; they are all in some way connected to the church, which was a criterion for the interviews; and they have all been in contact with Scandinavian missionaries, because it was

¹¹ The guesthouse was in an area called Kasanchis, close to the city center in Addis Ababa. I stayed in the guesthouse building in the compound, facing the church, by the side of the main office and the other guesthouse for the missionaries. There were almost only Norwegians staying at the guesthouse, many of whom were O.R. nurses who were a part of an exchange program.

through people staying at the guesthouse I found my informants. This makes for a very small group of people given that there are over 80 million people in the country, but given the circumstances (I travelled to Ethiopia without knowing anyone there) I could not have asked for a more varied group of informants. They are from different layers of society and from different hierarchical positions within both churches. Because I met them all through people I got to know at the guesthouse, one could argue that the selection is too narrow. On the other hand they are from many different places geographically, financially and hierarchically, and they cover a broader group of Ethiopians than I would have been able to find by myself in Addis. I have found that the data I am left with is both interesting and diverse, providing me with enough information to examine my research question from different angles.

I have chosen to keep my informants anonymous due to several reasons. All my informants are connected to the church, some more than others, and I don't want the more critical topics in this thesis to reflect back on them. Another reason is that some of them said they would like to help with answering questions as long as they could not be identified in the finished text, something I respect. I therefore chose to give all my informants fake names, but I kept their real gender, age and affiliation to the church.

2.2 My topic guide

The interviews I conducted were both semi structured and unstructured. I started with semi structured interviews and a question guide with too many questions. However, it only took two interviews and one unstructured talk before I had changed my question guide to question topics. I had three broad main topics with two to four subtopics under each, and one specific question at the end. I performed all of the other interviews with this topic guide. I also had some more unstructured talks with informants where I did not actively use the guide. These talks were not taped, but I wrote notes as we talked and I wrote down my thoughts about the meeting afterwards. Many of these unstructured talks were held during a meal or a coffee break, and often with more people present. Because of this, I got answers to questions I had not thought of asking and these conversations often turned out to be very informative. The full topic guide can be found in the appendix.

My question topics were specifically aimed at the informant's religious affiliation and his or her relationship to the other church, both personally and how he or she perceived their church's view of the other church. I also wanted to know what the informant thought about conversions, both from and to his/her own church. I asked very specifically about their view on the church policy on recruiting new members. This was often the trigger question. Whilst painting a rather friendly picture of their relationship to the other church, things often became more difficult when talking about how the other church recruited new members.

I think my topic guide worked well because by beginning with more fact-based questions about their relationship to their own church, the informants could talk about something familiar and safe. Moving on to the other church and personal feelings towards it, they could show how sympathetic they are to other church communities. This first session often lasted for twenty to thirty minutes. I also tried to bring up conversions during this time, for example by asking if any of their friends or relatives had converted from one church to the other. I asked about their view on church policy concerning recruiting new members. Because I had given them time to show how sympathetic they were to other church communities and religious institutions, it seemed like they were more open about how they felt about this subject. They first started talking about what they knew about recruitment to their own church, which is understandable. When I turned the question to the other church many started talking very openly about what they did not like about the other church's approach to recruitment of members. Many had experienced episodes where they had been exposed to recruiters, and they were very eager to share these experiences. After some time talking about this I asked them to comment on a statement I had heard one of my first days in Addis: "There are almost no conversion from the Protestant church to the Orthodox church, just the other way around." Because the statement came from someone I had met in Addis who was not an Ethiopian, most of my informants took their time commenting on the statement, arguing back and forth on how this could be true or false. This proved to be a good ending to most of the interviews.

2.3 Language barrier

The language barrier was a problem. Most of my informants spoke English, but their language skills varied a lot. Interviewing someone using a second language is difficult, both for me as an interviewer and for them as informants. I consider my English to be good, but this does not mean the informants understood everything I said. Most of them were very attentive and asked when they did not understand, but some answers did not match the question. This could be because they either misunderstood my question, or because they did not want to answer it. The reasons for this can be many and varied, something I will reflect more upon in my analysis chapter. I also found myself using a too academic language at times, partly because I wanted to be taken seriously and partly because it is the way I am trained to talk through my university degree. This was in some cases the reason why misunderstandings occurred. I became aware of this at an early point and tried to phrase myself in a more understandable manner throughout my stay.

In some cases where my informants did not speak English, or they wanted help to express themselves, we had someone step in as a translator. I only had two real interviews with a translator. Having a translator affected the conversation as the translator often was an active part of the interview and had opinions about the subjects we talked about. Having a translator was only necessary in two of the interviews, but in both cases the translator answered some of the question first before translating them to my actual informant. I can assume that much got lost in the translation, but it was useful for me as I got the translators opinion. Other situations where a translator was needed was during dinners or other meals and gatherings where there were people with poor language skills who wanted to be a part of the discussion about their church's relationship to other churches. In these situations, having a translator helped a lot, as the conversation was between several of the people around the table and I would have been completely lost without someone translating for me when the language changed into Oromo or Amharic.

2.4 The intervention of a second interviewer

Because many of the interviews were conducted while on the road with three other people, many of the conversations were held between me, the informant and one or more of the people I travelled with. This had its positive and negative sides.

The positive side to this was the many questions that were asked that I would not have thought of myself. The journalists and the missionary had a different way of looking at things, and this resulted in a lot of interesting conversations. Because their education differed so much from mine, we asked very different questions and saw things from very different perspectives. I got information I would not have gotten if it had not been for their questions.

The negative side was that I could not control the conversation as much as I wanted to. There were times when I wanted to go deeper into a topic, but the rest of the group wanted to ask about something else. But because I often had the chance to interview the person we were talking to alone at a later point, I let the conversation drift where the other people wanted it to drift, and learned a lot by doing so. I also had an easier point of entry when starting the interview because of our previous conversations. I think the informants were even more relaxed with me after having one of these group conversations, and therefore answered more truthfully to my questions, as I was no longer a total stranger.

2.5 Clothing codes

I chose to cover and wear respectable clothes, much similar to what I would wear in Norway. Dark, long jeans or other dark pants, a dark tunic that covered my shoulders and had a loose fit, a dark jacket to cover my arms and black shoes. I also always had a scarf with me so that I could cover my head if we were to enter an Orthodox church. I got a good feedback on my choice of clothes from both people who helped me get in touch with informers and from some of the informers themselves. Being conscious of what you wear and what signals that might give is important, especially when conducting interviews in a foreign country. I found that a general rule of loose fitted clothes in a neutral color was a good starting point. My clothes

could be worn when meeting both people working in the field in Boji and in more official settings in offices and church buildings.

2.6 Triangulation

Triangulation is using other data about your informants or themes in addition to the information gathered during the research period.¹² It allows you to look at your material from a different view, showing weaknesses and strengths in your collected data. To affirm information from informers it can be useful to check statistics or articles written about the same topic and search for both similarities and differences in order to get a broader understanding for the analysis.

My informants are my primary source in this thesis, but I have also checked the information I got from them up against other sources. I have as secondary sources *The Statistical Report* by the Population Census Commission in Ethiopia from both 1994 and 2007¹³, and articles written about the different topics my informants talked about. With this I can double check statistical data and other information given to me by my informants.

To sum up: over the course of five weeks in Ethiopia I conducted ten interviews and even more casual conversations about Ethiopia and its religion with people I met in both formal and informal situations. I went to three different towns, from the capital with 2.7 million people to a village with only 9,112 inhabitants. This gave me a variety of informants and my thesis benefitted greatly from it.

¹² Tilde Rosmer, "Bedre Føre Var ... Om Det Å Forberede Seg Til Feltarbeid," in *Kulturvitenskap I Felt, Metodiske Og Pedagogiske Erfaringer*, ed. Anders Gustavsson (Kristiansand: Høyskoleforlaget, 2005). p. 60.

¹³ "Summary and Statistical Report of the 2007 Population and Housing Census: Population Size by Age and Sex."

Part two:

The historical, political and social context

3 A historical background for the two churches.

3.1 The Ethiopian Orthodox Church

3.1.1 Establishment and growth of the church

The Ethiopian Orthodox Church, the EOC, is the oldest Christian church in Ethiopia. According to Orthodox priests, this church dates back about 2000 years.¹⁴ Its lineage can be traced back to Philip the Evangelist, who is recorded to have baptized an Ethiopian in the *Acts of the Apostles* in the Bible¹⁵, and it is therefore claimed by the Ethiopian Orthodox priests to be the most authentic Christian church. According to historic events, we can assume that Orthodox Christianity came to Ethiopia through the conversion of the Aksumite king Ezana in 330.¹⁶ The church expanded from the 12th and 13th century when an Amhara lord called Yekunno-Amlak overthrew the current emperor, creating what is known today as the *Solomonic* dynasty, allegedly tracing its lineage back to the son of King Solomon and the Queen of Saba.

The EOC was a part of the Egyptian Coptic Orthodox Church under the patriarch of Alexandria's rule until 1948 when they broke with the Coptic Church. However, they did not have a Patriarch to rule the EOC until 1959 when the patriarch of Alexandria appointed the first Ethiopian patriarch: Patriarch Basilios.¹⁷ This was the beginning of the separate and autonomous EOC, now coming to full bloom.

¹⁴ The EOC believes that Christianity came to Ethiopia at the beginning of our common era, which is evident through the belief that pieces of the cross were found in Ethiopia.

¹⁵ *The Holy Bible: 1611 Edition: King James Version*, (Peabody, Mass. : Hendrickson, 2010). Acts 8:26-40.

¹⁶ Bahru Zewde, *A History of Modern Ethiopia 1855-1991*, Second ed. (Oxford: James Currey, 2002). p. 8.

¹⁷ Eide, *Revolution and Religion in Ethiopia*. p. 34.

Up until 1974, the church had a strong bond with the monarchy, but this was broken with the revolution. The church and the monarchy were until this moment dependent upon each other both politically and ideologically. “The Patriarch, through the theology and traditions of the EOC, gave credibility to the imperial myth of an emperor being almost divine [...] the emperor gave the patriarch position and power.”¹⁸ Patriarch Tewoflos phrased it like this in 1969: “There is no state without the church and there is no church without the state. In Ethiopia church and state are one and the same.”¹⁹ The church had extensive power on the government level, influencing legislations and decisions to their advantage. Because the EOC was the state church for such a long time, it has inevitably developed deep connections both within the state and with the people. For many, it was the shield from other conquering forces trying to get access to the land. For others again, the EOC became the symbol of the Amharic race, and they welcomed other religious groups that were opposed to it as a rebellion against the leading ethnic group.

The EOC started already in the 1st century with translating the Bible and educating their clergy, and started seeing itself, in competition with African traditional religions, as “the great spiritual fortress” which could withstand both the attacks of other religions and the trials of foreign missionaries. The EOC had for a long time feared that non-orthodox Ethiopians would be disloyal citizens, they believed that no other church should exist. With the rise of the Evangelical churches, many Orthodox Christians resisted the activities of the missionaries, thinking they were up to no good, like the Italians during the Fascist occupation.²⁰ It became important to protect the Ethiopian legacy and the traditions the church stood for against the foreign influences. This strong tie between the church and its adherents can be seen in the Ethiopian Diaspora today as well, as they are very well attuned to ecclesiastical affairs in the homeland, which Levine states is an example of how unusually closely linked Ethiopian Orthodoxy is to the home nation-state.²¹

¹⁸ Ibid. p. 32.

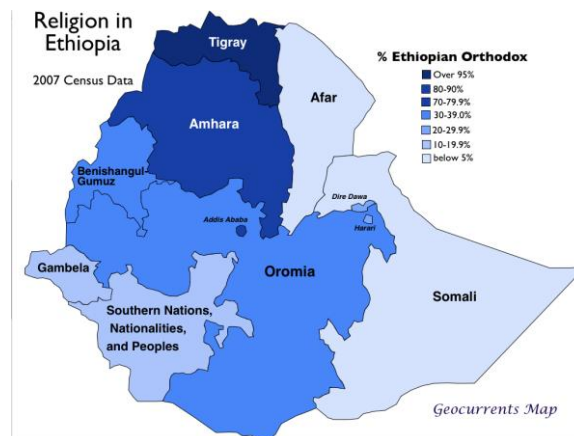
¹⁹ Ibid. p. 32.

²⁰ Ibid. p. 35.

²¹ Levine, "Ethiopia's Nationhood Reconsidered." p. 320-321.

For many of the minorities, the EOC was synonymous with the Amharic people, the second biggest ethnic group in Ethiopia today. The EOC also became a landowner after 1890 because the Amhara governors put the EOC in a favored position.²² They were now in a position to collect taxes and had become a part of the power structure, even further connecting the church to an ethnic and political group.

According to *The Statistical Report* from 2007, the EOC had over 32 million members in 2007. There are a higher percentage of EOC members in the northern and western parts of Ethiopia, as shown in this map²³:



3.1.2 Church structure

The EOC is based on hierarchical principles. Everyone has to start with the theological education and work their way up the hierarchy from there. Different educational accomplishments result in different positions in the hierarchy. I will explain the theological education further in the sub chapter on theological education in chapter 5.

The EOC is divided into three levels of hierarchy. These levels are episcopate, which consists of the patriarch, the archbishops and the bishops; the presbyterate, which consist of the priests and the elderly; and the diaconate, which consist of archdeacons and deacons. The three levels are connected through the activities of the church and one can advance from one level to the

²² Eide, *Revolution and Religion in Ethiopia*. p. 46.

²³ This map is from an Internet page that is not subject to copyright. Martin W. Lewis, "Religious Change and Tension in Ethiopia," www.geocurrents.info/cultural-geography/religion-change-and-tension-in-ethiopia. Accessed 08.11.13.

next if the education and conditions are right. The laypeople are not directly involved in the church service, but can contribute by singing in the church choir.

There has recently been a development in the structure as the EOC has initiated an annual national meeting. This national meeting is held in connection with meetings arranged in all the different regions in the country, facilitating for an improved communication between the church and the congregations.

3.1.3 Holy text and holy life

The EOC has, in addition to the Bible, a text called *Kebra Nagast*, which is a text linking the Ethiopian land and people directly to the lineage of King Solomon. This text is unique to the EOC. *Kebra Nagast* means The Glory of Kings and was written in Ge'ez by anonymous writers. It has been dated back to about 500 A.D. because the biblical verses that are quoted in the *Kebra Nagast* are identical to the 6th century Ethiopian translation of the Bible.²⁴

According to the *Kebra Nagast*, King Solomon and the Queen of Saba had a child together, David, and he became the first king of Ethiopia. According to *Kebra Nagast*, David is the one who brings the Ark of Zion to Ethiopia.²⁵ With the text *Kebra Nagast*, the Ethiopian Christians started seeing themselves as the new Chosen People of God, inheriting the place of Israel.²⁶ The Ethiopian monarchs became descendants of King David of Israel and the clergy became the Levites of the new Israel.

The *Kebra Nagast* is still used in Ge'ez in Ethiopia, but has been partially translated by western scholars since the 14th century. The entire text was not published in Europe until 1905 and the English version was not translated until 1922. This is not, however, used in the EOC. The EOC translated the Bible to Ge'ez and to this day recitations are still done in Ge'ez, a language no one speaks anymore. Ge'ez was the unifying factor for the churches and

²⁴ Rolf Furuli, *Kebra Nagast: Ethiopiernes Hellige Bok* (Oslo: Bokklubben, 2008). p. XII.

²⁵ Levine, "Ethiopia's Nationhood Reconsidered." p. 314.

²⁶ Eide, *Revolution and Religion in Ethiopia*. p. 31.

monasteries in Ethiopia, and the liturgy was also written in Ge'ez.²⁷ It is only recently that the EOC has translated parts of the liturgy to Amharic.

The EOC has a rich tradition of rituals, iconography, saints and holy artifacts. However, my informants did not stress this point when talking about the EOC, so I don't have as much material on this subject as I have about the EECMY. I will, however, get back to this more thoroughly in the chapter on competition, when I talk about the activities of the churches.

3.2 The Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus

3.2.1 The establishment and growth of the church

The Evangelical movement came with missionaries in the 19th century and has a significantly shorter history in Ethiopia than the EOC. The Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus, the EECMY, was founded in 1959, but was not allowed its current name until 1978. The EECMY grew from twenty thousand members in 1959 to over two million members in 1998.²⁸ This is a tremendous growth in a very short amount of time, being referred to by Eide as one of the fastest growing churches in Africa.

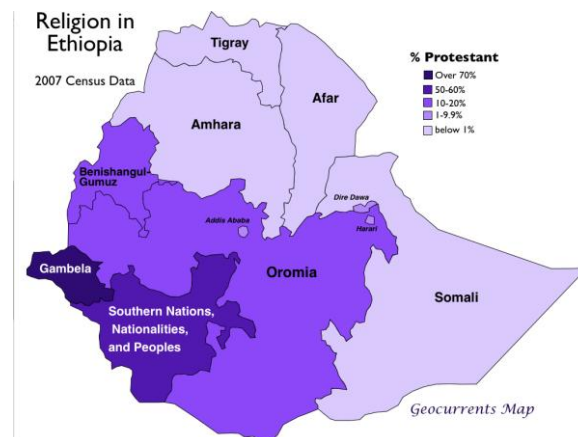
The EECMY identified itself with the people in the rural areas, which it has gained much from. Separating itself from the EOC geographically means separating itself from the ruling elite, the Amhara, and from the urban and educated masses. The EECMY was for many the church for the minorities. The church grew in the rural population and became popular with the minority groups living outside the big cities.

²⁷ Levine, "Ethiopia's Nationhood Reconsidered." p. 315.

²⁸ Eide, *Revolution and Religion in Ethiopia*. p. 2.

In the western part of Ethiopia, the EECMY provided education and an introduction to democratic practices. Some of the previously subjugated ethnic groups started feeling proud of their cultural identity and a sense of worth. This is characteristic for the Evangelical churches. According to Eide we can follow the people's ability to read by following the development of the Evangelical Christianity in the western parts of Ethiopia.²⁹ Wherever there is an evangelical church, there is a school. The Evangelical Church was responsible for the translation of Bible into several vernacular languages, making it easier for the people to read and understand more of their faith.³⁰

According to *The Statistical Report* from 2007, the Protestants, with the EECMY as the biggest church, had over 13 million members in 2007. There are a higher percentage of Protestants in the western and southern parts of Ethiopia, as shown in this map³¹:



3.2.2 Church structure

The EECMY is built on democratic principles. All levels from the bottom to the top; leaders and councils are all elected, and they all have to stand for a new election if they want to prolong their time in office.³²

²⁹ Ibid. p. 51.

³⁰ Ibid. p. 12.

³¹ This map is from an Internet page that is not subject to copyright. Lewis, "Religious Change and Tension in Ethiopia". Accessed 08.11.13.

³² Eide, *Revolution and Religion in Ethiopia*. p. 83.

The General Office is the coordinating and administrative organ, coordinating all the different activities on both a national and an international level. Under the General Office, we find the office of the president, the general secretary and the associate general secretary, human resource department, legal services and other departments. The departments are mainly working on the different projects the EECMY administer, as the EECMY are deeply involved with issues such as development and gender equality.

The EECMY's congregations are organized into congregation, parishes and synods. The neighboring congregations are gathered at parish level, who again gather at synod level. There are twenty-three synods in total, which are all self-governing entities. All congregations have an elder council. Every so often, the elder councils from the nearby towns gather in the parishes and discuss pressing issues. From the parish, a group of representatives go to the meetings at the synod level, and from every synod representatives are sent to the meetings at national level. They all bring information back to the level they were sent from, and in this way issues are raised and discussed through the church structure, and brought back to the congregations with answers and new guiding principles.

The congregations are organized with evangelists, pastors and an elder council. The elder council is the head of each congregation, the pastors are in charge of the liturgical part of the sermons and the evangelists are responsible for the rest of the sermon. The evangelists often preach almost twice as often as the pastors and have a big influence on the congregation. Because the education of evangelists is only a one-year course, some academics think they are more inclined to include ideas and concepts from the traditional culture in their speeches.³³

The laypeople are involved in the church sermons through choirs and actively engaging with the evangelists and pastors throughout the sermon through dancing and praising. They can assist in the different activities the church arranges and help collect food and clothes for sharing with those less fortunate after the sermon is over.

³³ Ibid. p. 81.

3.2.3 Holy text and holy life

The EECMY is grounded in the Lutheran faith and the basis for the doctrinal teaching is the Bible and Luther's *Small Catechism*. The EECMY have a firm belief that faith alone makes a person justified before God and the Bible is the Word of God. They place much emphasis on the Bible as the center of their faith and have no equivalent to the EOC's *Kebra Nagast*.

The EECMY have a policy of serving the whole person and is involved in development and social service projects through almost all of their churches. They focus on prayers, but also on the physical and spiritual development of their members. They say on their webpage that because they are a church that started in the rural areas of Ethiopia, it is in the nature of the church to focus on the spiritual and physical well being of their members.³⁴ They run an impressive 38 social institutions, including hostels, day care centers, and orphan homes.

³⁴ EECMY, "Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus," www.eecmy.org.

4 Federalism and ethnicity, majority and minority

4.1 Ethnic identity

When studying Ethiopia, it is important to have an understanding of what identity and ethnicity means to Ethiopians, and how it has changed throughout history. In the context of Ethiopia, ethnic identity is an important term used today to separate the different groups being discussed from each other. Fredric Barth defines ethnic identity through four points which says that the group:

1. Is largely biologically self-perpetuating
2. Shares fundamental cultural values, realized in overt unity in cultural forms
3. Makes up a field of communication and interaction
4. Has a membership which identifies itself, and is identified by others, as constituting a category distinguishable from other categories of the same order³⁵

This definition of ethnic identity is applicable to the Ethiopian context as most of the ethnic groups have their own language and cultural traditions, separating them from each other. There are about 80 different ethnic groups and 90 different languages in Ethiopia. The two biggest ones are the focus of this thesis, namely the Oromo people who speak Oromo and the Amhara people who speak Amharic. The Amhara are 23.3% of the population according to the Population and Housing Census of 2007, and the Oromo are a total of 37.7% making it the majority ethnic group.³⁶

When looking at Ethiopia's history, many scholars begin with the importance of ethnicity and how it has affected both the state and the churches. When writing about either the state or the churches, it is important to look at the relation the state and the churches have with the different ethnic groups in Ethiopia, especially with the Amhara. Donald N. Levine states in

³⁵ Fredrik Barth, *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries* (Oslo: Universitets Forlaget, 1970). p. 10-11.

³⁶ "Summary and Statistical Report of the 2007 Population and Housing Census: Population Size by Age and Sex." p. 13

his book from 1965 that: “[...] any serious account of contemporary Ethiopia must begin with the fact of Amhara dominance.”³⁷

The Amhara came to not only dominate, but also define Ethiopia to the extent that Amhara became the national identity in an attempt to unite Ethiopia under one nationality, which also resulted in Amhara becoming the official language missionaries had to learn as a general language of instruction before they could start working in Ethiopia. The national identity became important to Haile Selassie I, who once said, “Claiming to be Ethiopian without a thorough knowledge of Amharic is tantamount to having no country and to not knowing one’s parents.”³⁸ To define the concept of nation and nationality has been the privilege of one group, the Amhara, because of their fortunate position in Ethiopia, which was based on the myths and traditions of the EOC.³⁹ The strengthening of the Amhara identity made it necessary for other ethnic groups to create an identity in opposition to the Amhara. Eide writes about how the Oromo became aware of their own identity through contact with the Amhara and the growth of the Amhara elite identity. In reaction to the dominant, foreign and religiously connected ethnic identity, the Oromo started looking at their own identity. Through the introduction of the evangelical church by the missionaries, the Oromo were provided with general reading and writing skills, which helped them develop a deeper understanding of their own identity and traditions. The meaning of being Oromo became something in opposition to being Amhara and in opposition to being Orthodox Christian.

4.1.1 Defining Amhara

The Amhara were both an ethnic group based in the north of today’s Ethiopia and part of a ruling elite in the former Abyssinian empire. Their authority did not change much before the empire fell in 1974, at which point much of their legitimacy disappeared when the emperor, who had confirmed their claim to power through both himself and the EOC, was toppled and the military regime of *the Derg*⁴⁰ came to power. Before this, the Amhara were identified by

³⁷ Levine, *Wax and Gold. Tradition and Innovation in Ethiopian Culture*. p. 2.

³⁸ Eide, *Revolution and Religion in Ethiopia*. p. 19.

³⁹ *Ibid.* p. 87.

⁴⁰ *The Derg* was the military regime that ruled Ethiopia from 1974, when they overthrew the imperial regime, to 1991, when the transitional government came into place.

religion, language, geography and dominance, particularly in relation to the EOC. Donald Donham claims that: “[...] Amhara were first of all Orthodox Christians and secondly they spoke Amharic.”⁴¹ There is no doubt that many scholars agree on the dominance of the Amhara and their affiliation with the two power structures in Ethiopia. This greatly affected other ethnic groups and their perception of the EOC, and more importantly their perception of themselves as something different than the Amhara and the EOC, subsequently opening up for other churches like the EECMY.

4.1.2 Defining Oromo

Oromo people are found mainly in the east, south and west parts of Ethiopia, giving the name to the biggest state in Ethiopia: Oromia. The Oromo settled in what is now the western Ethiopia in the 17th century, quickly assimilating with the indigenous people and taking over the area.⁴² They were the superior ethnic group until the expansion of Ethiopia in the 19th century. Because of the expansion, the Oromo were under the rule of the empire and the emperor Menelik II, who did not care for powerful ethnic groups who might stand up against him. Under his rule, the Oromo were subjugated to violence and suppression. Their position in society did not change much until after the introduction of a more democratic rule in 1991. In recent years, the Oromo have formed several ethnic identity based political parties, with one being a part of the ruling coalition today. They are a minority in the coalition and are considered to be elite-friendly, unlike many other Oromo parties.

The Oromo language belongs to a family of languages found mainly in Ethiopia called eastern Cushitic. The Oromo language holds many dialects and is considered to be one of the six most important languages in Africa today.⁴³ “The Oromo are one of the most numerous peoples in Africa, and by far the largest ethnic group in Ethiopia. The people are made up of tribes, sub-tribes, clans and lineages.”⁴⁴

⁴¹ Donham and James, *The Southern Marches of Imperial Ethiopia: Essays in History and Social Anthropology*. p. 12.

⁴² Eide, *Revolution and Religion in Ethiopia*. p. 40.

⁴³ Ibid. p. 43.

⁴⁴ Ibid. p. 43.

4.2 Ethiopia and federalism

Federalism is a governing system in which each region in the country has the constitutional right to govern independently from the central governing authority. Each region has to report to the central governing authority and follow the constitutional law, but they can make decisions on their own without consulting the central governing authority.

In this way a country like Ethiopia, with a multitude of ethnicities living roughly in the same geographical areas, can still function because these ethnic groups can govern themselves without a constant interference from the central governing authority, which in the case of Ethiopia represents a specific ethnic group. I will come back to this later in this chapter.

In the specific example of Ethiopia, the ethnic groups can keep many of their traditions and avoid conflicts, which can occur when different cultural traditions clash. At least, this was the idea. As it turns out, the attempt to resolve the conflicts did not work. Kidane Mengisteab writes about how Ethiopia, after implementing a federal arrangement in 1991, is still mired in ethnic strife.⁴⁵ It was after the military regime had taken over in 1974 that the idea of a federal governing system was introduced as a more ideal governing system, given the country's complex composition. The lords of the old areas had been in conflict with the new areas since the 19th century, taking the newly incorporated Ethiopians as slaves, looting and stealing their land, marking their superiority to the southern parts of Ethiopia.⁴⁶ Giving the areas in the south some supremacy was seen as a way to overcome the gloom history they shared, and could be the start of a healing process that could unite the country. This is why the regional lines were drawn along the ethnic lines, as an attempt to resolve the ethnic conflicts, and many of the regions have been named after the most dominant ethnic group residing there; the Oromo people reside mainly in Oromia, the Amhara people reside in Amhara, and the Tigray people reside in the Tigray region and so on.⁴⁷ Of course, it is not as simple as this. People of different ethnicities do not live in a specific area, so the ethnic lines drawn also created minorities within a region because they happened to be on the wrong side of the line. This

⁴⁵ Mengisteab, "Ethiopia's Ethnic-Based Federalism: 10 Years Later." p 20.

⁴⁶ Ibid. p 21.

⁴⁷ Map with the regional lines can be found in Appendix 3.

also meant that small villages that used to be close to an Oromo-dominated area could suddenly be in the Amhara region or the Afar region. They were suddenly expected to abide laws and customs they were not familiar with. The attempt was to prevent ethnic conflict, but drawing lines based on ethnicity is, if at all possible, very difficult. Because there are so many ethnicities and languages, and only nine regions, there is a chance of complications.

The region of Oromia covers a large portion of Ethiopia and is the biggest region in both size and population, inhabited by over 27 million people. What are the chances that all 27 million of these people are Oromo? The area stretches from the border to Sudan in the west to the border to Kenya in the south, almost reaching the border to Somalia in the east. According to the National Housing Statistics, 87% of the people in Oromia are Oromo, making it to a great extent an ethnically homogenous region.⁴⁸ But behind the percentage there are big numbers hiding. If there are 27 million people living in Oromia, it means that 87% stands for 23.490.000 people, which leaves over 3.510.000 people who belong to other ethnicities. This does not, however, take into account mixed marriages and children who are a result of this. In Ethiopia, your ethnicity is based on your father's ethnicity, so even if your mother is Amhara and you are raised in an Amhara tradition, you will be seen as Oromo because your father is Oromo. This is not a system designed to the current situation of mixed families, which is the reality in many Ethiopian families today. So out of those 87%, how many have an Oromo father and a mother with another ethnicity? Given the fact that there are over 3.5 million people with other ethnicities, one can assume that some of these people are married and have children with Oromo men, subsequently having children with a double ethnic background who are registered as Oromo only, giving way for a distorted factual picture.

Now, one can ask how this affects the federal state?

1. The way I see it, this can legitimize the federal system and confirm the regional lines, making the governing system seem better fitted to the situation of the country than might actually be the case.

⁴⁸ "Summary and Statistical Report of the 2007 Population and Housing Census: Population Size by Age and Sex." p. 93.

2. On the other hand, it can fuel the conflict by undermining the people and their heritage, giving people an identity they don't recognize or associate with and in that way showing once again that the governing policy trumps the needs of the people.

The first point above has a more international and political aspect; having numbers to back up a functioning governing system is important if one is to be taken seriously in the international society. Having a federal system that works because it gives people more freedom and room to be themselves is the sign of a good governing system. The goal of the federal system in Ethiopia was to silence the cry for emancipation from the ethnic groups who felt violated by the state.⁴⁹

Under the military regime (1974-1991), many of the southern farmers who had been dispossessed got their land back in what might be called a radical land reform.⁵⁰ The imperial regime had during its expansion displaced many farmers who were now getting back what was rightfully theirs. The gesture, however, did not match the system already in place. The federal system and the ethnical hierarchy did not favour the ethnicities indigenous to the southern parts. It was under the TGE (Transitional Government of Ethiopia) that the federal arrangement was further developed, giving each region more autonomy than first given to each region in the transition to a federal state. During the military regime, the power of each region was minimal; there was still a powerful central government and the regions had little or no control over themselves, the arrangement was to a great extent superficial and constructed to silence the critical voices.

The second point is connected to the reality most people live in. Because different ethnicities are forced to live together, conflicts occur between them that is based on differences in tradition and religion. Basing regional lines on ethnicity undermines the diversity of the country, undermining the reality that there are always several different ethnicities in the same place. The situation is different in the bigger cities as urbanisation and ethnic diversity go hand in hand and is harder to compare to the situation in the more rural areas. The regional

⁴⁹ Mengisteab, "Ethiopia's Ethinc-Based Federalism: 10 Years Later." p. 24.

⁵⁰ Ibid. p. 21.

lines are forcing smaller towns to live under the same regional law that often favours one ethnic tradition over the others, even though they have lived peacefully side-by-side for years without interfering with each other. Regional lines are to some extent fuelling the conflict by undermining the people and their heritage, giving people an identity they don't recognize or associate with and in that way showing once again that the governing policy trumps the needs of the people.

The ethnic minorities are now forced to identify with the majority ethnic group, and the regions can be quite big encompassing many ethnic groups who vary in size due to where in the region they live. There might even be areas within one region where the minority group can be in majority. These places can have difficulty adjusting themselves to the ruling of another ethnic group.

I previously stated that the central governing authority represented a specific ethnic group. This is not only a red thread in most of the literature I have found on Ethiopia and its history; it was also an important backdrop for most of my interviews and conversations in Ethiopia. Many of my informants felt the need to inform me of the Ethiopian ethnical history, especially the people I met in Oromia i.e. in the west. It is written quite plainly in Eide's book from 2000; "Until the revolution of 1974 two basic institutions of Ethiopian society constituted this core group or centre. They were the ruling Amhara elite, embodied in the office of the emperor, and the EOC embodied in the office of the patriarch."⁵¹ There are a number of scholars who agree on the use of the term Amhara as a religious term as well as a term identifiable with dominance.⁵² The Amhara were Ethiopian Orthodox, spoke Amharic and were associated with positions of power. Although this changed slightly during the reign of Haile Selassie I, with an exclusion of people living in rural Amhara areas and an inclusion of people with similar interests as the elite although from other areas, the term still has an ethnic and elitist meaning in Ethiopia today.

⁵¹ Eide, *Revolution and Religion in Ethiopia*. p. 15.

⁵² *Ibid.* p. 16.

Having one ethnic group so closely linked to the ruling elite and the Ethiopian Orthodox Church is problematic. It can be viewed as one of the main reasons why there is so much conflict and violence between the different ethnic groups. As shown in the annual report on religious freedom from the U.S. Department of State, the EOC is linked to the Amhara region and is subject to positive discrimination from the government, leaving it without the responsibility to register itself as a religious organization unlike all other religious groups that have to register and reregister every three years to obtain the same rights as the EOC.⁵³ To further understand the Amhara and their position in society, I want to look at the EOC and its relationship to the state.

4.3 The Ethiopian Orthodox Church and the state

The EOC has a long history in Ethiopia, and its roots are deeply imbedded in the Ethiopian ground and soul, as I have shown in the previous chapter. As stated by Donald Levine in his book from 1965, if you attempt to look at contemporary Ethiopia you need to include the Amhara and their dominance.⁵⁴ Amhara did not only become the national identity through Haile Selassie I's attempt to create a national identity for the newly expanded Ethiopia in 1933⁵⁵, it also became the identity of the EOC through an adaption of the language. In his declaration, Haile Selassie I stated that using other languages than Amharinya is to oppose the unity of Ethiopia. The *Kebra Nagast* also talks about how the church and the state are one entity with no separation of what is religious and what is secular.⁵⁶

One difficulty for the Amhara with being in this position is the balance between politics and religion. A religious group being so connected to the political and governing organ of the country helps build walls around the elite and shut out the other ethnic groups. The Amharas position as "chosen" can be linked to their rule in the Abyssinian empire, an empire that

⁵³ "International Religious Freedom Report 2010," ed. U.S. Department of State (Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, 2010). p. 1.

⁵⁴ Levine, *Wax and Gold. Tradition and Innovation in Ethiopian Culture*. p. 2.

⁵⁵ Eide, *Revolution and Religion in Ethiopia*. p. 63.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.* p. 21.

encompasses two of the three biggest ethnic groups in today's Ethiopia, namely the Amhara and the Tigray. Both groups, which have climbed into position in Ethiopia today, are from the north of Ethiopia and have ties to the old Abyssinian empire, and it can be argued that their current rule is in some way connected to the old empire and the connections between the two ethnic groups. The Amhara rule became contested by not only the Oromo and other ethnic minorities, but also by the Derg when they forcefully toppled Haile Selassie I and his empire in 1974 and ended the Amhara stronghold legitimized by the emperor. It was through this coup that the close bond between the state and church was severed, leaving the church outside of ruling state power for the first time in centuries.⁵⁷

The Derg regime was a military regime with little consideration for religious institutions. Between 1974 and 1991, religious activities were more modest due to the restriction the Derg imposed on all religious communities. This struck the EECMY especially hard and several churches were closed during the military regime.⁵⁸ The Derg regime was ended in 1991 by the EPRDF (Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front), made up by the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), the Ethiopian People's Democratic Movement (EPDM) and the Oromo People's Democratic Organization (OPDO). This was the coalition that led the transitional government of Ethiopia (TGE).⁵⁹ The EPRDF won a majority in the local elections in 1992, which caused other political parties to withdraw from the coalition government in protest of what they said had been an unfair election with harassment of non-EPRDF candidates. They also won in the 1995 elections, giving them a monopoly on political power.⁶⁰ As time passed, the EPRDF became more Tigray friendly, losing many of their Oromo members and supporters. The Oromo nationalists who fought for freedom and autonomy did not see the EPRDF as a real change from the imperial rule, as they both were old Abyssinian ethnic groups from the north who were in opposition to any real autonomy for other ethnic groups.⁶¹

⁵⁷ Ibid. p. 144.

⁵⁸ Ibid. p. 188.

⁵⁹ Mengisteab, "Ethiopia's Ethnic-Based Federalism: 10 Years Later." p. 21.

⁶⁰ Ibid. p. 22, p. 23.

⁶¹ Ibid. p. 22.

The EOC and the state were very close until the fall of the suppressive imperial rule in 1974. The patriarch had a direct line to the emperor and the two backed each other in important matters. As the two power institution worked together, they could reap of each other's surplus. One example is when the land was to be redistributed after 1890 under the rule of Menelik II; the EOC got landownership because the Amhara were distributing the land.⁶²

The church and the state have relied upon each other and have confirmed each other's status as leading institutions. By focusing on one particular ethnicity, they have made one ethnic group, the Amhara, the leading ethnic group. In order to join the elite in either the church or the state, one would have to join the ethnicity; one would have to *become* an Amhara. This has lead the way to a country divided into ethnicities, giving more prestige and power to some ethnic identities and consequentially creating a subgroup in society. A group one only can break out of by breaking out of ones family and ethnicity to become an Amhara. I have, however, not found any evidence of people changing ethnicity *from* Amhara to another ethnic group, neither have I found evidence of people changing between other ethnicities. It would seem like the only allowed change to make is *to* Amhara.

The ethnic groups are to some extent divided by geography, language and position in society. Your ethnicity can, to a certain degree, decide what you can do and how far you can advance. This is based on the ruling elite in the state which at all time has been associated with the former Abyssinian elite, but even more important, the ruling elite in the Church. The Ethiopian Orthodox Church has for a long time favoured some ethnic groups over others, creating a leading group and a leading language that the church has been associated with.

⁶² Eide, *Revolution and Religion in Ethiopia*. p. 46.

Part three:

The competition between the churches

5 Competition between the two churches

Religious communities have existed side by side in Ethiopia for a long time. Evangelical churches have dominated the west and the Ethiopian Orthodox Church has dominated the northern and central parts of Ethiopia. The majority of the Christian community has been related to the EOC, as this for a long time has been the national church with strong connections to the state. However, the growth of the Evangelical churches like the EECMY has challenged the EOC's position.

There has always been a degree of competition between the religious communities even though they have coexisted for some time in Ethiopia. What is new is how this competition influences the religious communities. The Internet makes the world more accessible and it has become every religious group's stage. With the growing globalization, there has been an awakening in the religious communities as to what they are and who their followers are. To reach out to more potential members, many religious groups have begun a strategic marketing campaign using the new technology available on the market today. They have become products in a bigger consumer-product market. All of a sudden, what the consumer wants should be reflected in what the church can offer. Some of the power has shifted from the religious leaders to the members, making the members more involved in processes of decision and change. Even though they are still at the bottom of the hierarchy, the members have a growing power, forcing the church to become more aware of the members' needs and wants.

When looking at religious competition, I would like to add that the concept of competition is not easy to define. In my thesis, the competition is between two religious groups that are very different in size and age, and the competition I am talking about is not out in the open. On the contrary, actually, I was often told by people higher up in the hierarchy of each Church that there was no competition. I experienced no will amongst the clergy to talk about competition

in those exact words, but talking about counter measures to prevent loss and to ensure an increased number of members was a welcome subject. I suspect it was easier to talk about how they work with keeping current and gaining new members, than talking about who they were in competition with and why. This way they did not have to talk about losing members to other religious groups, and could focus on the positive sides of their work. But I found both in *The Statistical Report* from 2007, and when talking to laypeople in the EOC and the EECMY about competition, that the signs of competition are all there.⁶³ I wish to look further into my findings in this chapter and see if, and how, my empirical data can support my claim that the churches are in competition.

The following sub chapters will cover the topics I wish to analyze in my thesis. The topics are a result of the many conversations and interviews I conducted in Ethiopia, and in the following sub chapters I will examine them with the previous chapters in mind. Ethnic identity and the history of the two churches is part of the background for this analyzes, but there is one topic I have not yet looked at; the financial background. It is important to understand the difference between the financial situations of the two churches. In the next sub chapter I will highlight some of the financial differences between the Churches and how it affects their daily business. The two churches offer different activities to their members. I believe much of this can be traced back to the main funding and the Churches different views on foreign interference. I will also look at how this may affect the relationship between the Church and the members. Next, I will look at the theological education within the churches and how it might differ. I will also look more into the activities the churches offer their members separately from the theological education, as these activities are more connected to the potential funding from abroad than the churches own theological education. The use of church missionaries is another topic I will discuss; as this is something the two churches view very differently. After discussing church missionaries, I will look further into the topic of conversion in connection to the release of *The Statistical Report* from both 1994 and 2007. I will then look at the church policy in both the EOC and the EECMY to see how this might have changed due to the above-mentioned topics.

⁶³ "Summary and Statistical Report of the 2007 Population and Housing Census: Population Size by Age and Sex."

5.1 Aid and missionary funds

There is a fundamental difference in funding between the two churches of this study. Because they are funded differently, they have different opportunities. In this sub chapter I wish to look at the impact the missionary funds have had on the EECMY and why the EOC chose not to venture into cooperation with foreign missions. I want to look at how much of the EECMY budget is a result of foreign funding, and if they might be reliant upon the funding due to their identity as an aid provider.

5.1.1 Help from foreign missions with funds and projects

The tradition of receiving aid from foreign missions is not uncommon in African countries, and Ethiopia is no exception although missionaries were not common in Ethiopia before the 19th century. The late introduction of foreign mission presence is due to the Ethiopian emperors' dislike of intrusion from outside. The emperors of Ethiopia took a lot of pride in ruling what is seen as one of the oldest countries in Africa and the country had never been colonized during the colonial era. It was not until the reign of Menelik II⁶⁴ that foreign missions were allowed into the country, and then only to restricted areas under the emperor's supervision.⁶⁵ The missions was seen as a way to expand the country's educational institutions, as the Evangelists were known for establishing schools as part of their strategy.

The missionaries who came to Ethiopia met a well-established Orthodox Church that had no interest in cooperating with any foreign missions. They had a massive group of followers nationwide and, like the Ethiopian emperor; they were proud and not interested in receiving funds from missions from other countries. My informants in the EOC told me that they were very proud of being able to run the church with the money they collected from their members.⁶⁶ It meant that they were fully autonomous and Ethiopian, unlike other Churches

⁶⁴ Menelik II reigned from 1889 to 1913.

⁶⁵ Tuso, "Minority Education in Ethiopia." p. 279.

⁶⁶ Qes Ogbai and Nishan were both eager to stress that the EOC is funded by their members, not by abroad.

that were partly or totally dependent upon funds from abroad. Martin⁶⁷, one of the employees at the EOC theological college whom I visited at his house close to the theological college in Addis Ababa, told me that the EOC saw aid as bribery and a sign of weak social conscience, something that contributed to their unwillingness to work with the foreign missions when they came to Ethiopia. Because money is a factor in what Martin agreed could be seen as competition, the EOC have accused many of the Evangelical Churches of unfair play. This leads me to the topic of why many of the Evangelical Churches have more money than the much more established EOC.

Many of the missions that came to Ethiopia were from Scandinavia, Germany and the USA, and many of them spread out over the rural parts of Ethiopia. Scandinavian missions were prominent in the western part of Ethiopia, establishing both churches and schools as I have talked about in a previous chapter. This was part of a nationwide literacy campaign started by the emperor to expand the country's educational institutions. The EECMY was established through missionary help and is strongly connected to the Scandinavian missions that helped establish it. The connection is apparent through the many projects the Church is administrating, most of which is funded from abroad. This support is the reason why the Church can provide aid to so many of their members. They are helped, but are at the same time becoming dependent on the funds, which is exactly what the EOC was trying to avoid. In 1970, a total of 70 per cent of the EECMY's budget was made up of funds from abroad.⁶⁸ Most of the members of the EECMY are farmers or other low paid professions, and the Church is therefore unable to maintain its activities without help from abroad. Providing aid to their members in need made the Church very popular in smaller villages where there was a great need for help. The member base of the Church is made up of people who are in need of help and have a low income, and therefore rely heavily on the Church's assistance. It can be interesting to ask the question: What would happen to the EECMY if the funding for some reason decreased or stopped? Would they maintain the same number of members they have today, or would it decrease as well? It is an interesting question; has the Church established itself sufficiently among its followers or is it reliant on the funding? I will not look further

⁶⁷ Martin is now a member of the EOC, but has moved to Ethiopia from England and was previously a member of the Anglican Church. He therefore possesses a unique insider/outsider perspective I found very interesting and informative. He is a religious scholar with a PhD in the literary sources of the Kebra Nagast.

⁶⁸ Eide, *Revolution and Religion in Ethiopia*. p. 67.

into these questions as it is not a part of my research, but the questions should be raised as a comment on the influence of funding.

5.1.2 Personal relationship with members

When talking with members of an Elder council in the EECMY in Boji, Iskander and Jima, I got an introduction to the comprehensive structure within the EECMY; they support each other, give advice in difficult cases and have an ongoing church strategy concerning the development aid offered by the EECMY to their members. The local EECMY churches can, within certain frames, choose how to conduct much of its own work the way they want. This means local churches can choose to be very active in the lives of its members, many through activities much similar to the work missionaries have done for some time, in the form of local aid.

Because of the aid provided by the EECMY, the relationship between members and the clergy is often personal due to the intimate interaction between the two. The members can receive help with everything from loans, saving groups to extra clothes or food. Having a personal relationship between the clergy and the laypeople is something that separates the two churches. When I talked to one of the priests at the EOC theological college, Qes Ogbai, who had invited me into his office in the back of the theological college compound in Addis Ababa, he told me about the EOC strategy towards their members. The EOC has a big and faithful group of members. In his opinion, they have the tradition and the commitment of their members that works in their favor. The benefit of having families who have been members for generations and a church that is strongly connected to the country itself is something he felt churches like the EECMY can never compete with. These are factors that strengthen the EOC in his opinion. I thought his arguments were interesting and I will look further into these arguments in the sub chapter on conversion.

Daniel Olson talks about the power of pluralism, how small religious groups can be stronger than bigger religious groups in a pluralistic society because they are only one of many

religious groups to choose from.⁶⁹ He claims that the reason is not based on the clergy working harder as other scholars might argue⁷⁰, but that the core members are becoming more committed when they see other less committed members come and go, something which is more noticeable in smaller religious groups than in bigger religious groups. It is because of this core group of committed members that smaller religious groups are seen as having more resilient and passionate members than larger religious groups.⁷¹ In addition to this, I want to add that in the case of Ethiopia, a strong relationship between the clergy and the laypeople are also a contributing factor to the likelihood of members leaving or joining the Church. I will come back to this later in a following subchapter when I discuss conversions.

To sum up: I have a theory that the funding lets the EECMY come closer into the personal life of their members and this creates a different bond between Church and member than exists in the EOC. Because of this personal bond, members are less inclined to leaving the church. The projects enable the EECMY to get closer to their members and connect with the local community in a different manner than the EOC, which has not been involved in aid in the same manners as the EECMY. The EOC is relying more on the history and tradition of the church and the country, which I have shown is quite extensive in the previous chapters. In the following subchapters, I will look at how and why this view on member-relations might be changing in the EOC.

⁶⁹ Olson, "Why Do Smaller Religious Groups Have More Committed Members?." p. 355.

⁷⁰ Roger Finke, "Religious Choice and Competition." p. 762. *Acts of Faith: Explaining the Human Side of Religion* p. 219.

⁷¹ Olson, "Why Do Smaller Religious Groups Have More Committed Members?." p. 375-376.

5.2 Theological education for the masses.

The idea of theological education of members of the church, who are not studying to become a priest or take up any form of office within the church, is a very new idea in Ethiopia. The education of clergy has a long and proud history within the EOC, where the study of holy texts has been a requirement for anyone hoping to work within the church. The EECMY has a significantly shorter history in Ethiopia, and subsequently no longstanding tradition for theological education. However, they have played a big part in the education of the nation, establishing schools on a big scale throughout Ethiopia, and paving the way for a growing number of well-educated students in all parts of the country. I will therefore present the EECMY first.

5.2.1 The EECMY and theological education

The EECMY have offered theological education to their members since they first started preaching, as they saw themselves as the church for the minorities in the rural parts of Ethiopia.⁷² As the evangelical movement spread, so did the establishment of schools. They were providers of education in the rural areas, giving people both theological and general education. Steven Kaplan writes that: “*In some areas, converts to Protestant Christianity were nicknamed ‘the literates’.*”⁷³ The education of the Oromo in the west is directly connected with the development of Evangelical Christianity among the Oromo.⁷⁴ The EECMY had from early on a special focus on teaching their members how they, the EECMY, were theologically different from the Orthodox Church. As a result, they have members who are capable of arguing for their choice of faith, giving members of EOC a challenge if they end up in an argument. In 1962 the EECMY started the nationwide literacy campaign that was mentioned in the previous chapter⁷⁵, establishing community schools that were open to everybody, irrespectively of ethnic or religious affiliation.⁷⁶ Within thirteen years, they had over half a million students involved.

⁷² Eide, *Revolution and Religion in Ethiopia*. p. 12.

⁷³ Kaplan, "Themes and Methods in the Study of Conversion in Ethiopia: A Review Essay." p. 383.

⁷⁴ Eide, *Revolution and Religion in Ethiopia*. p. 51.

⁷⁵ Chapter on aid and missionary funds.

⁷⁶ Eide, *Revolution and Religion in Ethiopia*. p. 63.

The EECMY have been responsible for educating the poor and uneducated people in many of the rural areas they are active in. Establishing schools together with the establishment of churches has been standard practice. Through their system, people were educated in reading, writing and mathematics. The members were also taught basic democratic principles through being a part of the EECMY's democratic system. Because the EECMY is built on democratic principles as mentioned in the chapter on EECMY church structure, the people who were educated within the EECMY also got an introduction in democracy.

The schools the EECMY helped build through the literacy campaign were community schools, not church institution, which means they are institutions outside of the EECMY. The official policy is that the schools do not teach the EECMY theology and they do not encourage students towards one religious group over another, but I will argue that there is a certain pressure on the students when they know which church that has facilitated their education. Remembering what was stated in chapter four about ethnic identity and conflict, many of the ethnic groups in the rural areas were looking for something in opposition to the EOC, and the EECMY represented just such an opposition. Facilitating education and offering a real alternative to the EOC, the EECMY was a growing church for people who wanted to distance themselves from the history of Amhara rule and ethnic suppression.

In conversations with some of the EECMY Elders in Boji, it became clear how proud they are of how educated their members are in their Christian faith. Children start Sunday school at the age of four, learning how the EECMY differs from the EOC, and are encouraged to talk to their new classmates about the EECMY when they start school at the age of 7. Iskander and Jima from the Elders in Boji talked about how the children could bring the true word of God out to others without being afraid of other people. Nishan, a member of the EOC from Addis Ababa, talked about this from the standpoint of the EOC. In her opinion, the EECMY teach the children to go out and force their believes on other people who believe differently. She sees the theological education of children in the EECMY as a strategy towards converting members from the EOC to the EECMY. Using children to convert children is using innocent messengers to target innocent victims who cannot defend themselves because the children in

the EOC are not taught theology in the same manner as the EECMY. I will come back to this discussion, but first I think it is important to look at the theological education in the EOC.

5.2.2 The EOC and theological education

The policy of the EOC has been that theological education is for the clergy, not for the laypeople. They have a long history of theological studies, interpreting the Bible and other holy text such as the *Kebrā Nagast* from early on, studying how the Ethiopian history is intertwined with the Christian history. The EOC have extensive libraries of theological studies that have been written on these subjects throughout the centuries, but this has not been open for others than the clergy.

This system of learning is very old in the EOC. It is said that it was devised in the seventeenth century in Gondar, a city in the north of Ethiopia.⁷⁷ The system is built on oral tradition of learning a great amount of scripture, hymnody, poetry, music and dance by heart. They can start the first stage at age 4, but it is more common to start at 7. The first part of the study is in theory offered to both boys and girls, but in practice almost no girls attend. Students of the EOC theological education are prepared for a career within the church, which is why this education is only for a small percentage of the members of the EOC. The EOC's educational system teaches the students to read, write and other basic skills as well as theological education, but because further study is for future priests only, it cannot be compared to the extensive education given by the EECMY.

This brings me back to the discussion of using children to convert children. First, I would like to point out that it is not common for children to break with the family church and convert because of what they have heard from other children. I did not hear any stories where this had happened. What I think Nishan is referring to when she talks about children converting other children, is children influencing other children. Normal members of the EOC do not have the theological education many EECMY members have. They can have problems discussing with

⁷⁷ Binns, "Theological Education in the Ethiopian Orthodox Church." p. 104.

members of the EECMY due to different levels of theological understanding. For children, this can become evident when they ask questions based on conversations with other children, such as referred to by Nishan, which their parents may not be able to answer adequately. The EOC has recently⁷⁸ introduced night classes in theology for ordinary members who want to educate themselves in their own faith, which Nishan is attending. This is only offered in the biggest cities, as it is still a rather new arrangement. She thinks this is a reaction to the surprising increase in members of the EECMY and the equally surprising decrease in members of the EOC shown in *The Statistical Report* released in 2008 by the Population Census Commission.⁷⁹

The level of theological understanding and education of members have been given a more prominent role in the new EOC agenda than before. Many of the people from the EOC that I spoke with contributed this to *The Statistical Report* that showed decreasing number of members in the EOC. This was not confirmed by Qes Ogbai, an employee of the EOC theological college. I spoke with him about this topic in his office in the theological college in Addis Ababa. But Martin, another informant who worked at the same college, was more open to the idea of the night classes being a reaction to the statistics. According to him, *The Statistical Report* caused the EOC “a little headache”, to use his words, and was the final evidence that change had to be made. Many of these changes had started taking form before *The Statistical Report* was released, like the expansion of theological education to include the laypeople and not only the clergy. I suspect the EOC was aware of the changes in their membership numbers even before *The Statistical Report* was released, a thought that is strengthened by them already making changes before the report was released.

⁷⁸ When I asked Qes Ogbai, a priest and employee of the EOC theological college, when the EOC had started teaching night classes, he only answered that it had started “recently”, stating that it was established at different times in different cities and he was therefore reluctant to give me a specific year. His reluctance to answer made me think there might be other reasons to why he did not want to answer, but I will not go further into this.

⁷⁹ "Summary and Statistical Report of the 2007 Population and Housing Census: Population Size by Age and Sex."

5.2.3 The difference between the EECMY and the EOC

While the EECMY teaches their students the difference between the different church communities, the EOC teaches their students an old and time-consuming oral tradition that prepares them for further study or work within the church. The EOC have not prioritized an education open for all members that is focused on the differences until very recently, and therefore the majority of members don't have the arguing skills that the EECMY members have.

In confrontations it becomes evident that many EOC members don't really know the theological difference between the EOC and the EECMY. Many of the people I talked to would tell me about the visible difference such as iconography and the belief in saints that is connected to this, but very few of the Orthodox members I met could tell me about the liturgical or dogmatic difference between the two churches. I met a substantial amount of EECMY members who could inform me about the differences between the two churches in depth, discussing both the nature of Christ and how the Bible has different number of chapters in the two churches. Looking at this critically, this can be connected to where I met these people. Many of the EECMY members I met were either in the church compound on their way to or from school, or they were introduced to me by people who themselves were active and educated members of the church, and therefore introduced me to other informed and educated members. The people I met who were members of EOC were often the result of more casual connections, but not always. Many of my informants who are Orthodox are high up in the hierarchy, but the people I met and talked to in a more casual manner were often people I started talking with in Addis Ababa. One example is my cabdriver who is a member of the EOC, but did not have the same level of theological knowledge as my informants. Even though there might be a misbalance, I still think the amount of people I talked to is enough to represent the level of theological knowledge generally found in members of the two churches, and many of the statements made about theological education by my informants and scholars in this field supports this claim as well.

The difference in educational structure and outreach was mentioned by many of my informants as a big difference between the churches, although they portrayed it very

differently. Iskander and Jima from the EECMY in Boji talked about the differences in a very factual way, giving me a thorough introduction in the EECMY's Sunday school and the history of education in western Ethiopia, with special focus on the EECMY's effort. Nishan, who is a member of the EOC in Addis Ababa, also talked about the differences, but she talked about the modern day education from the perspective of an Orthodox member. She put great emphasis on how secular education in Ethiopia today is not connected to a specific church, so children growing up today are not educated within a structure built by the EECMY. The EOC has started to arrange night classes in the biggest cities, giving devoted members a chance to learn more about their faith and become more aware of the doctrinal and liturgical difference between them and other Christian churches. Nishan also pointed out that this gives Orthodox members a chance to defend and argue for their own belief. To be able to talk about why she believes the way she does and not just follow blindly in the family tradition is something Nishan described as liberating. She said it made her truly believe that she had chosen right, confirming and strengthening her belief.

5.3 Church activities

Theological education of members is one of the activities both the EECMY and the EOC are currently offering their members. This is, however, not the only way the churches are trying to reach out and interact with members. In this sub chapter, I will look further into the different activities offered by the churches. I want to look at how the development of new activities can be linked to the previous chapter on funding, and how these activities might be seen as tactical in the competition between the churches.

5.3.1 Childcare during the service

When using the word activity, I mean the kind of free time leisure interests the church is offering its members besides more common church activities, like sermons and liturgies. The reason I want to look at this is because of what an informant told me. Lebna, a 35 year old woman from Addis Ababa, told me about being in a split family, with one part of the family

in the EOC and the other part of the family in the EECMY. She is currently choosing not to be a member of any church, but as a child she was taken to both churches. I met her at a restaurant in Addis Ababa for an informal lunch to tell her about my thesis and my research in Ethiopia and to ask her some questions. When I asked her about what she experienced as the biggest difference between the two Churches, she started talking about the playground at the EECMY. The EECMY offered childcare services while the parents went to the church service, with a playground for the children to run around and play in. In her opinion, this made it easier for the parents to bring their young children to church and it gave the children a positive experience of going to church. They were occupied with fun and games until they were old enough to sit quietly in the church and listen to the sermons. When I asked her if she thought this might be a tactical move from the EECMY, she stated that at the time, it did make her think that the EECMY was a more fun church than the EOC. It is a possibility that this might be used as positive reinforcement, where children experience the EECMY as more fun and attach more positive feelings towards it. Later in life, they might be less likely to leave the church because of the positive feeling they connect to it. If this is the case, there might be similar thoughts behind more of the EECMY's activities, where they emphasize positive experiences to ensure the continued church attachment of their members.

While children are welcome to join the service in both the EOC and the EECMY, my informants gave me the impression that it is more normal to bring children to the service in the EOC. There may be local differences, not all churches have the opportunity to offer the same. I still think this shows that the two churches think differently about facilitation for families during the service. When I asked the priest Qes Ogbai about childcare during the service, he answered that this would be for every church to decide for itself, but this was not an offer the EOC was pushing churches to provide their members. Other members of the EOC I talked to did not see the difficulty of bringing their children to church and let them participate in the service. They answered that they did not need childcare; they wanted their children to participate in the service from an early age. Nishan told me she brought her daughter to church when she was only a baby, eight months old. She could herself not remember the first time she attended church and therefore assumed she was brought from an early age as well.

As this shows, the need for childcare is not present in both churches to the same extent, but I still think it is a valuable point to bring up. It portrays a difference in the followers of the churches, which could reflect on differences between the churches. Because the churches are different, the needs of its members also differ. To sum up: both the financial situation and the needs and demands of the members are influencing what activities the church offers its members. I also think the positive experience the children get from the playground outside the EECMY has an impact on their feelings towards the church at a later point in life. This can be a tactic from the Church to keep members throughout their adulthood as well. This does not mean that children in the EOC who attend church develop a negative attitude towards their church; it is a positive experience to feel that you are included. However, the EOC does not facilitate especially for the children.

5.3.2 The EOC newspaper and magazine

In my conversation with Nishan, a member of the EOC in Addis Ababa, she told me about a new initiative from the EOC. They have recently started publishing a newspaper on a monthly basis and a magazine every fortnight. Nishan works for the magazine as a journalist and was willing to discuss why she thought this initiative had been taken. Nishan brought up *The Statistical Report* from the Population Census Commission very quickly in our conversation. She thought the member decrease was definitely one of the reasons for launching the newspaper and the magazine. Even though they are only distributed in the biggest towns, like Addis Ababa and Dire Dawa, they reach a substantial amount of people. They are hoping to expand, and are hosting several charity events to collect money for increased distribution. I met Nishan in the lobby of *The Intercontinental Hotel* in Addis Ababa after just such an event.⁸⁰ She told me she believes that providing the members of the EOC with these publications can help educate them on their own faith. Nishan sees the newspaper and the magazine as a good opportunity for members to pass on the knowledge they obtain to other members. As more and more members take the night classes provided by the EOC, they are encouraged to write articles, send them in and get them published. Nishan has also taken the night classes to get to know her faith better. She says it is important to pass on what you learn, and that the newspaper and the magazine are great platforms for just that. I believe this is a

⁸⁰ I did not attend the event as it was for invited guests only.

way the EOC tries to stop members from joining other churches, by educating their members on their faith through these publications. Nishan told me that the EOC have started to design a new strategy to recruit and maintain members. This is something I will look further into in the sub chapter on church policy. I suspect the newspaper and magazine are only the first of many changes that will be initiated by the EOC.

5.3.3 Development program and aid work

As I have stated in the sub chapter on aid and missionary funds, there is a great difference in what the two churches offer their members in terms of aid. They have different views on what role the church has in their member's life, and therefore differ in the views on what activities the church should offer them. However, this does not mean that only the EECMY is involved in aid.

The EECMY is the biggest competitor on this area, as they are funded by foreign missions and have access to a vast amount of resources. They have activities that are closely connected to the church, like education through bible study, equality- and women's groups held in connection to choir practice⁸¹, and saving groups where the clergy collect clothes and grains from more fortunate members to give to the needy after the service. Other activities are less connected to the church and are only being administered by the church. These are activities like house building, water purification programs, prevention of soil erosion and nursing stations for trees, to name a few. Nursing stations for trees is very important for Ethiopia at the moment, as deforestation has become a big problem resulting in soil erosion over vast parts of the country. This might be the reason why the EOC is also involved in a forest development program. Nishan told me about this work. As it turned out, the EOC is also working with a refugee program. Nishan did not know any details about the work, she only knew of it. When I asked the priest Qes Ogbai about development work in the EOC, he did not want to talk about forest development or the refugee program. I asked him directly about the forest development, which he confirmed existed, but he clearly did not want to talk about it. He started talking about how the EOC reaches its members through their liturgy, which is

⁸¹ I will come back to this when I discuss choirs next in this sub chapter.

the most important thing. It was clear that the informants from the EECMY wanted to spend time talking about the different development and aid programs they lead, but the informants from the EOC avoided the subject. My initial thought was that Qes Ogbai avoided the subject because of the comparison with the EECMY. He might not have wanted to talk about how the Church spends its member's money on refugee programs and forest development, as this is not directly linked to the normal church activities. However, the reasons were not clear as to why he avoided the subject and I did not push further for answers. I can only assume that the EOC are not as eager to talk about their development work as the EECMY.

5.3.4 Church choirs

Another thing the two churches have in common is church choirs. This is an activity both churches are very comfortable talking about. Choir song is a big part of the liturgy in both churches and during religious holidays the choirs often perform while marching in parades in the streets. Both the EECMY and the EOC have a tradition of church choirs with both children and adults. There is, however, a difference in how they carry out the choir practice. While one is purely occupied with singing, the other is integrating education and church doctrine into choir practice.

The EOC have offered choir practice to their members for a long time, but I did not get the impression that this was being used to educate members. Nishan told me that her eldest daughter sings in the church choir, which means she learns to sing songs in both Amharic and in Ge'ez. I found there to be little focus on translating the songs from Ge'ez to Amharic, and almost no focus on theological education. This is unlike the EECMY where choir practice is mixed with both theological education and women's groups. The EECMY don't seem to mind mixing activities with education, while the EOC seem to think the two almost incompatible. Is the EECMY's integration of education in choir practice and other activities a clever tactic to educate of their members? As my informant the Norwegian ex-missionary Per said; if anything, the EOC should learn from the EECMY. This is a theory mentioned by several of the people I have talked to about Ethiopia; Ethiopians in the EOC, Ethiopians outside the EOC and Norwegians who are engaged in Ethiopia. The theory is that the EOC will, if they

have not already started, introduce more educational tools into activities like the choir practice, as a part of an ongoing new strategy to educate members. I will expand on this topic in the sub chapter on official church policy.

5.4 Missionary activity

In this sub chapter I will look at how members of one church try to convert members of another church, which can be referred to as missionary activity. More specifically, I want to look further into what kinds of missionary tactics the two churches might be using and how missionary activity is perceived in Ethiopia. I want to connect the previous sub chapter on theological education to the issue concerning missionary activity, and see how they might be connected. The EECMY have educated and encouraged members to share their knowledge with other people for a long time. I want to see if this has had an impact on how the EOC thinks about missionary activity, and if this can be connected to the growing education of laypeople in the EOC. To clarify; in the EECMY, the people involved in the missionary activities are regular members who are encouraged to spread the word of God and the theology of their church to people who are members of other religious groups.

5.4.1 Missionary tactics and strategy

The topic of missionary activity first came up in conversations with informants who all had their own view on what it meant. Iskander and Jima from the EECMY in Boji talked about encouraging members of the EECMY to take on the role of local missionaries as an effort to spread the word of God, while Nishan from the EOC in Addis Ababa talked about encountering missionary activity in settings she felt was unnatural. We can divide the two statements into two groups of people; those who are positive towards missionary activity and those who are negative towards missionary activity. This is connected to the two churches and their strategy: the EECMY is based on missionary activities and is therefore positive to local missionaries; while the EOC have an ‘open to all’ attitude, but have not had the tradition of actively recruiting members, and is therefore more negative towards local missionaries.

It is common for Christian groups to have strategies on how to maintain current members and recruit new members. Evangelical churches like the EECMY have a history of missionary activity, cultivating an outgoing approach towards potential new members. The EOC has a different approach to recruiting members. An orthodox church is open for anyone to visit, but they do not have a policy of actively seeking out new members. Contrary to this, the EECMY is actively encouraging its members to spread the word of their church, as I have shown in the previous sub chapter on theological education. Many of my informants in the EECMY used the word *strategy* when they talked about their church's position concerning topics like missionary activity. I specifically asked Iskander and Jima if the EECMY had a strategy concerning recruiting new members, and they answered that they relied on local missionaries. The EECMY have an ongoing discussion on how to attract more members, which is discussed in the congregation, the parish, the synod and on national level. Iskander and Jima said it is a continuing discussion in the EECMY; they are always evaluating how to attract more members. This was confirmed by my informant Per, a Norwegian ex-missionary who is evaluating some of the projects a Norwegian mission is involved in with the EECMY. He told me that the EECMY have used local missionaries for a long time, encouraging young as well as old members to spread the word of the Church, hoping to attract new members. As *The Statistical Report* from 2007 shows, the EECMY have grown during the last fourteen years, confirming what one can assume is an effect of their missionary activities.⁸²

5.4.2 Examples of missionary tactics

There have been many rumors and accusations that the EECMY are strategically targeting other Christian groups, which is seen as unfair play by the EOC. I heard from different informants from the EOC that the EECMY and other evangelical churches are targeting the Orthodox Church, recruiting within their religion, while they should be focusing on those outside of Christianity. My informants mentioned both Muslims and traditional African religions as a potential target groups the EOC think the evangelical churches should focus on.

⁸² "Summary and Statistical Report of the 2007 Population and Housing Census: Population Size by Age and Sex."

The discussion of who is inside or outside of Christianity is interesting in this context. It is clear that members of the EOC believe that the EECMY are recruiting members from inside Christianity. When I asked Iskander and Jima in the EECMY who the church focused on when recruiting new members, they answered that the EECMY focused on people who have not heard of God or people who have lost sight of God. They were not willing to answer if they thought of the EOC as having lost sight of God. However, later on in the conversation when I asked what the difference was between the EECMY and the EOC, they answered that the EOC was not focusing enough on God as they direct too much attention towards their saints. They did not want to expand on this, but other members I talked to were clear that they did not think of the EOC as a Christian church. My informant Lebna told me that her aunt, who is a member of the EECMY, had said outright that she felt her church had more in common with Muslims than with the EOC. Several of the people I talked to in the EECMY expressed a similar attitude, which can indicate that this opinion is held by several members within the EECMY. If the theory that the EECMY are actively recruiting members from the EOC is true, the EECMY might be justifying their actions by portraying the EOC as a religious group outside of Christianity. Because of this, they are free to continue recruiting members from the EOC.

One of my informants, Nishan from the EOC in Addis Ababa, was very outspoken about her feelings towards Evangelical Churches like the EECMY and their missionary activities. Her experiences with local missionaries from the EECMY have all been negative, which have clearly affected the way she talked about local missionaries in a broader sense. Local missionaries from the EECMY, she claimed, were very aggressive. She told me about situations where she had been confronted on the bus by local missionaries in such an aggressive and pushing manner that she eventually had to get off the bus just to get away from them. She said this is a typical Evangelical approach to converting people, by being aggressive and pushing people to talk about their faith in public, often against their will. When I asked her if the EOC also try to convert people by approaching them in a similar fashion, she clearly stated that this is not the Orthodox way. According to Nishan, the EOC lets you find your own way. The church is open to people who have questions or thoughts, but they do not push their own beliefs on people to get them to return to Orthodoxy.

What I found after several conversations with Ethiopians on the topic of local missionaries was that members of the EECMY talked positively of the work the local missionaries do, while members of the EOC talked about local missionaries in a negative manner. Because the EOC do not have a tradition of actively recruiting members, they seem to be less understanding of other churches that do. However, because of *The Statistical Report*, they are forced to acknowledge that the outgoing tactic of the EECMY is in fact generating results.⁸³ When my informant Per and I were driving back to the guesthouse in Addis Ababa from a visit to a remote rock hewn church outside of town, we started talking about how the churches have responded to *The Statistical Report* that was recently published. He said that the EOC had to respond to the growth of the EECMY by addressing their own decreasing number of members. According to him, the EOC has to evaluate their approach to recruitment and become more aware of the competition in the religious market. When I spoke to the priest Qes Ogbai in the EOC's theological college, I got the impression that the EOC are going through changes both structurally and strategically. I believe these are the changes Per was referring to, and they are in progress. I will come back to these changes within the EOC in the sub chapter on official church policy.

The examples of missionary tactics are not limited to the example on the bus that Nishan told me about. I was told by members of the EOC of incidents with members of the EECMY trying to go undercover into the other church to recruit new members. The priest Qes Ogbai told me about members of the EECMY who had signed up for the EOC's Sunday School to, in his opinion, try to infiltrate the EOC. They had argued with the teacher on the same subjects the two churches disagree on, and tried to convince the entire class to convert to the EECMY. Qes Ogbai explained how the EOC staff had to forcefully remove people from the different classes because of their behavior. This is an extreme version of missionary tactics, and not one the EECMY are acknowledging as an approved part of their strategy. However, I heard too many stories of how members of the EECMY had infiltrated some part of the EOC to disregard this story as exaggerated. What does this tell me about the tactic of the EECMY? It is possible that there is some truth to the many stories I was told. The fact that the EECMY

⁸³ I will return to the possible effect of the statistics in the subsequent sub chapter.

are encouraging their members to actively engage themselves in discussions and talk about the EECMY has been confirmed by both priests and elders I talked to in the EECMY. But this does not mean that the EECMY is strategically placing their members within different activities offered by the EOC. It was interesting to note that all the people who told me these stories answered that the incident had made them even more secure in their belief in the EOC. This means that these stories can act as a reinforcement of the EOC; having an external enemy can have a unifying effect.

5.4.3 Local missionaries at universities

Nishan from the EOC in Addis Ababa told me about how young people have started to form religious groups and try to recruit other people to their church. This is evident especially at the university. Both Nishan and Lebna, who is also from Addis Ababa, said they had experienced being approached by active youth groups at the university, but they only mentioned Evangelical youth groups. From what I could understand, this is because the Evangelical groups tend to be more outgoing and seeking contact with other students. Nishan talked about how the Evangelical youth groups actively tries to recruit new members among the students. This can be seen as an extension of the youth groups established within the different EECMY congregations during Sunday school. Because the EECMY are encouraging members to do missionary work already from an early age, it is not surprising that members continue to do so when they start higher education.

It seems that the EOC have interpreted the youth groups of EECMY as another way the EECMY is trying to recruit members. My informant Nishan claimed that the youth groups are organized by the EECMY and when I talked to the priest Qes Ogbai, he talked about how the EECMY have positioned themselves in groups all over the social sphere. Whether or not this is organized from the EECMY is not as interesting as how it has been perceived by the EOC. My informants gave me the impression that the EOC believes this to be another tactical move from the EECMY in the hope of recruiting more members. This could therefore be seen as another reason why the EOC are reviewing their strategy. If the EOC perceives the EECMY to be in a competitive mode, strategically placing local missionary groups in different social

spheres, it is a natural reaction to think of ways to protect and secure the members they have. It seems to me that recently, the EOC are starting to interpret much of the information they get about the EECMY in light of *The Statistical Report* from 2007 that was released in 2008 by the Population Census Commission. When I spoke to my informant Per about this, he confirmed that from the outside, it does seem like the EOC are reacting more strongly to the growth of the EECMY than they have done before. It would appear that *The Statistical Report* has had an impact on the EOC, and that they are starting to examine their situation more carefully with the intent to strengthen the church against external enemies. They have to review their idea of the EOC as the ‘great spiritual fortress’⁸⁴ and start seeing themselves as a church in competition with other religious groups.

5.5 Conversions

In 1994, *The Statistical Report* released by the Population Census Commission, showed the EOC to be the biggest church and the biggest religious group in the country. In 2008, the new census showed an alteration in the religious scene. The EOC had gone from 50.4% to 43.5%.⁸⁵ The only other religious group to have a similar change in numbers was the Protestants, which had risen from 10.2% in 1994 to 18.6% in 2007. This states that there has been a clear decrease in members within the EOC and a clear increase in members within the Protestant Church; one of the biggest denominations being the EECMY. This is an indication that there are conversions happening that have resulted in a decrease in the EOC and an increase in the EECMY. One might even say; a statistical indication that there are conversions happening from the EOC to the EECMY.

In this chapter I will look at conversions and how it can be linked to the previous chapter on local missionaries. It is also interesting to look at how the EOC have reacted to the decrease of members, and how they blame the EECMY. I want to look at how this reaction might cover the fact that the EOC are experiencing a crisis and a need for change due to the decrease

⁸⁴ The expression ‘great spiritual fortress’ was explained in the chapter on the historical background of the EOC.

⁸⁵ "Summary and Statistical Report of the 2007 Population and Housing Census: Population Size by Age and Sex." This statistic is openly available at the Central Statistical Agency of Ethiopia’s webpage, www.csa.gov.et. Accessed 08.02.13.

of members. They are no longer the state church which means they have lost their connection with the state, as well as experiencing a decrease in members. I also want to look at how different age groups think differently about conversions. The younger generation is not as strict in their view on conversions as the older generation. This is also evident in groups that have moved abroad; the Diaspora views conversions differently from native Ethiopians.

5.5.1 Linked to local missionaries

Conversions can be a sensitive topic, but many of my informants seemed to find the subject easy to talk about. It was never difficult to lead the conversation towards the subject, neither in informal conversations or formal interviews, but what answers they gave still depended on how comfortable they were with the subject. Most had no difficulty talking about conversions and spoke freely about what they thought and how they felt about conversions, but some thought it was emotional and did not want to give answers that differed from the official church policy. As one of my most outspoken informants from the EOC in Addis Ababa, Nishan had much to say about conversion. According to Nishan, the biggest difference between the EOC and the EECMY has been their attitude towards recruiting members. She referred to the EOC as a church open for all, anyone who is interested in learning more about it can come to a service whenever they want to. The EOC does not have a tradition for actively recruiting members, as they have been in a powerful position in Ethiopian society for a long time. Even though they are no longer the state church, they are still able to exert influence on state and society. They have always had a big and stable member base. The EECMY are only 150 years old and have had to work hard to recruit new members ever since they were established. Nishan talked about how churches like the EECMY are more aggressive in their approach when recruiting new members. They are openly out to convert people, something she saw as aggressive and threatening towards her own faith. The priest at the Holy Trinity College, Qes Ogbai, did not explicitly say that he agreed with Nishan, but he did indicate that he thought the EECMY could be very persuasive when recruiting new members and that this could potentially harm the EOC.

My belief is that this is to some extent linked to local missionaries. The EECMY have been actively using their members as local missionaries, effectively spreading their word and reaching more people than they would have been able to if only the clergy were to work with recruiting new members. Because the members of the EECMY generally have a better theological education than members of the EOC, the combination of knowledge and seeking out new members can be a reason why the EECMY has had a tremendous growth. Members of the EOC might be less prepared to discuss their faith and are therefore more vulnerable to the tactics used by the EECMY. Qes Ogbai, Nishan and several other members of the EOC I talked to are, to some extent, verifying this theory by blaming the decrease in members in the EOC on the EECMY.

5.5.2 Stealing members

The numbers in *The Statistical Report* clearly state the increase and decrease of members within the two churches, but they do not say anything about how or why this has happened. Previous in this chapter, I have stated some possible reasons to why this has happened. Furthermore, from what I heard people talk about and from what my informants said, it would appear that the EOC are convinced that the EECMY are actively targeting EOC members. Some of the people I talked to used the phrase *stealing members* when they talked about members converting from the EOC to the EECMY. It is evident that in the eyes of members of the EOC, the stream of members converting from the EOC to the EECMY have not chosen this themselves, they have been stolen from one church to the other. By using words like *stealing*, the EOC members I talked to show what might be considered disbelief when it came to members willingly leaving the EOC for another church. I found that there were several theories as to why the EECMY had managed to trick former EOC members to convert to the EECMY; many of these involved bribery by offering different kinds of aid as I have listed in the previous sub chapter on aid and missionary funds. I think this can be true to a certain degree, but it is not the only reason why people have chosen to leave the EOC to join the EECMY. There are other factors involved that I want to look at.

At an early point, I was told that there are almost no conversions *to* the EOC, only *from* the EOC. This was a statement I chose to use in my topic guide during interviews. The topic of members converting from the EOC to the EECMY was something almost all my informants wanted to talk about; either eagerly denying it on the grounds that it is a one-sided version of the different developments in Ethiopia today, or confirming it based on *The Statistical Report*. What struck me as interesting was how several of the people I talked to described how the EECMY were targeting EOC members, but no one talked about why the EOC might be disposed to losing members. While my informants Ogbai and Nishan from the EOC were both comfortable talking about the decrease of members as long as they could blame someone else, none of them seemed to want to talk about why the EOC was losing members. They both talked about the issue as if the EOC was an innocent victim, not addressing why the EECMY might be targeting the EOC. Of course, because I was an outsider looking for information on the current relationship between the EOC and the EECMY, they might not have wanted me to hear anything that would in any way implicate the EOC. Because the loss of members can be a very vulnerable issue, it is understandable that they did not want me to get any indications that the EOC are in any way blaming itself. They did, however, let me know that the EOC is reviewing their strategy, something I interpret as a reaction to *The Statistical Report* and a realization that the EOC needs to change. I will look further into this in the following sub chapter on church policy.

5.5.3 Different age group's view on conversion, other churches and cross-denominational relationships

Ethiopia has gone through many changes during the last 40 years which has affected the Ethiopian population. The older generation has a memory of the imperial time and many Ethiopians have lived through the military regime, while the younger generation has little or no recollection of either. I think this can affect the way they think about issues such as conversion, other churches and their cross-denominational relationships.

My informants and other people I talked to in Ethiopia gave me the impression that there was a gap between the older and the newer generation's view on conversion. When I spoke to

people over 60 most of them seemed to be negative towards conversions, negative towards family members becoming members of other churches and negative towards having friends from another church. Their family life and social life was connected to the church, and they were all members of the same church their parents had been members of, which they took great pride in. They had a clear memory of the imperial time and how things changed during the military regime, something many of my informants emphasized as the main difference between them and the new generation growing up today. Because of the historical background, the older generation views conversion and cross-denominational relationships differently than the younger generation.

The imperial time was viewed as something negative in the rural areas I visited in the west of Ethiopia. Many of the elderly members of the EECMY I talked to in Gimbi and Boji saw the imperial time as a time of little religious freedom due to the state church system. This was not how the elderly members of the EOC remembered the imperial time. They saw it as a time of great religious growth and prosperity. However, when the military regime overthrew the imperial regime, religious activities were limited for everyone. As the Derg was built on a Marxist ideology it did not differentiate between churches and limited the activities of both the EECMY and the EOC. As a result, almost all the people I talked to who were over the age of 60 agreed that the military regime was limiting to the religious freedom. Because of these events, it did seem as though the older generation was more protective of their church and more negative towards people converting from it. I was told by an old man from the EECMY in Gimbi that the youth today seemed to be unaware of what his generation had gone through. I met him while I was waiting for my driver to come pick me up in the EECMY compound in Gimbi. I never got his name, as his English was poor, but he had been told that I was there to ask questions about the church and conversions and he had felt the need to come and tell me his thoughts. He said that the youth did not know how lucky they were to be able to practice their religion out in the open. He felt like he had fought for his church, something many from his generation could identify with after living through the military regime, and they saw themselves as less likely to leave their church because of this.

My informants Nishan, Ogbai, Iskander, Jima and Kafa were from the generation of people between 40 and 50, and they were generally more open to having friends from other churches and having family members who converted from the family church. They did not have such a clear memory of the imperial time, but did remember living through the military regime. However, there was a big difference between the people I talked to in Addis Ababa and the people I talked to in smaller towns. In smaller towns it seemed like your church determined much of your social circle and I did not meet anyone who had family from another church. Iskander, Jima and Kafa all came from families where everyone was members of the EECMY, and they all had their social connections through the church. Of course, this might be connected to what church was the majority church in their home town. In Gimbi, over half the population adheres to the EECMY and in Boji the church is said to have about 95% of the population. This also affects the member's social circle and the probability of someone in the family being members of other churches. In Addis Ababa, my informants had social circles that were unrelated to their church, and it was more common to have family members who were a part of different churches. My informant Nishan is from Addis Ababa and does not determine her social circle based on her church. She told me that the only time it becomes evident what church her friends belongs to is when they all pray their separate prayers before a meal. In fact, many from this generation have friends from different churches. This is more natural now and it is viewed as old fashioned to think of your social circle as restricted to your church.

The younger generation, people between 20 and 30, did not have as good a memory of the military regime and what restrictions they imposed on Ethiopian society, as the older generation. My informants in this age group were generally not interested in what church their family and friends were members of. One of my informants, Lebna, is from Addis Ababa and is from a family where her mother is member of the EOC and her aunts are members of the EECMY. She is very open towards family members converting and has friends who are from different religions. She stated quite clearly that her generation had a much more relaxed view on conversions and religious affiliation than the older generations. This was consistent with many other statements I got from other people as well. The older generation did not like the fact that members of the family could be members of other churches than themselves. The entire family was supposed to be members of the same church, and if someone is attached to

another church, it was very much frowned upon. The younger generation does not look as strictly on church affiliation. Having Orthodox and Protestant members in the same family is not a problem anymore they told me, but for the elder generation this is still problematic.

I met a group of Norwegian-Ethiopians in Norway to discuss conversion, other churches in Ethiopia and cross-denominational relationships. They were from 33 to 48 years old and were all members of the EOC. They talked about how their generation had a more relaxed relationship towards conversions than their parents' generation. One of the women said she would not be angry or sad if her children decided to be Protestants, because this was just another form of Christianity. If they felt more at home in that church it was more natural for them to convert to that church. But she told me that if she had gone to her father and said she wanted to become a Protestant, he would not only be sad, he might cut her off and leave her out of the will. This was confirmed by the other women who all said that conversion is more connected to shame for the older generation. It is shameful for them if their children choose to leave the family church and join a "new" church. This indicates that the number of conversions might be connected to how society views conversion. During the military regime, members of different religious communities had to fight for their church and their belief, and it was viewed as shameful to convert from your family church. After the end of military regime, and religious freedom was restored, people no longer had to fight for their belief. The generation that grew up during the period of religious freedom does not seem to view conversion as something shameful and have a more relaxed relationship towards religious affiliation. They experience religion as something more individual and removed from their social lives, something my informant Lebna thought was a result of urbanization and modernization. This might help explain the increase in conversions in Ethiopia, as the younger generation is growing up and are making decisions concerning their faith in a different social context than the older generation.

5.6 Official church policy and personal opinions

The Statistical Report from 2007 showed both the EOC and the EECMY that the previous numbers and positions of the two churches were changing. It showed that Eide is right by referring to the EECMY as one of the fastest growing churches in Africa.⁸⁶ The EECMY, seen as the church that identified itself with the rural population in Ethiopia, is now expanding. It is no longer a church just for the poor and disadvantaged; they are becoming involved with the entire Ethiopian society. This is the first time in the modern Ethiopian history that the EOC has been challenged by another church. The EOC has experienced religious competition from other religious communities, but not from another church and never at this level. I have looked at how this has affected the church in the previous sub chapters, and now I want to look further into how it might have affected the church policy in the two churches.

I have referred to the official church policy several times in the previous sub chapters. In this sub chapter I will try to sum up all the information and statements I heard while I was in Ethiopia. I will present each church separately to show how the policy of the church has either changed or largely stayed constant. This again can be seen as an indication of how the churches have reacted to *The Statistical Report* from 2007 that was released in 2008 by the Population Census Commission. When I talk about official church policy, I mean the rules and regulations of the church in connection to the structure and the strategy.

5.6.1 The EOC

I have previously looked at the church structure in the background chapter on the EOC, but this structure seems to be changing, as I have indicated in the previous sub chapters. There have not been many official changes to the church structure yet, but from the many conversations I had with Ethiopians in the EOC, it became obvious that the EOC are reviewing their structure and tactics to better face the challenges the church is experiencing.

⁸⁶ Eide, *Revolution and Religion in Ethiopia*. p. 2.

The priest at the theological college in Addis Ababa, Qes Ogbai, told me that there have been some changes in the structure in the EOC during the last years. My first interview with him was cancelled due to the annual EOC national meeting that had just started. He informed me later that this was the third year in a row such a national meeting was organized within the EOC. This indicates that the EOC had already started to change, structuring itself in a more similar fashion to the EECMY, by having meetings from local to national level. This can be an indication that the EOC are working to improve communication between the head administration in Addis Ababa and the local congregations throughout the country.

My informant Nishan from Addis Ababa talked about *The Statistical Report*, which was released in 2008, and how it had affected the EOC. In her opinion, the statistic is what gave the EOC license to react to the decrease in members. She said the statistics showed the EOC that it had to change in order to maintain its members. Because of this, the EOC has started to design a new strategy, which Nishan said would focus on harder work to maintain members. This is in line with the changes I have mentioned in the previous sub chapters. A theory I heard while I was in Addis Ababa was that the EOC would start introducing more educational tools into activities like to choir practice, as a part of an ongoing new strategy to educate members. I have mentioned this theory before in the sub chapter on church activities. This is a change that can be seen as a counter reaction to what the EOC knows the EECMY is doing, and which can appear to be a part of the reason why the EECMY has grown.

The EOC is changing its structure and tightening the connection between the head office and the congregations. This can be seen as a signal that they are strengthening the defenses of the church. Even though they are the *great spiritual fortress*, as I have mentioned in the chapter on the historical background of the churches, they need to evaluate their current situation. Nishan was very open about the changes in the EOC and what she thought they meant, but none of the priests I talked to at the theological college would confirm anything. They did talk about how there had been some changes in the structure with the newly established national meetings, but they did not want to confirm if this was a part of a reaction to the growth of the EECMY. However, many of the members I talked to in the EOC were very open about how

the church was changing and that this could be related to the report showing a decrease of members in the EOC.

5.6.2 The EECMY

The EECMY started early on with a structure based on democratic principles and a close connection between the head office of the church and the congregations. They have been consistent in their strategy and their structure since they were allowed to operate freely after the military regime was ended in 1991. The structure and connection between the congregations and head office has been unaltered for a long time as the system and meetings on different levels was established at an early time. Iskander and Jima, the two members of the elder council in the EECMY in Boji, told me about how the system gave them the opportunity to be autonomous while in correlation with the official church policy. This corresponds well with the facilitation of aid and development work the EECMY has been involved in, giving each church the chance to involve itself with what is more beneficial for the congregation.

The EECMY have been accused of targeting other Christian groups when recruiting members. Several of the people I talked to in the EOC were convinced that this was the EECMY strategy to recruiting members. This was not confirmed by anyone in the clergy in the EECMY. They talked about the importance of turning people to God, stating that the most important objective is to spread Christianity. However, several of the members I talked to in the EECMY said they saw it as equally important to reach out to people who were Christian but had *lost sight of God*, as they put it. I tried asking Iskander and Jima directly what they thought was more important, converting people to Christianity or recruiting them to the EECMY. As they are a part of the clergy their answer has to reflect the official policy of the EECMY, which is that they are focusing on converting people to Christianity, but I will argue that because of the correlation between the increase in members in the EECMY and the decrease in members in the EOC, there might be some truth to what I heard from the members of the EECMY as well.

6 Summary and conclusion

In this thesis I have looked at competition between a religious minority group and a religious majority group, contextualized in the empirically based study of two church communities that coexist in Ethiopia. My hypothesis has been that the EOC has had to change because of the growth of the EECMY. I posed three questions to help me examine this hypothesis:

1. How has missionary funding influenced the EECMY and what effect has this had on the EOC?
2. How is theological education a big part of the EECMY and how has the EOC reacted to this?
3. How is missionary activity by the EECMY connected to conversion and how has the EOC reacted to this?

In this chapter I will examine if these three questions have been answered in the previous chapters, and whether or not my hypothesis is correct. I will discuss my findings and elaborate on the topics I have used in this study.

6.2 Summary and discussion

I have focused on two churches and two ethnic groups that have been presented in separate chapters. The two churches are different in many aspects, but have similarities that allows for a comparison. They are both Christian churches, they are both registered in the Ministry of Justice as religious groups and they have a known number of members that is recorded in *The Statistical Report*. The differences are important to understand as well, in order to see why the EOC might have been unwilling to change its strategy or structure for so long.

The EOC is a church with a long history and a deep connection to Ethiopia and it has relied on its status as an unchanged and consistent church. It is considered by the clergy in the EOC

to have been established in the time of Philip the Evangelist⁸⁷, who is recorded to have baptized an Ethiopian in the *Acts of the Apostles* in the Bible. Being constant and unchanged has become the characteristic of the EOC, which is why the church might be unwilling to change. The EOC has survived change for almost 2000 years, according to its own history, and started to see itself as the *great spiritual fortress* that could withstand pressure and threats from other religious groups. The competition between the EOC and the EECMY can be seen as precisely such a threat. Because the EOC has a history of overcoming these threats and not being weakened by it, as proven by the fact that it was the state church until the military regime dissolved the connection between the state and the church, the church has not had to reconsider or change because of external influences. However, this conflict has proven to have an effect on the EOC by decreasing their number of members. Due to this, the EOC has had to reconsider many aspects of its previous perception of itself as a church that is supposed to be unchangeable. The EECMY has represented modernity and change in Ethiopia. Because it is a young church in comparison to the EOC, it does not have the same historical foundation. It has become a church for the minority and the ethnic groups who have felt suppressed by the state and the EOC. They are in many ways the opposite of the EOC and one might even say in opposition to the EOC.

The federal state has to some extent highlighted some of the different ethnic groups in the country, giving them different positions in society and basing the regional lines on the biggest ethnic groups. Given that there are over 80 different ethnic groups in Ethiopia, it would appear that the federal arrangement has hindered rather than helped the ethnic groups gain some supremacy as they are still underrepresented in government institutions and other important organizations. The two ethnic groups in this study have been the Amhara and the Oromo. By portraying their different positions in the Ethiopian society, it is easier to understand some of the bias that is connected to them and the two churches. By introducing ethnic identity in the Ethiopian context, it became evident that ethnic identity and social status are connected. The Oromo are a big ethnic group, but does not have as much influence in society as the Amhara, who are the second biggest. As the Amhara grew stronger, other ethnic groups became aware of their ethnic identity as something opposed the Amhara. The Amhara are connected to the EOC, as many of the people who are high up in the hierarchy are

⁸⁷*The Holy Bible: 1611 Edition: King James Version. Acts. 8:26-40.*

Amhara. This has, as I have shown in the chapter on federalism, made the Amhara a powerful ethnic group, but other ethnic groups associated the term Amhara with the EOC and a regime the other ethnicities saw as suppressive.

In chapter 5, I used different topics to highlight different aspects of the conflict between the EOC and the EECMY. The topics were arranged to answer my three questions in connection to my hypothesis. The first topic was aid and missionary funds. The intention here was again to highlight the differences between the two churches. The funding is a part of what separates the two churches and what they can offer their members, and it is crucial in many of the following topics. This is the reason why I wanted to discuss this topic first. How the church finances its activities is important to examine in relation to both the fear of control and the possibilities foreign funding might offer. The fear of control was one of the reasons why the EOC did not want help for foreign missions; they wanted to be autonomous and was afraid that the funding would come with demands or a loss of Ethiopian leadership. The possibilities funding can provide are evident in the EECMY. But the funding does not only separate the churches in relation to budgets, it can also indicate a social and ethnic division between the churches.

The EECMY are being supported from foreign missions and are providing help to people in need in the rural areas in Ethiopia. Their members can be said to be of different ethnic and social groups than the members of the EOC. Many are poor and do not have the possibility of contributing funds to the church. Because of this, the EECMY have become dependent on the foreign funds. This can be problematic due to uncertain economic stability. If something were to happen that would prevent the missions from providing funds to the church, the church would have no means of income. Much of the aid and several of the development projects the EECMY are funding would have to stop and members would be affected. It can be interesting to question whether or not members would leave the church if it could no longer provide aid or fund development projects. The EECMY is built up on providing what the EOC cannot provide in terms of sermons in the native language of the members, a service where members are actively involved to the degree that members can preach more than the pastor during a service and an open and democratic institution where members can be involved in decision-

making. The church has many followers who are not members because of the help they are offered, but because they feel more at home in this church. I still think it is important to look at the funding critically, even though the financial situation seem to be stable for the foreign missions supporting the EECMY.

The second topic was theological education. The intention in this sub chapter was to show how the two churches prioritize theological education of their members differently and how this has affected the two churches. The EECMY has had a focus on educating its members and has used education to help spread the word of the church. The EOC has had a different approach to theological education, and has viewed it as something reserved for the clergy. Because they have used their educational platforms differently, they have achieved different results. The EOC have extensive libraries filled with the interpretive studies of theologians from the last centuries, but these are not open to the public. They have recently started opening these libraries to religious scholars from other countries that have come to study the EOC in general or the *Kebrā Nagast* in particular, but they are not open for the members to read. The EECMY have a membership base with a high general knowledge of the theology of the EECMY and how it differs from the EOC. Studying competition in relation to members and conversion shows that the result of the educational platform of the EECMY has had a bigger influence on its members than the educational platform of the EOC. However, this might be about to change due to a new strategy being developed by the EOC.

The third topic was church activities. The intention in this sub chapter was to examine the difference in activities provided by the churches, and linking it to missionary funds. Because the EECMY is funded by foreign missions, they have a budget that focuses on activities that can to some extent be categorized as aid. By showing the vast amount of development and aid work the EECMY offers in comparison to what activities the EOC offers, it becomes clear how funding influences the ability to provide activities. The topic of church activity was also intended to show how the EECMY have integrated theological education in many of their activities. Because of this, members who do not take part in Sunday school or other educational activities are still receiving some form of theological education. This can be through choir practice, an activity the EOC also offers its members. The difference is that the

EOC does not focus on education within this activity, like the EECMY. The activities are therefore related to the previous sub chapter on theological education and the following sub chapter on missionary activities.

The fourth topic was missionary activity. The intention in this sub chapter was to show how the two churches perceive missionary activities differently. Through examining what members of the two churches say about missionary activity, their attitude towards how a church should recruit new members becomes clear and another difference between the churches is emphasized. This also helps show how the EECMY has recruited members. By using theologically skilled members, the EECMY has grown tremendously, as indicated by Eide when he writes that the EECMY is the fastest growing church in Africa.⁸⁸ Because the EECMY have used several social platforms like the universities and public transportation, they have a wider range of contact with potential new members. The EOC has interpreted some of the EECMY's missionary activities as especially focused on their members, and are accusing the EECMY of targeting members of the EOC. Due to the EOC's perception of EECMY missionaries as aggressive and their experience of being targeted, the EOC has been forced to reconsider their attitude towards actively recruiting members. The EOC has to respond to the decrease in members by being more active in maintaining their current members and become more active in recruiting new members.

The fifth topic was conversions. The intention in this sub chapter was to look further into the link between the missionary activity and conversions, and how different age groups perceive conversion differently. Conversion is linked to missionary activity, which was indicated in the previous sub chapter. Because the EECMY have been accused of actively targeting members of the EOC, the EOC has interpreted their activities as stealing members. This is in correlation with their belief that the EECMY is actively using aid to bribe people to convert to the EECMY, as indicated in the sub chapter on aid and missionary funds. I argue that this reaction from the EOC can be an indication that the EOC is starting to realize that they need an internal review of their strategy in order to maintain their high number of members. The increase in conversions in Ethiopia can also be explained by looking at age groups and their

⁸⁸ Eide, *Revolution and Religion in Ethiopia*. p. 2.

view on conversion and other churches. I have shown that the younger generation has a less strict view on conversion than the older generation, which I argue is because of their age and lack of personal connection to historical events such as the military regime and their suppression of all religious expressions. Because the older generation had to fight for their right to a religious affiliation and expression, they are more protective of their church. The younger generation is more open to conversions, and this can be a part of the explanation of why there has been an increase in conversions during the last decade.

The sixth and last topic was official church policy and personal opinions. The intention in this sub chapter was to sum up the previously mentioned structural and strategic changes that have been more or less confirmed in my interviews. I argue that because of the indications I have confirmed is found in *The Statistical Report* concerning a correlation between the increase in members in the EECMY and the decrease in members in the EOC, there has been a reaction in EOC and they are now reviewing their strategy on how to maintain members. Another reaction within the EOC is the structural change to facilitate for better communication between the hade administration and the local congregations. They have established a structure with a national meeting which is held in relation to meetings on local levels in the congregations, in order to improve information circulation within the entire church. I argue that this is an indication that the EOC has reevaluate their identity as the *great spiritual fortress*, and admit they need to make changes in order to maintain their status as the biggest church in Ethiopia.

6.3 Conclusion

My hypothesis has been that the EOC has had to change because of the growth of the EECMY. I will go through the three questions I posed in the introduction in order to provide an answer.

1. How has missionary funding influenced the EECMY and what effect has this had on the EOC?

Missionary funding has provided the EECMY with the power and capital to become a strong competitor in the religious market in Ethiopia. Because of the funding from foreign mission, they have been able to provide aid services to their members and quickly build churches and establish themselves in new areas. They can meet demands from their members without financial worries, which is especially important because many of their members are from poor areas where financial contributions from members to the church are low. The EOC has had a strictly negative attitude towards funding from abroad, because they see it as bribery and a sign of weak social conscience to offer aid to members. The EOC has been confronted with the power of money both in relation to what activities the church can offer and how it can help build a more personal relationship between the clergy and the members. I will argue that a personal relationship between clergy and laypeople can strengthen the member's bond to the church, which might be a reason why the EECMY is growing and the EOC has a decreasing number of members.

2. How is theological education a big part of the EECMY and how has the EOC reacted to this?

Theological education is a big part of the EECMY in the sense that it is incorporated in most of the church's activities and has given the EECMY a large group of members with a theological knowledge that surpasses the theological knowledge of a regular member of the EOC. The EECMY was able to expand in Ethiopia due to the education they offered their members as a part of the nationwide literacy campaign started by Haile Selassie I in 1962. Theological education was also a big part of the EECMY as they are concerned with educating their members from an early age to understand the difference between the EECMY and the EOC. The EOC has not had an official reaction, but I found there to be many changes in their activities, such as the establishment of a magazine and a news paper, night classes for members who want to educate themselves on their faith and a focus on integrating theological

education in activities such as choir practice. These are changes I have demonstrated to have a clear connection to the activities and growth of the EECMY.

3. How is missionary activity by the EECMY connected to conversion and how has the EOC reacted to this?

Missionary activities by the EECMY have been successful in recruiting new members and can be said to be a direct result of the theological education of members. Because the EECMY have been so active in finding and recruiting new members by the use of local missionaries, they have had a tremendous growth. The EOC has reacted to this with a negative attitude towards missionary activities, but I found indications that the EOC are going through internal changes both structurally and strategically. An example of these changes is how the EOC has started to organize annual meetings on national and local level to improve the communication between the head administration and the congregations. The EOC has also started to design a new strategy which will focus on harder work to maintain current members and a different focus on who to recruit new members. This is in contrast with their negative attitude towards missionary activities, but because of the surprising and drastic decrease in members, the EOC are in fact starting to change their practice.

This proves my hypothesis is correct: the EOC *has* had to change because of the growth of the EECMY. To be more specific; the EOC has made changes in their structure, their theological education and their view on recruiting members, among other things, proving that the growth of the EECMY has enforced a change in the EOC.

6.4 Future research

This is a study of a religious minority group and its effect on a religious majority group. This field of study is very interesting and relevant in today's pluralistic and diverse society. Even though this is a religious history thesis, the topic is relevant in other fields of study such as minority studies and area studies in Sub-Saharan Africa.

For future studies on this topic, there is a need for a more in-depth and long-term study of the competition between the EOC and the EECMY. This is a study of both Ethiopia as well as a study of the relationship between a religious minority group and a religious majority group. My thesis provides a description of parts of the conflict and indicates some aspects of the competition; further study will need to examine the situation more thoroughly, preferably with a quantitative study of the entire country.

Bibliography

Ahmed, Hussein. "Coexistence and/or Confrontation?: Towards a Reappraisal of Christian-Muslim Encounter in Contemporary Ethiopia." *Journal of Religion in Africa* 36, no. 1 (2006): 4-22.

Arén, Gustav. *Evangelical Pioneers in Ethiopia: Origins of the Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus*. Örebro: Libris, 1978.

Barth, Fredrik. *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries*. Oslo: Universitets Forlaget, 1970.

Binns, John. "Theological Education in the Ethiopian Orthodox Church." *Journal of Adult Theological Education* 2, no. 2 (2007): 103-13.

Cowley, Roger W. *Ethiopian Biblical Interpretation: A Study in Exegetical Tradition and Hermeneutics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988.

Crummey, Donald. "The Ethiopian Orthodox Tawahedo Church." *Cambridge History of Christianity: Eastern Christianity* (2006): 457-62.

Donham, Donald L., and Wendy James. *The Southern Marches of Imperial Ethiopia: Essays in History and Social Anthropology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986.

EECMY. "Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus." <http://www.eecmy.org>.
Access date 02.10.12.

Eide, Øyvind. *Revolution and Religion in Ethiopia: The Growth and Persecution of the Mekane Yesus Church 1974-85*. Oxford: James Currey Ltd, 2000.

Furuli, Rolf. *Kebrä Nagast: Ethiopiernes Hellige Bok*. Oslo: Bokklubben, 2008.

The Holy Bible: 1611 Edition: King James Version. Peabody, Mass. : Hendrickson, 2010.

"International Religious Freedom Report 2010." edited by U.S. Department of State: Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, 2010. Access date 25.02.13.

Ismagilova, Rosa. "Ethnicity and Federalism: The Case of Ethiopia." *Africa: Rivista trimestrale di studi e documentazione dell'Istituto italiano per l'Africa e l'Oriente* 59, no. 2 (2004): 179-200.

Kaplan, Steven. "Themes and Methods in the Study of Conversion in Ethiopia: A Review Essay." *Journal of Religion in Africa* 34, no. 3 (August 2004): 373-92.

Levine, Donald N. "Ethiopia's Nationhood Reconsidered." *Análise Social* 46, no. 199 (2011): 311-27.

———. *Wax and Gold. Tradition and Innovation in Ethiopian Culture*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965.

Lewis, Martin W. "Religious Change and Tension in Ethiopia."

<http://www.geocurrents.info/cultural-geography/religion-change-and-tension-in-ethiopia>. Access date 08.11.13.

Lovise Aalen, Kjetil Tronvoll. "The 2008 Ethiopian Local Elections: The Return of Electoral Authoritarianism." *African Affairs* 108, no. 430 (Januar 2009): 111-20.

———. "The End of Democracy? Curtailing Political and Civil Rights in Ethiopia." *Review of African Political Economy* 36, no. 120 (2009): 193-207.

Mark Chaves, David E. Cann. "Regulation, Pluralism, and Religious Market Structure: Explaining Religion's Vitality." *Rationality and Society* 4, no. 3 (July 1992): 272-90.

Mengisteab, Kidane. "Ethiopia's Ethinc-Based Federalism: 10 Years Later." *African Issues* 29, no. 1&2, Ethnicity and Recent Democratic Experiments in Africa (2001): 20-25.

Olson, Daniel V. A. "Why Do Smaller Religious Groups Have More Committed Members?".
Review of Religious Research 49, no. 4 (June 2008): 353-78.

Roger Finke, Rodney Stark. *Acts of Faith: Explaining the Human Side of Religion* Berkeley,
California: University of California Press, 2000.

———. "Religious Choice and Competition." *American Sociological Review* 63, no. 5
(October 1998): 761-66.

Rosmer, Tilde. "Bedre Førre Var ... Om Det Å Forberede Seg Til Feltarbeid." Chap. 2 In
Kulturvitenskap I Felt, Metodiske Og Pedagogiske Erfaringer, edited by Anders
Gustavsson. Kristiansand: Høyskoleforlaget, 2005.

"Summary and Statistical Report of the 2007 Population and Housing Census: Population
Size by Age and Sex." edited by The Office of the Census Commission. Addis Ababa:
The Central Statistical Agency, 2008. Access date 08.02.13.

Tuso, Hamdesa. "Minority Education in Ethiopia." *Africa: Rivista trimestrale di studi e
documentazione dell'Istituto italiano per l'Africa e l'Oriente* 37, no. 3 (September
1982): 270-93.

Ullendorff, Edward. *Ethiopian and the Bible*. London: Oxford University Press, 1968.

———. *The Ethiopians: An Introduction to Country and People*. 3rd edition ed. London:
Oxford University Press, 1973.

Zewde, Bahru. *A History of Modern Ethiopia 1855-1991*. Second ed. Oxford: James Currey,
2002.

Attachment 1: List of informants

Informant 1: Pseudonym: Qes Assefa

Male; 55 years old; pastor; EECMY. Interview conducted 20.09.12 in Gimbi.

Informant 2: Pseudonym: Bekele

Male; 32 years old; studying to become a pastor; converted from Islam to Christianity and is now a member of the EECMY. Interview conducted 20.09.12 in Gimbi.

Informant 3: Pseudonym: Desta

Male; 25 years old; studying to become a pastor; EECMY. Interview conducted 20.09.12 in Gimbi.

Informant 4: Pseudonym: Gabra

Female; 23 years old; studying to become a pastor; EECMY. Interview conducted 20.09.12 in Gimbi.

Informant 5: Pseudonym: Hagos

Female; 21 years old; studying to become a pastor; EECMY. Interview conducted 20.09.12 in Gimbi.

Informant 6: Pseudonym: Iskander

Male; 53 years old; Elder; EECMY. Interview conducted 22.09.12 in Boji.

Informant 7: Pseudonym: Jima

Male; 57 years old; Elder; EECMY. Interview conducted 22.09.12 in Boji.

Informant 8: Pseudonym: Qes Kafa

Male; 48 years old; pastor; EECMY. Interview conducted 24.09.12 in Boji.

Informant 9: Pseudonym: Lebna

Female; 35 years old; no religious affiliation, but was taken to both an Orthodox church and a Protestant church as a child by her mother an aunt, her family is made up of both Orthodox and Protestant believers. Interview conducted 06.10.12 in Addis Ababa.

Informant 10: Pseudonym: Martin

Male; 52 years old; scholar of theology at the Holy Trinity College in Addis Ababa; converted from the Anglo-Saxon church to the Ethiopian Orthodox Church; English. Interview conducted 12.10.12 in Addis Ababa.

Informant 11: Pseudonym: Nishan

Female; 44 years old; journalist; EOC. Interview conducted 13.10.12 in Addis Ababa.

Informant 12: Pseudonym: Qes Mihret

Male; 46 years old; pastor; EECMY. Interview conducted 15.10.12 in Addis Ababa.

Informant 13: Pseudonym: Qes Ogbai

Male; 57 years old; high up in the hierarchy in the Holy Trinity College in Addis Ababa; EOC. Interview conducted 20.10.12 in Addis Ababa.

Informant 14: Pseudonym: Per

Male; 70 years old; previous missionary; Lutheran; Norwegian. No formal interview conducted, but we had many conversations between 17.09.12 and 14.10.12 in Gimbi, Boji and Addis Ababa.

Informant 15: Pseudonym: Rahad

Male; 58 years old; got HIV and was kicked out of the EOC by his priest, met the priest again while teaching a course in HIV and was accepted back in the church; EOC. Conversation during an informal lunch at restaurant 09.10.12 in Addis Ababa.

Informant 16: A group of Ethiopian women in Norway

Females; 33-48 years old; a part of the Ethiopian Diaspora in Norway; EOC. Conversation at café, 07.02.13 in Oslo, Norway.

Attachment 2: Topic guide

Question topics:

- Your relation to your church
 - o How/when was it established
 - By who?
 - o How close are you to your church and how often do you go?
- Your relation to other churches
 - o Any conflicts (open or hidden)
 - o Personal feelings towards other churches
 - o Especially if converted
- Your view on church policy concerning recruiting new members
 - o Your own church
 - o Other churches
 - o Rumors about “unfair play”?
 - o Where do most people convert to/from?
 - People you know?
- Statement: “There are almost no conversions from the protestant church to the orthodox church”
 - o Comments or thoughts?

Attachment 3: Map of Ethiopia



This is a map of Ethiopia with my travel route marked out in black.⁸⁹

⁸⁹ This map was retrieved from www.vidiani.com, an internet page with free access to maps that are not subject to copyright.