Contextualizing Church Planting among the Oromo Society: With particular Reference to the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus (EECMY)

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By Tesso Djaleta Djaldessa

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Abstract

This thesis aims to explore and analyse the success of the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus (EECMY) strategy for Church Planting among the Oromo community in the wider social and cultural context of Ethiopia in general, and Oromia in particular. Since the 1970s the Church has made considerable efforts to effectively evangelize the diverse unevangelized peoples of Ethiopia and to create new Christian communities in their own cultural and religious contexts by developing what the EECMY calls 'Church Planting strategies'. I argue that EECMY Church planting has been only partially successful in that, while the EECMY has approximately three million Oromo members, after one hundred and ten years of its evangelism in Ethiopia, the main reasons for this growth have been due to existing Church members having children and through members of other Christian denominations joining the EECMY. The expansion of the EECMY has mostly not been among Oromo people unacquainted with Christianity. This thesis, therefore, carefully examines and analyzes why and how EECMY Church Planting has been ineffective among the vast majority of Oromo people.

Findings from my fieldwork demonstrate a number of reasons for the lack of success of Church planting among the Oromo people. Notable examples include: Oromos' strong preservation of their culture and tradition, fear of the persistent Ethiopian Orthodox Church (EOC), persecution of evangelical Christians and the EECMY mission approach, EOC collaboration with the suppressive Abyssinian colonial system and the Western missionary cultural influence which was adopted and is still being practised by the EECMY. This study argues that a combination of a high regard for traditional Oromo culture and religion and widespread negative experiences of Christianity as a religion of repression and colonization has left many Oromo people feeling alienated from, and afraid of, Christianity.

Recognizing the current ineffective nature of the EECMY's Church planting strategies, this research then seeks to make a response by constructing alternative, contextually informed Church Planting approaches which do not disregard Oromo language, culture or tradition. In order to achieve this, the thesis develops contextual methods of mission, notably a 'translation' model of contextualization. A contextually appreciative approach to mission, it is argued, will in turn help to change perceptions of Christianity among the Oromo people and open up opportunities for a more successful mission praxis among Oromos.

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Contents

Introduction

0.1 Background to and motivation for the research

This thesis aims to critically evaluate existing evangelistic mission in the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus (EECMY). In particular, it seeks to examine their 'Church planting' strategies. Although recognizing that Church planting has had some success in Ethiopia more widely, it has nevertheless largely failed to engage with the Oromo people in particular. Given this situation, this thesis seeks to understand more about Oromo culture and traditions, through fieldwork, in order to develop a more contextually sensitive and appropriate mission strategy for Church Planting among the Oromo people. The Oromo have been 'mission targets' for the Ethiopian Orthodox Church (EOC), Western evangelical missionaries and the EECMY for many years. Historically, the EOC has approached the evangelism of the Oromo people with the strategy of political expansion and subjugation as a part of Abyssinian colonization and, therefore, has undermined their strong socio-cultural values and language (Eide, 2000, 6; Staffan, 2000, 18; Aren, 1999, 19).

With the help of the western evangelical missionaries, the EECMY has also engaged in Church planting which involves evangelism accompanied by the establishment of facilities to provide educational and social action through which the Church might support its programme of evangelizing the Oromo people (Sadi, 2003, 133; Aren, 1978, 424-429). More importantly, since the 1970s the Church has moved to develop further Church planting methodologies and plans to evangelize among the non-evangelized diversified communities of Ethiopia including the Oromo people (EECMY MS Articles 5:3 and 5: 8). I argue that the EECMY Church planting has been successful to some extent in that it has reached approximately three million Oromos after 110 years of missionary activity (EECMY DMT 2009, 50; Ujulu, 1999, 47). However, I further argue that the strategy of the Church has not been successful among non-evangelized Oromo people, if tested against its objectives and Church planting targets, since millions of unreached people in Oromia and beyond have not yet been evangelized.

The project arises out of my own ministerial experiences and personal observations as an ordained minister within the EECMY, working in various areas of evangelistic ministries for the last two decades at local, regional (Synod) and national Church levels. In particular, during my EECMY evangelistic outreach ministry, I was personally conversing with different Christian and non-Christian Oromo individuals and communities and from that it appeared that there was a lack of success in Church Planting, particularly among the adherents of the traditional Oromo religion (OTR) '*Waaqeffannaa'.* Based on this, I developed my preliminary hypothesis that Church planting was not successful among the non-Christian Oromos, particularly members of '*Waaqeffannaa'.* In this thesis I seek to explore why and how this has occurred, given that a number of EECMY Church planting strategies over a number of decades have been developed with the objective of enhancing the evangelistic outreach ministry among Ethiopians more widely and the Oromo people in particular.

I came to the project perceiving that in the south-western part of Oromia, where I was born, because evangelical Church planting is a century old, its growth has been successful in comparison with other areas of Oromia (central, north, south and south east) in the EECMY. I, thus, primarily aimed to share the relatively better experience of the south-west with the rest of the Oromia regions. Conversely, I soon learnt from my reading and fieldwork that Church Planting had also been unsuccessful in the south-western regions of Oromia, particularly in the border areas of the west and south-west. The collaboration of the EOC with Abyssinian cultural suppression as well as the western evangelical missionaries' foreign, cultural influence and their western version of Christianity have been significant factors in the lack of successful Church planting among the Oromo people as will be discussed in chapter four. Despite developing its strategic plan, the existing EECMY Church planting approach itself has also lacked success among the un-reached Oromos.

0.2 Rationale and aims of the project

The purpose of the project is to evaluate the existing evangelistic strategies in the EECMY which attempt both to communicate the Gospel and to plant Churches in ways that make sense to both the un-evangelized Oromos and to the whole Oromo community within their cultural and religious context. It also explores reasons for the lack of success of these existing Church planting approaches among unreached

Oromo people and develops an approach to Church planting that is more fully shaped and informed by theories of contextualization.

The specific aims of this thesis are:

- To critically evaluate existing approaches to Church Planting in the EECMY among Oromo society.
- To examine Oromo culture and religion and the impact of its current revival in order to develop a contextualized approach to Church Planting.
- To pursue a critical exploration of how the Christian Gospel and Church planting could be contextualized among Oromo society and the role of the existing Church in this process.
- To develop an approach to Church planting that takes into account the role and significance of contextualization.

These four aims provide an outline of the chapters of the thesis as I seek to explore and understand the failures of Church Planting among the Oromo people and then to construct a more culturally sensitive and appropriate Church Planting strategy. The chapter structure will be outlined in more detail shortly. Before that, however, it is important in this introduction to define some of the key terminology that will be used throughout the thesis.

0.3 Defining key terms

0.3.1 Contextualization

The word contextualization is derived from the Latin word *contextus*, conveying the idea of weaving together. Contextualization takes place when an ideology from one culture is intertwined perfectly into another culture. Contextualization is, therefore, part of an evolving course of thought that correlates the Gospel and church to a specific context in time and place. In other words, ccontextualization may be defined as the process by which the Gospel takes root in a specific socio-cultural context. According to Whiteman, therefore, 'Contextualization attempts to communicate the Gospel in word and deed to establish the church in ways that make sense to people within their local cultural context, presenting Christianity in such a way that it meets people's deepest needs and penetrates their worldview, thus allowing them to follow Christ and remain within their culture' (1997, 2). The contextualization of theology entails an understanding of Christian faith from a particular context. Diverse authors approach the issue of contextual theology from different viewpoints. Bevans defines

contextual theology as 'experiences of the past' and 'experiences of the present' (2004, 7). The experiences of the past embrace the Scriptures and Bible–based Christian traditions that have been conserved. Experiences of the present take into consideration experience that is personal, communal and cultural within a social location, and subject to social change (Bevans, 2004, 5-7). Such a concept of contextual theology would allow everyone to participate equally, bringing a balance of various Christian praxes into theological formation.

The theological foundation for contextualization is, 'the fact that the Son of God was incarnated within a specific human history and culture, through which grace has been made available to all' human beings (Parratt, 2004, 9; see Gilliland, 1989, 65). This is a fundamental foundation for contextually translating the Gospel message and Christian tradition into the receptors' cultural settings. Whiteman argues, '…unless we present the Gospel locally in ways that connect to peoples' language, culture and worldview, we will fail in our efforts at world evangelization' (1997, 5). Therefore, to be able to contextualize the gospel message for Church Planting in a given culture, a good understanding of the language, culture and worldview will be vital (Hesselgrave and Rommen, 1989, Xi). To be more specific in my case, contextualization further refers to the process whereby the Gospel message is presented in an incarnational/ interpretive manner with reference to the methodology of translating and inculturating Christianity in a given Oromo culture and socio-economic life-style and where the people clearly understand the message in their own language and culture.

0.3.2 Church planting

Church planting has been defined as 'evangelizing non-Christians to conversion and salvation through witness of the Gospel and creating new communities of Christian believers as the core part of God's mission to express his kingdom among their own society'(EECMY MS, 2000, 2). This implies a process of multiplying new believers and may seem to imply a traditional process of Church planting. In this thesis, however, Church planting is also used to mean strategies for converting non-Christians by attempting to inculturate Gospel values and by interpreting Christianity into the Oromos' language, cultural expressions, thought forms and worldviews. This

in turn leads to new believers coming together to create a new church community which may have mutual relations with the existing church. In this context, a church simply refers to a Christian community which devotes itself to communal life, practises worship in its own cultural style with its own musical instruments, preaches and teaches the Word of God through the people's own language and cultural expressions and administers the sacraments amongst its members.

Taking the Oromos' socio-cultural and religious practices into account I, therefore, explore approaches to the contextualization of Church planting as a mission strategy within relevant and contemporary approaches to contextualization in other parts of Africa. I then propose a way forward where I critically reflect on and develop a number of different approaches - theological, translation, interpretation, inculturation and pastoral - in order that they may be utilized as contextual Church planting strategies among the Oromo people (cf. Bosch 2005, 447, 483; Hesselgrave, 1989, 32, 98).

0.4 The plan of the thesis

The thesis is organized into five chapters, which seek to fulfil the four aims of the thesis described above. The first chapter is in two parts; it explores the social, cultural and religious context of the Oromo people within the wider political and ecclesiastical settings of an Ethiopian context for the purpose of understanding their culture and traditions. The chapter also examines the history of the development of the EECMY and its evangelistic ministry. It shows how the EECMY's Church planting strategies have failed to take seriously the culture and traditions of the Oromo people.

The second chapter analyses a historical survey of the EOC and European colonial mission approaches employed among Oromos and the non-western world respectively using literature by both western and African missiologists, along with the very few Ethiopian historians and theologians. The colonial approach to mission spreads Christianity by compelling the colonized people to convert, thinking that its culture and way of life is better than that of the recipients (see Pears, 2010, 8-9; Parratt, 2004, 4). This model has been employed by the EOC and by western missionaries and still largely shapes the EECMY's approach to mission in a variety

of ways. I also engage with important studies on mission practices in Africa more widely, including the work of David J. Bosch, Andrew F. Walls, John Parratt, as well as Oyvind M. Eide, Johnny Bakke and Gustav Aren (Western Lutheran missionary writers) as well as Tadesse Tamrat (an Ethiopian historian) for a wider Ethiopian context. However, there is a great lack of literature from Ethiopian and Oromo writers and theologians, which means that fieldwork becomes a key research methodology in this thesis.

The third chapter introduces the fieldwork as the primary methodology for my research. The chapter gives a rationale for engaging in fieldwork in order both to understand existing practices in Church planting and to identify areas for future development based on the language, culture, needs and context of people in Oromia. It also discusses the locations for fieldwork and the nature of the respondents. I then outline and evaluate the research methods (observation, interviews and journal keeping) used to gather data.

Drawing on the fieldwork, the fourth chapter aims to examine the objectives and planning of the EECMY Church planting initiatives and to identify and examine the reasons for their lack of success among the non-evangelized Oromo people within the EECMY evangelistic ministry. It discusses the reasons for this lack of success which include the cultural suppression by the EOC and the western missionaries. It also examines the EECMY Church planting approaches which also excluded the use of the indigenous language in most Oromo regions for practising Christianity within the people's socio-cultural context.

The fifth chapter demonstrates the importance of contextualizing Church planting strategies for the unevangelized Oromo community. It assesses the theoretical framework of contextualization and discusses the process of developing the translation model. The chapter makes some proposals for a contextualized approach to Church planting among the Oromo people. These include contextualizing the communication of the Gospel message and the EECMY Christian tradition into the Oromo language and culture, thus enabling the Oromo people to hear the Gospel message in their own language, and according to their socio-cultural perceptions.

Overall, this thesis contends that, despite the experiences of the unevangelized Oromo people - intense intimidation (bullying) by political domination, western cultural values and theological influences - so that they have not welcomed the EECMY Church planting in the past, we may hope that the suggested contextual strategies might encourage them to accept EECMY evangelical Christianity and transform their social and cultural way of life.

Chapter One

Oromo society, culture and religion, and western evangelical Christianity and EECMY traditional Church planting strategy

Introduction

In this chapter I seek to explain the historical, social, political, cultural and religious context of the Oromo people in order to deconstruct existing models of mission and to reconstruct alternative models. This will include a number of areas: the origin of the people and their language, their cultural and religious patterns, how historically the western evangelical Christianity reached them and how the EECMY was established. Mission strategies employed by both missionaries and the EECMY for Church planting purposes, among the Oromo people will also be explored. As the main objective of the project is to critically evaluate the mission strategy of the EECMY among the Oromo people and to develop a contextual strategy of Church planting for the community, these issues are important in this chapter for establishing the historical and contemporary context. Without some knowledge of the wider context (historical, social, cultural, political and religious), it would be difficult to understand the traditional mission strategy of the Church and suggest some feasible Church planting strategies for the future. Hence, it is imperative to get a sense of the general situation of the Oromo people and their socio-cultural values before embarking on a historical survey of the EECMY mission practices among the people.

1.1 Oromo society, culture and religion

1.1.1 The Oromo people

The Oromo tribe is the largest group both in Ethiopia and the Horn of Africa with an estimated 50% of the Ethiopian population being Oromo (Knutson, 1997, 31; Cooper, 1996, 22; Bulcha, 1995, 1; Gamta, 1994, 9). The Oromo people have lived on their land, Oromia, for many centuries. Oromia is the largest region-state of present-day Ethiopia, covering an area of over 600,000 sq. km (Guta, 2003, 2).

There are four major people groups in present-day Ethiopia: Cushitic, Semitic, Omotic and Nilotic (Ullendorff, 1978, 39). According to Melba, an Oromo writer, of these four families the Cushitic groups were the earliest ancient inhabitants in east Africa (1983, 5). Linguistic evidence shows that the present Cushitic peoples could

be descendants of the ancient Cushites of northeast Africa from where they moved towards the south and southeast regions of the Horn of Africa (Haile, 2006, 19). As Haile, an Oromo anthropologist, in his book on the history of the Oromo people suggests, this movement may have resulted in the formation of four major branches of Cushitic speakers with a total of approximately 23 classified languages (2006, 15; see Bartels, 1983, 19). Further, Melba notes that 'the Oromo were a very ancient race, the indigenous stock, perhaps, on which most other peoples in this part of eastern Africa have been grafted' (1988, 5). This notion could be said to justify the observation of a French Catholic missionary that Oromo is a 'great African nation' (Salviac in Kenno, 2008, 1). However, as observed earlier, Oromos are socially, culturally and religiously related to the tribes of the Cushitic family rather than to the other three families. There is no suggestion that the Oromo people are related in any way to the Semitic, Omotic and Nilotic families, except through marriage and the influence that comes from sharing the same geographical boundaries in the integrated modern-day Ethiopia.

Although there are many theories regarding the homeland of the Oromo people, Hassen, an Oromo historian, observes that the Oromo were among the indigenous people of Ethiopia who had lived in the central and southern parts of the country for many centuries (1990, xiii). Furthermore, the latest studies argue that there is geographical and linguistic evidence that the Oromo lived in the northern highlands of the country even before the arrival of the Semitic groups (Haile, 2006, 45). The existence of the ancient names and places of the Oromo people may justify this argument. Traditionally, the Oromo people named the places where they lived after the names of clans and tribes. For example, Barentu in present day Eritrea is probably named after the Oromo tribe Barentuma or Barentu (Haile, 2006, 45). Today, the existence of clans and tribes of the Raya and Wallo Oromo groups of the Barentuma branch in this same vicinity makes Haile's view very probable, along with Monroe's statement on the primitive inhabitants of the highland of Abyssinia.

> The primitive inhabitants of the Abyssinian highlands would seem to have been peoples of Hermetic [Cushitic] stock, racially and linguistically akin to the Dankali (Afar) and Somalia people to East and South East [Ethiopia] and to the tribes of the Nubian desert to the North West (1970, 7).

From this evidence, one may argue that the Oromo people undoubtedly lived in most parts of present day Ethiopia including the northwest, west, south and southeast as they were the largest tribes among the indigenous stock of the Cushitic groups.

According to Monroe, however, the Oromo people were politically oppressed by the Semitic group who were later identified as Abyssinians. Monroe further suggests that these Abyssinians came from southern Arabia in approximately 1000 BC and settled on the Red Sea coast and northern parts of present day Ethiopia (1970, 7). Notably, from the 7th century they moved further south and gradually invaded and took much of the original Oromo lands by force. Consequently, the Cushitic groups in general, and the Oromo people, in particular, were obliged to move to other areas away from their original lands (Wayessa, 2003, 17).

According to recent research by the Oromia Culture and Tourism Institute, from the early 12th to 15th century the two Oromo confederacies (Boranna and Barentuma) reinforced their traditional *Gadaa*[1] political system with new regulations for the purpose of regaining their lost territories (Haile, 2006, 107; see Hassen, 1994, xii). Justifying this statement, Haile, writes that in the 16th century the Oromo people regained and further extended their original homelands through this movement (2006, 100-110; see Braukamper, 2002, 81). The people then lived as an independent nation with their *Gadaa* system which contributed greatly to preserving their culture and language and led to their becoming a strong community in Ethiopia (Amanu, 2008, 28). However, according to Jalata, an Oromo historian, towards the end of the 19th century on the eve of European colonization, and during their major empire expansion the Abyssinians colonized the Oromos and incorporated them into newly established modern-day Ethiopia, with the help of European advisors and modern weapons (1994, 2). Since then Ethiopian rulers have oppressed the Oromo people and attempted to destroy their traditional leadership (*Gadaa*), religious practices and language, and to replace them with their own (Guta, 2003, 55) as will be seen in chapters two and four.

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[1] See 1.1.3 and Appendix 1 for an explanation of *Gadaa*

1.1.2 Oromo Language

The mother tongue of the Oromo people, *Oromiffa*, is claimed to be one of the 23 Cushitic languages spoken by a single majority of the Cushitic peoples of Ethiopia (Haile, 2006, 10-11, 15, 19; Bartels, 1983, 19). More than two-thirds of the speakers of the Cushitic languages are Oromo or speak *Oromiffa*. Linguistic evidence shows that of the Cushitic languages, the Somali and Konso languages are closest to the Oromo language in sharing 60% and 50% of common words respectively (Wayessa, 2005, 25). There are also about five regional Oromo dialects which have gradually developed among the people. In general, *Oromiffa* seems to be a *lingua franca* predominately in the southern and western half of Ethiopia (such as Haran, Anuak, Gumuz, Barta, Sidama, Gurage, etc,) and north-eastern Kenya, used by several ethnic groups as a means of trade and communication (Melba, 1983, 13-16).

Taking the number of speakers and the geographic area it covers into account, the Oromo language probably rates third (after Arabic and Hausa) among the most widely spoken indigenous languages in Africa and also the third largest Afro-Asiatic language in the world (Gragg and Kumsa, 1992, 97). As has been noted by linguists and social anthropologists, *Oromiffa* is rich in many senses. Gragg, for example, observes that 'the Oromo are a very 'verbal' and word-oriented people with a vast, rich and at times densely lyrical oral literature' (1982, VI). Accordingly, the Oromo people claim an extraordinarily rich heritage of proverbs, stories, songs and riddles in their language (Simeso, 2005, 9). There is also a wide range of plant, animal, place, mountain, river, road and town names in the Oromo language. All these naming activities in the Oromo language have further developed cultural images, symbols and identities of the Oromo people (Tolessa, 1999, 74). In spite of its importance as a vernacular language widely spoken in the Horn of Africa, *Oromiffa* today lacks a developed literature. Both the language policy of the Ethiopian successive governments and socio-cultural history of the Oromo people are responsible for this state of affairs.

The Abyssinians ruthlessly suppressed the culture and language of the Oromo people and introduced their own at the expense of the local culture and language of the people, particularly up until the last Marxist regime (1991) (Wayessa, 2003, 23). Until comparatively recently the language policy of the country discouraged the use

of languages other than Amharic (Breezy, 2001, 25). Indeed, Oromo literature was also completely forbidden in Ethiopia (Tolessa, 1999, 2). Consequently, except for some basic written materials, there has been virtually no Oromo-related literature produced for the last 100 years (Negaso, 1983, 57). In the absence of Oromo literature, Abyssinian colonialist literature has attacked Oromo history, arts, education, culture, language, religion, naming systems and social institutions (Tolessa, 1999, 71). Baxter, a Scottish anthropologist, further argues that the Oromos are 'one of the most numerous and productive nations of Africa,' but due to the lack of literature their existence as a people is 'hardly known at all' to the outside world (in Tolessa, 1981, v). As I have argued, such ignorance has partly been due to the policies of successive Abyssinian rulers which have actively sought to assimilate the culture and language of the people.

Such a cultural assimilation of Oromo people and the absence of written literature seem to be among the reasons for the diversity in *Oromiffa* dialects. Arguably, the Abyssinians have superficially recognized these regional dialects as different languages both for their 'divide and rule' political ends on the one hand, and in order to undermine the Oromo language on the other. This may have resulted in the continued existence of the distinctive dialects (Hassen, 1998, 187). Despite such a severe oppressive Amharaization policy, a few educated Oromos and western missionaries, as well as social anthropologists, started writing some Oromo literature from the second half of the nineteenth century (Wayessa, 2003, 26; Bulcha, 2002, 75). For example, the Oromo linguist Hordofa, wrote that Onesimos Nesib and the young woman Aster Ganno who were freed Oromo slaves and educated at the first missionary school established at Massawa, outside Oromia, translated the Bible and other educational literature into the western Oromo dialect from 1883 to 1898 using the Sabean [Amharic] scripts (1999, 5; c.f. Bulcha, 1995, 41-42; Bartels, 1983, 167; Aren, 1978, 73). Religious and non-religious songs, dictionaries, stories, proverbs, poems and books have also been printed under severely restricted conditions. However, they were not openly used, nor has there been opportunity to build on the literary foundations that were laid down during the last two decades of the 19th century (Horoo, 2008, 23).

Nevertheless, many of those who contributed to the Oromo literature repeatedly asserted that the Sabean (Amharic) script was not adequate to express the Oromo language well. An Italian scholar, Cerulli, who attempted to write in *Oromiffa* using both Sabean and Latin scripts, expressed the shortcomings of the Sabean script saying,

> to express the sounds of Galla [Oromo] language with letters of the Sabean [Amharic] alphabet which express very imperfectly even the sounds of the Ethiopian language, is very near impossible …reading Galla language written in Amharic alphabet is very like deciphering a secret writing (in Melba, 1983, 10).

Similarly Demie, another Oromo linguist, argues that one of the many weaknesses of using the *Geez* script to write *Oromiffa* has to do with the seven vowels of the *Geez* alphabet that do not have sounds to represent the ten vowels of *Oromiffa* (1995, 26). A scientific study which considered the nature and the characteristics of the Oromo language and its policy, as well as the adult literacy programme of the present Oromia regional state, has also reached a similar conclusion (Bulcha, 1990, 13). Consequently, Latin script has recently been adopted to write down a single common dialect since 1993 and has been officially used for the whole *Oromiffa* script. One obvious advantage of this is that an Oromo child, who has learned his/her own alphabet in Latin script, albeit with adaptations, can learn the Latin script required for English in a relatively short period of time without any additional burden. According to Gamta, an Oromo linguist, another practical advantage of using Latin script is its adaptability to computer technology which gives Latin script 'an age (sic) over even the simplest of syllabic writing' (1994, 10). Yet one may ask whether this is simply substituting one inadequate colonial system for another. However, the above advantages of the Latin script for the Oromos' own context chosen by their own conviction and also used for English, a language many countries of the world have adopted as their vernacular, make this a better choice than the narrower local oppressive language.

In conclusion, the determined effort for almost a century to destroy the Oromo language and replace it with the Amharic language has been mostly ineffectual (Simeso, 2005, 18). Further, the Oromo language has developed greatly from an oral home dialect to a written public language and has been consolidated as a common dialect in the regional state of Oromia and beyond. However, most of the foreign

missionaries, like the Abyssinian EOC mission before them, have also disregarded the Oromo language in their mission enterprises (Cooper, 1996, 24). How and why this happened in relation to their historical mission practices will be discussed in detail in the second part of this chapter and chapter two respectively. Further missiological analysis of how this negligence has impacted on Church planting among the Oromo people will be part of my exploration in chapter four. In the next section I will discuss the Oromo social and cultural structure.

1.1.3 Oromo social and cultural structure/organization

According to Melba Oromos have a rich culture, fostered by the size of the population and large land areas with diverse climatic conditions (1988, 59). The Oromo social, cultural, religious and political institutions, which shaped their history and expressed their world view, were developed long before their 16th century movement when they regained their lost territories (Hassen, 1990, 6). The landmark in the history of the Oromo people is the development of the famous socio-cultural and religious leadership system which cannot be easily dated and explained but which has fulfilled religious, social, economic and political functions in Oromo society (Birri, 1997, 57). This traditional system is called '*Gadaa'*.

Legesse, an Eritrean anthropologist who exhaustively studied and wrote on Oromo social and cultural structure defines Gadaa as:

> A system of classes that succeed each other every eight years in assuming military, economic, political and ritual responsibilities. Each *Gadaa* class remains in power during a specific term which begins and ends with a formal power transfer ceremony. In my observation, it is one of the most astonishing and instructive turns the evolution of human society has taken (2000, 25).

Bakke, a Norwegian missionary theologian and writer who also lived in Ethiopia for three decades supports this definition and further comments that Gadaa is a highly democratic system, perhaps the extreme opposite of the former monarchic, hierarchic and current ruling system of Ethiopia (1987, 40). Furthermore, Lipinsky elaborates,

> Oromo social structure traditionally was based upon an age grade according to which males in the tribe or sub-unit of the tribe were grouped by age and assigned various social, religious, military and political **functions** (1992, 68).

In line with this analysis, *Gadaa* can be depicted in two ways; the '*hiriyya'* - members of an age-set all born within the period of age-grades, or stages of

development through which a *Gadaa* class passes and '*Jarra tokko*'/'*Butta tokko*' one *Gadaa* rule of eight years. In both cases, the Oromos who are the same age group share between them collective labour and social, economic, ritual, military and political responsibilities. In order to do this, members are initiated into adult society at the same time and perform a variety of transitional rites of passage as they approach each new stage of the life cycle (Guta, 2003, 25). Thus, the *Gadaa* system is multi-functional and a total expression of the Oromo existence and way of social, cultural, spiritual and ritual life from birth to death. Without a basic understanding of this socio-cultural system one may not be able to understand the Oromos' worldview, far less attempt to plant churches successfully.

According to Legasse, in the *Gadaa* political system, the election and transfer of power takes place at the time of the *Jarra* or *Butta* ceremony (1997, 59; see Hassen, 1994, 15). This ceremony commemorates the end of the previous eight years and the beginning of the next. It is a time of feasting and extensive ritual activities, during which the strengths and weaknesses of the past eight years are told and the hopes for the next eight years are expressed (Birri, 1997, 59). As Melba states, the election is carried out under the supervision of the '*Qaallu*' (the spiritual leader of the OTR) (1994, 20). The transfer of power is symbolized by the handing over of the *Bokku* (sceptre) to the newly elected *Abba Bokku*. After receiving the *Bokku* the new *Abba Bokku* slaughters his *Butta*, dips a branch of a green tree (representing peace, plenty and fertility) into the blood of the bull and plants it in the assembly to symbolize the unity of the confederacy after which the new law is proclaimed (Hassen, 1994, 15).

However, the *Gadaa* democratic leadership system was suppressed by the Abyssinians and also by despotic Oromo feudal rulers (who had been highly influenced by the Abyssinians) during and after the Abyssinians' colonialism and replaced by their monarchies (Kumsa, 1995, 18; Jalata, 1994, 9; Bartels, 1983, 57). Nevertheless, Loo, among others, observes that *Gadaa* has been and still is, in southern and central parts of Oromia, 'the most powerful means to cyclically renew peaceful interregional contacts and the exchange of knowledge, blessing and sacred power across both clan and regional boundaries within the vast Oromo cultural area' (1988, 25).

The current cultural revival among most Oromo people, (see Chapters one, four and five) could be said to support this argument. However, the present practice may not fully reflect its original cultural aspect in the current political environment (Jalata, 1994, 10). This may explain why scholars like Baxter, a Scottish anthropologist, emphasize the ritual function of the system rather than its political culture (1978, 151). Yet, it is argued that ritual in the *Gadaa* is an inauguration into power or a transfer between grades which will continue to be held despite the stripping away of political power of those in the *Gadaa* (Kumsa, 1995, 19).

In contrast, the new debates introduced by Oromo scholars such as Jalata (1994, 1) and Kumsa (1992, 17) might help people to understand the reduced significance of Oromo social structures under the Abyssinian colonial order such as the *Gadaa* system, the importance of cultural value, kingship, religion and the decentralization of the Oromo political system. Viewing the *Gadaa* in its historical context, one may see that its general characteristics have remained the same. Formally and informally, in its flexible and decentralized ways, it still operates as a nationwide system for organizing and co-ordinating a large population of the Oromo people over a huge territory and for regulating their activities according to its socio-cultural principles. Thus, in whatever form *Gadaa* takes, it is recognized by all Oromos as key to the unique heritage of Oromo political, social and cultural life. It is with this basic guiding principle that Oromos identify themselves and recognize *Gadaa* as a root feature of their culture and as a symbol of a pan-Oromo national '*Orommuuma*' identity (Jalata, 1994, 1; Kumsa, 1992, 17). This social and cultural system, which governs every aspect of the Oromos' life from birth to death, is key to understanding their worldview in order to propose a contextualized approach to Church planting which might adopt some of their cultural elements in order to motivate them to become more open to EECMY evangelical Christianity.

1.1.4 Oromo Religion

It has been observed that the Oromo people practised a particular traditional religion long before the introduction of Christianity and Islam. An American pioneer missionary without a significant survey simply argues that the Oromo people were nearly all 'heathens' and 'tree worshippers' (cited in Birri, 1997, 66). In contrast, Mbiti, an African scholar, assessed their religion differently when in his study of

African understandings of God, he noted that the Oromo people were particularly religious, a characteristic which they shared with other African peoples (1969, 1).

Further, Salviac, an 18th century French anthropologist, who had studied Oromo society, culture and religion considered that, 'The Galla [Oromo] are neither Christians or Moors, nor heathens, for they have no idols to worship' (translated by Kenno, 2006, 23). Moreover, Krapf, a German Lutheran missionary, who had a great desire to establish mission work and visited the Oromo people during the 1840s, expressed his disagreement with those who said that the Oromo did not have a religion (Ujulu, 1999, 17). Krapf may have been considering the well-known disparaging Abyssinian saying '*Galla dagmo min haimanot alaw?*' (What religion does a Galla [Oromo] have?). He writes,

> I must oppose those who are of the opinion that the Gallas [Oromos] have no religious ideas whatever (sic) certain it is, that they have an idea of a Supreme being which they call *Waaqayyo Tokkicaha* - that man [person] exists after death, receiving the wages of his bad or good life- that they pray to *Waaqayyo* … they have a kind of priest, called '*Qaallu*' and some civil order. Very early in the morning they pray to *Waaqayyo*. It is remarkable that they very much esteem the Sunday, which they call *Dilibatta Gudda* [Great Sunday], on which day they do not labour (cited in Ujulu, 1999, 17).

Given the definition of religion as 'the service and worship of God or the supernatural' (Birri, 1997, 83) and the observations above, one may contend that the Oromo people were and are neither heathens nor atheists. Rather they have a complex and sophisticated set of religious traditions, beliefs and practices. Bartels another western missionary anthropologist who lived among the Western Oromo people for more than two decades studying the Oromo religion attests further that Oromos were monotheists who believed in *Waaqayyo Tokkicha* (one Supreme God) and had a traditional African religion, *Waaqeffannaa.* (1983, 89). Other missionary writers such as Eide (2000, 47f) and Bakke (1987, 47) who had also lived in Ethiopia agree with Bartels' argument.

Waaqayyo, approximately equivalent to the English word God, is the centre of the OTR. With reference to the attributes of *Waaqayyo*, Bartels' research reveals that the traditional *Ayyannas* (divinities) are both one and at the same time also many. The Supreme Being, (*Waaqayyo* - God), is *Uumaa hundaa* (creator of all things) and the source of all life (Daniel, 1984, 25; Melba, 1988, 39). Starting with water and rocks, going on through the vegetable and animal world to man, *Waaqayyo* has appointed to

every being his own place in a cosmic order of which he is also the guardian (Melba, 1983, 89). Daniel argues that the Oromos believe that *Waaqayyo* puts everything in order and if anybody breaks his order, it results in sin, which in turn leads to punishment (1984, 26). He further notes that they believe that *Waaqayyo* could punish anyone who commits sin, because they consider him as the one who guards the truth. The punishment may be in the form of a bad harvest, disease, famine or other hazardous events. Arguably, the statements reveal their belief in *Waaqayyo* as creator (*Uumaa*), all knowing and potent (*bekkaaf dandaa hundumma*) and controller of everything (Gobana, 1975, 6-13). Both Guta (2003, 120) and Wayessa (2003, 27), contemporary Oromo researchers, argue that these characteristics appear similar to those of the Old Testament Yahweh or the Christian God of the Hebrews (c.f. Hilbert, 1991, 273).

Despite the claims above, we may not simply compare how the Oromo people understand their *Waaqayyo* with the Christian God (omniscient) without further critical analysis. Accordingly, although Oromos' understanding of *Waaqayyo Tokkicha* is not identical, it could be considered equivalent to the Christian God. This will be discussed in chapter five. The Oromos also further believe in one *Waaqayyo* whose nature is good, righteous, and full of truth and justice. *Waaqayyo* is also believed to be the Sustainer, provider and governor of everything. Although there are no further theological and academic sources which discuss the Oromos' belief in *Waaqayyo Tokkicha,* I will develop the significance of the religious names that the Oromo people give to *Waaqayyo Tokkicha* based on the findings from the fieldwork in chapters four and five.

The people also acknowledge the attributes of Waaqayoo by naming their children. For example: *Waaquma* (*Waaqayyo* is creator), *Waaqjira* (*Waaqayyo* is existent) *Waaqtolla* (*Waaqayyo* is righteous/ gracious), *Waaqknne* (*Waaqayyo* has given), *Waaqgarri* (*Waaqayyo* is good) and *Waaqwaya* (*Waaqayyo* is the best) (Wayessa, 2003, 47-63; Tadesse, 1995, 4). Socially and culturally, there are also names which convey wishes of success, wisdom, and prosperity through generations. For instance, among others, the most popular Oromo names are *Naggasaa* and *Ibsaa* for males, meaning 'his *(Waaqayyo)* peace' and 'light' respectively. In this way, Oromos' native names reflect their identity, which also preserves the continuity of their

heritage. These social, cultural and religious names are legitimatized by the Oromo religious leaders *Qaallus*. Having understood the background of their religion, I now proceed to examine the significance of the *Qaallu* office in the Oromo religion.

The Office of *Qaallu*

Traditionally *Qaallu* is a primary ritual office of the OTR (Melba, 1988, 20). According to Oromo culture, *Waaqayyo* talks to his people through the *Qaallus*. The *Qaallus* are people anointed by *Waaqayyo* to manifest his power and work. They communicate with *Waaqayyo* with the help of the spirit called "*ayyaana*" which is literally translated as a 'mediating spirit' between the divine and human, explained as a manifestation of *Waaqayyo*. Every human being, animal, plant, geographical area and even every day has its own *ayyaana* (Bartels, 1983, 113). In this manner Qaallu*s* have a more 'effective channel of communication' to the *ayyaana* and hence also to *Waaqayyo* (Knutsson, 1967, 45). Moreover, the duty of the *Qaallu* is to bless individuals, groups and both social and ritual meetings. Bartels further observes that the *Qaallu* is regarded as an expert and high status ritual leader of the Oromo traditional religion (1983, 35). It is also believed that the office of *Qaallu* often maintains an active relationship between *Waaqayyo* and the people. In principle, unlike the *Abba Bokku* (leader of the *Gadaa* system), the office of *Qaallu* is claimed to be hereditary, yet it seems open to anyone who may have direct personal contact with A*yyaanas* (divinity) (Hassen, 1988, 55).

Another major difference is that, unlike the *Gadaa* system, women can be religious leaders who are called '*Qallitti*' (Melba, 1983, 21). This illustrates the partial inclusion of women in the Oromo socio-cultural and religious leadership system. In Oromo society both male and female *Qaallus* are regarded as senior and respected persons both in their clan and in society more generally (Djillo, 1997, 6). They respect the traditional taboos, '*safuu*', as well as ritual observances in all situations and in all their dealings they uphold what is right and reject what is culturally unacceptable (Bartels, 1990, 350; see Tippet, 1970, 243). The *Qaallus*' main responsibility is to look after the quality of religious teaching, reconciliation and to consecrate newly elected leaders and so forth (Bakke, 1987, 48; see Djillo, 1997, 6). Among many, the following three functions of the *Qaallus* are worth mentioning:

Firstly, they are responsible for protecting the Oromo religion from foreign religious influences and safeguarding the correct teachings. In so doing, they seek to preserve the Oromo culture; just as the Abyssinian priests simultaneously preserve the EOC Christianity and their culture (Hassen, 1990, 6). Secondly, *Qaallus* are said to be '*Raaji'* (prophets) of the Oromo religion. Bartels (1970, 110) specialist in Oromo religion explicitly labels the Oromo *Qaallu* as '*Raaji/Ooda'* (prophets) or *'Ogessa'* (wise person), whom the people usually consult about their problems. In contrast, the activity of the Oromo *Qaallu* as a prophet is sometimes considered to be 'witchcraft' by others including the EOC, foreign missionaries and non-Oromo people. However, Tippet, an American missiologist, strongly argues that Oromo traditional *Qaallus* have nothing to do with witchcraft. They are simply accepted as essential leaders, both socially and religiously. They are genuine persons, firmly established in their business, sometimes part of the hierarchy and usually the most significant persons in the community (1970, 178-9). This argument is strongly supported by Oromo scholars such as Megerssa (2006, 15) and Hassen (1990, 57).

Thirdly, *Qaallus* play a significant role in the traditional socio-political system. Oromo writers like Kumsa (1997, 45) and Hassen (1983, 15) similarly summarize the *Qaallu* activities in the *Gadaa* political system in two ways. First, as the head of the council of electors the *Qaallu* organizes and oversees the election of the new *Gadaa* leaders and every eight years observes the proclamation of new laws of the Oromo national assembly '*Gumi'* or '*Caffe'*. Second, the *Qaallu* ritually anoints the '*Muduu',* the newly elected '*Abba Bokku/Gadaa'* and legitimizes the leadership (Djillo, 1997, 6). Further, the *Qaallu* village is usually perceived as a spiritual centre, where political debates are organized for candidates of the *Gadaa* offices. Oromo ceremonial symbols, like the *'Bokku'* (sceptre), *'Alabba'* (flag) and '*kallacha'* (anthem) are kept in the *Qaallu* village (Melba, 1988, 20). Observing these, one may conclude that the Oromo religious rituals and politics intersect and overlap, one influencing and the other determining the duty of the other office for the well-being of the community (Hassen, 1988, 16). In this way the traditional *Qaallu* institution preserves and safeguards the cultural and religious life of the Oromo people.

However, the Oromo religion and *Qaallu* institution have not continued in their traditional form except in some parts of south and south-east Oromia (Djillo, 1997,

6) where they still partly hold some of their original features. As the *Gadaa* system was replaced by the Abyssinian traditional monarchical system a religious change also occurred (Birri, 1997, 86). Subsequently, a new *Qaallu* institution with completely different connotations from the traditional *Qaallu* office emerged (Djillo, 1997, 7; Gidada, 1977, 8). It was this type of *Qaallu* institution which came to be known in northern, central and western parts of Oromia and was established when Western missionaries arrived (Birri, 1997, 87). Since this different *Qaallu* institution was significant in the lives of the early EECMY Oromo Christians, particularly in the west and southwest of Oromia it is important to discuss it here.

There are contradictory suggestions regarding how this *Qaallu* cult developed into something different. Some suggest that this came about as the Oromo people grew in number and with new generations (Birri, 1997, 86). Other notable Western writers like Bartels (1983, 41), Bakke (1987, 44-4), Forslund (1993, 57), 5) and Aren (1999, 27) similarly argue that the Oromos' traditional *Qaallu* had been influenced by the *Qallicha* cult of the north which had been built on a belief in spirit possession subsequent to the Abyssinian empire's expansion and the introduction of EOC Christianity (1890s to 1920s). This view is also supported by Hassen, an Oromo historian (1994, 34). The breakdown of the OTR, including the original *Qaallu* offices, by the Abyssinian use of the *Qallicha* cult exercising ecstatic evil spirit possession and claiming religious authority over the people (Wayessa, 2003, 32), might tend to support the latter interpretation (Aren, 1999, 27). It followed the incorporation of Oromia into Ethiopia. Hence, this type of *Qallicha* practice challenged the Oromo belief in the uniqueness of *Waaqayyo Tokkicha* since it claimed to take the place of *Waaqayyo* by pretending to exercise the power to cure or to kill (1993, 57). It created a great fear in the people with the result that they were ready to do whatever the *Qallicha* demanded from the people and to make payments in kind for their services (Negaso, 1978, 8). Hence, it is not surprising that the EOC, present among the Oromo people, suppressed the traditional Oromo religion and strengthened Abyssinian culture and the *Qallicha* religious cult as part of its mission to build Abyssinian national ideology in which the Oromo people were frightened into accepting the new cult (Bakke, 1987, 48). This will be further discussed in chapter four in the light of the fieldwork.

Nevertheless, the EECMY Church planting, which was begun by western evangelical missionaries, played a significant role in the decline of the foreign *Qallicha* institution in the western and south-western parts of Oromia and set the people free from such a harmful traditional cult. In so doing, the EECMY mission was welcomed and accepted by many people, possibly as a reaction to the new *Qallicha* cult which dominated and influenced the OTR and *Qaallu* office. This may indicate how western and south-western Oromia became a stronghold of the EECMY (Eide, 2000, 67; Forslund, 1993, 64). However, the EECMY was unable to differentiate between the original Oromo *Qaallu* and the foreign *Qallichaa*, with the result that it banned both. This misunderstanding adversely affected Church planting in that particular area.

Further consideration of how a contextual missiology might view aspects of the OTR and a possible corruption of the foreign Qallichaa will be discussed in chapter five. How EECMY was introduced and advanced in this context, and how it imposed its version of Christianity on the Oromo people and its impact with regard to its history is the subject of the second part of this chapter and chapter four discusses this in relation to findings from the fieldwork. Given this, I shall now proceed to explain how the people worship *Waaqayyo* in their religious life.

Worship

For the Oromo people, worship is perceived as providing a sense of security for their whole life. They express this in their saying, '*Qomon ngatuuffi Qomon segaaduu hinbadhu* (lit. tribes who eat and worship never perish) (Angose, 1999, 13). Thus, worship is an expression of their entire existence and religious identity**.** Mbiti (1969, 62), who studied about three hundred African traditional religions, including the OTR, notes; 'the *Galla* [Oromo] make frequent prayers and invocations to God in the morning and evening, asking him to protect them, their cattle, their families.' Hulting (1990, 157) also states that Oromo elders communicate with God through prayers and sacrifices. They are constantly concerned with the maintenance of peace which is a necessary condition for the flow of God's blessings and continuity of life. Oromo elders give blessings during weddings, meetings, child-naming rituals, and weekly and yearly festivals such as *Irressa* (a thanksgiving festival) and other similar occasions (Ujulu, 1999, 21-2).

The Oromo traditional house of worship or ritual is called *Galma*, where followers of the religion meet every Thursday and Saturday night (Ujulu, 1999, 21-2). The religious ceremonies are also performed at special places, such as under *Oodaa* (Oromo sacred) trees traditionally designated for this, on the hills and mountains and at the river sides at special times (Ujulu, 1999, 21-2; Birri, 1995, 84; Bartels, 1983, 373).

It might be this practice that led those who did not know the nature of Oromo belief to say that Oromos worship mountains, trees, rivers, etc (Lambie in Birri, 1995, 84). However, Bartels (1983, 92) and Mbiti (1969, 62) strongly argue that Oromos worship the Supreme Being, *Waaqayyo* for whom they have no image and to whom they make frequent prayers and invocations as their creator and protector. This argument may be relevant to their popular religious motto which says, '*Waaqayyo nu uumetti amannaa uumamaan Waaqayyon kadhanna*' (lit. We believe in one God who created us and worship him alone from our nature) (Banti, 2000, 6). In addition to the daily and weekly prayers, Oromos also practise religious rituals and hold annual festivals through which they worship *Waaqayyo*. Two of these which are rich in ritual may be analysed to establish some points of contact for the purpose of contextualizing Church planting approaches.

Before looking at these two rituals, I should explain that they have been revived and widely practised particularly among the non-Christian Oromos of the central and southeast regions. They are not only practised among the non-Christian Oromos but are also still vital in the lives of Oromo Christians as a legacy of the pioneer EECMY Oromo Christians. However, the EOC has used its Abyssinian political power to weaken such religious significance (as will be discussed in chapter two). The EECMY has also been teaching against the existence of the festivals and imposing its own Church planting on the people. The problem of such an imposition on the current Oromo worship practices and its effects will be considered in the fourth chapter and based on the fieldwork data. Having indicated when future discussions will take place, I shall now proceed to discuss how the people practise the two prayer festivals or celebrations.

Irressa Festival

Irressa is an annual prayer to *Waaqayyo* in designated places - usually a lake, riverbank or mountaintop. The festival is usually celebrated at local and national levels. At national level, it is celebrated at a specific Lake − Lake Horra, in central Oromia (Guta, 2003, 42; Kumsa, 1998, 27). According to Guta, the *Irressa* national celebration at Horra Lake was most likely initiated by Nebi, the leader of the central Oromo of the time (2003, 42). This may be noted as a pilgrimage whereby all Oromos come together to strengthen their religion, culture and their unity as one nation (Hassen, 1994, 34).

The *Irressa* festival takes place in the third week of September (Guta, 2003, 41; Wayessa, 2003, 97). During this festival the people commemorate the end of the rainy season and the beginning of the new harvest time '*birraa'*. How they celebrate the ceremony further illustrates the significance of the season. In line with the Oromos' perception, *Waaqayyo* needs to be approached with an offering of thanksgiving (Wayessa, 2003, 41). Accordingly, the people carry the '*coqorsaa'* (green grass); '*bala Odda'* leaves of sycamore (Oromos' sacred tree) and '*Ababboo kello'* or *'Birra'* autumn flowers in their hands during the celebration (Guta, 2003, 41; Wayessa, 2003, 97). The green is said to symbolize joy, fertility and hope. Animal sacrifices also accompany the thanksgiving (Gadaa, 2000, 7). The festival prayer is traditionally performed by a senior '*angafa'* spiritual leader, identified by his ritual staff '*bokuu'*. The content of the prayer is associated with the constant Oromo religious theme, '*Waaqayyo nu uumetti amannaa uumamaan Waaqayyo tokkicha kadhanna'* (we believe in creator *Waaqayyo* and we worship him by nature) (Gadaa, 2000, 6). The main subjects for prayer are peace, fertility, productive farming (grains and cattle) and rain.

However, during the Abyssinian expansion the EOC attempted to suppress the *Irressa* festival and gradually replaced it with the EOC *Masqala festival* (Hastings, 1996, 11-12), as will be further discussed in chapter two. The western missionaries have also regarded the *Irressa* festival as a primitive religious event and such an approach continues to be the EECMY's Christian teaching also. The Meskel festival is said to be a 'cross-finding' celebration, a typically Coptic tradition but celebrated by all Christian denominations in Ethiopia including the EECMY (Tamerat, 1998,

18). Nevertheless, since the people were forced to adopt and practise this other festival, which is mostly irrelevant to the content of the *Irressa* festival, it has hardly satisfied the people (W. Journal. 2000, 6-9). Currently, following legislation leading to wider religious freedom, the Oromo people strongly revived their culture and religion and reintroduced the *Irressa* festival. While some may say it is the pre-eminent festival for both Muslim and Christian Oromos all over the region (Simesso, 2005, 36), both the EOC and EECMY have equally failed to take it into account, and so have failed to fully engage with the cultural and religious values of the Oromo people in order to contextualize Christianity. This is a current and future challenge for the EECMY and requires a new mission strategy involving the development of Church planting which is much more orientated towards the context and culture of Oromo society.

Attette Festival

The *Attette* festival is also part of OTR that expresses the grand monotheistic belief of the Oromo *Waaqeffannaa* - a belief system that takes *Waaqayyo* (God) as the one and only God '*Waaqayyo Tokkicha'* (Lamessa, 2001, 1). A group of *Attette* adherents who were interviewed by Lamessa said,

> The *Attette* was there among the Oromo people from time immemorial. We inherit it from our ancestors and it passes likewise from generation to generation and it has neither a beginning nor an end that someone can refer to (2001, 12).

This insider's view indicates that the Oromo people have been celebrating the *Attette* festival since they began to worship *Waaqayyo*. According to Bakke's observation the *Attette* prayer is exclusively celebrated by women (1987, 45). Although the participation of men varies from place to place, in general, the celebration is dominated by women (Lamessa 2001, 2). It seems also that the festival began as a response to social, cultural and economic problems.

During the festival eating and drinking coffee (*bunna)* and local beer (*farsoo*) is accompanied by dancing (*dallagu)* and prayer (Negessa, 1975, 13). Lamessa translated the *Attette* folk-song and content of prayer as follows:

> The *Waaqayyo* of Oromo people, the *Waaqayyo* of big mountain, the *Waaqayyo* of rule and justice, let him keep us the day on peaceful land, may he give us a good leadership, may he give us the rain, may he let the grass grow, let the witchcraft disappear and let the happiness come for us. Final blessing is - -may he give us a good

health, may he bless us with children and may he keep us safe until next year (2001, 22).

In the *Attette* prayer the woman thanks *Waaqayyo* for his protection in the past and prays for health, fertility (of human, cattle, seeds and the like) and other kinds of help or blessing in the uncertain future. The content of the prayer stresses issues of common concern like the peace of the nation and orderly maintenance of common property and fertility. The nature and content of the *Attette* prayer is similar to the *Irressa* festival except for the leadership and composition of the participants. Furthermore, the *Attette* festival still forms an important part of the OTR. Beyond the religious value, it also encourages a sense of common origin, unity and the distinct identity of the people. In this manner, the *Attette* ritual has a social value of maintaining the social structure and uniting people (Lammii, 2003, 14; Lamessa, 2001, 23). The *Attette* ritual could be characterized as a communal ceremony to be undertaken at a time of infertility in order to pray for a plentiful and prosperous future.

Like the *Qaallu* institution, however, as observed by Bakke, the traditional view of the *Attette* seems to have been weakened by the introduction of Amhara rule and culture while the *Qallichaa* cult may have taken on a new dimension in the encounter with these influences (1987, 46). As this new dimension took effect the *Attette* women leaders appear to have been influenced by the above cult during the festival activities. Accordingly, the *Attette* festival time was fixed to the days when the EOC venerates Saint Mary, August 28 and November 12, in central Oromia and other locations.

Additionally, the name *Attette* itself gradually changed to Saint Mary's festival (Lamessa, 2001, 17-18). As a result of this cultural influence the festival seems to have lost its traditional value in some parts of Oromia. The EOC mission might have used the opportunity to contextualize the Gospel message using some of the religious elements of the *Attette* festival to interpret the Gospel for the Oromo in their own cultural context. In contrast, it has been some of the EOC religious elements that have been picked up and practised in the festival contrary to the Oromo traditional *Attette* festival. It was during such a time of confusion of beliefs that western evangelical missionaries came to the country and planted evangelical churches. Since

numerous OTR practices were mixed up with elements from Abyssinian culture due to the ecclesiastical impact of the EOC, many Oromos accepted evangelical Christianity in western Oromia as a protest.

More recently, however, a few of the EECMY members from the grassroots have tried to reintroduce some cultural forms, such as melodies of *Attette* folk dances, and have composed indigenous songs which have been welcomed by the Oromo community (Angose, 1999, 14-15). However, such contextually orientated songs have received little recognition from the western missionaries and the EECMY leaders. Some of these examples will be discussed in detail in chapters four and five as they are significant in contextualizing Church planting among the non-Oromo community.

In summary, the Oromo people have their own history, culture, religion and language, identifying them as a distinct community in Ethiopia. It is these historical and cultural elements which shape their identity as a nation. However, I have also suggested that the Abyssinians persistently dominated and suppressed Oromo culture, religion and language. This will be further discussed in chapter two alongside the EOC colonial mission. I have also argued that western evangelical Christianity was introduced by various mission approaches and was later adopted by the EECMY for its own evangelization among the Oromo community in such a social, cultural and political context. The historical survey of these mission practices will be the subject of the next section and a missiological analysis based on the fieldwork data will be considered in chapter four.

Part two: the EECMY traditional Church planting strategy (1897-2009)

I now move on to discuss how evangelical Christianity was introduced into the Oromo community by indigenous evangelical pioneers and western missionaries, which resulted in the establishment of the EECMY. This part of the discussion covers three main sections. First, I will describe how and when the western missionaries came to Ethiopia with the aim of revitalizing the EOC and later on adjusted their vision to reach the Oromo people. Second, the establishment of the EECMY as a national Church as a result of the historical partnership with the missionaries will also be explained. Finally, I will identify the Church planting

strategies employed by the evangelical pioneers and western missionaries in order to reach the Oromo people and consider how these strategies have related to the social, cultural and religious context of the people being evangelized.

1.2.1 How western missionaries reached the Oromo people

According to Aren the 19th century was a remarkable era for missionary revival movements in western Christendom in which various missionary societies were established for the purpose of reaching the rest of the world with the Gospel (1978, 97). As a result, the Church Missionary Society (CMS - an Anglican mission) and the Basel Mission, in co-operation, sent the first four German Lutheran missionaries to Ethiopia. The arrival of the missionaries in 1829 marked the beginning of the modern missionary enterprise in Ethiopia (Aren, 1999, 48, 52). Their primary purpose was entirely confined to the distribution of the scriptures, Bible reading and exposition, with the intention of reforming the EOC (Tamrat, 1998, 24-25). While the reading and evangelical interpretation of the scriptures enabled some EOC clergy to question some of the Orthodox doctrine and practice, other Orthodox priests, who were not pleased with such challenges, then collaborated with the Abyssinian rulers of the time and expelled the missionaries from the northern EOC dominated areas (Aren, 1999, 69).

Following their expulsion from the north, John L. Krapf (1810-1881), one of the missionaries, turned his attention to the Oromo people inhabiting the south and southeast of Shoa (central Oromia, one of my fieldwork locations). His coming to Shoa brought him to the gate of the Oromo nation and generated a new missionary idea (Harms, 1997, 41). He then made use of every opportunity to learn their language and culture and was highly moved when he observed the way they worshipped and dedicated themselves to *Waaqayyo* (Aren, 1978, 73). His own observations showed him that the Oromo people were a religious community who believed in *Waaqayyo.* In 1839, in order to move further into Oromo territory properly, he twice had to submit his plans to secure royal permission. However, an Abyssinian King of Shoa at the northern gate to the Oromo land turned down his requests and tried to frighten him by saying that the Oromo people would kill him if he was granted permission to go in. Such a negative response exposed the king's and the rest of the Abyssinian emperors' attitudes towards the Oromo people.

Additionally, the response was inaccurate as Krapf had already built a close relationship with the people by studying their culture and language; he had even translated the Gospels into their language in the Latin script, which was later used for reference when translating the whole Bible (Harms, 1999, 16).

When Krapf and others realized their inability to reform the Orthodox Church and to reach the Oromos, because of hostility from the Abyssinians, the missionaries left the country in 1842. The EOC then sought to influence the king against the return of Krapf and other missionaries. For example, the EOC priests argued that, 'their ethos is not like ours and their sacred book is different from that which is accepted in our country. If they are allowed to return, people will fall away from the faith [Abyssinian EOC] of their fathers' (Harms, 1999, 16). Consequently, a royal order was given to prevent all European missionaries from re-entering the country. With this, the mission of the CMS came to an end in Ethiopia.

Krapf, however, became influential in arousing interest in the Oromo people through his writings, which made a great impact on Christians in Europe and America (Birri, 1997, 17). For example, in his journal of January 1840, he writes,

> I like… much Galla [Oromo] people and I am convinced that if a missionary once commenced his labours among them, he would be blessed with better success than among the Abyssinians… In my heart, I fervently prayed that the Lord would open a door to the Galla [Oromo] nation and hasten the time of their salvation…. The Lord grants that the time for the salvation of the Oromo may come, and that this great nation may live before him. This was my continual prayer (cited by Harms, 1999, 16).

Louis Harms was among many Christians who were motivated by Krapf's vision and came to express, '…the country of Oromo in East Africa downwards from Abyssinia has become very important to me so that I believe there is no country in Africa more promising for mission than this one' (Harms, 1999, 16). He ultimately founded the German Hermannburg mission (GHM) in 1849 with the aim of reaching the Oromo people (Ujulu, 1999, 36-7). However, despite GHM making several attempts through Kenya and Somalia to reach the people, they were unsuccessful (Tadesse, 1995, 7). Nevertheless, the Swedish Evangelical Mission (SEM), which had close contacts with the GHM, designed an alternative strategy which would enable them to reach the people (Hordofa, 2005, 68).

The mission then established a school at Massawa (a northeast coastal port) in 1872 and trained the freed slaves and the EOC exiled reformers to effect their aim (Eide, 2000, 82) (This will be discussed later in this section). From this port, both missionaries and the nationals made four unsuccessful mission expeditions to reach the people. Ultimately, however, it was the trained national evangelical pioneers who reached the people on a fifth expedition in 1897 without the western missionaries (Aren, 1978, 424-429; see Simeso, 2005, 38-43). Thereafter, the national Christians extended evangelical Christianity into different parts of western Oromia approximately 25 years before foreign missionaries were able to enter this part of Ethiopia (Hirpo, 2003, 83).

The first foreign nationals to do so in western Oromia were from the American United Presbyterian Mission (AUPM) in 1919. They were followed by the SEM and the GHM in 1923 and 1929 respectively. They supported the strengthening of the evangelical work started by the national pioneers (Eide, 2000, 32-33). However, they were forced to leave for approximately 10 years during the Italian invasion (1935-41) and returned in the second half of the 1940s (Hirpo, 2003, 83). Regarding other regions of Oromia (i.e. central, north, south and southeast - my study locations), except for brief visits, there was no significant time prior to the end of the 1940s when either foreign or national missionaries were working among the people. It was not until 1948 that the Norwegian Lutheran Mission (NLM) and the Danish Evangelical Mission (DEM) arrived in south and southeast Oromia (Anderson, 1989, 13). The former went on to become the largest Lutheran mission in that specific region (Djillo, 1997, 13). There were also other Lutheran missions from America and Finland which came later to Ethiopia and collaborated with the EECMY (Hirpo, 2003, 84). A range of Lutheran and Presbyterian Churches were then planted in Oromia and throughout Ethiopia by both the missions' trained indigenous evangelists as well as the foreign missionaries. It is this historical partnership from which the EECMY as a national Church has been developed.

In summary, it appears that the EOC's persistent refusal to allow western Christianity has diverted the attention of the western evangelical missionaries towards reaching the Oromo people. Devising different strategies, such as mobilising western Christians, training missionaries in their theological seminaries, freeing and

educating Oromo slaves (who had been enslaved by other ethnic groups outside Oromia) for the evangelization of the Oromo, and making various missionary expeditions to effect their vision was a remarkable effort. What was even more remarkable was fulfilling their vision to facilitate the establishment of the EECMY as a national Church in Ethiopia despite the persistent political domination of the Abyssinians and the EOC ecclesiastical pressures. Notwithstanding this remarkable achievement, I suggest that the social, cultural and religious context of the Oromo people was not sufficiently considered. These inadequacies of the western missionaries' mission activities will be analyized in chapter four. How the EECMY leaders initiated further Church planting following the establishment of the national Church to the present day will be the subject of the next section.

1.2.2 The establishment of the EECMY as a national Church

During the time that the foreign missionaries were absent from the country (1935-1945) the indigenous evangelical Christians (Lutherans and Presbyterians) from west, southwest and central Oromia demonstrated their increased confidence as leaders by recognizing the need for a united nationally established church (Hirpo, 2003, 84). Despite being unsuccessful in their series of attempts to maintain a United National Church due to traditional differences, they did not give up the idea of organizing a national Church (Garoma, 2007, 47-81). When the foreign missionaries returned they supported this idea and were able to provide a framework based on their own (western) home church structures (Staffan, 2000, 17; Bakke, 1987, 124). Ultimately, in 1959 the Lutheran Christians from the whole country came together and established a national Church: 'The Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus (EECMY)' with twenty thousand members (Hirpo, 2003, 84). In 1974 the Presbyterian group, which had also established itself as an independent Church merged with the EECMY, despite their confessional differences (Forslund, 1993, 60). As these two groups eventually came together, the initial vision of forming a national church was fulfilled.

However, despite the governance and structure provided by the missionaries enabling the establishment of a national evangelical church in Ethiopia, the democratic Oromo cultural pattern was not clearly reflected in the church structure (Tippet, 1970, 281). As Bakke comments, the missionary structure seems to be a hierarchal model of

leadership in which 'some had to make decisions and rule over others' (1998, 157). This was similar to the leadership system of the Amhara rulers and the EOC and the west, which is not only in contrast to the Oromo traditional *Gadaa* leadership and religious pattern, but also suppresses it (Bakke, 1998, 156). The establishment of the EECMY as a national Church with such a centralized structure may be suggested as one of the less effective approaches of the EECMY for Church planting among the people. Nevertheless, unlike the vertical (top-down) EOC structural leadership pattern which was also associated with political power, the EECMY structure may be considered autonomous in its ministerial activities (bottom up), and in its ways of election and mutuality which are similar to some elements of Oromo traditional leadership (Guta, 2003, 55). One may thus suggest that such similarities and the utilization of indigenous evangelists for the first two decades, as well as in later times, made the Oromo people more open to evangelical Christianity than the Abyssinians had been at the beginning. With this perception, I proceed to discuss further mission strategies employed to plant evangelical Christianity among the Oromo people.

1.2.3 The EECMY traditional Church planting strategy (1897-2009)

As observed earlier, after adjusting their vision to reach the Oromo people, whom they found relatively more open than other groups to accepting evangelical Christianity, western evangelical missionaries devised some mission strategies through which they could evangelize the Oromo (Sadi, 2003, 133). Despite the traditional differences among the missionaries, recent research reveals that the mission strategies which they employed among the Oromo community had a similar nature with only a few exceptions (such as using an approach through Bible translation) (Bakke, 1998, 157). I, therefore, discuss how a western form of Christianity along with western culture has been introduced into the culture, religion and language of the people in the Church planting process, rather than seeking to encourage the contextualization of Christianity into Oromo culture. I will discuss in greater detail in chapter four how and why these socio-cultural elements have been overlooked and the implications of this for the effectiveness of Church planting among the Oromo in the light of the fieldwork data. In the next part, however, I will discuss the mission practices which have been adopted and used by the EECMY.

Worship approach

The evangelical pioneer evangelists and missionaries employed worship as one of their methods of evangelizing the Oromo people. Indeed, as observed earlier, Oromos are traditionally considered a people of prayer (Eide, 2000, 75). Through prayers, songs and folk-dances they worship *Waaqayyo*. Many of their religious and social gatherings and ceremonies are also accompanied by praying and singing, which not only help them to practise their religion but also strengthen their solidarity as a people (Buba, 2005, 3). Therefore, using such a worship approach for Church planting among the Oromo people seems appropriate.

However, as Forslund states, the worship patterns introduced by the western missionaries in different Oromia regions, as well as in other parts of Ethiopia were those of the Europeans and Americans (1993, 70-73). For example, it was as late as 1969 that the EECMY adopted and published its own book of worship and liturgy, which was a direct translation into Amharic of the missionaries' pattern of worship to be used for the purpose of Church planting and its whole ministry of evangelism (Angose, 1997, 7). In general, its content and patterns, including prayers and hymns, were a western pattern of worship which had been utilized for evangelizing both the Oromo people and other ethnic groups (Ujulu, 1997, 60-67). Adopting a liturgy in Amharic for Church planting and further evangelistic work might seem encouraging because, as one of the oldest and largest evangelical churches in Ethiopia, the EECMY should have its own written liturgy.

However, two main problems have been identified in using a western pattern of worship for evangelizing the Oromo people without properly considering their context. First, language was the primary issue. Although parts of the German and Swedish missions' hymns and Bible were translated into the western Oromo dialect, most of the other Oromia regions could not understand this dialect (Ujulu, 1997, 65). Neither the order of worship nor the Bible was translated into the northern, southern or south-eastern Oromo dialects (Guta, 2003, 184). Instead, the Amharic version was used in those areas and this made the worship unintelligible and foreign. The conclusion must be that the language of the people was not taken seriously by the EECMY in the whole approach to worship of the western missionaries and this might have enhanced the effectiveness of the Church planting.

Second, Oromo culture was another subject to have been overlooked in the pattern of worship. Angose argues that traditional Oromo cultural and religious phenomena such as ritual dances, musical instruments and melodies have only been used rarely in the EECMY's evangelistic approach to worship (Angose, 1999, 6-7; see Tippet, 1970, 256-7). This close observation exhibits the domination of a western pattern in the evangelical worship service. Employing such a style of foreign dominated EECMY worship seems to have alienated the Oromo Christian members from active participation in the worship. It is this worship approach which the EECMY still uses, with some minor changes, for its Church planting and evangelism ministry. Thus far, the liturgical book has been revised three times (1984, 1991 and 2002) and translated into more languages, including the western Oromo dialect, with the inclusion of some indigenous songs and new orders of worship (Behrends, 2008, 5; Grenstedt, 1997, 14). Although the effort made thus far has had some positive impact on the expansion of evangelical Christianity among the Oromo people, much further contextual endeavour is needed.

The degree of the EECMY's mission impact on the Oromo people varies from region to region. For example, the western and south-western parts of Oromia accepted evangelical Christianity perhaps faster than the central, south and southeast regions of Oromia and the rest of Ethiopia. The primary reason for the former was that the people in these areas were originally reached by indigenous evangelical pioneers who partly employed an Oromo version of worship (for example, in songs and prayers) and the Bible in their own dialect, in spite of Abyssinian political tension (Angose, 1997, 7-8). In contrast, using Amharic versions of the liturgy and the Bible in evangelizing southern and eastern Oromia could be considered one of the reasons why the region is still thought to have been the least evangelized area (Guta, 2003, 184). It was, of course, the Abyssinian political system that originally suppressed and discouraged the public use of the Oromo language and enforced the use of Amharic (Forslund, 1993, 38). However, even though some western missionaries have shown their interest in evangelizing the Oromo in their contexts, for example through Bible translation, they have still ignored their culture and Oromo dialects (Ujulu, 1999, 39-59; Grenstedt, 1997, 14). In Church planting the significance of the Oromo culture and language in the EECMY liturgical worship seems to have been overlooked. How

it has been overlooked and the implication of this will be discussed in chapter four. However, this conclusion suggests that the EECMY needs to consider the cultural and religious contexts of the Oromo people in its worship approach if the Church is to reach the Oromo people.

Educational training approach

Educational ministry was another mission method for Church planting through building schools, running literacy campaigns and training indigenous leaders at different levels. The purpose of developing the method was to evangelize the student community and train them for further Church planting and growth (EECMY 2001). There had been a strong traditional EOC education system in Ethiopia prior to the emergence of a modern education policy (Yadeta, 1998, 7). It was this traditional EOC education, along with Koranic schools, that produced some of the literate persons in society until the emergence of modern schools towards the end of the 19th century (Kiros, 1991, 1). Nevertheless, the EOC traditional education was designed to serve the needs of the Abyssinian rulers and the Church (Sadi, 2003, 118). According to Eide (2000, 28-29), the EOC school system was responsible for preserving the Amhara language, culture and traditional values as well as training priests for evangelization and administration rather than for the benefit of the community at large. However, it gradually lost such importance as modern education was introduced with new policies (Sadi, 2003, 118). It was these new education policies which partly paved the way for western missionaries to extend their education ministry through the EECMY into areas not dominated by the EOC within the state educational context (Eide, 2000, 83-7).

As a result, the evangelical missionaries continued their mission work by establishing schools in different parts of western Oromia at the beginning of the 20th century (Hirpho, 2003, 83). As they continued their effort, numeracy and literacy improved in places where they were working, and primary, secondary and higher education institutions were established in different parts of the country until the Marxist regime took over many of them in the 1980s (Eide, 2000, 80-85). The EECMY still operates over 9% of primary schools, about 8% of junior secondary schools and over 13% of senior secondary non-governmental schools in Ethiopia according to the 1995 Ministry of Education (MoE) schools' statistical data (Yadeta,

2003, 19-20). Hence, education has significantly contributed to the creation of numerous Christians who have played dynamic roles in church life and society at large. The evangelical Christians used the schools to teach the Bible and the buildings for worship and for evangelizing the students, as a result of which many accepted Christianity.

Of the significant contributions of this educational approach to Church planting, three are worthy of mention. First, many evangelical converts among the literacy school attendees and elementary school graduates influenced their parents, relatives and neighbours, and planted churches among the community (Ujulu, 1997, 70). Not only did they plant churches, but most of them also became lay preachers and congregation elders in their local settings. As Eide observes 'these persons were [are] more than any others active missionaries in the church' (2000, 84). Second, some converted students who joined higher educational establishments in turn converted many students in those institutions. Based on this experience, the EECMY strengthened further the high school and university student ministry (USM) in order to develop the students' Christian growth to maturity and to engage in further Church planting through the educational institutions (EECMY DMT 2005). Third, some of those educated in such schools later became prominent leaders of the church and the state, for example, Onesimos Nesib and Aster Ganno (Hordofa, 2005, 65-69). In addition, Emmanuel Abraham became an ambassador of Ethiopia to five countries including the UK, and president of the EECMY for 22 years (1963-1985) (Eide, 2000, 58-59; Aren, 1999, 459). Along with others, these persons proved to be most useful in EECMY and state services (Eide, 2000, 86). In this respect, the method of Church planting through education became a significant factor in the Oromo people's response to the Gospel as well as in the emergence, growth and maturity of the EECMY (Ujulu, 1997, 72).

Despite such benefits, this education approach was not without its problems. In terms of curriculum and ways of teaching, it appeared to favour a particular ethnic tradition at the expense of the other tribes' cultures and languages, including the Oromos'. Eriksson points out that in Ethiopia the formal institution of elementary church schools is a very important means of preserving the cultural and traditional values of the Amhara (1972, 65; see Cooper, 1996, 23). According to this observation

Amharic became an exclusive medium of instruction which purposely set out to serve a 'distinctive and supra-ethnic' tradition (Cooper, 1996, 24). Breezy (2003, 12) and Ujulu (1997, 74) similarly argue that Oromo students were made to feel embarrassed at their social and culturally-bound names and many of them were forced to change their names to Amhara ones in Church/mission schools. Although the Western missionaries have not directly exercised their own western educational models in Ethiopia, it is argued that they have imposed their western cultural values on the communities of the Church/mission schools through their western Christian teachings. It is also observed that they were involved in extending Amharization in using Amharic as the medium of instruction in the EECMY Church/mission run schools (Cooper, 1996, 24-25). This will be discussed in chapter four in detail.

However, in the following statement Eide argues that the long-term effect of mission schools' education was actually to raise Oromo consciousness.

> The long-term effect of education is interesting. Its immediate aim was to promote integration into the Amhara way of life. Its long-term effect, however, was a new awareness of the individual's life situation which gradually developed into a social and political consciousness and ultimately a critique of political structures and conditions (2000, 93; 1996, 110).

For Eide, Oromo resistance to Amharization is the result of modern education, and he gives the illustration that, 'one of the first signs of a rising Oromo consciousness was Oromo students at the university beginning to take back their original names and the distribution of occasional pamphlets in the Oromo language at the beginning of the 1970s' (1996, 111).

This may indicate that an evangelical Christian enterprise was one means of re-establishing the identity of the Oromo people and became a further foundation for their current strong cultural and religious revivals (Simeso, 2005, 37). Yet, it may also be argued that, from the many people affected by Amharization, some Oromos still opted to abandon their culture and traditions as a result of a biased school system (Gutema, 2007, 33-34, 42-44; Cooper, 1996, 22).

Generally, the education methods of the evangelical missionaries were effective in evangelizing, in developing mature Christians and in providing a good education for some of the Oromo people. Nevertheless, it has left some negative impressions of Christianity because of the denial of Oromo cultural and social values. As recent

research reveals, some high school students and the Oromo elite have become unfriendly towards Christianity due to the influence of such negative implications, as will be further discussed in chapter four (Gutema, 2007, 33-34). This is a challenge for the EECMY today and into the future, and demonstrates the need to develop a contextualized Christianity and methods of evangelism which may enable the Oromo people to be more open to Christianity.

Training approach

Training indigenous evangelists, pastors and church leaders at pastoral training centres was another important approach employed by evangelical missionaries, which was also later, adopted by the EECMY (Bakke, 1987, 144). The primary purpose of training indigenous Christians was to equip them to extend and increase Church planting by reaching more people and by strengthening them in evangelical Christianity through evangelism and teaching (Sadi, 2003, 122). To achieve this goal, three types of training programmes were established: residential Bible schools (RBS), theological education by extension (TEE), and national and regional seminaries. These were set up sequentially in Oromia and other parts of the country (EECMY 1999). However, looking closely at the curriculum and content of the training programmes, it is clear that a contextual basis, or at least any discussion of the Oromo cultural context, was definitely lacking. For example, use of the Oromo language as the medium for training in the primary theological training (i.e., RBS and TEE) and specifically in the respective Oromo areas were, and are, hardly considered. Instead, Western Lutheran traditional theology and EOC history subjects have dominated the training (Sadi, 2003, 35). In this process, Amharic was retained, not only as one of the subjects, but also as the medium of instruction in the RBS and TEE institutions (Ujulu, 1999, 50; Bakke, 1998, 162 n. 1, Sadi, 2003, 124).

In reference to the training effects, Eide writes that the graduates of the theological training schools who became evangelists or pastors have contributed much to the evangelism work, including Church planting (2000, 84). For Eide, this was done as a result of relevant mission training. In contrast, Bakke argues that the pattern of the training alienated the graduates from the daily life of the rural congregations because they could not recognize the significance of their own culture (1987, 260). Consequently, some of the ministers who were placed among the members as church

planters pulled themselves out of the community as they were unable to assimilate themselves to the life settings of the people (Guta, 2003, 151). This may suggest that the western oriented theological curricula of the training not only affected Church planting but also the trainees' ministerial profession. How such theological training negatively affected Church planting among the non-evangelized Oromos and how this would be responded to by proposing some contextual approaches will be further discussed in chapters four and five in the light of the fieldwork. Given this, I now move to discuss the Bible translation approach.

Bible translation approach

Employing a Bible translation strategy for Church planting among the Oromo people was as old as the foundation of evangelical Christianity in the western part of Oromia Aren a Swedish missionary who lived among the people for more than two decades and wrote two volumes on the history of the EECMY writes that the main reason for using a Bible translation method was to reach the Oromo more effectively in their own native language so that they could understand the Gospel message and accept evangelical Christianity with its emphasis on the Bible as the Word of God (1978, 222; cf Norlander, 1998, 5). Where previously the Bible had been in Geez and Amharic, the Bible was translated into *Oromiffa* by the first baptized indigenous Oromo people who were the fruit of the SEM enterprise (Bulcha, 1996, 45), including Onesimos Nesib and the young woman, Aster Ganno, already mentioned. In this way the Oromo Bible came into existence and was used for Oromo evangelization. Other books were also translated. For example, a hymn book, the '*Galata Waaqayyo Gofta Maccaa'* and Luther's Catechism. These were employed for the mission and Church planting enterprise.

In 1899, two years after its publication, the pioneer indigenous missionaries successfully reached the Oromo people during their fifth expedition and fulfilled a long awaited vision, as previously noted (Tadesse, 1995, 8). They seem to have been received with great honour by many people in western Oromia (Norlander, 1998, 8). Citing the pioneers' report Norlander comments that the Oromo willingly gathered around the evangelical pioneers when they heard the Word of God in their own Oromo language and they willingly accepted evangelical Christianity (1998, 8). However, to what extent the translation was in the people's own language is an

interesting question because words and concepts have their meanings in their original cultural contexts. Nevertheless, an attempt was made to translate the term 'God' into its equivalent *'Waaqayyo'* in the way Oromos understand 'God'. This requires further study and will be partly discussed in chapter five. In general, however, the Oromo people had a positive attitude towards the mission approach which used the Bible translated into Oromo. Consequently, the translation has played a vital role in the expansion of Church planting in western Oromia. Two possible reasons may be suggested for the success of evangelization in western Oromia by employing this Bible translation approach.

First, the evangelical missionaries reached the people with the gospel in their own mother tongue in contrast to the EOC, which used Geez and Amharic and which were foreign to the people (Aren, 1978, 396). As Eide further notes, to the Oromo people 'hearing the Word of God in their vernacular greatly offered a remarkable aspiration in the midst of their suppression under Abyssinian colonial rule' (Eide, 2000, 74). For example, Chibssa reflects his experience as follows: 'when I was a young man my only ambition was to become an Amhara. But then I came across the Oromo Bible. Realizing that God talked to me in my own language, surprised me *(sic)* joy and changed my ambition completely' (cited in Eide, 2000, 74).

This experience demonstrates how the existence of a translation of the Bible into the Oromo language persuaded Oromos to accept an evangelical Christianity. Secondly, the Oromo people seem to have found that the Oromo Bible conveyed relevant meanings within their cultural and religious context (Digga, 1999, 45). Norlander further suggests that this occurred as 'they had never imagined that it would be possible to use their own native language for sacred Scriptures and Christian poetry' (1998, 4). It may be argued that the people seem to have enthusiastically accepted evangelical Christianity since the Oromo Bible version was the first of its kind to reflect their cultural and religious concepts and made the Gospel message relevant to their life situation (Bulcha, 1990, 11).

In this respect, it could be said that the Oromo Bible played a significant role in laying the groundwork for an indigenous (contextual) interpretation of the Gospel (Eide, 2000, 89). Employing the Oromo Bible translation mission approach has,

therefore, contributed to the recognition of evangelical Christianity by western Oromo people. Such recognition suggests not only a positive attitude towards evangelical Christianity, but also a positive attitude towards their own language, culture and literature development (Digga, 1999, 49). Furthermore, the Oromo Bible has had a great impact on the non-Amharic speaking communities of Ethiopia by being a model in raising their consciousness to develop their own vernacular translations (Norlander, 1999, 7).

Nevertheless, some problems have also occurred in employing the Oromo Bible as an approach of mission. For example, the Amharic script in which the translation was carried out became a barrier. Two reasons may be cited for this. First, it was observed that all aspects of Amharic, even the script, are likely to be viewed as oppressive and promoted at the expense of diminishing the Oromo language, being 'funded mainly with revenues collected from the Oromo peasants' (Bulcha, 1995, 56). Second, as explained earlier, the Amharic script is hardly suitable for transcribing and expressing the Oromo language since the two languages are from different cultural (Semitic) backgrounds (Gemta, 1986, 132). As we have already seen, this criticism is supported by indigenous and non-indigenous linguists (Cerulli in Bulcha, NJAS 1995, 17; c.f. Hordofa, 1999). This made using the Bible a difficult task, particularly for beginners.

Further, despite the Bible existing in the western Oromo dialect, hardly any effort was made to adapt the translation for the vast central, south and southeast Oromo people who were the least evangelized community of the Oromia region (Guta, 2003, 184). It was suggested that the NLM and DEM missionaries, who have served the areas for the last six decades, and the EECMY Bible translation project are responsible for this state of affairs (Dibbo, 2001, 79). Nevertheless, after a hundred years the original version was revised with minor changes and published in the Latin script in 1998, although this still does not solve the dialect problems of the Oromo people in the central, south and south-eastern regions (Breezy, 2001, 32).

Overall, the effort of the evangelical missionaries to develop a Bible translation strategy to reach the Oromo tribe was remarkable. As Bevans notes, 'if no effort of translation is made, there is hardly any way people of another culture can come to

know the life that Christianity holds out' (1997, 36). This was particularly true for the Oromo people; the Oromo Bible translation method has significantly contributed to the founding of evangelical Christianity among the Oromo people in the west and to the growth of the EECMY over the last hundred years. The focus in this last section of the chapter has been on the use of the Bible in mission and how it has been employed by the EECMY among the Oromo people. Other aspects of this subject, such as how the western missionaries and the EECMY further viewed the use of Bible translation into the Oromo language, and how the translation considered Oromo culture and its effect in the Church planting mission among the Oromo people, will be analysed in the forthcoming chapters.

In summary, I began this chapter by discussing and analyzing the culture, language and religion of the Oromo people followed by an explanation of how the western missionaries reached first Oromia and then Ethiopia. I have discussed the different mission strategies developed and used by the EECMY to plant evangelical Christianity in Oromia. I have showed how training indigenous persons and translating the Bible into the western Oromo dialect appear to have formed an integral part of the missionary vision. Consequently, western evangelical Christianity reached the Oromo people through the missionaries' trained indigenous evangelical pioneers and the foreign missionaries themselves who engaged in mission approach which included evangelism accompanied by establishing facilities to provide educational and social support. However, I have also argued that most of the methods contained serious weaknesses in that they used Amharic, traditional western theological and general education approaches, and failed to engage in any serious way with the culture, language and religion of the Oromo people. Further analysis and evaluation of the mission strategy and its Church planting effects will be made in chapter four in the light of the fieldwork.

Chapter Two

The Impact of Colonial Mission Models

Having discussed the context of the Oromo people in chapter one, my primary aim in this chapter is to evaluate the EOC and European colonial mission models which were employed in different social, cultural and political contexts. I argue that both mission models had a similar purpose, which was to impose their version of Christianity on the colonized people and to compel them to be converted based on their conviction that their cultures and ways of life were better than those of the Oromo. In chapter one, I illustrated how the Abyssinians of Ethiopia had colonized and sought to suppress the Oromo people, their land, culture and language. In this chapter the emphasis is given to the EOC's traditional approaches to mission which were used as part of the agenda of Amharization. I also focus on European colonial mission approaches whose mission legacy led the Oromo both to refuse to engage with the missionaries and to feel alienated from Christianity. Both EOC and European mission strategies are in no small way responsible for the lack of success of Church planting among the Oromo people. In this chapter, therefore, I analyse the root cause of their mission models, how they were employed and their impact on Church planting among the Oromo people. In so doing, my specific objective is to draw lessons from their mission approaches by examining their positive and negative implications in order to develop better mission models for the Oromo community, such as those which are culturally sensitive and religiously meaningful to the people.

2.1 The EOC mission approach

2.1.1 The origin of the Church

In this section, the nature of EOC Christian expansion among the Oromo people will be evaluated. I argue that the nature of the EOC mission approach has not only become an obstacle to its expansion, but also to any kind of Christian mission in Oromia and non-Abyssinian parts of Ethiopia.

It is often claimed that the EOC is one of the oldest Churches in the world. Traditions also offer several accounts of when the Christianity of the EOC was introduced to Abyssinia. However, many historical records trace the earliest establishment of Christianity to the Axumite kingdom in the 4th century, brought by a Syrian Greek named Frumentius (Bevans and Schroeder, 2006, 113; Sanneh, 1983, 5-6; Grafton in

Bonk 2007, 101). According to the Church's own narrative, it was Frumentius himself who became the first bishop to head the Church following his consecration by the Alexandrian Patriarch (Lemi, 2001, 17). The office of this consecration continued until the Church gained its independence in the second half of the 20th century (Saeveraas, 1974, 31). After the arrival of Frumentius, the king, with all his family and nobility, embraced the Christian faith and formally established Christianity as the official religion of the country (Meinardus, 1999, 132). The arrival of Frumentius, therefore, marks the birth of mission by the EOC.

Nevertheless, an explicit mission effort was not carried out until the arrival of the monks from Syria in the 5th century (Isichei, 1995, 32; Markakis, 1975, 25). Founding monasteries, writing religious books and translating the Bible from Greek into the Geez language were the primary mission strategies through which they expanded Christianity from the royal court to the common people (Bakke, 1987, 51, 74). It was also from this time that Geez was considered to be a sacred Abyssinian and Orthodox liturgical language (Lemi, 2001, 17; Aren, 1999, 59). Thus, the development of the monastic tradition became a significant mission endeavour, which strengthened the church to move forward in its expansion.

2.1.2 The relationship between the EOC and the Coptic Church

The EOC had a strong relationship with the Coptic Orthodox Church from the 4th century until the second half of the 20th century, when it was granted its own Patriarch (Baur, 1994, 33-34). Three reasons may be suggested for this relationship. First, the Alexandrian Coptic Church appointed Egyptians to be the bishops of the EOC for about 1600 years until 1959 (Parker, 1995, 53). Second, the Church inherited Alexandrian liturgy and music, and the monastic tradition (Lemi, 2001, 125). Third, and most importantly, the EOC adhered to the same Monophysite creed as the Coptic Church (Parker, 1995, 54) along with the Oriental Orthodox Communion. The controversy about the nature of Christ, which resulted in the Monophysite creed, had taken place around the Greco-Roman world when the Church was at a young age (Birri, 1995). In this controversy, the Abyssinian Orthodox Church followed the lead of the Egyptian Church in the division of Christendom at the Council of Chalcedon during the 5th century (Isichei, 1995, 57). The Western (Roman Catholic) Church and the Eastern (Greek) Orthodox Church

held that the two natures were distinct (separate) in the one Christ (Parker, 1995, 49). However, the Egyptian Coptic, Syrian and Armenian Churches and the Malankara Syrian Church of India (members of the Oriental Orthodox Churches communion) refused to accept this Chalcedonian formula and came to be known as Monophysites, who believe that Christ had one divine-human nature (Ayenew, 2009, 14). The EOC then stood with the latter view. This was also how the Church used the term Monophysite, *Tewahido* (unification or fused into one) to express its stand on the nature of Christ and which is also included in its official transliterated Amharic name: *Ye Etiopia Tewahido Ortodox Beta Kristian.*

Generally, it was this tradition which related the Church to the Alexandrian Church and led it to be called Coptic until it became independent in 1959 with its first national Patriarch (Saeveraas, 1974, 31). The EOC is also in full communion with the Oriental Orthodox Churches, which prefer to be called 'Non-Chalcedonian' (Ayenew, 2009, 15). In having about 40 million members, the EOC is the largest Church of the entire communion (Isichei, 1995, 52). Although hierarchally the members of the communion appear to be independent, they share the same basic faith tradition (Parker, 1995, 50). Such a long relationship and interdependence has had an effect on the development, character and tradition of the EOC, which in turn has affected Oromo society and influenced its religious ethos. Based on this tradition the EOC seems to have developed and enriched its own faith tradition according to its own Abyssinian milieu (Parker, 1995, 50) which has had a significant role in its mission.

2.1.3 The EOC Christian tradition

Traditionally, the EOC has remained subject to Alexandrian episcopal authority, to those who appointed EOC bishops, and to the Church to which the EOC has owed its creed, liturgy and monastic spirituality for the last sixteen centuries. However, the expansion of Islam into the Mediterranean world and the Red Sea coast from the 7th century onwards isolated Ethiopia from the rest of the Christian world, except for some links with Alexandria (Tamrat, 1998, 17). This enforced isolation enabled it to develop a unique Abyssinian form of Christianity which encouraged the integration of the Church with the State as the symbol of nationality (Tamrat, 1972, 23). Furthermore, this practical isolation and its socio-cultural requirements also

permitted the development of a unique theology, faith, worship and mission as well as artistic traditions (Johnston, 1993, 241).

According to Tamrat the primary source of the distinctive features of the faith and worship of the Abyssinian Church was its great dependence on the books of the Old Testament, as they relate to the practice of Judaism (1998, 17-18). This dependence on Jewish practices has always been understood to be the foundation for its Christian tradition and which was transmitted to the church in the 4th century and because of its isolation, is evident to this day (Sergew, 1972, 38). Hence, as several important Judaistic practices are part of the church tradition, the Hebrew tradition is preserved more faithfully in the EOC than in any other of the Christian Churches today (Ayenew, 2009,14). As Tovey says, these attributes 'show a strong Semitic influence that makes the Church distinct' (2004, 59).

Additionally, many of its other common practices, which still flourish in the EOC, were taken from the Coptic Orthodox Church (Tamrat, 1998, 18). Among others, a particular practice of EOC worship which was received from the Coptic Orthodox Church and highly developed in the Abyssinian context was the festival of the holy cross '*meskal*' (in Amharic) (Tamrat, 1998, 18; Hastings, 1996, 11-12). Traditionally, this festival is held in the middle of the first month of the Ethiopian calendar *Meskerem* (September). It is often celebrated with huge bonfires, Abyssinian traditional singing and dancing, particularly after the long rainy season.
 In this manner, the *Meskal festival* developed as a distinctive feature of the EOC Christian tradition and, during its expansion in Oromia, the Church sought to impose this on the Oromo people as a fundamental Christian tradition.

As I have already explained in chapter one, the Oromo people had their own festival called '*Irressa*' or' '*Huluquo*' which also takes place at the end of the rainy season between September and October (Bartels, 1983, 35). After colonizing the people, however, the EOC attempted to ignore the *Irressa*' or' '*Huluquo*' festival and gradually put the EOC *meskal* practices in place (Melba, 1988, 62). Subsequently, the people were made to celebrate the new festival as '*Masqala Oromo*' (Gadaa, 2000, 6-9). Yet, the Waaqeffannaa leaders argue that, since the Oromo people were forced to practise the version of this festival, which is generally irrelevant to their

culture, they have been largely dissatisfied with it (2000, 9). Consequently, only a few Oromo have accepted it and, even then, imperfectly practise the *Masqala Oromo* version festival. Currently, '…despite the EOC and state political tension, almost all the Oromo people celebrate their own Irressa traditional festival rather than the new version' (Gadaa, 2000, 6). In this respect, the EOC traditional self-interpretation among the Oromo people was not only unsuccessful, but also left a negative connotation on Christian mission as a whole.

In general, therefore, the EOC Christian tradition seems to have developed from the Old Testament and Coptic Church practices. However, as Olana argues, it has also been integrated into the Abyssinian socio-cultural and political context with its unique character, from which the Church mission motive has been developed (Olana, 1997, 29). I mean by this that the EOC traditionally claims that its Christian tradition is superior to other cultures in Ethiopia since it has been adopted into an advanced Abyssinian culture (Guta, 2003, 35). It might be from this perception that Oromo culture and religion was regarded as primitive and something that should be replaced by the EOC 'ready-made Christian tradition' of the Abyssinians (Simeso, 2003, 12). It could also be said that it was this cultural ethnocentrism which turned the EOC mission into ''Amharization''. This is where the problem of the EOC version of Christianity and its mission lies. I will discuss this in detail, along with the EOC Church mission practices, having first introduced my personal experience.

2.1.4. Personal experience

I begin this section by analysing my own and my parents' experience of the EOC in order to support my argument that the EOC mission was a means of Amharization. As an Oromo by ethnicity, having been born and brought up in Oromo society, I have much to say from my own experience and observations which allows me to critically reflect on the strategy of EOC mission. First, I was told that my father and mother were baptized at the EOC by decree of the rulers. Not only them, but also all the children, my brothers, sisters and I were taken to the church and baptized as soon as we were born. Second, following baptism, we were given new Amhara or Saints' names, by which we were to be called rather than our native ones. Third, there was an obligation to venerate the prominent persons of Abyssinia in addition to the Saints

and Mary, and failure to fulfil this obligation was met with severe spiritual punishment.

The two Churches nearest to our home were named after the Saints Gabriel and Mary, who must be venerated on the 19th and 21st dates of the month respectively. The Church required that no-one should work on those days. If we did work, we would be excommunicated from the community and denied a burial place after death. Compelling the people to venerate the saints, as Bartels comments, 'would be just one more way to lead converts away from an essential dimension of the culture' (1983, 28). The same is true for the Oromo people. In short, from my experience, the EOC mission seems to be more about imposing the Abyssinian culture through its version of Christianity, rather than relating the good news of Christianity to a different culture. Accordingly, the primary reason behind the EOC mission could be considered that of making non-Amhara people Amhara in the name of Christian expansion, but without which a person cannot be a Christian or an Ethiopian (c.f. Guta, 2003, 80; Eide, 2000, 6ff; Staffan, 2000, 18). This personal observation may seem biased, yet it is supported by the literature above and also through widespread experience among other Oromo people as recorded in the fieldwork.

2.1.5 Using colonial power as a mission tool

Abyssinian colonial power was the main mission strategy of the EOC during and after expansion of the empire. The close relationship of the State and Church has also played a significant role in this process. The relationship was started by King Ezana in the 4th century and continued until the overthrow of the last Emperor in 1974 (Lemi, 2001, 26-27). Although the EOC lost influence after the Marxist revolution of 1974, which led to the official separation of State and Church, the EOC has still kept its status as the State Church and is considered to be the custodian of Abyssinian colonial and imperial ideology. This ideology has played a central role in almost the entire history of Abyssinian and EOC expansion as well as in the formation of the present day Ethiopian State (Gnamo, 2002, 4; Lulseged, 1985, 12).

There have been many historical moments when the EOC has expanded alongside expansion of the empire. For example, this occurred at the end of the 19th century when Menelik II expanded Abyssinian territory by colonizing most of the eastern,

southern, central and western independent regions, including Oromia. The EOC was clearly seen to be the permanent and unifying factor in this (Staffan, 2000, 15; Bakke, 1987, 55). Tareke, an Ethiopian writer, explains this ideological role of the Church in Abyssinian expansion as follows:

> By exalting the virtue of social hierarchy, the Orthodox Church helped to stabilize the Abyssinian social formation; it was the continuing edge of relations of exploitation… Supported by a tradition of awesome antiquity, enjoining direct access to land and the product of the peasants and exercising a virtual monopoly in education, the Church affected every aspect of rural life (in Gnamo, 2002,6).

Lipsky more clearly describes,

> The archbishop officially is part of the government, and he and other members of the upper clergy are participants in the councils of the emperor. In the provinces, the various bishops are to be reckoned at least as on the same level socially, economically, and politically as the provincial governors. The local priest, *dabtaras* and other officials still retain their prestige and predominant economic and social position in most of the rural areas (1992, 164).

This illustrates how the EOC has become an integral part of Ethiopian politics, culture, economy, identity, education and why some people cannot separate being Ethiopian or Amhara from being Orthodox Christians.

The approaches and actions of the EOC have justifiably led to the alienation of some. For example, the Church was allocated up to 30% of the land in the countryside, most of which was confiscated from the newly incorporated regions, including the Oromo region (Eide, 2000, 46). Gnamo, an Oromo writer, further notes that the EOC has attempted to justify the Abyssinian colonial conquest and alienation of the subject peoples, including its own adherents, whom it plundered and reduced to serfdom, as well as the massacre and mutilation by the expanding army against those who refused to surrender (2002, 6). Following this expansion the priests maintained the Amhara political mission. As Levine, an American historian, states,

> The Amhara clergy had the task of maintaining a specialized body of religious culture, a task they could fulfil in any place… It was the formal structure of specialized political roles that enabled the Amharas to channel their motivation to dominate into historically efficacious actions (1974, 150-151).

Consequently, the expansion and consolidation of the Abyssinian state increased the interdependence of the Church and state in the conquered Oromo territory. The last emperor, Haile Sellassie verifies this in his words, 'the Church [EOC] is like a sword and the government is like an arm, therefore, the sword cannot cut by itself without the use of the arm and vice versa' (Birri, 1995, 7). This clearly illustrates how the

Abyssinian throne (political power) was closely associated with the EOC altar or mission tradition. This suggests that it was likely to be impossible to differentiate Orthodox Christianity from the political consciousness of colonization working towards the mission of Amharization.

Having viewed how the EOC and the Abyssinian State relationship has been built up to be supportive of each other, it is important to ask why the EOC employed Abyssinian political power and what the impact of this was on Christianizing Oromo society. Among other reasons, Larebo states that the EOC needed the political power of the State in order to share the economic resources taken from the conquered areas and to compel the people to accept its version of Christianity (1988, 377). Let us examine Larebo's reasons in more detail. His first reason is to share the economic resources taken from the conquered areas for the EOC's further expansion and its general administration (Eide, 2000, 46; Bakke, 1987, 109). Accordingly, more than one-third of the land in Oromia is said to have belonged to the EOC. The clergy and monks depended on this for their livelihood in return for their service (Donham, 1986, 12). The fact that the priests in the conquered areas of the south and west were relatively wealthier and more aristocratic than their contemporaries in the heartland of the EOC demonstrates just how much they gained from this expansion (Bakke, 1987, 109). The Church has, therefore, not only benefited economically as a result of its Christian mission at the expense of the colonized Oromo people, but it has also supported the domination of the community leading to Amharization.

The second reason was the imposition of its version of Christianity on the people and the total rejection of other cultural structures, symbols and religious rites, as well as other ritual and shrines (Ujulu, 1999, 27; Melba, 1988, 53). For example, the Oromo traditional leadership system, '*Gadaa',* and the historic religious pilgrimage '*Abbaa mudda'* were two of many other structures and practices that were rejected. Messing further says that Church buildings were constructed by force in these areas and guarded by militants who were permitted to remain permanently on the land as shareholders and guardians of the feudal Church (1985, 180). Although one may consider that such top-down Christian expansion may act as a unifying factor of religious culture, in contrast, however, plundering Oromo resources and imposing a new religion on them by force at the expense of their cultural identity may not be

considered anything less than cultural imperialism or *de-Oromization*. This might be where the significance of the impact of the EOC mission approach lies among the Oromo people.

Despite these problems, the EOC has claimed that it has expanded Christianity across the nation and argues that Ethiopia is a Christian country because of its mission (Parker, 1995, 58; Isichei, 1995, 47). In contrast, Levine suggests that the largest number of affiliated EOC members have been, and remain, Abyssinians in the northern part of the country where the Church began, where it has remained for almost all of its existence, and where the culture has always been Semitic (1974, 151). In fact, there have been a relatively small number of other ethnic groups, including Oromos, who have been baptized. With reference to the Oromo people, however, the people appear to have accepted the religion in order to 'escape from the worst aspects of imperial domination' (Eide, 2000, 47; c.f. Aren, 1999, 87). Gidada, an Oromo historian, further argues that after severe domination, the people only nominally accepted the Orthodox Christianity (1982, 105). Markakis, an American political science writer supports this view. Accordingly, their response to such a mission approach is supported by their saying: '*siriba giddii sirbuu'* (lit. 'Just dance the dance that you are forced to do so without your interest and willingness'). Conversion, therefore, 'neither brought [bring] a dramatic experience of the adherent's belief system nor a disruption of their social custom' (Larebo, 1988, 377). Rather, they seemed to continue practising their traditional religion (*muka abba Kegnaa)* where they found their religious satisfaction (Ujulu, 1999, 83). This could be a missiological lesson for the EECMY for its own vision to reach the unreached tribes in general, and the Oromo people, who may not need to be forced to accept a new religion at the expense of their economic resources and/ or their culture. Similarly, for developing a contextual Church planting strategy for Oromia it could be a vital lesson for the EECMY to consider the cultural and religious contexts of the Oromo people.

2.1.6 Christianizing the people by mass baptism

Baptizing people in large numbers (mass-baptism) was the most common way of making the people Christian in the conquered areas of Oromia (Eide, 2000, 46). According to Negaso, the Oromo people as a whole preferred to cling to their

traditional religion, which they called *muka abba Kegnaa* (lit. our father's tree, which meant our traditional or father's faith) through which they believed in *Waaqayyo* (1972, 9). However, they were intensively pressurized into being baptized through mass baptism after which they embraced EOC Christianity as a formality rather than as a matter of conviction. As well as being forced to do so, they were not taught the principles of Christianity either before or after baptism (Birri, 1995, 92). Alongside mass baptism, it was also observed that the EOC took some major actions in its mission practices (Guta, 2003, 50), three of which will be discussed: *matab*, names and language.

First, following baptism the people had to tie a string called *matab* (in Amharic) around their neck as a symbol of being an orthodox Christian. It is also equally recognized as a sign of baptism (Sergaw, 1982, 33). According to Tamrat, the origin of tying a string goes back to the time of the Chalcedonian council after which the Alexandrian Church devised a sign that consisted of three strings: red, white and blue, twisted together and tied around the neck whereby the Christians could be distinguished from others (1972, 38). As the EOC was related to the Alexandrian church, it may not be difficult to see how both Churches shared this tradition. Furthermore, the colours of the Abyssinian flag and the EOC ritual string – *matab* - are green, yellow and red and seem to have been adopted from this tradition. The tri-colours of the flag were traditionally defined in a way that validated the Abyssinian monarchical rule and the EOC as an official religion of the empire (Simeso, 2005, 23).

It was this Abyssinian flag which was twisted together and tied around the baptized person and without which a person could not be recognized as Christian. According to Birr, the *matab* not only symbolizes a true Orthodox Christian but also a good Ethiopian or Amhara citizen (Birr, 1995, 93). Given the inseparability of Church and state in Ethiopia, Birr's interpretation is probably justified. Customarily, the Church also wraps the Bible, cross and other altar items with the Ethiopian flag as well as using it to cover some parts of the inside and outside of church walls and fences (Fufa, 1995, 29). This may be taken not only as religious expression but also as an ideological and psychological influence, through which the people may abandon their own cultural and religious symbols. Nevertheless, as Bakke comments, with

such a mission approach, the EOC was not successful among the Oromo people (1998, 63, n.2). If such a symbol was needed it would be preferable to use the Oromo flag[2] and its colours, which reflect the cultural and religious symbols of the Oromo people.

Second, converting the Oromo native names into Amhara (Christian) names was a widespread practice during baptism. Guta notes that accepting Christianity in this way is to be a member of the superior race [Amhara] regardless of social background (2003, 63; c.f. Olana, 1997, 37). In this respect, to become a member of the EOC meant more than a change of religion. It meant a change of status in society and becoming a member of the 'Amhara' race (Staffan, 2000, 18). Olana argues that this might be part of the EOC colonial mission in which non-Abyssinians, particularly Oromos, would simultaneously be assimilated into the Amhara ruling state (Ethiopia) (1997, 23). Greenfield and Hassen further note that the Amhara state religion was not only baptizing and Amharizing the people, but also baptizing the land. In so doing, the names of Oromo cultural places, religious centres (shrines), mountains, rivers, villages and towns were replaced with Amhara ones. For example, *Finfinne* became Addis Ababa; *Ambo* was changed to Hagre Hiwat, *Haramaya* to Alem Maya, *Bulle Hora* to Hagre Mariam, *Hadema* to Nazareth, *Bishofteu* to Debre Zeit, and *Walliso* to Ghion (1992, 76). Thus, the primary reason behind changing native names was twofold: to baptise the people and land into the EOC coupled with Abyssinian colonialism and displacement of the former cultural identity of the Oromo people (Olana, 1997, 23).

However, as various experiences reveal, the mission of the EOC by means of this approach (baptism and changing names) seems to have been largely ineffective in its mission of Amharization (Sadi and Guta, 1997, 34). Evidently some, if not all, Oromos have gradually dropped the Amhara names and returned to their original

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[2] Oromos have a national flag *alabba* that also comprises three colours: black, red and white. Each of these is culturally and religiously very meaningful in that they constitute the whole social and spiritual life cycle of individuals and community. For example, in the *Gadaa* cultural and political system the black, red and white represent those yet to enter active life (0-40 years old), those in active life (41-48) and those who had passed through active live (49 to death) respectively. Religiously, the black, red and white represent the mystery of Waaqayyo, the present and dynamic work of Waaqayyo among the people and an act of commemorating what Waaqayyo has done in the past and remembering the people who have correspondingly been involved in that process.

cultural and religious names (Ujulu, 1999, 29), for they believe that their names are a reflection of their distinctive ethnic identity. What makes this comment significant is that a few Oromos who kept their Amhara names and still intentionally or unintentionally name their children in Amhara seem often to have been embarrassed among the community. This might be a result of the Oromo revival of their culture and traditional religion, where the people feel comfortable in their socio-cultural entities. The weakness of the mission at this particular point informs us of the need to be aware of the cultural and religious importance of naming ceremonies for a culture such as that of the Oromo people. Such a mission appraisal is also of particular interest in developing a contextual Church planting strategy for the EECMY in terms of reaching the Oromo community.

Third, employing the two Semitic languages (Amharic and Geez) has been another major criterion in the EOC mission strategy (Deressa, 2003, 9). During the 19th century, *Amharinya* (Amharic), the offspring of ancient *Geez,* emerged as the prime medium of Amhara culture and became known as *Lesane Negus*, (*yenegus qwanqwa*) 'the king's language' (Henze, 2000, 78). It was employed as the standard national language (Deressa, 2003, 9; Forslund, 1993, 36-39). As the EOC and its religion was meant to be the most central aspect of the political identity of the Amhara ruling class, applying the language played a significant role in its mission (Staffan, 2000, 18; Olana, 1997, 13). According to the EOC and Amhara state rulers, claiming to be Ethiopian without a thorough knowledge of Amharic was equivalent to having no country or religion (Fufa, 1999, 26). Based on this ideology, the church seems to have employed this language for its Christian expansion and also to weaken linguistic differences (Simesso, 2005, 10). Therefore, when this policy was applied to the Oromo peoples, it may be taken as self-evident that this was not only for Christian expansion but also to discourage their mother language.

As McGravan, an American missiologist argues, however, 'the language of the heart is difficult to stamp out. It is learned from the mother's lips and spoken in the home. It is an inner sanctuary where the outside world cannot penetrate. It is jealously guarded because it enhances a sense of peoplehood' (1991, 160).This argument may not be identical for all people and all the time. Yet, it seems true of the Oromo people in that their language survived despite relentless repression by the State and the

Church over the last hundred years (Bulcha, 1997, 326). Accordingly, the type of Christianity that was introduced in such a manner encountered implacable rejection. Consequently, how would the Oromo people be expected to accept a new religion in a foreign language? A missionary who closely observes this argues 'how could one expect a people to turn to Christ if their teachers [priests] did not even think it is important enough to communicate with them in their native Oromo tongue' (cited in Guta, 2003, 63). Indeed, if the Church had expected the people to accept Christianity as a religion it would have used their own Oromo language, which would be part of inculturating the Gospel message for the well-being of the people. In contrast, the Church seems to have incorporated the Amhara language alongside its Christian practice making it a method of racial as well as Christian expansion. Yet, it has been observed that the determined Amharization effort of the EOC mission by such system has been largely ineffectual (Kumsa, 1982, 157).

This may inform us that one's mother tongue is an integral part of identity, which may not be easily abandoned. It is a prime component of human personality (Jacobs, 1994, 41). The same could be said to be true for the Oromo language in that the people as a community have never renounced the language, despite the ecclesiastical pressure of the Church over the last hundred years. Hence, the main obstacle for the Oromo people to accept all forms of Christianity was and is not theological but socio-cultural due to the systematic attempt to remove their '*Orommuuma*' (Oromo identity) and replace it through Amharization .

Generally, the EOC mission may be appreciated in Ethiopia for its Christian expansion over the last sixteen centuries. In particular, it is well respected among the Abyssinians for inculturating Christianity into their social context, as well as building their culture, language and national ideology. Accordingly, all the Semitic tribal family (such as Amhara and Tigre) are largely affiliated to the EOC and recognize it as their own national religion (Simesso, 2005, 15). In contrast, non-Abyssinian tribes, in general, and the Oromo people, in particular, hardly acknowledge the church since it imposed its version of Christianity on the people alongside its gradual enforcement of the assimilation of Abyssinian culture and language (Eide, 2000, 21-22). Consequently, many Oromos resented EOC Christianity and many others converted to Islam, which they used as a resistance

ideology against the EOCs mission of Amharization (Hassen, 1990, 77). Nowadays, perhaps as a response, Oromo adherents of the Church equally practise their traditional religion with the non-Christian and Muslim Oromo community (Bartels, 1993, 15). Olika, an Oromo researcher notes that most of the EOC Churches in Oromia today seem to have become isolated islands which have nothing to do with the religious life of the Oromo people other than being used as sites for graveyards (2001, 37; c.f. Lewis, 1990, 45, 61). In this respect, the EOC has been largely ineffective in its Christian expansion.

Thus, the EOC mission approach among the Oromo people demonstrates that, without a contextualized or an inculturated Gospel message that fully considers Oromo culture any form of Church planting may not be practical. Further, colonization and the imperial imposition of religion on the Oromo people has not succeeded in converting them to Christianity, but has in fact alienated many Oromos from Christianity. Hence, if the EECMY needs to further its church-planting mission among the Oromo community, this suggests an imperative component, which my project focuses on. It is, however, not only the experience of EOC mission strategies and practices that have oppressed Oromo people and alienated them from any form of Christianity, it is also the strategies and practices employed by the European colonizers and missionaries who have further contributed to EECMY's lack of success among the Oromo people.

2.2 European colonization and Christian mission

This section discusses how European Christian mission reached the rest of the world during the colonization period in the form of cultural imposition. I also argue that the Christian mission of the colonization era was not successful. My intention is to investigate why this is the case and to suggest strengths and weaknesses in the light of my survey. To do this, the relationship of mission and colonialism, and the mission approach of the European Christian missionaries and its impact will be considered.

According to Bosch, a contemporary missiologist, European Christian mission began in the mid-16th century and was associated with the colonial era of European expansion into other nations with reference to those overseas nations to which the

early European Churches used to assign missions 'with the idea of a magisterial commissioning' (2006, 228). The assigned missionaries were permanently attached to institutions in 'Europe from which they derived the mandate and power to confer salvation on those who accept certain tenets of the faith' (Bosch, 2006, 228). In this respect, mission describes the activities by which the European Christian tradition expanded into the rest of the world intertwined with the expansion of the European empire.

2.2.1 Mission and colonialism

The great voyages of discovery of the new world by explorers in the 16th century seems to have inspired both European colonization and Christian mission expansion (Bosch, 2006, 226-7; Walls, 2004, 21; Parratt, 2004, 2). When European explorers discovered new worlds the then innate partnership between Christendom and the State led to the sending of missionaries to non-European nations. However, it can be argued that there had been earlier historical factors with which European military supremacy and Christian mission were closely associated. Two undertakings are particularly worth mentioning.

First, following the conversion of the Emperor Constantine in the 4th century, Christianity, which had been persecuted for the first three centuries, was officially recognized as the religion of the Roman Empire (Provost-Smith, 2007, 87-88; Langley, 1995, 595). Consequently, the relationship of Christian thought and practice with the Empire facilitated both the expansion of the Roman Empire by military conquest and Christian mission of the time. Supported by bishops and theologians, Christian rulers passed laws that discriminated against adherents of non-Christian religions and justified the use of force. According to Kreider at times conversion was inspired by 'fear of the imperial laws' or by actual violence by the soldiers rather than by their own conviction (2007, 74).

Second, during most of the medieval period, the whole of Europe was cut off from the East and lost some parts of its areas to an invasion of Islam (Bosch, 2006, 214, 226)**.** When the European Christian rulers organized Crusades (1096-1291) to reclaim the Christian lands from the control of Muslims, the Christian communities collaborated with these Christian rulers whereby an ambivalent relationship between

Christian mission and military supremacy was observed (Jongeneel, 2007, 147). Although there is controversy regarding whether the primary aim of the crusades was religious, political or economic, it could be argued that they seem to be religious as much as political, since Christian expansion was explicitly exhibited in the incidents following the establishments of political and legal institutions (Bonk, 2007, 88). In one way or another, in both examples 'waves of forced conversions swept through the Roman Empire from the fourth to the eleventh century', in which a relationship between the State and the Church was exhibited (Bosch, 2006, 225-226). Likewise, the colonial era of Christian European expansion, from the end of the 15th century to the mid-twentieth century combined mission and militarism (Pankratz, 2007, 247). On closer inspection, one may even argue that colonization was the modern continuation of the expansion policies of the ancient Roman expansion and the medieval crusades.

The European colonial missionary movement may be divided into two major waves and symbolic periods. First, the missions of the 16th to 18th centuries consisted almost exclusively of Catholic missionaries from Portugal and Spain, followed by France, who engaged in mission mostly in Latin America and Asia (Bevans and Schroeder, 2004, 45; Sugirtharajah, 1998, 58-59; Walls, 1995, 21-2). It was perhaps during this missionary enterprise that the Church unusually became a symbol of colonial establishment and exercised social control through exploration (Escobar, 2007, 386). Second, the protestant missionary wave occurred in the 18th century, continuing into the early 20th century and began an imperial thrust that challenged the Roman Catholic powers in their own territories (Kreider, 2005, 65; Sugirtharajah, 1998, 58-59). This modern missionary enterprise was the direct outcome of the Pietist movement, which founded missionary societies with the aim of evangelizing their own peoples and non-Christians of other nations (Kreider, 2005, 65). As a whole, according to Walls, a British missiologist and historian more than two-thirds of Anglicans and other Protestant missionaries from continental Europe were sent to other nations under the patronage of the Anglican Church Missionary Society (CMS) in the first half of the 18th century (2004, 22). Unlike Catholic mission, the Anglican and Protestant missions of the 19th century were not as closely associated with empire building (Bosch, 2006, 227). However, it is argued that missionaries still

tended to support the imperial advance of their nation and worked within that context (Escobar, 2007, 386).

Indeed, Bosch observes that it became customary for missionaries to be regarded as both frontline and rearguard for the colonial powers of their nations (2006, 304). For example, the following describes how the mission station was useful for a British colony in South Africa:

> Missionary stations are the most efficient agents which can be employed to promote the internal strength of our colonies and the cheapest and best military posts that a wise government can employ to defend its frontier against the predatory incursions of savage tribes (cited in Bosch, 2006, 305).

Similarly, Bosch agrees with Carl Mirbt, who wrote in 1910, 'Mission and colonialism belong together and we have reason to hope that something positive will develop for our colonies from this alliance' (cited in Bosch, 2006, 306). Statements such as these reflect the role of the missionaries as partners of European colonial advancement. The mission of the colonial era seems to have been to gain political, economic and cultural advantage for their home countries alongside 'civilization' and 'Christianization'. As cited in Bosch, 'to colonize is to missionize' becomes 'to missionize is to colonize' (Bosch, 2006, 306). Accordingly, even in the later era, missionaries from numerous countries in Europe continued to see their roles as supportive of their countries' colonization policies (Bosch, 2006, 304).

Conversely, Comaroff (1991, 25) argues that from the early stage of colonization, while they served as support for the colonizers, there were missionaries who attempted to resist the system and advocated the rights of the nationals and supported their independence against colonial domination. Likewise, in certain areas, the colonizers themselves '…refused to allow the missionaries in the territories under their jurisdiction since they saw them as a threat to their commercial interests' (Bosch, 2006, 303). The historian Porter observes that 'religion and empire frequently mingled, but were as likely to undermine each other as they were to provide mutual support' (Porter, 1999, 245). In most cases, therefore, both institutions used to encourage each other and they worked together as it suited their interests (Woodberry, 2007, 347-50). Nevertheless, since Christian expansion (mission) coincided with the spread of European economic and political hegemony,

it was initially perceived as a tool of colonialism (Woodberry, 2007, 135). For example, the Kenyan Kikuyu in saying that, 'there is no difference between a settler [colonizer] and a missionary' well expresses the danger of Christian mission being closely identified with colonial values, especially in relation to the sensitive issues of land ownership, slave trade and cultural imperialism/imposition (Ward, 2007, 4).

In addition to this colonial outlook, the missionaries understood that European Christian culture was superior to all other**s** (Pocock et al, 2005, 167). It is this outlook that might have persuaded them to claim the exclusiveness of European culture and Christianity, to view themselves as educated and civilized human beings, and to see others as uncivilized people (Pocock et al, 2005, 167). Thus, civilizing became the missionary endeavour which advanced the colonial system (Reed, 1992, 2). How such a mission approach took place will be the next discussion.

2.2.2 Cultural impositions

The lengthy development of Christianity in Europe eventually led the European Churches to see mission as a moral force, capable of elevating and improving the society of the other world (Bradshaw, 1984, IV). The missionaries brought Christianity and civilization and assumed that the non-European people would both become Christians and their societies would be improved (Hiebert, 1993, 98). Accordingly, the Churches might share their civilized cultural advantages with the less privileged and undeveloped societies. Educational, medical and other social welfare institutions became tangible expressions of the civilized Christianity of Europe (Grunder, 1997, 71; Bradshaw, 1984, V). In general, most of the missionaries seem to have emphasized the value of education and health.

In schools and Churches, the indigenous people were taught European culture, history, philosophy and ways of life. They were required to abandon their own ways of life, considering them to be primitive and uncivilized (Hillman, 1993, 36). Referring to Gerrie Chitambo further notes that Western education undermined non-western traditional society in many ways and that the schools played a particular role in that process (Chitambo, 1998, 113). Tovey, similarly, argues that, 'it was realized that there would be few results from a mass campaign to the existing population and these schools were built to take the children out of their culture and train them in

Christianity and Western education' (2004, 109). According to this view, although the result of the mission seems less effective, one may argue that the education system greatly promoted mission. For example, the cultural and missionary diffusion of these areas and the simultaneous loss of the cultural autonomy of the conquered peoples brought direct dependence of the nations on the cultural and economic life of the colonizers (Grunder, 1997, 71). Additionally, 'it imposed upon them new European languages and devalued their native ones' (Parratt, 2004, 4; c.f. Witmer, 2007, 151-2).

With regard to language, the practice seems mixed. Dammann strongly argues, 'both on theological and pedagogical grounds, one of the tasks of Christian mission has been to preserve and care for local languages' (1997, 256). However, this was clearly not the case in many missions during the colonial period, since several colonizing states and their missionaries required the exclusive use of given European languages by imposing upon the colonized peoples and devalued their indigenous ones (Parratt, 2004, 2). As McGavran argues, this has been observed in many colonized countries of the world (1991, 163-168). The missionaries may have thought that knowing and speaking European languages might civilize or missionize the native peoples more completely and enhance that sense of European identity or 'European way of life' (Witmer, 2007,152). In contrast, a West African missiologist, Sanneh, who examined in depth the cultural impact of Bible translation into African vernaculars, contends that the Church should have no hand in damaging an indigenous language by imposing a western language. In the face of such attempts, the Church must stand up again and again for the right to use one's mother tongue (1997, 256). Yet, he also argues that missionaries were supportive of African language and culture (Sanneh, 1983, 246-7; 1989, 128). Whilst this view related to translation models of mission, which brought new insights into the history of mission, it leads us to be cautious in accepting it as a general fact for all components of culture and language (Sugirtharajah, 2006, 73). On the other hand, Chitambo states that in Zimbabwe, one of the colonized countries, 'indigenous languages were down-played during the implantation and subsequent growth of Christianity' (1998, 117).

Accordingly, the acceptance of missionary Christianity, which in most cases imposed foreign European languages on the native, was not as successful as intended. In other words, the refusal to recognize native culture and language in European colonial mission deprived the Gospel of being preached in a contextualizing nature and with the dynamics of breaking through every human society (Hiebert, 1991, 45). One of the enduring lessons of the European and the EOC mission models is that extending Christianity by imposing foreign languages is not feasible, as language is at the heart of culture for human beings. This could be said to be a key lesson for the EECMY for its own Church planting mission among the Oromo people. Unless it strengthens its strategy to use *Oromiffa*, the EECMY will not further its Church planting operation among the people because the Oromo people are relentless in their efforts to preserve their own language.

2.2.3 Imposing Western Christianity

The European missionaries seem to have been convinced that their belief systems were advanced and, therefore, that their version of Christianity and Christian culture had to be normative for the entire world (Hiebert, 1991, 46). Writing of them Hiebert says,

> They were too confident of the wholesomeness and goodness of their own culture to see the pagan flaws in their own special and political structures. The mission was influenced by the 19th century ideas of progress [enlightenment]. Missionaries believed themselves to be participating in a worldwide crusade of human advancement (1991, 46).

The missionaries, in this respect, seem to have assumed that their form of Christianity was superior to others and could improve the lives of the colonized peoples they would encounter. However, one may ask, how would the entire European version of Christianity fit all cultures of other nations? According to Hiebert, 'they [the missionaries] assumed that their own theology was wholly biblical and that it was not biased by their cultural and historical contexts' (1991, 46). Again, Hillman argues that the same conclusion was reached from a different direction that 'Western [European] culture, owing much to its ancient Greco-Roman antecedents, was uncritically assumed to be normative for the entire human family' (1993, 36). However, Walls cautions that, claiming this tradition as the 'dominant representation of Christianity' might be untenable (2004, 20).

In the case of Ethiopia, however, one must further question why Western missionaries were sent to Ethiopia since Ethiopia was not colonized by European powers and already was a largely Christian country. It could not, therefore, be to support colonialism through imposing uncritically Western Christian teaching on the society. Indeed, there is no written evidence to show that the missionaries were entirely directly involved in colonial affairs as they were in the case of many non-European nations during the colonial periods (Alehegne, 2005, 2001). Nevertheless, the missionaries appear to have been one of the agents by whom modern technology was introduced into Ethiopia from the first half of the 19th century when they targeted reformation of the EOC, which had been confined to the northern part of Ethiopia until the end of the 19th century as stated in chapter one.

The main aim of the missionaries was confined to translation and distribution of the scriptures, Bible reading and exposition with the intention of transforming the EOC for further Christian expansion towards southern (west, south and east) Ethiopia (Tamrat, 1998, 24-25). The missionaries, however, were considered to have been sent with the purpose of imposing their Western culture and a religious form of colonialism on Ethiopian society. When they were unable to effect their endeavours in such a way they might have developed their aim to intervene in the affairs of colonialism (Gidada, 1981, 78). Eshete argues that due to the lack of open opportunities some pioneer and prominent missionaries had been suspected of lobbying some European states for 'colonial intervention in Ethiopia' (2009, 67; see Crummey, 1972, 149). This was another reason for their expulsion from the country in addition to their expulsion as a result of opposition from the EOC as suggested earlier. Although the Ethiopian context did not fully allow the missionaries to impose all colonial components on the Ethiopian society as they did in other non-European countries hand in hand with their colonizers, the above arguments indicate that the missionaries seem to have supported colonialism. As discussed in chapters one and four, after officially being allowed to work in Ethiopia from the first half of the 20th century, the missionaries clearly did impose their own western cultural values on Ethiopian and Oromo communities through their western-based Christianity and also greatly shaped EECMY Church Planting mission.

According to Ujulu's recent research, the Western missionaries who introduced evangelical Christianity to the Oromo people and Ethiopian society imposed their western culture because they were unable to differentiate the Gospel from their own cultural ways (1997, 81; cf Hiebert, 1991, 142). Indeed, it is the case that the majority of missionaries condemned elements of indigenous religions and cultures of the non-Europeans as evil or at the very least, as primitive and uncivilized (Phiri, 2004, 142; c.f. Wulfhorst, 2005, 7). As a result, European Christianity and culture were meant to replace the indigenous religions and socio-cultural elements of the non-Christendom communities. In effect, it became an expectation that at baptism the people were to acquire western names and change their way of dressing from the local to the European form as a symbol of the Christianity associated with western civilization (Phiri, 2004, 142). Further practice of imposing a European Christianity can be seen in that the infant missionary Churches worshipped using European liturgies and hymns and their leaders wore European-type clerical vestments. In addition, their order, celebrations (like Christmas and Easter) and theology were also adapted from the missionary tradition (Anderson, 2001, 15). At this juncture, mission seemed to be a way of disseminating European culture (Scherer, 1964, 36). Of these symbolic elements, I will briefly discuss the missionary attitudes towards the traditional culture of the colonized people by considering the changing of native names and its impact on mission.

It has been observed that both cultural-bound names and the practice of traditional name-giving were condemned by the European missionaries as forms of paganism (Chitambo, 1988, 116). Accordingly, the non-western communities were compelled to change their native names at baptism (Hillman, 1993, 12; Chitambo, 1988, 116). Conversion to Christianity required a change of name from indigenous to mostly Jewish or European ones during their baptism as a symbol of being Christians (Chitambo, 1988, 116). Indeed, in many African countries, the use of indigenous African names at baptism has been precluded. This was also the case for Asians, Latin Americans (Indians) and other indigenous peoples. In so doing, the missionaries could be said to be building their own culture and Christian theology. I will return to this point to further note the obvious parallels with EOC mission. Consequently, such favouring of European representation suggests the presence of

missionary cultural imposition as the motive for persuading the native people to disown their own cultural values (Hillman, 1993, 12).

In postcolonial times, after independence, however, the indigenous peoples appear to have changed their Jewish and European names back to indigenous ones, although they gave themselves names that still express their Christian faith (Phiri, 2004, 142). Giving children indigenous Christian names implies that the suggestion that vernacular languages are insignificant is being consciously challenged. Chitambo remarks that 'through the names they [parents] give to children, they are reflecting on the implications of what is meant to be a Christian in Africa… through their naming practices, African Christians are engaged in African theology' (2004, 142).Consequently, they have come to realise that local languages can effectively communicate their faith. Likewise, this is what the Oromo people have started doing nowadays as a response to the EOC Amharization mission as discussed earlier in this chapter.

In general, with regard to its impact, the superiority of European Christian mission over other cultures and traditional religions seemed self-evident to the western missionaries. Certainly, they saw that their mission to non-Western people brought them both Christianity and human advancement (Hiebert, 1991, 46). According to Ujulu, many of those who became Christians in western Oromia because of the missionaries' cultural influences came to believe that progress consisted not in being themselves, but in imitating foreign ways, which, therefore, proscribed their authentic ethnic human development (1997, 85; cf Hillman 1993, 8). Bradshaw further argues that the result of European mission was, therefore, a colonial paternalism that disempowered the national Christians and kept them from developing a vital, indigenous form of Christianity in their own socio-cultural contexts (1984, IV). This suggests that such complications gave way to feelings of discontent among the national people, with a missionary approach that caused alienation from Christianity, since it was seen as a foreign religion and therefore, foreign to the people's culture (2004, 144). Both Christianity itself and converts to the faith were rejected by the larger communities. According to Newbigin, 'converts were called upon to separate themselves radically from society'. But the 'churchly' society was rather a transplanted version of medieval 'Christendom' (1974, 86). In

some cases, new converts were detached from their culture by necessity because their lives were threatened by their close families and communities. In addition, Nambala argues that such groups were slowly encouraged by the Church to leave their native culture in order to take up much of the European culture (1997, 8). Moreover, this circumstance forced the converts to view themselves differently from others even in terms of faith practices and social affiliation. In this way Christian believers became closer to Europeans than to their unchristian countrymen/women and neighbours (Labrentz, 1978, 292). Thus, the converts were often viewed as traitors to their own people, culture and customs and treated as foreigners in their own land (Hiebert, 1991, 46).

Understanding this imposition of a foreign culture, epitomised in the name and culture of mission, is vital. The rise of giving vernacular Christian names in the post-colonial period is not accidental. Certainly, it was a reaction to the negative implication of European colonial mission which had ignored native cultures and languages. Evidently, a people's quest for cultural identity indicates their utter rejection of the imposition of foreign names. Behind the indigenous Christian names lies the crucial question of Oromo-Christian identity, a search for the balance between what it means to be both 'themselves and Christians' and 'Christians and themselves'.

As discussed in the first section of this chapter, the EOC took the same approach in changing Oromo native names into Amhara ones at baptism. In that sense, to be Christian one had to change his or her Oromo name and cease to be an Oromo. This led numerous Oromos to resent the Christian religion itself, and many others changed their names back to their native ones, preferring their cultural identity over EOC Christianity which came to them by political suppression. This could be an indicative lesson for the EECMY in its mission of further Church planting by respecting Oromo cultural naming practices. Consequently, examining the development of this aspect of contextual Church planting forms part of this research project. If the unreached Oromo people are to be reached with the Gospel message, their traditional naming ceremonies, their native names and their dress and wider culture need to be respected and be used as part of the mission model for further Gospel expansion among them.

In this respect, both EOC and western missionaries had the same approach and this compounded the negative view of Christianity.

2.2.4 The strengths and weaknesses of the European colonial mission approach.
Over the last five centuries the different phases of European colonialism and mission brought with them their respective religious beliefs and cultural practices, whether Catholic or Protestant (Sugirtharajah, 2006, 59; Tovey, 2004, 109). Both positive and negative implications have been observed in this missionary expansion. On the positive side, despite many missionary activities having had indirect colonial biased consequences and bringing problems of cultural pluralism, mission has played an undeniable role in developing some African as well as Latin-American and Asian societies (Hiebert, 1993, 45-46). Determined by deep convictions, some missionaries were courageous in planting churches in both urban and rural regions of the nations. They also initiated formal education, translated the Bible and other texts into some vernaculars and laid foundations for the medical and agricultural systems of numerous young nations (Hiebert, 1993, 57). The significance of missionary influence was also highlighted by some of the early nationalists and reformers who studied at mission schools and became the first political leaders of the newly independent nations of Africa and Asia (Woodberry, 2007, 349-50; McGrath, 1993, 380). Thus, despite establishing Churches in ways that also imposed colonial values, the continued existence of these Churches' post-colonialism suggests that the missionaries were still able to leave a legacy of lasting benefits.

In contrast, regardless of its worthy influence, an inadequacy of European mission has also been equally observed. First, whilst the colonial and mission aspects of Christendom advanced together, missionaries carried out a parallel function along with military and political administrators, causing them to be seen as agents of colonialism (Scherer, 1964, 30). For example, in the case of Africa, Mofokeng puts the collaboration between colonial rulers with missionaries in this way: 'When the white man (sic) came to our country he had the Bible and we had the land. The white said to us 'let us pray'. After the prayer, the white man had the land and we had the Bible' (1988, 34).

In both Africa and Asia further critics have described this as 'the Bible in one hand and a gun in the other' (Pankratz, 2007, 247) or the 'association of the cross with sword and gun' (Parratt, 2004, 8). Perhaps this seems an oversimplification. Yet, it possibly indicates the close alliance between the colonizers and the missionaries in which converts were not able to differentiate between colonialism and Church mission (Phiri, 2004, 142). As Langley further argues, 'the charge is often made that the Church co-operated too well with colonial governments that clearly discriminated against nationals' (1974, 102). According to Parratt it might be such an identification which has left a continuing legacy of European mission with the negative reputation of colonial advancement rather than Christian expansion 'which is yet to be completely overcome' (2004, 8).

Second, the missionaries considered their culture to be both civilized and superior to the non-western communities. They attempted to impose their cultures, languages and traditional practices on these indigenous communities, rather than valuing and contextualizing the Gospel message to their actual context or the felt needs of the people (Alister, 1999, 380; Hillman, 1993, 11, 37). Third, some, if not all, missionaries assumed that their version of Christianity was the ultimate religion and other religions were false, pagan and had to be displaced. Thus, they perceived no need to study local cultures or to contextualize their message. Instead, they believed that western Christianity needed to be imposed as the universal model for all Churches of the non-western world (Hiebert, 1991, 55).

All these factors gave way to feelings of dissatisfaction with the European missionary approach among the non-European people. The result was an overt as well as implied protest from the native peoples in order to seek cultural and ecclesiastical justice and freedom (Phiri, 2004, 142). Such a reaction led the native Christians to protest against mission domination, break away from missionary Churches and form culturally sensitive Christian institutions like the African Initiated Churches (AICs). All these implications indicate that the European mission approach has led to dissatisfaction and, in many cases, complete alienation from Western Christianity since it is seen as associated with European colonial oppression.

In general, a significant lesson which could be drawn from this mission model is that every people, every human community, conceives and organizes its historical existence not according to a universal and irreversible model, but according to its own particular situation in space and time (Mushere, 1994, 24).The Gospel needs to be translated into forms and meanings which the addressees might understand without feeling that it has been imposed on them. Whilst the Church, after the example of Paul, had become Greek with the Greeks, barbarian with the barbarians, and European with the Europeans, the colonial missionary Church had not become American Indian with American Indians, African with Africans, or Asian with the Asians. The Church of Jesus, regarded as a whole, remained a European affair (Hans Kung in Gibellini, 1994, 15-16). The same is true with the EOC, which had become Abyssinian with Abyssinians, but had not become Oromo with the Oromos. It could be argued that there is neither a Western Christ nor an Abyssinian Christ who would hate the Oromos' culture and identity. Nor is there Christianization which may be considered equivalent to westernization or Abyssinianization. This is where the weaknesses and failures of the European missionaries and the EOC Christianity during the colonial era lie.

In conclusion, utilizing mission for colonial or territorial expansion and cultural transference by imposition on the native peoples' own religion (ecclesiastical colonialism) may be equally applicable to the EOC and European colonial missions as cultural fusion paradigms. As a result, both mission models have been less than effective in their endeavours, since the nature of their mission resulted in alienation of the people from Christianity. My aim in this particular study has been to make a critical survey of the two mission models and learn from their mission approaches by examining both positive and negative implications. Although I appreciate their positive endeavours, I learned more from the negative ones, as their ineffectual mission models could be a lesson to help me develop better mission models for the Oromo community, such as those which are culturally sensitive and religiously meaningful to the people. As a Christian minister, mission is an important part of the faith tradition to which I belong and as such mission is important. Nevertheless, my task is to construct methods for engaging in mission that avoid the mistakes of the past and treat Oromo people with dignity and respect.

Chapter Three

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Introduction

Having discussed the research context in chapter one and analysed oppressive mission practices in chapter two, both of which have led in large part to the lack of success of Church planting among Oromo people, in this chapter I discuss the fieldwork which I used as my primary research method in order to gather accurate data on the lack of success of the EECMY Church planting mission strategy in the Oromia region. In so doing, I also set out to fill a gap in the literature on this subject in Ethiopia. My aim in this chapter is to outline the research methods for the fieldwork used. The chapter includes a rationale for engaging in fieldwork, an explanation of the research methods I have used, drawing on perspectives from the social sciences, and finally, a reflection on the strengths and weaknesses of the methods themselves when used in practice.

3.2 Rationale for Fieldwork

The main reasons for choosing to engage in fieldwork were a lack of Oromo written sources on the successes and failures of Church planting and in order to gather data on the views of the unevangelized Oromo people and the recipients of EECMY's Church planting programme. As Lincoln and Guba (1985, 120) describe, 'Field research is a systematic study of ordinary events as they occur in a real-life situation. It is a naturalistic inquiry that takes place in the field, that is, in a natural setting that is not constructed for the purpose of conducting research (in Sarantakos, 2005, 202). Researchers carry out field research for the purpose of investigating real-life situations, behaviour patterns and the reasons behind social interaction; more specifically, they want to see life through the eyes of and from the perspective of those living in the field (Sarantakos, 2005, 202). Likewise, in this research study, it is clearly important to carry out field research in order to collect and examine first-hand information about the EECMY evangelistic outreach among the Oromo society, and from those people who have lived and worked in the Church planting mission areas.

It would appear that there is no academic research by the Oromo themselves on these particular subjects: evangelistic outreach and contextualization of the Christian

Gospel message or Church planting in Ethiopian Churches, including those in Oromia. Of course, there are a few narrative Church history books written by western missionaries (Aren 1978 and 1999; Bake 1987; Eide 2000; Staffan 2000) and recently produced facilitative Church documents from the EECMY (EECMY 1999 and 2006). Additionally, some graduate papers from the Mekane Yesus Theological Seminary and the Ethiopian Graduate School of Theology have currently appeared in which the graduates presented their requests to the Church to reassess or evaluate their Evangelistic outreach mission activities and strategies in the light of their recommendations (Djillo, 1997; Angose, 2000; Amenu, 2001; Zeleke, 2002; Guta, 2003; Wayessa, 2003). Nevertheless, none of them is directly relevant to this particular field of study because they do not specifically address the issue of Church planting. Moreover, since many Oromo people are illiterate and even those who are educated have generally been suppressed by the ruling Abyssinian people of Ethiopia, very few Oromo historians and anthropologists have written about their own people. Hence, an insiders' view of the experience of the Oromo people, much less their experience of Church planting, has not been available. Consequently, there is an untapped, rich and genuine Oromo oral tradition available. This requires the researcher to engage in fieldwork in order to access their experience and oral tradition.

3.3 Research Location (Sampling)

In chapter one I outlined the context of Ethiopia and the place of the Oromo people there. With such a large population over such a great geographical area and, with limited time and financial resources, the research needed to be very focused. Additionally, for effective qualitative academic research I needed to sample particular locations which were representative of Oromia as a whole (Burgess, 1991, 76).

By definition sampling is:

> 'A process of selecting a sample [smaller location/site] from the sampling population [the larger region] to become the basis for estimating the prevalence of an unknown piece of information, situation or outcome about the bigger group [larger region]' (Kumar, 2005, 164).

With regard to the issues affecting the inferences drawn from a sample, Kumar suggests, '…the larger the sample size, the more accurate will be the findings' (2005, 164). However, Kumar in another context argues that where the population is homogeneous with respect to the characteristics under study, a small sample can provide a reasonably good representation of the whole (2005, 164). In addition, the time taken to do qualitative research requires that numbers in a sample are often relatively small. As a result, I chose qualitative research methods and selected small sample groups of people who were representative of both the different localities and the different dialects in the larger Oromia region.

Consequently, I selected a limited number of research locations where I could make comparisons between different areas (Burgess, 1991, 76). The identified research sites were deliberately selected in order to be representative of a wide variety of perspectives as opposed to simply random sampling. The specific selection criteria included:

- the extent to which the EECMY had engaged in Church planting in those locations
- manageability in terms of the number of sites where fieldwork could be conducted
- accessibility of the various communities
- distinctiveness of communities to represent a variety of different perspectives

As a result, four locations for fieldwork were identified, one in the western region, one in the central region, one in the southern and south-eastern region and one in the north. I selected samples within these locations from both rural and semi-urban areas. I discuss below each of these areas and the various characteristics they represent in more detail. My intention was to engage in fieldwork with an equal number of men as women as well as a range of local community and religious leaders and the wider membership of those communities. I encountered a number of difficulties in achieving this as will be discussed later.

The fieldwork was conducted over two six week periods between July and August 2007 and the same period in 2008. The different research locations I identified are discussed here in detail.

1. **South and Southeast Oromia:** This part of Oromia is usually recognized as the 'cradle land' of the Oromo people and their culture and religion (Megerssa, 2006, 2; Zeleke, 2002, 19; Legesse 2000, 9). It is the largest area and represents six 'zones' with a total population of 8 million Oromos (Amenu, 2001, 2). Livestock, agriculture and tourism are the main contributors to the economy of this region (Djillo, 1997, 3). Geographically, south and southeast Oromia is bordered by the regional states of Ethiopian Somalia and Afar to the east and northeast, the regional state called the 'Southern Nation and Nationalities Peoples' (SNNPR) to the west and by Kenya to the south (Djillo, 1997, 3). This area of Oromia includes both urban and rural locations and I engaged in fieldwork in both of these areas. Culturally, this region is distinctive because it has kept many of the Oromos' social and cultural heritage and values better than other parts of Oromia. This area is mostly dominated by Islam and traditional religions (Zeleke, 2002, 15) which contrasts with other regions in Oromia. It may be considered to be the area of Oromia in which Church planting has been least successful (Zeleke, 2002, 15).

2. **Central Oromia:** This location comprises four 'zones' with a total population of 9.5 million, geographically, this is the central part of Oromia where its capital city Finfinne (Addis Ababa) is situated (Bekele, 2009, 5). The eastern and western rural sites of the location are, however, the main research focus areas. As a whole, the setting was selected as it represented typical religious centres where the '*Waaqeffannaa*' (Oromo traditional or original religion) has recently been revived and which has spread to different parts of the region. Church planting in this region has also had limited success while, in contrast, the foreign traditional practices (see chapters 1, 4 and 5) has still existed here. Traditionally, Central Oromia is one particular area where the foreign traditional practices and the EOC Christianity have been exceedingly imposed onto the people, syncretized and made confusion so that they have widely practised side by side. As a result, the people here have been reluctant to engage with any form of Protestant Christianity such as EECMY. Consequently, this offers a particular challenge to EECMY's Church planting programme.

3. Northern Oromia: This location is bordered to the south by Finfinne, to the west and north by the Amhara regional state, and to the east by the Afar regional state (Bekele, 2009, 3). It includes four 'zones' with a population of 8.5 million. Debra Libaanos and Gebre Guraacha are the main towns, and agriculture is the main income of the community (Bekele, 2009, 3). The

location was chosen for the research for a number of reasons: firstly, it is an area where OTR rituals, as discussed in chapter one, are practised. Secondly, many Oromo traditional and foreign religious practices have been syncretised with elements from Abyssinian culture because of the influence of EOC Christianity in this region. Historically, this region has been important in Abyssinian political and EOC ecclesiastical domination as it was and still

4. Western Oromia: This location is bordered to the south by the Gambella region, to the west by Sudan, to the north by the Benishangual Gumuz regions, to the east by West Shoa (of central Oromia) and to the south and southwest by the Southern Nation Nationalities Peoples' Region (SNNPR). The area comprises five zones with an approximate total population of 9 million. In terms of economy, it is the most prosperous area. Among other things, coffee is the main cash crop. For this research, therefore, the setting of Western Oromia represents five western zones and was selected for the following reasons: first, this was the first region in which the EECMY was successful in Church planting and in establishing itself as a presence in Ethiopia (Eide, 2000, 19). Although most people in this region are members of the EECMY and have been dominated by the influence of western missionaries, which would be a helpful comparison with the other regions, there are currently social changes taking place, particularly among the younger generation who have begun to question the western Christian tradition. Second, despite this, some areas, particularly western and south-western parts of the region are also under the influences of traditional beliefs and Islam. This is another challenge which underlines the need for the EECMY to develop new Church planting approaches.

These four sample locations are situated in the catchment areas of eight EECMY Synods. In other words, the sample areas also represent most of the areas in which the EECMY is working in Oromia. Accordingly, the places were deliberately chosen to compare and contrast the variety of experience of the Oromo people in Ethiopia

and to explore how and why the EECMY Church planting strategy has been successful in some areas and not in the others.

3.4 Questions and issues for the fieldwork

Cohen and Manion (1994, 5, 186) 'identify the first stage in the research process as being identification and formulation of the problem' which needs to be addressed. There might not always be a problem as such for the research focus, but in the case of this thesis this was indeed the case. The identified problem of the study was that, despite the many years of EECMY Church planting initiatives to reach the Ethiopian society in general, and the Oromo community in particular, the strategy had not worked effectively. This has already been discussed in chapter 1. As the problem was clearly identified in advance I was able to identify particular foci for the fieldwork. Thus, as the research focused mainly on seeking to discover missiological and contextual strategies for Church planting among the Oromo Society, the specific focus issues of this fieldwork study were:

- To evaluate the EECMY evangelistic or Church planting strategy, its strengths and weaknesses.
- To identify the value that Oromo people place on their cultural expressions and social practices.
- To identify the significant elements of the Oromo traditional religious and ritual practices.
- To look at how the EOC and the EECMY Church planting and mission programmes engage with this context.
- To explore possible constructive comments on mission approaches and how Church planting might be developed.

3.5 Methodological framework

In this field research, a qualitative methodological approach has been employed for data collection rather than a quantitative approach as it is more appropriate to the nature of the intended study. Qualitative research involves moving from an inductive to a deductive mode: creating hypotheses and then testing them for verification (Stern, 1994, 116). Strauss and Corbin (1998, 10-11) define qualitative research as

'any kind of research that produces findings not arrived at by means of statistical procedures or other means of quantification'.

Furthermore, qualitative implies non-mathematical procedures of interpretation, focusing on the discovery of concepts and relationships (1998, 10-11). When compared to quantitative forms of research, it may be said that the preferences of the qualitative researcher are: the analysis of words and descriptions rather than numbers; observing real life events and experiences; generally using unstructured rather than structured interviews; and attempting to 'document the world from the point of view of the people studied' (Hamersley, 1992, 165). In contrast the quantitative forms of study often endangers 'a science that silences too many voices' (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000, 10) and 'emphasizes measurement or analysis of causal relationships between variables, not processes' (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000, 8). Moreover, while the quantitative researcher is accused of shallow information based on pure numbers, it is suggested that the qualitative researcher bases findings on merely a single or few cases (Strauss and Cobin, 1998, 28). While the debate between the validity of two distinct methods of research goes on, promoters of qualitative research are taking greater comfort in the proven efficacy and widening acceptance of this newer method of research. Perhaps one of the helpful outcomes of the suspicion placed on the qualitative researcher is the careful substantiation and justification of one's choices and decisions. Increased caution in using the approach is, in itself, helping to validate the use of qualitative research as a significant tool.

Qualitative research was used to complete the fieldwork since it, 'seeks direct access to the lived experience of the human actor as he or she understands and deals with on-going events' (Patton, 1990, 391). Similarly, as the approach focuses more on the subjective (i.e. personal experiences) it is significant for my study in order to understand the perceptions of the Oromo community and their self-reflection on how they view the Church's mission in the light of their own cultural values. Additionally, qualitative research methods are also very helpful in identifying unanticipated phenomena and they allow for generating new grounded theories for research purposes. In using a qualitative approach I was aiming at uncovering phenomena not previously addressed, such as the reasons for the EECMY's lack of success in their Church planting mission strategy among the Oromo people in spite

of the attempts made over the course of a century. I also preferred these methods as they deploy a deductive research strategy (working from the data collection) that develops or shapes new hypotheses, based on the detailed accounts of the socio-cultural aspects of the Oromo people which have, until now, only been written down by outsiders. Thus, methods of qualitative research were endorsed for their potential to provide a helpful framework and guidance for conducting the necessary fieldwork. As the purpose of this research is to generate and develop new Church planting approaches, I have chosen the qualitative approach in order to explore and test an original hypothesis which may help to inform me about how the EECMY Church mission has been operating among the Oromo community and how it may operate more effectively.

Having made the decision that qualitative rather than quantitative research is the most appropriate methodology for this study, the next decision was to decide on which types of qualitative data-gathering to adopt. As stated earlier, within the qualitative research approach there are several methods of collecting data such as participant observation, analysis of texts and documents as well as interviews (Silverman, 2000, 35). Within this broad framework of qualitative methods, both interviews and participant observations have been employed for the purpose of this field research because they include listening to the voices of the Oromo people. As such they were relevant to the present research subject and its setting and they strengthen the credibility of my research findings as will be discussed below.

3.6 Methods of Data Collection
3.6.1 Questionnaires

Questionnaires are one of the methods of quantitative research which may help researchers to test out and establish more widely the findings from the qualitative data investigation (Bryman and Burgess 1994, 251). However, they were not useful for the purposes of this thesis because, although questionnaires could potentially provide me with a high number of responses, the high levels of illiteracy among the Oromo people would make them inaccessible or irrelevant to most of the people with whom I was interested in engaging in research. Therefore, I decided not to use them.

3.6.2 Interviews

According to Pole and Lampard an interview is defined as 'a verbal exchange of information between two or more people for the principal purpose of gathering information from the other' (2002, 126). This definition demonstrates the purpose of the interview method which is that it enables enormous amounts of information to be gathered by questioning people about their views, feelings, attitudes and beliefs prior to scientific explanations. Dingwall (1997, 243), however, argues that an interview is not like a conversation, but an opportunity which the interviewer deliberately creates in order to talk about something that interests the interviewer, but which may or may not be of interest to the interviewee.

Many types of interviews take place in the Social Sciences. Of the varying types, structured, unstructured and semi-structured represent the three main approaches. The existence of such a spectrum provides broad opportunities for researchers to fit their research somewhere on this spectrum in accordance with their research context and needs. In a structured interview, the interviewer asks a predetermined set of questions, using the same order and wording of questions and keeping the same tone of voice across the interviews for all the respondents (Sarantakos, 2005, 268; Kumar, 2005, 126). In contrast, unstructured interviews employ unstructured questions (interview schedules) containing open-ended questions, whose wording and order can be completely altered (2005, 268). Additionally, the structure and content of the unstructured interview is flexible and the limitations are kept to a bare minimum, usually taking 'the form of guides rather than rules' (Sarantakos, 2005, 268). In this context, the interviewer is free to order and formulate questions in whatever sequence he/she wishes and may raise new issues at the time, based on what may occur in the course of the discussion.

Procedurally, the structured interview works within a strict framework so that the range of data expected is limited and the researcher does not prejudice the data they seek to gather as the same questions are formally asked in the same way each time (Kumar, 2005, 126). In contrast, the unstructured interview is freer and more conversational, allowing the researcher to informally pursue lines of enquiry according to the direction of the conversation, but may be more difficult for the interviewer to control (Kumar, 2005, 126). The structured interview is less

appropriate for my research because of its inflexibility. Such inflexibility would prohibit the use of additional questions which might be appropriate with some respondents in the context of the interviews and therefore some important issues which would provide further useful information would be missed.

In contrast, semi-structured interviews were employed in this thesis as the most appropriate of the three methods. In the semi-structured approach unstructured questions and a number of open-ended questions with the possibility of changing words and orders would be combined (Robson, 1993, 229). Similarly, Nunan (1992, 149-150) argues that a semi-structured interview should be where the interviewer has a general idea of where the interview should go and what should come out of it, but does not have a list of predetermined questions. Rather, he/she has a list of topics and issues which may determine the course of the interview. Conversely, Robson argues that the semi-structured interview has to stand on its own so that the interviewer has worked out a set of questions in advance but is free to modify their order and manner based upon the context of the conversation. The interviewer can give explanations, leave out specific questions which seem inappropriate with a particular respondent or conversely include additional questions (1993, 231). In this instance then, semi-structured interviews allow greater flexibility for the interviewer while providing the interviewee with some structure in the interview environment within which they are able to put forward their views during the course of interviews. For these reasons, I used the semi-structured interview in this fieldwork.

Despite the fact that in this study a number of questions were set out (see appendix 2) they were open-ended and not designed to illicit any set responses, but employed in order to enable the interviewee to freely express their own views. The respondents were also encouraged to move the discussion into other areas of interest if they so needed. I developed the semi-structured approach, using the opportunity afforded by its flexible nature in such a way that I could probe effective research on Church planting from the EECMY members and the Oromo community according to their local context.

Respondents

Having identified interviews as the main method of data collection, I must now move on to discuss who the respondents were, where and how they were selected. Respondents for the interviews were purposely selected according to the representative sampling plan that I had prepared (c.f. Patton, 2002, 236). This strategy involves selecting respondents who display representative characteristics for the group being studied. The purpose of using different representative groups is not to make generalised statements about the experiences of all respondents, but to be illustrative rather than definitive (Patton, 2002, 236). Accordingly, the respondents were chosen from the four regions already highlighted. The sample areas do not only represent the Oromia regions but also, as already indicated, the EECMY Synods which are in the region. The guide interview questions were prepared to elicit the information I needed in relation to the four particular areas in which these respondents lived, and according to the semi-structured interview method described above. The selected respondents in each region were identified and grouped into three categories as follows:

(1) The EECMY evangelistic or Church planting co-ordinators were chosen because: firstly, they have a considerable amount of experience to share and reflect on with regard to Church planting. Second, they are theologically trained and may have the potential to offer insight into their personal evaluations of the process of the Church planting strategy of EECMY and its employment in practice. Third, they have more access to the socio-cultural settings of the Oromo community. Fourth, they are aware of how, why and where Church planting has been successful or not. The co-ordinators, however, have biases which I had to be aware of when interviewing. For example, they work for EECMY and so their loyalty to that institution may have influenced their responses.

(2) The EECMY congregation, lay ministers and members were selected because they have practical experience of Church planting. First, I wanted to know how they have valued their conversion to evangelical Christianity in comparison with their traditional cultural values. Second, I wanted to find out how they perceived the Church's traditional theology, teaching, preaching, worship and liturgy as well as other services. Third, I wanted to find out how they, as members of EECMY, viewed

the existing tension between Church traditional practices and the traditional cultural and religious values of the Oromo people. The fact that they are committed members of the EECMY may have influenced their responses, especially as I am an ordained minister in that church as well as a researcher.

(3) The Oromo community and religious leaders along with other prominent members of the community were chosen because they were able to describe the significance of the Oromo traditional religious and socio-cultural values as well as the practices and worlds in which they live. They also have valid knowledge regarding the impact of the EECMY's Church planting mission upon the people and how Oromo members of traditional religions view Christianity. The problem here was that I was not able to access both leaders and ordinary members of these communities. Consequently, the responses I received were only from 15 prominent leaders and members of the community. In this group, despite improving during the second fieldwork trip, it proved very difficult indeed to engage with the views of women members of the non-evangelized Oromo community.

Having identified these three groups of people I now turn to a breakdown of the respondents in terms of age, sex and location. I interviewed a total of 45 people. In the first group, i.e. those involved in Church planting, I interviewed 15 Church ministers from the sample areas of Oromia and from the EECMY Central Office as well as Synods who have a better experience of Evangelistic outreach either serving as co-ordinators or trainers of the Church planting ministers. The ages of the interviewees ranged from 30 to 65 years. They were all married. Educational qualifications varied and included primary Bible School certificates, diplomas and seminary degrees in theology. Sixty percent of them worked in mission fields directly related to the Evangelistic outreach ministry.

Having given some detail about the first group of 15 from the EECMY Church planting co-ordinators, I give more specific information about age, sex and specific Church ministry areas in the first table.

Table 1: Church planting mission co-ordinators

Sex	Pastors	Evangelists
Men	5	4
Women	3	3
Role within EECMY		
Central Office	2	0
Synods	2	2
Grass roots	4	5
Age		
25-35	3	2
36-45	2	3
46-60	2	2
61+	1	0
Region		
South and Southeast	2	2
Central	3	2
North	1	1
West	2	2

Having discussed the profiles of this first group of respondents, I need to clarify three important comments concerning their attributes. As indicated in the table, these Church planting mission co-ordinators were from the Church Central Office, Synods and grassroots. This selection was deliberate, based on the current EECMY Church structures. It will be helpful if I explain them briefly. The responsibility of the Central Office is to co-ordinate and evaluate the church's work, the Synods facilitate and follow up on that work and the grassroots' responsibility is eventually to practise and implement the Church's work in their day-to-day activities and report back to the relevant body (EECMY constitution article 16). Church planting adopts the same structure of overseeing, co-ordinating, evaluating and practising. This explanation indicates the distinctiveness of their different roles and explains why there were fewer representatives from the Central Office.

Both pastors and evangelists are commissioned for Church planting ministry, yet their position and level of responsibility often varies. Having understood this, I interviewed Church planting co-ordinators using the same semi-structured guide questions in order to collect information from their experiences of ministry. Using the flexibility of the semi-structured approach, I varied the questions to each interviewee depending on their particular context and experience. In general, however, the data I have collected demonstrates the distinctiveness of their context and experience, and the contribution they were able to make to this thesis. They were all ministers (pastors and evangelists) who are practically involved in Church planting mission fields, many at grassroots level, and so they have more useful experiences to contribute to my thesis than many others working in the EECMY.

In the table the respondents are categorized into two groups: pastors and evangelists. This was to show that there are two distinctive formal roles in Church planting mission activities. Pastors and evangelists do have similarities in that they are both theologically trained personnel ministering to the people for faith formation (conversion) and faith growth. However, pastors generally have a higher status than the evangelists because they are ordained and evangelists are not. Furthermore, the pastor's ministry could range from the grassroots level to the Church central office. Arguably, this distinction, and the status given to each, reflects the Oromo traditional viewpoint which honours and respects the traditional religious leadership *'Luba'* (priest) (Bake, 1987, 43). Conversely, in most cases, the ministry of the evangelists and their position is confined to the grassroots, yet their involvement in Church planting mission among the community is very important. The variety of information I have gathered from them has confirmed this significance.

The table further indicates that among the EECMY evangelistic outreach ministers interviewed the number of men was slightly higher than the number of women. Three reasons could be suggested as to why this was so. First, socio-cultural barriers often mean that women are denied access to education and remain illiterate and alienated from other social advantages. Second, this has led to very few women who are theologically trained and who can serve in those positions. Third, the numbers of ordained women in EECMY was fifteen at the time of the fieldwork, this compares with approximately 1083 men, even though EECMY is the first and only Church to

accept and recognize the ordination of women in Ethiopia thus far. These are, therefore, the main reasons why the number of interviewed women ministers was slightly lower than male ministers. Because of the large number of women in the Church in general, I acknowledge there is not an exact balance of male and female voices in this particular area. However, since there was little notable difference in the number of men and women interviewed the women's voices could relatively represent the women members in informing this thesis.

From the second group I interviewed 15 EECMY Church members from four different congregations. The ages of the interviewees ranged between 18 and 65 years. Sixty percent of them are married. Educational qualifications varied, from illiterate to university graduates. Twenty-five percent of them work in different Government, NGO, Church or Church related institutions and serve the Church voluntarily.

Table 2: EECMY Church (congregation) members

Sex	Lay ministers	Common members
Men	4	5
Women	3	3
Age		
18-30	4	3
31-40	2	2
41-55	1	2
56-65	0	1
66+	0	0
Region		
South and Southeast	2	2
Central	1	2
North	2	2
West	2	2

As explicitly shown in this second table, the respondents were characterized into two smaller groups: lay ministers and other members. In the EECMY context, lay ministers are unpaid, volunteer members (including young people and adults in the roles of congregation elders, choir members, lay preachers, Sunday school teachers, and various committee members) who serve the Church in more formal ministries. In this way, the lay ministers appear to have slightly more experience of Church planting than other church members. However, the existence of the ordinary members is, by itself, very important for the existence of the Church. Thus, the data collection does not focus on the experiences but rather on the perspectives of both lay ministers and members. Accordingly, the significance of the category is to explore whether they may have similar or different views on Church planting gained from their own personal experiences.

In the same table the number of the respondents from age 18-30 is the largest figure. I interviewed them for the following reasons: in contrast to the western world more than half of church members in Africa and in Ethiopia are young people. Almost all of them have accepted the charismatic renewal movement, particularly in the Ethiopian context, which challenges the Church's traditional ways of teaching and worshipping. Nowadays, they are comparatively more exposed to modern education, to global impact and to current Oromo socio-cultural influences than the adults. Additionally, they are involved in most of the Church's activities at grassroots level. Having considered these factors and the questions they raise about the EECMY Christian tradition (which creates more tension in the Church), I was attracted to them as interviewees more than the adults, and hoped to gather useful information in relation to the ministerial tradition of EECMY and its Church planting strategy among the Oromo community.

In the last group or category, I was able to interview 15 persons from almost all of the north, central, south and western parts of the region.

Table 3: Oromo community and religious leaders and members

Sex	Leaders	Members
Men	7	3
Women	2	3
Age		
16-24	0	0
25-32	2	2
33-39	2	2
40-48	4	1
49-56	1	1
57-64	0	0
65+	0	0
Region		
South and Southeast	3	2
Central	3	2
North	2	1
West	1	1

In this last category, the figures for those interviewed from the different age groups reflect the population and therefore seem balanced. However, this creates a tension in relation to the worldview of the Oromo community. The tension exists between the people groups above 40 years old (i.e. 40-48 and 49-64) and those under 40 years old (such as 25-32 and 33-39). According to the Oromo cultural perspective, the former age-group is considered to be when people are most wise and capable of judging things properly (Bartels, 1983, 185). The view of the people in the next age group, i.e. from 40-64 years is still viewed as more important than all the people under 40 years old (Bartels, 1983, 185). This perception has come from the *Gadaa* age grade traditional political system (Legesse, 200, 31). Most older adults still accept this traditional view, particularly in some functions of leadership and in constructing complicated ideas. However, the people under 40 years of age, i.e. 25-32 and 33-39, are energetic and are thought of as the 'back bone' of the community in having fresh views and visions for the well-being of the whole society. Similarly, they also have

comparatively more accessibility and exposure to contemporary education and global influences and often have a greater consciousness of their own cultural identity than the older adults and this may enhance their ability to look for transformation of the very traditional views. Given this understanding, I gathered equivalent information from each age group in order to balance the data collection in both fieldwork visits.

Nevertheless, I was not able to interview as many people as I wished on my first fieldwork visit as I was unable to make contact with the relevant Oromo community and religious leaders and members whom I wanted to interview. The reasons for this were: first, as a pastor and church person, it was not as easy as I first thought to get access to the Oromo traditional religion followers and cultural adherents. In particular, the non-Christian Oromo community has a historical detestation for Church people (for reasons to do with the imposition of Christianity as outlined in chapter two), However, I overcame this problem by careful planning during my second fieldwork visit and arranging for some of the EECMY members who were close friends of the non-Christian Oromos from the same areas to help me to interview them. Second, although I am an insider as an Oromo, I trained a member of the Oromo traditional religious communities to do some interviews on my behalf in those places where I had personally found it difficult to access a community and where I could not develop trust and build relationships because the people were not known to me and lived far away from my home location. Third, as Oromia is a very large region with many rural locations at a great distance from one another, I could not easily reach the sampled areas because of the rough and muddy roads. In both rounds of fieldwork, I was unlucky, since the rainy season caused severe problems of access. Consequently, I was unable to interview as many people in rural locations as I had hoped. However, as the former two groups were Oromos by ethnicity, despite the fact they may have had some biased opinions due to their new faith - Christianity - their responses regarding the views of the OTR adherents helped me bridge the gap.

I attempted to conduct interviews with both women and men in each category regardless of their social and educational status. However, the number of women interviewed in the different categories, despite improving during the second fieldwork trip, was slightly fewer than the male respondents. Generally speaking, this was because of the deep-rooted socio-cultural barriers which mean that women are

often afraid to speak to men other than their husbands and close relatives. Even if a few of them seemed to be slightly more open to being interviewed they often did not have the time as they usually have heavy domestic and agricultural workloads. In most cases, this was a very particular problem with illiterate women in both rural and urban areas. However, in whatever circumstances they are, without the voices of women the research would be incomplete. I, therefore, gave more attention to this problem and gained access to some of them by developing trust and interviewing them in the presence of their husbands. This improved the number I was able to interview during my second fieldwork trip as stated above.

The interviews took place over a period of five weeks. Each respondent was interviewed for between 35 and 45 minutes. On each occasion, the respondent chose the venue for the interview and the day and time was also arranged to suit him or her. I did this because I wanted to ensure that the interviewees did not feel any threat or intimidation by using specific areas that could pose a pressure on those who felt less secure or less sure of their position. Hence, the interviews took place in a variety of locations: the respondents' homes, my home, in Church workshop venues, Church halls, in the privacy of respondents' places of work (offices) or suitable alternative places which were mutually agreed. Because of the socio-political instability in Ethiopia in general, and in Oromia in particular, people are often insecure regarding being interviewed by researchers in public, especially if their voices are to be recorded. Therefore, facilitating the venues with good care for interviewees had a significant positive impact on the responses.

The interview questions

Having explained how and whom I interviewed I next had to identify the main interview questions to be used for the semi-structured interviews. Having read around the subject, I had many areas I could focus on during such an interview so it was important to keep focused on my research subject and have prepared questions that would help to keep that focus. In considering my interviewees and recognizing the constraints of time and the possibility of interview exhaustion, I decided to focus on three key areas that related to the main research issues from which all the interview guide questions have been developed for the three interviewee groups. As these questions relate to three different respondent groups I have included appendices

containing more detail of what I asked each group (see appendix 2). In so doing, my purpose was to gain effective data to help with analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of Church planting models employed by the EECMY among the Oromo and why they have not always been successful according to the original Church mission plan.

Of particular interest was how the Church has been unable to influence and engage with the social experience of the Oromo people in order to develop contextual strategies for Church planting with them. Further discussion related to this topic can be found in chapter four. It was out of this concern that I prepared the interview guide questions for the three categories of respondents.

The interview questions were tested with four Oromo people working or studying here in the UK before leaving for Ethiopia to carry out the fieldwork. All of them were members of EECMY. All the interviewees' responses and comments were very useful in helping me to improve the clarity of some of my questions but they also confirmed that most of the questions were appropriate in terms of acquiring the data I needed.

Ethical considerations

For the safety and security of the trip and research process, I had an official letter from the University. The letter was very helpful in the process of the interviews. I showed the letter to the interviewees to create healthy communications and a good environment with the respondents. From the beginning of the research considerable care was taken over ethical issues involved in the gathering of information. Interviewees were informed of the objectives of the research at the beginning of the interview and they were reiterated to the participating respondents during the data collection. The data collection was carried out at mutually agreed times giving respect to cause the least amount of inconvenience for the respondents and without placing too much stress on any of them (Sarantakos, 2005, 277). Most of the interviews were recorded by dictaphone with the respondents' permission. The respondents were informed that all the information collected would be treated in the strictest confidence and reported in an anonymous manner. All the interviewees' responses were collected, classified and kept for subsequent analysis. They were then

held on file or stored in a reliable place and accessed only by those involved in the project. Moreover, the data were used only for the purposes of this inquiry. The dignity and interests of the respondents were valued at all times, especially with regard to their views in the course of the interviews.

Efficacy of the interview approach

The effectiveness of the interview approach in fieldwork depends on the nature of the project, the time limitation, sampling areas and the social characteristics of the respondents. Taking all this into account, I selected the interview approach and used it to collect the necessary data. Nevertheless, I also experienced some challenges in using the approach.

One of the challenges I faced was that I was not able to interview all of the non-evangelized Oromo community members and religious leaders. There were three reasons for this: firstly, as a Christian and church minister (pastor), it was not as easy as I first thought to be able to gain access to the non-evangelized Oromos because they have are very suspicious of Christianity and of Christians as previously discussed. Secondly, although I am an Oromo, I personally found it difficult to access the community and develop trust as well as build relationships because many of the people were not known to me and lived far away from my home location. Thirdly, as Oromia is an extremely large region with many rural areas at a great distance from one another, I was not easily able to reach the sample areas during my first fieldwork trip because of the rainy season resulting in rough and muddy roads. However, I overcame some of the problems by careful preparations for my second fieldwork trip. Firstly, I arranged for some of the EECMY members who were close friends of the non-Christian Oromos from the same areas to help me to interview them. Secondly, I also trained a member of the Oromo traditional religion to do some interviews on my behalf in those places where I could not develop trust or relationships and in other far distant locations. By making such arrangements during my second trip, I was able to collect data from a total of 15 non-evangelized Oromos. Although my plan was to interview 20 non-evangelized Oromos, I was unable to interview as many people in rural locations as I had hoped. However, as the former two groups (of EECMY members and of ministers) were Oromos by ethnicity, their responses concerning the views of the non-Christian Oromos helped me bridge the

information gap, although I had to take into account that their views were biased by their new religion - Christianity -

Furthermore, the number of women interviewed in all three categories was a fewer than the number of male respondents in my first round of fieldwork, although it was higher during the second fieldwork trip. In general, this was due to the existing socio-cultural barriers which mean that women are often not free to speak to male strangers other than their close relatives and husbands. In most cases, this was a very particular problem with illiterate women in both urban and rural locations. However, without women's voices the research would not be validated. Consequently, I changed my strategy and gained access to some of them by interviewing them in the presence of their husbands or relatives. Although the effect of this may well have been that they were unable to speak freely and express what they really thought, I decided to interview them in this way in order not to miss their voices completely. This improved the number of women I was able to interview although it may have affected the quality of the responses.

Additionally, I faced a challenge from Church people; particularly among the Evangelistic outreach ministers and some of the congregation members whom I interviewed. The problem was that they asked me why I was interviewing them since they thought that I knew more than them about Church planting. Some even thought that I interviewed them to test their knowledge or evaluate their performances. As a result, some of them did not respond openly. In this fieldwork I recorded the interviews using a dictaphone in order not to be hampered by having to write down responses whilst trying to keep a coherent discussion flowing and maintaining eye contact with each interviewee. On one occasion, I had an opportunity to interview someone but did not have my dictaphone with me and so I took shorthand notes. The interviewee reacted badly to this, suggesting that in taking notes I was not giving him my full attention. This reinforced the need to use the dictaphone rather than to take notes. Nevertheless, two slight challenges occurred in the interview process. First, there were some respondents who had never before had their voices recorded. They were very happy to have this new experience and some were talking so enthusiastically to the point of being incoherent which affected my schedule to some extent. As a researcher, however, I often needed to focus the interview back to my

research questions. The problem arising from this was that the interviews often took longer than I had planned which, in the first round of fieldwork, affected my schedule.

A further challenge regarding the interviews was that there were some respondents who were too conscious of every single word they said in their recorded responses. They thought that they would be judged negatively by me or by others for what they had said. Consequently, they were often more conscious of choosing particular words than answering my questions. These two scenarios slightly changed the atmosphere of the interviews. However, the majority of respondents answered the questions with enthusiasm, which partly confirmed the objectives of my research and encouraged me to carry on the study. Thus, despite the minor challenges indicated above, I decided to use the recording system with care. Another challenge relating to the interview process was that of language and translation. The interview guide questions had to be prepared in English, i.e. my third language, to be approved by my supervisor. However, since all my respondents by ethnicity were Oromos, I had to translate all the guide questions into Oromiffa. The questions, recordings, notes and records were in Oromiffa. I then had to translate the responses from Oromiffa into English and write them down. Eventually, as the fieldwork report and the final project have to be written up in English, all the responses had to be translated into English and transcribed for data analysis. As English is the language for the thesis, the process of translating the interviews and data from one language to another was inevitably problematic. For example, there were some English words and expressions which I could not translate into *Oromiffa* and vice versa. Although I have tried to remain true to my respondents' words and expressions, there is the possibility that I have lost some of their original meanings. In writing about Church planting in English, some of nuances and issues that arise, particularly around the area of inculturation may be lost in translation. The challenge for me is to try to be aware of when that may occur and to attempt to spend time explaining some of the cultural nuances to the reader.

Despite the challenges, however, interviews were a very useful method of collecting data. In the process, I personally experienced occasions when some interviewees were extremely interested in the research topic, and answered my questions

enthusiastically. However, although a physical nervousness was not in evidence, the respondents might have been anxious by the formality of being interviewed and the unnaturalness of the occasion. The reflective nature of the semi-structured interviews by itself also allowed me to probe for more information and to draw out the respondents' opinions. I further found the nature of the method motivated many of my respondents to have in-depth conversations with me so that they shared their perspectives about EECMY traditional Church planting weaknesses and the ways Church planting could be improved. However, the interview method on its own would not be adequate for this research project, even though I have collected some important data and new insights which will help to develop some Church planting strategies. In order to check and confirm the validity of the data collected, I needed another research method and I, therefore, chose participant observation as the most appropriate to use alongside the interviews in my fieldwork.

3.6.3 Participant Observation

Engaging the method of participant observation allowed the gathering of complementary information. Participant observation is a method that can be used to diminish the bias of interviews, as 'what people say is often different from what they do' (Hodder, 1994, 395). Participant observation refers to immersing ourselves in the study of the real lives of people: what they do, how they act, the language they use, how they socially interact (Robson, 1993, 191-2). As Marshall argues, this might be to some extent what makes participant observation a vital component 'of all qualitative studies' (1999, 106). It was from this conviction that I extended my engagement in the real social life of those who were studied (Bryman, 2004, 291). In this instance, I employed this method as an insider participant observer in order to collect relevant information on the EECMY Church planting mission among the Oromo community.

As an ordained minister in the EECMY, I have served the EECMY at parish, district, Synod and national Church levels for the last twenty-six years (1980-2006). During this time I have observed the effectiveness of the EECMY Church planting mission strategy. In particular, when I was serving as National Co-ordinator for an Evangelistic Outreach mission from 2002-2004, I observed, from the workshops and seminars I co-ordinated and attended, that the Church's Church planting mission

strategy was inadequate to meet the intended objectives. This past experience is mentioned as background information as it helped me to carry out the observation in a critical manner.

Rationale for using participant observation

The primary reason for employing participant observation as a method was that it offered me an opportunity to gather information 'from the inside' by observing the social, cultural and religious activities of the people in their various interactions (Sarantakos, 2005, 220). My main focus in using this method was to observe whether the evangelistic ministry workshops evaluate the past and present Church planting in terms of the current social and cultural context of the Oromo; whether the EECMY former and newly converted members actively participate in the worship services; and whether Oromo social, cultural and religious reflections and language were reflected, referred to or used in EECMY worship, or in the teaching and preaching ministries. Further, I observed from their own activities and interactions the problems, attitudes and reactions of the unevangelized Oromo people towards Christianity in general, and the evangelical Christianity of the EECMY in particular (Sarantakos, 2005, 220). I therefore chose this method to investigate how and why the EECMY Church planting mission strategy has been unsuccessful in some places, and to identify the issues behind its failures. In so doing, I observed a range of EECMY Sunday services and evangelistic workshops, as well as the Oromos' social, cultural and religious activities in order to achieve my objectives.

Sunday worship services

During the fieldwork, I visited six different EECMY Sunday worship services in Church planting areas. At the request of the congregation pastors I took part in two particular Sunday services by preaching. In the remaining four services I merely participated as a member and an observer. My aim in this task was to observe how the EECMY pastors and evangelists led the worship services using the EECMY liturgy and how the congregation members responded to it. The main reason for participating in the worship services was to observe whether Oromo culture and tradition was reflected in the worship ministries and whether or not the Oromo language was used. Indeed, the Church has the same Lectionary and Liturgy book for all congregations. Despite using the same materials, four pastors in each of the four

churches were performing (leading the liturgy, singing) in their own ways, and so the service differed from that in the Liturgy book. These differences might have come from the missionary backgrounds, or the ways in which they were trained during their pre-ordination courses, or from their personal or professional abilities. It is also possible that the pastors themselves had problems in performing the liturgies since the liturgy has not been either culturally informed or locally developed. I also held conversations with some adult and some young members in order to compare and contrast their perspectives on the Church liturgical worship services.

Workshops

I participated in four evangelism ministry workshops. The first was a pastors' workshop conducted by the Central Ethiopian Synod of the EECMY focussing on 'how to strengthen an evangelism ministry'. The workshop was conducted at Bishoftu from July 18-21, 2007 and was attended by 100 participants. I purposely participated in this workshop (with permission) because the Synod is located in the central part of Oromia and its coverage touches all my sample areas except the western part of the region. I also participated in the workshop to observe whether such a workshop evaluated its Church planting success and devised further plans to improve its endeavour.

In addition, I participated in three evangelistic outreach mission workshops conducted at national level by the EECMY Department of Mission and Theology (DMT) in Finfinne. The first two workshops were conducted from August 6-9, 2007 and August 24-26, 2008 respectively for different groups of participants from different Synods of the Church. The participants of the third workshop, which was conducted from August 27-29, 2008, were from the whole of the EECMY. The purpose of the workshops was to evaluate the evangelistic work of the Synods. My primary purpose in participant observation was to investigate whether the subject of contextualizing Church planting was discussed as a feasible approach for reaching the unevangelized communities in socially and culturally changing Oromia and Ethiopia.

Oromo social, cultural and religious activities

I also visited some of the areas of the Oromia region where sampling had taken place in order to interact with Oromo social and religious activities. Accordingly, I attended two meetings and two religious ceremonies, in both August 2007 and 2008. The two social and public meetings I participated in were of medium size and conducted in the central and south Oromia regions. The purpose of the first meeting was to encourage the community in local road construction in their own respective areas, while the second was to solve a conflict created between two particular groups in a traditional and cultural manner. My aim in these meetings was to observe how they were conducted from a cultural and religious perspective, how the meetings were monitored, and how problems were effectively solved.

In August 2007 and 2008 I visited two religious ritual ceremonies in northern and southeast Oromia. The first visit was made to the weekly worship programme and the second to an annual *Attette* festival (see chapter one). I participated in these religious meetings to observe the way Oromos traditionally worship *Waaqayyo Tokkicha*, and to observe the contents and patterns of their worship practices in order to gain some insight into how the Church could contextualize Christianity among the unreached Oromo community. I also intended to participate in the *Gadaa* assembly and the national religious thanksgiving festival (*Irressa*) in order to explore a wider perspective of their cultural and religious interactions. Unfortunately, however, I was not successful during either trip as there was no such meeting or religious festival during the time of the fieldwork.

Efficacy of participant observation

Participant observation has significant advantages over the interview methods I used. One of the main strengths I found was that I observed what I could not explore in the interview process. For example, I interviewed an evangelistic outreach worker of a particular Synod about the success of Church planting in his own vicinity. The same person delivered an oral report to one of the workshops I attended. Inadvertently, one of the participants at the workshop asked him exactly the same question that I had asked him in an interview two weeks previously but his response was entirely different. In this instance, the method enabled me to collect additional data which I

was unable to achieve in the interview process. Therefore, being an inside observer enabled me to observe the success and failure of EECMY Church planting from the reports and discussions during the workshops and meetings as well as the Sunday liturgical worship services.

However, the effectiveness of the participant observation method in collecting data from the natural settings of all the intended groups may vary. For instance, I once required permission to enter a particular workshop for the purpose of observation. Consequently, since I was not familiar with the place or most of the participants, the co-ordinator of the workshop formally introduced me as a researcher or observer. Hence, all of the workshop participants were aware of my purpose and I learned that, because of my presence, a decision was made to change the approach of the workshop. Having understood this, I had a conversation with some of the key leaders and members during the tea and lunch breaks to develop trust hoping that they would be relaxed about my presence. Despite my attempts, I acquired less data than I had hoped, as the group was conscious of being observed.

Another weakness of the method was that it demanded substantial time and finance to reach each geographical location as there were vast distances between the four sample areas of the Oromia region. I have already reported on the adverse impact on proposed visits of the heavy rainfall and muddy roads. Throughout the fieldwork periods, I also recorded my personal reflections in my personal journal, which focused around the research themes. I endeavoured to make entries either during or after the data collection when I considered that something worthy of recording had occurred.
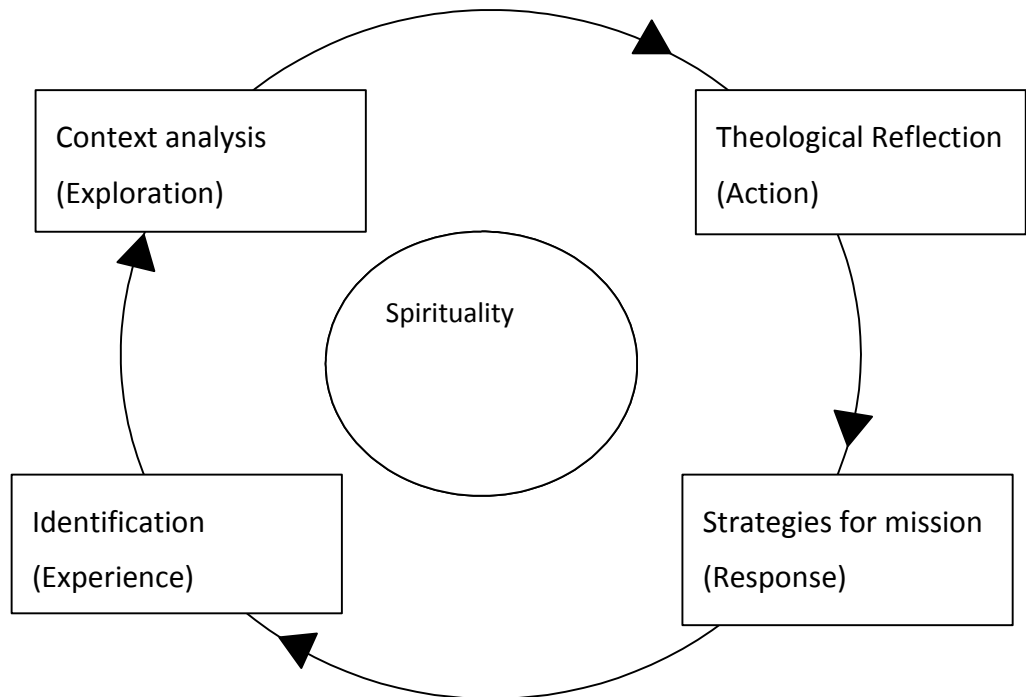
3.6.4 Keeping a journal and critical theological reflection

Using a field journal has been one of my data collection methods. During both five-week periods of fieldwork I used the method to record my observations in order to critically reflect on the data in the subsequent process of data analysis. As an ethnic Oromo with an ability to speak the Oromo language and with personal knowledge of the culture, as well as serving the Church over two decades, I have attempted to compare my observations with my previous experience along with data gathered from the fieldwork and the literature I used as part of my critical reflection.

During the course of the fieldwork some significant events, experiences and encounters, as well as my own reflections on the issues were recorded separately from the other field notes such as interview records. This included information from others that related to the processes of EOC mission and EECMY Church planting strategies among the Oromo People. My own reflections containing further insights were also recorded after some days. This is one of the factors which supports the originality of the research. Most of the records were expressions of events that happened among the Oromo people in various ways either accidentally or on purpose. A weakness of this method is that, as I actually come from this community, it is difficult to be entirely objective.

Recording and reflecting on experiences and observations of different activities during my ministry in the EECMY Church was the core purpose of this journal. In order to engage with, interpret, and ensure critical reflection of these experiences the 'cycle of mission praxis' was used. This cycle, which has close relations with the pastoral cycle (Green, 1990, Ballard and Pritchard, 2006), was formulated by Holland and Henriot (1994), and developed and adapted by the Missiology Department of the University of South Africa. The cycle of mission praxis is a system developed for reflecting theologically and analytically probing experiences in particular communities in the areas of missiology (Karecki, 1999, 15) and was appropriate for my area of research. The title 'Cycle' was given because it is a process that is on-going and which integrates Christianity, culture, tradition, political and economic realities, as well as social transformation in a way that keeps all of them in perspective. This wholistic process 'begins with experience, which becomes an analytical tool and informs mission praxis and missiology' (Karecki, 1999, 14). Using the cycle in this study would aid the integration of theory and practice as well as contextual analysis in bringing theory and relevant practice together in the Oromo community. The cycle has four dimensions which illustrate the process of this missiological method. Every step or dimension has a heading as follows: identification (experience), context analysis (exploration), theological reflection and mission strategies (action /responses).

Table 4: Mission Cycle (adapted from Karecki, 1999, 15)

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        Context analysis                    Theological Reflection
         (Exploration)                            (Action)

                            Spirituality

        Identification                      Strategies for mission
         (Experience)                           (Response)
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Identifying experience

A series of experiences I have encountered within the course of my ministry and fieldwork observation were identified and recorded in my field journal. Identification has been defined by Gourdet as

> a complex and rewarding experience that increases our capacity for growth and our ability to effectively communicate the Gospel interculturally which can be accomplished only when we become one in communion and community with the people with whom we live ((1999, 1).

These are key approaches for building solidarity and mutual inclusiveness with the local community through active participation. This gives a clear picture of the relationship between identifying with the people we live with and minister to and its contribution towards the collection of effective data from the community. Holland and Henriot (1994, 8) argue that it is through this communion and communication that one is able to identify the natural context of the community and become involved in analyzing certain experience: what are people feeling? What they are undergoing? How they are responding? These are the experiences that constitute primary data. By gaining access to the community and identifying with the experiences of common people, researchers are able to collect data. I have gathered

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information related to Church planting from my observations and recorded this in my journal. All the experiences encountered and my impressions were then also recorded and kept for later data analysis and further critical reflection. These actions form the 'experience' in this cycle.

Context Analysis

The second step of the cycle is that of context analysis. 'Context analysis explores the historical dimension of society as well as its social, political and economic structures and cultural make-up' (Karecki, 2000, 16). Such an exploration of any given context facilitates conditions for later reflection on the interaction of the text and the context. Likewise, exploring the historical identification or situation and experiences of the Oromo community has already been discussed in chapter one for the purpose of understanding the context. However, 'the context analysis should not be understood as knowledge for its own sake but it would lead to meaningful action that may help facilitate the coming of the reign of God in its fullness' (in Karecki, 2000, 15). In this case, context analysis may be described as an essential element of contextual theology and mission praxis since through this a person may come to a realistic assessment of the situation in which theology could be made.

With regard to collecting and recording some dimensions of the Oromo community in the field journal it would be imperative to address the following questions raised by Holland and Henriot (in Karecki, 2000, 17) when analyzing data in social analysis: What is noticed about the situation of the people today? What are people experiencing? What most influences people in this situation? Why? Who makes the most important decisions in this situation? What do people want most in life? Why?

These questions serve to identify and analyze the core values of the community, to get to know the people and to identify their existing situations and experiences. Similarly, in my exploration towards comprehending the strategy of Church planting among the Oromo community the questions would be helpful in informing my perception of their experiences. In addition, the historical factors and the social sciences such as socio-political and cultural anthropology have been included with the expectation of being better able to understand how Church planting would be developed in a contextual manner for the Oromo community. Detailed discussions

regarding the Oromo people and the matters that affect them have also been included at the start of this thesis for this purpose. Therefore, the study integrates some disciplines (such as history, social anthropology and religion) which are reflected in the research approaches utilized in this study.

Theological reflection

The third step of the cycle considers theological reflection. As De Beer and Killen put it,

> Theological reflection is the discipline of exploring individual and corporate experience in conversation with the wisdom of a religious heritage. The conversation is a genuine dialogue that seeks to hear from our own beliefs, actions and perspectives as well as those of the tradition. It respects the integrity of both. Theological reflection therefore may confirm, challenge clarify and expand how we understand our own experience and how we understand the religious tradition. The outcome is new truth and meaning for living (1999, viii).

Whatever people individually or collectively are experiencing, then, ought to be examined in the light of Christian tradition (i.e. faith, scripture and theological perspective). Without this the situation may remain outside the sphere of theological reflection. Therefore, the identified and analyzed problems of the Oromo people are assessed in the light of Christian tradition in order to bring them to the new life of Christianity in their social setting. Care was required in informing my conception of the theology of Church planting among the Oromo people in the process of using Christian tradition. Undoubtedly, Christian written texts, tracts, and the Bible itself play a significant role in EECMY's Church planting strategy. However, utilizing the written materials among the Oromo Community would be very limited as most of them cannot read or write. Although the Bible was translated into the western Oromo dialect only a century ago, the same is not true for the eastern, southern and central Oromos' dialects, despite the fact that some attempts have been made to do this Hence, it may need considerable attention to provide culturally informed and vernacularly (dialectically) fit material resources. More details regarding Bible translation as a mission approach is discussed in chapters one and five.

In the conversation regarding the wisdom of Christian tradition, it was important to be careful not to engage my own experience among Oromo people and Church plants or the corporate experience of the western Oromo Christians with an essentially western form of the Christian tradition. The EECMY identified with a 'biblical'

Christianity growing out of western missionary activity. This form of Christianity itself is criticized for being colonial and oppressive of African peoples (Hillman, 1993, 36-37), as discussed in chapter two. The question for me then is: what does the western-based Christian tradition mean in an Ethiopian context and, more specifically, in an Oromo context? This question is held in tension with an attempt to be faithful to the Church tradition of which I am a minister.

The Bible was originally written in Hebrew and Greek, then Latin and the Canon was agreed by a Greco-Roman council. It was further contextualized and reshaped in western languages and contexts (e.g. English). Therefore, the version of the Bible that has come to Ethiopia has been shaped by centuries of western culture, and used as the main tool for western Christian expansion. It was then translated from western languages into Amharic (1840) and the western Oromo dialect (1897). In addition to the imposition of western cultures, the Amharic Bible translation has also been imposed on the Oromo people, creating problems because of the language, cultural ill-fit and literal standard of translation, all of which made it inadequate for the current and future use among Oromos. The same is true for other Christian traditional written texts. Moreover, the EECMY has predominantly valued this western-based Christian tradition and this has partly contributed to its unsuccessful Church planting among the Oromo people by disregarding their culture and language. It is, however, also true that within this same text there is the heart of the Christian message which alongside my vocation, as a minister of the EECMY demands a loyalty to Christ and his Church. On the other hand, imposing a western Christianity on the Oromo people or applying western critical methods to contextualized Church planting for Oromos and Ethiopians may repeat the former mistakes and the unsuccessful nature of EECMY Church planting will continue. Therefore, I must endeavour to develop a contextual approach through a model of translation which may help the EECMY to translate the Bible and western Christianity into the language and culture of the Oromo so that Church planting will be extended among the unreached Oromo people.

Response or mission strategy

The final step in the cycle is to make an action plan or strategy to address the identified problems or experience in the light of context analysis and the theological

reflection that have already taken place. As Karecki writes 'this step leads to a deeper quality of identification and action, which is based on the data collected through context analysis which are understood in the light of people's particular Christian tradition' (1999, 20). Holland and Henriot 'call this pastoral planning and praxis' and say that at this step the community decides on what they now discern to be God's will for them, what it is they are called to as the people of God, and what action this requires in the world (Cochrance et al 1991, 24). The entire process of this project could serve as a response for such a missiological strategy and may enhance the action to be taken. In carrying out this project, I am not claiming to be able to solve everything by creating new paradigms for the Church planting strategies. However, I am claiming to be gathering information, recording, analyzing, reflecting on the results and eventually proposing some culturally informed contextual Church planting approaches in order to present them to the EECMY for use in reaching the unreached Oromo and other communities of Ethiopia.

Currently, some Oromo Christian members, including Seminary and Bible School graduates, have started to argue that it was, and is, the responsibility of the EECMY Church to take serious steps to evaluate its Church planting strategy in order to reach the unreached Oromo people effectively in their own context so that the Oromo people can be recipients of the Christian religion (Wayessa, 2003, 95; Guta, 2003, 183; Gutema, 2006, 23). Although no major action has been taken so far, the Church has been running various workshops and seminars for training Church Planters or evangelistic outreach ministers, and evaluating its Church planting (over the last ten years) in order to respond to this challenge (EECMY DMT Reports, 2001, 2004, 2006).

Similarly, various challenging recommendations regarding appropriate Church planting strategies which may facilitate effective mission have been forwarded to the Church from many perspectives. Among others, the Mekane Yesus Theological Seminary (MYTS) and the Ethiopian Graduate School of Theology (EGST) (the two higher theological institutions) as well as some Synod Evangelistic Outreach field ministers have put forward initiatives. Responding to this missiological request has partly become my responsibility to deal with the contextual mandate of developing Church planting strategies for the Oromo community and as such to analyze them

and respond to them. Thus, the current project is the effective product of that strategy and is by itself a missiology, an act of developing a better contextual Church planting strategy so that the unevangelized Oromo people might be reached with the Gospel in their own socio-cultural context.

3.7 Conclusion

In brief, the chapter has considered the whole framework of the chosen research methodology, and the specific research methods, techniques and procedures used in the investigation. These methods have also been evaluated and justified. The research methodology chosen was that of a qualitative research approach. It included fieldwork that consisted of interviews, participant observation and journal keeping. These were the means used in order to collect data to develop an introductory work for contextual Church planting strategies. The chapter has given an outline of the rationale for the research methodology and provided the basis on which the data analysis was grounded. What is of some significance is that the fieldwork methods I have used from the primary input to the increase of academic knowledge. This has been done with due consideration, and with some knowledge of the literature and current research sources. Some of the originality of my input has come from the variety of the research approaches, interviews, participant observation, field notes and journal keeping. Based on this background information, I will proceed to analyze and discuss the data collected in chapter four which contains the results of the fieldwork, and in chapter five I will also propose some contextual Church planting strategies for the EECMY to reach the unreached Oromo people.

Chapter Four

Reasons for the lack of success of EECMY Church planting among the unevangelized Oromo people

Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to explore the reasons why the EECMY strategy of Church planting has not been successful among non-evangelized Oromo people with particular reference to those who are members of the OTR. I will argue that EECMY Church planting has been successful to some extent in that it has reached approximately three million Oromos after one hundred and ten years of its Gospel expansion. However, the expansion has largely not been a result of reaching non-evangelized Oromos but rather through the growth of the families of church members and the transfer of Christians from other churches. My argument is primarily based on fieldwork data collected over two six-week periods between July and August in 2007 and 2008 from four sample areas, representing most of the EECMY operational areas in Oromia as explained in chapter three. My argument is also based on my own experience as an ordained minister within the EECMY working in various areas of evangelistic ministries at local, regional (Synod) and national church levels for the last two decades. From the many issues which emerged from the fieldwork, I have established five which I consider to be the main issues that have hindered the success of Church planting among the non-evangelized Oromos who strongly maintain their own culture and religion. These are: the legacy of the EOC mission, the collaboration of the EOC mission with Abyssinian colonial expansion, the Western missionary heritage (legacy), the way that the EECMY has failed to observe Oromo culture and the Oromos' strong preservation of both their culture and religion. This chapter will discuss each of these issues in turn.

I begin the chapter, however, by first examining the objectives and plan of the EECMY Church Planting strategy. I will then discuss and evaluate its success. Finally, I conclude the chapter by drawing together the key arguments for the EECMY's lack of success in evangelising those Oromos who are engaged in traditional religion. The chapter will also indicate ways forward for developing a possible contextual Church planting strategy, which may enable the Church to communicate the Gospel message to the Oromo community in their own socio-

cultural context. I begin then by considering the aims and objectives of the EECMY Church planting strategy, which may help us to measure the success of its achievement among the Oromo people.

4.1 Evaluating the success of EECMY Church Planting among the Oromo people

In this section I argue that the success of the EECMY Church Planting is not among the non-evangelized Oromo people, and that its success needs to be evaluated in the light of its membership growth statistics and its mission objective and plan.

4.1.1 Objective, plan and success of the Church Planting

The Church defines Church planting as 'evangelizing non-evangelized or unreached communities to bring salvation through witness to the Gospel and by creating Christian communities as the primary part of God's mission to express his kingdom among their own society (EECMY, 1999, 3). The specific objective of the EECMY is to proclaim the Gospel to the non-evangelized people so that they receive Jesus Christ for salvation from the condemnation of sin and acknowledge God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit as the triune God (EECMY Mission Statement, 2001,1-2). The primary focus of the EECMY evangelistic outreach is, therefore, reaching un-evangelized or non-Christian communities with the Gospel message of salvation in order to establish new Christian communities. Given this clear and specific goal of Church planting, I argue that it has not been achieved.

The EECMY claims that it has its own evangelistic outreach or Church planting strategic plan to achieve this objective (EECMY, 1999, 2). However, the relevant Church documents do not clearly demonstrate a consistent and clear strategic plan for evangelistic mission from the EECMY's outset (EVTC 1983). Moreover, the strategic plan of the Church for evangelistic outreach appears to be complicated. This will be explained later. For the purpose of providing some background it will be helpful to consider three periods of the Church's history, i.e. 1898-1959, 1960-1988 and 1989-2009, and to discuss the historical context of the EECMY strategic plans for Church Planting mission. These dates are very significant in the life and history of the Church in relation to the strategic plan of the EECMY for Church planting and its statistical membership growth, as will be outlined below.

The first period (1898-1959) was key in the history of the Church as it covers the time from the foundation of the Church to its establishment at national level. Norlander argues that during this period the pioneer missionaries had no detailed or specific plan for a Church planting enterprise among the Oromo people of the west (1998, 22). What supports his argument is that the issue was not even raised in the commissioning missionary meeting in Eritrea from where the indigenous missionary-trained evangelists were sent to the Oromo people (Norlander, 1998, 22). As Ujulu further contends, this may be in agreement with the initial objective of the western missionary enterprise which aimed to promote renewal within the EOC rather than Church planting to create a new Christian community among members of the Oromo traditional religion (Ujulu, 1999, 54).

However, as explained in chapter one, after realizing their inability to reform the EOC, the missionaries adjusted their vision to reach the unevangelized Oromos (Eide, 2000, 53; Aren, 1978, 391). They seem to have then devised strategies through which they themselves could evangelize the Oromo people (Sadi, 2003, 133). Aren further suggests that the evangelical leadership of the time from Eritrea urged the missionary team to adapt their approach to the existing circumstances (1978, 392). The strategies of the time appear to be based on educating indigenous Oromo Bible translators (Onesimos and Aster) and evangelists at mission schools and then sending out these people as indigenous evangelists alongside a foreign missionary team (Aren, 1978, 424-429). Accordingly, it was a team of indigenous evangelists who did successfully reach the Oromo people during their fifth expedition (1898) as discussed in chapter one. They also brought with them the first translation of the Bible in Oromo and they opened schools to teach literacy in the Oromo language (Tadesse, 1995, 8). Despite lacking a time frame and scale of achievement, the contents of the strategic plan further indicate that the evangelicals of the time seem to have been relatively organized and adapted to the context. Consequently, a range of evangelical churches were planted in Oromia and indeed throughout Ethiopia, with a total membership of about 20,000 in 1959. The Oromo people made up more than half of this number in accordance with the size of its population (LWFI, 2009). Such significant membership growth within the first 60 years of Church planting suggests

that the strategic plan was successful. I will discuss later how this success was achieved.

The second period (1960-1988) follows immediately after the establishment of the Church at national level. The evangelical Christians in Oromia and other parts of Ethiopia organized themselves into congregations and finally established a united national church across the country, legally registered with the Ethiopian government in 1969 (Abraham, 1995, 256). Church documents show that it was in this period that the EECMY for the first time preceded its evangelistic activity with a specific written plan. Accordingly, the first plan was approved by the 8th General Assembly in 1973. The main recommendations of the plan are summarized as follows:

- That the Synods undertake studies of evangelism opportunities in areas adjacent to their present work and among people not yet reached by the Gospel of Jesus Christ.
- That Synods need to mobilize the congregations to send their pastors, evangelists and members to reach unevangelized communities.
- That a Christian anthropologist who can study the present situation and various new cultures of different ethnic groups be sought.
- An evangelism department be established to speed up all evangelism work.
- A special resource fund for evangelistic outreach be established by each Synod.
- That the Church [Central Office] prepares an evaluation procedure for use in its social and evangelical work.

This plan needed to be facilitated by the three Church bodies. First, the Synods were to explore unevangelized areas adjacent to their areas, produce their own local plans, and mobilize their congregations to implement these plans (GMD 1981, 4). Second, the congregations were responsible for evangelizing the non-evangelized communities through their ordained and lay ministers as required by their Synods. Third, the Church Central (national) Office was to establish an Evangelism Department, undertake missiological studies in an attempt to contextualize Church Planting strategy, and also set up an evaluation procedure for its evangelistic

activities. Theoretically the structure of the plan seems to be a contextually orientated set of Church planting principles which might be considered appropriate to the context.

However, the plan seems to be incomplete in that it needed further development by the respective bodies (Central Office, the many Synods and a multiplicity of congregations) in order to evangelize the diverse peoples of Ethiopia effectively and to create new Christian communities, including the Oromos in their own cultural and religious contexts. There is no documentary evidence to indicate whether a number of the recommendations had been implemented, for example, whether the Central Office of the Church had made any missiological or contextual studies of the different groups and also whether they had prepared an evaluation procedure through which the achievements of the Synods and congregations would be measured against the plan and goals set. Similarly, neither Church reports nor other documents demonstrated whether the Synods had developed a contextual plan for their congregations which engaged with the cultures and religions of the non-evangelized communities of Ethiopia.

Despite this, every year progressive membership growth is registered in Ethiopia, including in Oromia. Accordingly, the total membership of the EECMY grew from 20,000 to 816,726 (1960 to 1988), which shows a massive expansion in 30 years and suggests great success of the Church planting (EECMY Statistics 1988). However, under a subsequent heading, I will discuss findings from my fieldwork in order to consider whether this growth and success has been achieved according to the Church planting objective and plan.

The third and last period (1989-2009) is the one during which the EECMY produced Church planting manuals for the whole of its evangelistic ministry which contain methodologies and plans to strengthen its mission in the multi-cultural and diversified society of Ethiopia. The first manual was prepared by the four EECMY Oromo Synods when 'The 100 Year Anniversary Celebration of Gospel Preaching to the Oromo People' took place and when the Synods committed themselves to strengthening Evangelistic Mission in Oromia and beyond (EECMY Synods Mission statement 1999). Two other documents on outreach in the whole of Ethiopia were

also produced by the Department for Mission and Theology (DMT) (EOR 2000) on the nature of holistic ministry as defined by the EECMY General Secretary's Office (EECMY 2001). In the latter document (Articles 5:3 and 5:8) 'conducting research on society, culture, religion and language of a particular community' and 'designing a short and long term plan and follow up', seem to be important strategies for Church planting. Both manuals equally emphasize that the Synods help the local congregations to be involved in evangelistic outreach work in order to spread the Good News. The manuals seem to be far more advanced documents than those previously utilized by the Church. Nevertheless, as with the previous plans, both documents contain no clear method for evaluating the activities, even though this could be done since membership growth is known through the Church's registering of a total number of 5, 279,822 baptized members (non-communicants and communicants). This growth has made the EECMY the largest Lutheran Church in Africa (EECMY Statistics 2009; LWFI, 2009).

This huge membership growth indicates that there are successful EECMY Church planting strategies and plans. However, I suggest that this growth is not the result of the effectiveness of the methods and plans of the Church. Notably what has greatly contributed to this growth is the number of EOC members who have joined the EECMY and the new born children from EECMY families rather than non-evangelized Oromo people. Therefore, as the primary aim of EECMY Church planting mission is not evangelizing EOC members or young people born into EECMY families, I argue that the objective of the Church has not been adequately met in any of the three periods discussed above. I will demonstrate this by examining the statistical growth of the Church from the fieldwork and relevant literature. I will now proceed to evaluate the success of EECMY Church Planting in terms of its membership growth.

4.1.2 Evaluating the EECMY Church planting in view of its Church membership

As discussed above the success of EECMY Church planting in terms of membership growth within the three categorized periods has been remarkable, even though there has been no alternative evaluation procedure with which the Church might measure the effectiveness of its strategic plan. Consequently, I argue that evangelism has not

sufficiently considered the non-evangelized communities of Ethiopia, in general, and the Oromo community, in particular, in accordance with its objective and plans. In order to build my argument, I present relevant statistical data about Church growth which summarizes the three periods discussed earlier, and identifies where the members came from in relation to the strategic plan.

Traditionally, EECMY statistics group Church members into two main categories: 1) baptized (total number of members which include communicants (confirmed) and non-communicant (non-confirmed-- who actively attend church but do not receive communion), and 2) communicant (confirmed) members. The statistics also do not include age or religious background, particularly their previous religious affiliation. In order to fill this gap, fieldwork data will be used.

Summary of the EECMY membership statistics from 1959-2009.

	Years	Total/baptized member	Communicant member	Non communicant	Total changes
	1959	20,000			
	1988	816,726 100%	362,218 44.35%	454,508 55.65%	816,726 - 20,000= 796,726
	2009	5,279,822 100%	2,465,637 46.70%	2, 814,185 53.30%	5,279,822 - 816,726= 4,463,093

(Table adapted from the Church 2009 statistical data)

The table shows that at the end of the first sixty years of the Church, about 20,000 were evangelical Christians. My discussion, however, focuses on the next two periods of time since they demonstrate more remarkable changes in terms of membership growth. According to the table, from 1959-1988 Church membership increased massively and reached a total of 816, 726 of which 362,218 (44.35%) were communicant members and 454, 508 (55.65%) were non-communicant. Within these three decades, membership increased by 796,726. The table also shows that within the last 21 years the membership has again massively increased to reach a total of

5,279,822 of which 2,465,637 (46.70%) were communicant members and 2, 814,185 (53.30%) were non-communicant. That is to say, within the last two decades a total of 4,463,093 have been added to the existing membership.

Nevertheless, the important question for us is: 'how has the Church achieved this membership growth?' 'Has the Church clearly identified how this membership increases?' 'Has the Church been planted in unevangelized communities of Ethiopia in general, and the Oromo people in particular, according to its objective and plan?' In order to answer these questions, I have, primarily, consulted findings from the fieldwork supported by some Church documents in order to identify who the members were and are, and their background before joining the Church, and by these findings to evaluate whether or not the Church has fulfilled its mission. The following two themes will be explored for this purpose: 'evangelizing those already evangelized people' and 'biological expansion'.

Evangelizing the evangelized rather than the non-evangelized

Most members of the EECMY appear to join from other Christian denominations, particularly from the EOC. For example, from the 30 EECMY Oromo members and minsters I interviewed 23 (76.66%) of them had been nominal members of the EOC. Although there are no EECMY statistical data to support this argument, based on the survey made on the evangelistic ministry of the Church in 1988, the EECMY Evangelism department (EVD) director clearly stated in his EOR report that the majority of those who join the EECMY are former nominal members of the EOC, while some were members of other protestant churches, and a few were Muslims and traditional religious practitioners (1988, 4). This statement appears to demonstrate that EOC members have been the main respondents to EECMY mission. Eide further remarks that about 77% of the EECMY members are assumed to have been baptized in the EOC (2000, 90). Other recent research also maintains a similar percentage (ECFE, 2005, 53). This suggests that only 23% of the EECMY members are from all other backgrounds.

Out of the 30 EECMY members and ministers (pastors and evangelists) I interviewed, 23 (76.66%) supported the above statements and further explained that

most of the EECMY Oromo members came from the EOC. For example, a pastor interviewee said,

> Starting from my parents and my own family we were from the Orthodox Church. Later on we joined the EECMY. The reason we left the EOC was that except being baptized and celebrating the Epiphany once a year during the month of January, we do not clearly know about Christianity. Even when we go to the church we cannot understand *'degamma Kesota'* the priests' prayer or liturgy and teaching as they speak in Geez and Amharic alternatively.

Numerous Oromo EECMY members made similar comments. Of these, a woman interviewee said,

> I was told that I was baptized at the Orthodox Church and my parents and I used to be Orthodox. However, we did not know what Christianity meant. Of the many things that I can tell you about this church is that we were told to fast 280 days a year and also to venerate the entire Saints' days and miss work in order to do so. If we did not do this we were called *'aramaenne'* and *'tsera-mariam'* (literally, pagan, non-religious, anti-Mary and so forth). We also could not understand the language used in the Church so that we could not fully participate in the Church practices. We finally joined the Mekane Yesus Church. Since then I have clearly understood my Christian faith.

From these responses two points need to be discussed: 1) EOC as the major church for recruitment to the EECMY and 2) Reasons why EOC members left their Church and joined Mekane Yesus. Firstly, the responses clearly show that a large number of the EECMY members were formerly EOC members. During my fieldwork, when I visited a newly planted small Church in the central part of Oromia, I observed the same situation. In a consultation with the elders they told me that they had 311 baptized members (Communicant and non-communicant members). They also told me that more than half of their members were from the EOC, including the elders' committee members themselves. They further remarked that only a few of their church members came from other protestant churches, from Islam and from the Oromo religion *'Waaqeffanna'*.

Reasons why the former EOC members left that church and chose to join the EECMY are varied. However, one important reason is the language barrier which meant that they could not understand the teaching or the worship in EOC services. Most Oromos are uneducated and the liturgical languages of the EOC (Geez and Amharic) are foreign to them. Additionally, Eshete, an Ethiopian historian, in a wider Ethiopian context observes that even the literate people viewed the use of Amharic as an expansion of Amharization rather than as part of Christian practices

(2009, 69). Likewise, feeling excluded within the EOC service through lack of understanding, and gaining a growing sense of identity as Oromos, have resulted in the EOC Christian practices appearing foreign to Oromo people and have greatly contributed to breaking their relationship with this Church. Birri further argues that, since the people were deprived of their rights to hear the Gospel message and could not understand Christianity, numerous EOC Oromo Christians have lost a sense of attachment to EOC and joined the EECMY (1997, 15). Additionally, one of the EECMY evangelistic outreach co-ordinators said, 'our Church proclaims the Good News for all human beings and our door is also open to accept whoever needs to join the Church. This might be how many Orthodox Christians became our members.' It is this majority which has increased EECMY membership growth. What one might learn from this is that the Oromo people need a faith which they can freely accept by their own conviction, where they can also be taught relatively well and where they can practise their faith in their own language. This partly helps the EECMY to contextualize its Church planting strategy for the objective of engaging with unevangelized communities of Ethiopia like Oromos. The other group which has accounted for such rapid growth are the children of EECMY families, so I turn now to show how the EECMY has increased by a simple process of biological expansion from Christian families.

Biological expansion: From Christian families by infant baptism-

So-called 'biological' growth refers to children who are born naturally into EECMY Christian families and are baptized (non-communicant) as infants, actively attend church but do not receive communion. Recent research similarly maintain that 'the EECMY membership increased by nearly one million in the last five years [and] is attributed mainly to growth in Christian families' (LWFI, 2009). For example, according to 2009 statistics 53.30% of the total membership relates to non-communicant members (EECMY statistics 2009), from which the vast majority are, it is claimed, young people under the age of 15 born into EECMY families (EVD, 1997, 5).This aspect of the issue of EECMY membership was similarly discussed by different respondents and many of them agreed that most of the Church members are those under the age of 15 and categorized under non-communicant membership. For example, one of the respondents, a pastor, said, 'the majority of our Church members are children and teenagers (underage) as well as young people.' A female evangelist

also commented, 'our Church is so blessed by having children.' Such responses exemplify the preponderance of children and young people in the EECMY which annually increases the membership of the Church. In addition, when I visited three Congregations from central Oromia I observed that more than half of the members were children and young people as explicitly maintained by the above literature and interview responses.

Such an increase of Church membership demands an extension of the same church buildings or construction of new ones to accommodate the members within the same building and/or in different sites adjacent to the existing one (mother church). A range of respondents commented on this issue. One of them was an evangelist, who said,

> Our congregation is about 21 years old now. Our membership is increasing every year. The former building was extended twice within the last 10 years in order to accommodate our members. According to our record most of our members are children [baptized members]. There are also some EECMY members who moved from other places because of businesses and by marriage. In the last 10 years we have gained only 13 new converts who have accepted Christianity from the Oromo traditional religion (*Waaqeffannaa*).

Another respondent also said, 'Our congregation is growing so much. Two years ago we extended our church building. But I see very few new converts in our Church.' Although congregations have extended their buildings in order to accommodate the increasing number of members, both respondents expressed the view that the number of people who come from traditional religions (unevangelized) is very much smaller. A survey made by the Evangelical Churches Fellowship of Ethiopia (ECFE) on the evangelical Churches' activities around un-reached areas of Ethiopia (including Oromia) also reveals the same fact (ECFE, 2005, 54).

In summary, the success of EECMY Church planting and its membership growth seems to have been within the Christian Church itself, either from the Christian families by baptism or by moving from one church to another. This further suggests that the particular strategy of 'Church planting' i.e., establishing new communities among non-evangelized persons is not taking place. Instead, existing communities are simply expanding, evidenced by the larger church buildings. Thus, I argue that the strategy of the EECMY has not achieved its Church planting targets since

millions of unreached people in Oromia have not yet been evangelized. Having considered the state of EECMY church growth in terms of its Church planting strategic plan, I now move to discuss key reasons why Church planting has not operated as a successful strategy among the Oromo people and begin with the legacy of the EOC.

4.2. Reasons for lack of success of Church planting among Oromo people

4.2.1. The legacy of the EOC mission impact

In this section, I will discuss how and why the legacy of the EOC mission has continued to hinder the success of the (EECMY) Church planting among the Oromo people. Three significant reasons will be highlighted: 1) Oromos associated Christianity with the suppression of their own culture and traditions. 2) The EOC collaborated with the Abyssinian traditional religions to colonize the people which made the Oromos associate Christianity with colonialism and also gave them confidence in their own religion. 3) The EOC collaborated with different Abyssinian governments to persecute the Oromo evangelical Christians which led to fear among the Oromos about what might happen if they also converted to evangelical Christianity in the EECMY.

Associating Christianity with the suppression of Oromo culture and tradition.

In chapter one I discussed how the Abyssinians colonized the Oromo people, integrated them into the present-day Ethiopian empire and suppressed their social, cultural, and religious identity. In chapter two, I also examined how the EOC, which claimed to be the Abyssinian national religion, imposed its version of Christianity (Abyssinian inculturated Christianity) and its Abyssinian culture and traditional practices onto the Oromo people's cultural and religious practices. They did this by using Abyssinian political and colonial expansion as the major mission approach. In this section my argument will focus on how and why the legacy of the EOC mission has severely hindered the success of Church planting in that the Oromo people resist any mission claiming to come to them in the name of Christianity

To begin, it is important to ask the following questions: How and why has the EOC mission approach affected the Oromo people and led to them not welcoming the

EECMY? How do the Oromo people view EOC Christianity, and the later version of Christianity presented by the EECMY?

An Oromo EECMY member who became a Christian from a non-evangelized Oromo family remarked that,

> I am the only Christian from my family. My parents used to tell me not to join the so-called Christians' group who came to our land as killers and destroyers of our Gadaa culture. Many times I told them that I would join the evangelicals who do not do the same to the Oromo people. However, they always used to cite one of the Abyssinians' saying, '*Alshashume zorr allu indjii* (lit. they are about the same) and relentlessly contended that they were the other side of the same coin.

Fifteen Oromo *Waaqeffannaa* leaders and members (33.33%) also made similar comments from their experience. For example, one of the leaders stated that,

> For approximately one and half centuries *(Jarra tokkofi wallakka)* we have experienced the colonial iron of the so-called northern Abyssinian Christians. The Menelik priests and soldiers marched to our land together with their *'tabots* (Arks) and *duubanta'* (long guns) and destroyed our shrines *(Galmas Waaqeffannaa)* from our hills and mountains and forced us to build their Churches by their power. They also forced our cultural and religious leaders and the people to be Christians. They even went to the extent of brutally beating and killing our *Waaqeffannaa* leaders [*Qaalluu]* and *Gadaa leaders*. How can we consider Christianity as a religion in such a situation?

From this, two significant points can be made. First, the appearance of the Orthodox priests with the colonial Christian soldiers who brutally ruled over the Oromo people created a negative attitude towards the religion of Christianity. Birri, an Oromo theologian, further explains that the Oromo people were deprived of their resources as the colonial rulers laid on them the heavy burdens of paying tributes to the rulers and their church, which was unprecedented in the history of the Oromo people up until then (1995, 75). The following is a practical example of such a colonial hardship with which the people were confronted under the Christian rulers. A male respondent stated what happened to his mother and father as follows:

> The *malkanya* [Abyssinian governor] required my mother and father not only to grind and cook for him but to tend their animals and transport grain to the store. Both were once chained to a post because they tried to escape and go back to their children. Particularly, my mother's spine was damaged as a result of the heavy loads of grain which she had to carry to the store, a day's walk from where they lived.

A practical story such as this, shows very graphically how the Oromo women and men suffered under the Christian kingdom and were reduced to a state of slavery and poverty, and the time they spent on their own fields was severely limited. In contrast,

the Abyssinian overlords in Oromia became wealthy and the priests of their church are also said to have been noted for their riches and relative pretentious consumption (Birri, 1995, 80). The priests of the church were responsible for extending their form of Christianity alongside colonization, but also legitimized such bitter colonial rule and served as faithful agents in different parts of Oromia. All this seems to have been done in the name of Christian expansion and in direct relation to the empire's expansion. Factors such as these are root causes of the discouragement of the Oromo people and their negative views towards any form of Christianity.

Second, according to the interview response given above, the effect of destroying the Oromo religious centres and replacing them with EOC Church buildings led the Oromo people to disregard any category of Christianity, whether EOC or not. Indeed, as a strategy for Christianizing the people, the colonial rulers compelled them to build Orthodox Church buildings at their worship and festival centres. Kelbessa, an Oromo anthropologist, observes that as a counterbalance 'the Oromos' cultural and religious sacred trees were cut down and their Galma (worship halls) as well as ritual symbols burned to ashes' (Kelbessa, 2004, 33). Fagher, a western missionary writer supports this view and further explains that very systematic suppression was undertaken in a number of Oromia regions. For example, one of the Abyssinian rulers, Menelik II, passed the following decree,

> The foundation of faith and the sign of Christianity is a church building. Judgment will fall on the soul of any crooked person who refuses to contribute money and labour to rebuild Churches. As well, in this life, you will lose your position in society and your possessions (1996, 23).

This decree reveals that if the people did not obey the decree, they would be socially and economically victimized. As the Church was supported by the colonial rulers, the EOC became more and more a part of the political process of Abyssinian colonization of the Oromo people to the extent of controlling their material and economic resources (Fargher, 1996, 11; Bakke, 1987, 51). Gnamo, an Oromo historian from his experience argues that such a programme of expansion by the Church was an extreme form of evangelism accompanied as it was by colonialism, a model employed by the western colonial missionaries and not unfamiliar to the Oromo people (2006, 31). Consequently, the effects of EOC evangelism appeared to be one of the main factors leading the Oromo people to be suspicious of anything

labelled 'Christian' because Christianity has been associated with de-Oromoniaztion and colonization, along with suppression of their culture, religion, language, identity and resources by another (Guta, 2003, 87). Yet, this could be an indicative lesson for the EECMY to take a step back and realize this legacy as a real challenge for its evangelistic outreach ministry and work out how to transform the image of Christianity before engaging with Church planting mission among the unevangelized Oromo community.

EOC collaboration with Abyssinian traditional religion

As already discussed above and in chapter two, along with Abyssinian expansion the original Oromo religious practices were suppressed and replaced by EOC and Abyssinian traditional religious practices. In this section, I will discuss how the EOC has collaborated with Abyssinian traditional religion and how this involvement has hampered the expansion of Christianity among the people. I will further argue that the collaboration of the EOC with Abyssinian traditional religions in the suppression of Oromo culture has made the unevangelized Oromo community suspicious and closed to any form of Christian mission or Church planting and how it has also given them confidence to maintain their own original religion.

Contrary views are observed about how these traditional practices developed among the Oromo people. Some advocate that as the Oromo people grew in number and with new generations, the practices also developed (Birri, 1997, 86). Conversely, others argue that the Oromos' original traditional religion and its *Qaallu* institution had been replaced by the *Qallichaa* cult which had been built on a belief in spirit possession following Abyssinian colonization and the expansion of EOC as discussed in chapter one (c.f. Forslund, 1993, 57; Bakke, 1987, 44-45; Bartels, 1983, 41). The breakdown of the Oromo *Waaqeffanna* (OTR), including the original *Qaallu* offices, by Abyssinian suppression and cultural influence following the incorporation of Oromia into Ethiopia appears to support this argument (Aren, 1999, 27). In this respect, the traditional *Qaallu* institution appears to have been replaced by the Abyssinian traditional cult called *Qallichaa,* which exercises ecstatic evil spirit possession and claims religious authority over the community (Wayessa, 2003, 32). Such a *Qallichaa* practice suppressed Oromo belief in the distinctiveness of *Waaqayyo,* since they took the place of *Waaqayyo* by imitating the power to heal or

to kill (Forslund, 1993, 57). This generated a complete fear in the people and they were likely to do anything the *Qallicha* required from them. Furthermore, they received payments in kind for their services (Negaso, 1978, 8).

It was this traditional religion (cultism) which the EOC is assumed to have been involved in and closely associated with. How the Church collaborated and associated with such traditional practices (*Qallichaa*) was one of the fieldwork discussions. A number of respondents maintained that both institutions were supportive of each other. An EECMY member [a government officer] told me their story saying,

> I know the *Qallichaas* and the EOC priests help each other practically. Among other things, the priest whom I personally knew usually takes a 'quintal of *teff*' (indigenous grain) by donkey twice a year for the *Qallichaa* as '*Galicco/irressa*' (thanksgiving). When this *Qallicha* died he was buried in the Church compound which was supposedly reserved for the so-called prominent Church members, particularly, the '*naffetagna*' (Amhara rifle carrier) ones and priests.

Another interviewee (male pastor) also said,

> Sometimes the EOC priests and traditional *Qallichaa* support each other. For example, once when the Ark (*tabot*) was stolen from the church the priest went to the *Qallichaa* to ask him to tell his fortune in order to find out who took the Ark. As far as I heard, however, the *Qallichaa* does not go to the church unless he occasionally visits the priest at his home.

Both respondents highlighted the involvement of the EOC priests in traditional religion. In the first case, it appears that the EOC priest was explicitly involved in *Qallichaa's* practices by providing a material present (grain) as a ritual gift during his life-time and gaining a recognized cemetery for his dead body. In the second case, the priest seems to have been frustrated at the loss of the Ark and visited the *Qallichaa* to help him discern where the stolen Ark was and how to get it back. In both cases, the priests seem to have required support from the *Qallichaas* as they were superior to them. This may suggest that they were effectively involved in some practices related to traditional religions along with Christianity. It was further discussed by my respondents that the EOC priests in some other Oromia regions attend local *Qallichaa* worship practices. For example, an evangelist interviewee from his own observation told me that,

> There was a female cult worship centre, (the so called *Galma Qaallitti Hadha Abbayii)* where sometimes a massive number of people [claimed to be non-Christians and EOC nominal followers] attend every Friday night. As I was serving a newly planted

congregation, once I visited the centre for observation and noticed that two priests were amongst the attendants who sometimes visit the centre.

This response further points out that some priests sometimes participate in the practices. The equal involvement of priests in such abusive traditional practices with their members may encourage the EOC Oromo adherents themselves to overlook and disregard the Christian religion itself, or they may consider it either as equal to the traditional practices or inferior to it.

Tamrat, an Ethiopian scholar of the EOC argues that in many cases the traditional religion (cult) is seen as superior to that of EOC Christianity, but Ethiopian society has no choice but to maintain an outward adherence to this Church's Christianity (1972, 171). Similarly Haile, in his recent research on the Koore tribe, who live close to Oromia in South Ethiopia, supports this view, writing, 'the Koore EOC Christians compromise Christianity with their own Koore Traditional Religion (KTR) and even called the Church *'Xhoossa'* which literally refers to 'the house of Satan'' (2003, 38). The same is true of the Oromo EOC members who were Christianized by political power and who also sometimes call the Church *'mana xxinqolla'* (the centre of witchcraft) (Ujulu, 1999, 85). Out of the 15 non-evangelized Oromos I interviewed, seven of them also thought that the EOC was a centre of witchcraft. Furthermore, not only do Oromo EOC members disregard Christianity, but also non-evangelized Oromos, who have been faithfully practising their own original traditional religion, and further maintain their position against any mission coming in the name of Christianity. This is a key reason for the relative failure of the EECMY's Church planting among the unevangelized Oromo community.

However, the EOC officially claims to have forbidden any contact with non-Christian religious practices without any compromise (Forslund, 1993, 58; Bakke 1987, 54). Yet, in line with the fieldwork results above, the actual practice is very different. Further, Ullendorff remarks that the most notable feature in Abyssinian Christianity (EOC) is the survival of traditional cults and their practices (1968, 79). In general, as Bakke contends, the involvement of the so-called EOC *debteras* (scribes) in such traditional religious practices could be regarded as 'an embarrassment to the Church' and may disgrace the EOC mission and also affect the reputation of other Christian missions (Bakke, 1987, 71). Similarly, Tamrat, in a

wider Ethiopian context, argues that the practical involvement of the EOC *debteras* (scribes) in traditional practices and mystical (magical) functions has left the Church a legacy of complete Christian religious confusion (972, 148). The same is true of non-evangelized Oromos, who may view EOC as a colonial sector which judges the original Oromo religion on the one hand as a primitive entity and, on the other hand, as a reflection of Oromo identity (nationalism) which needs to be suppressed. Conversely, one of the highly educated Oromo interviewees commented that, 'the EOC seems to have diminished the original Oromo religion as an illegitimate entity and yet collaborated in Abyssinian orientated traditional religion *(Qallichaa)* hand in hand with its own version of EOC Christianity.' It could be such action which compels its own Oromo members to join the EECMY and gives non-evangelized Oromos' confidence to maintain their position against any form of Christianity.

EOC collaboration with governments to persecute Oromo evangelical Christians

The relentless persecution of evangelical Christians by the EOC in collaboration with the Abyssinian governments is another factor that impeded the expansion of Christianity among the Oromo people. Historically, the EOC has been seen as a persecutor of: 1) its own reformers and western (pioneer) evangelical missionaries 2) pioneer indigenous Oromo evangelists and 3) Oromo evangelical Christian members and leaders in various Oromia regions. Given the focus of this thesis, I will consider only the last two groups. A range of respondents remarked on the root causes for the constant persecution of evangelical Christians. For example, a pastor interviewee said,

> The problem for evangelicals was that the pioneer missionaries (foreign and indigenous) translated the Bible into the Oromo language and preached in that language. Additionally, the evangelical members were also considered as separatists and identified as propagators of a foreign religion and considered as anti-Orthodox religion.

Another interviewee made a similar comment and said, 'the spread of education among the un-educated Oromo population along with evangelical teaching in the Oromo language was also considered as strange as well as 'anti-tradition and culture' [anti-EOC tradition]'. Two main root causes for the persecution can be drawn out: 1) the use of the Oromo language for preaching the Gospel and as the medium of education and 2) accepting western evangelical Christianity instead of the Orthodox

faith. Firstly, the interviewees traced the origin of the persecution back to the time when evangelical Christianity was introduced to the Oromo people and the Oromo Bible was made available. Oromo was used for preaching and worship services as well as the medium of mission schools. This seems to be in agreement with Aren's remarks about the persecution of Onesimos and some other pioneer evangelists in the first three decades of the 20th century for preaching the Gospel and educating students in Church schools in the Oromo language in western Oromia (Aren, 1978, 424-429; see Simesso, 2005, 38-43). Aren further points out the underlying reason for the persecution and the action taken as follows:

> It was evident that government officials in alliance with the clergy formed a powerful pressure group, which tried to strengthen Orthodoxy as a means of securing Amhara culture and combating Oromo consciousness, which seems to have found an outlet in the evangelical movement (1978, 427-428; see Hirpo, 2001, 73-75).

It appears that Abyssinian political support came after EOC ecclesiastical pressure to secure the Amhara culture and language at the expense of the use of the Oromo native language in their own land. This may reflect the sovereignty of the Amhara language and culture and the marginalization of the Oromos' identity, culture and language, so that the Oromo evangelicals were persecuted for using their own language in their new Christian religion. Furthermore, according to the above interview responses, the spread of the Gospel and education among Oromo people, together with evangelical Christianity in their own mother tongue, so terrified the local government officials (*naftanyaochh)* and the Orthodox clergy that they exerted their power in rising against the pioneer evangelical Christians and leaders . A range of interviewees, who were between 50 and 61 years old, and who had personally experienced such evangelical Christian suppression told me their stories. For example, an evangelist from western Oromia said,

> The Orthodox priests who observed the expansion of evangelical Christianity among us [Oromos] collaborated with the regional rulers and ordered the closure of the schools, the newly planted churches and the arrest of the evangelists, so that many of us were arrested.

One of the EECMY former leaders also said,

> In one particular region about 18 churches were closed, members of the evangelical movement were ordered to pay tax to the EOC and Oromo Bibles were collected and burnt to ashes as well as forbidden to be sent to the country.

These are practical examples of how the Orthodox Church suppressed evangelical forms of Christianity in Oromia and collaborated with the governments. Despite the

toleration of the evangelical Christians, such extreme suppression might have made the traditional Oromos more suspicious of any form of Christianity and more determined to maintain their own culture and religion. Among the 15 interviewees of the Oromo religion adherents 9 (60%) of them clearly expressed their suspicion of Christianity and their view that their own traditional religion was a more secure way to live.

Second, the interviewees also suggested that the Oromo evangelical Christians were persecuted by the EOC for accepting western evangelical Christianity. This has been carried out in collaboration with successive governments, accusing the evangelical Christians of being foreign agents seeking to influence Ethiopian society with Western culture and a religious form of colonialism using evangelical Christianity (Gidada, 1981, 78). While this persecution has been on-going since the conversion of the first Oromo evangelical Christians a century ago, in 1964 a Government decree to destroy the evangelical Churches in the country in general and in Oromia in particular was issued. The partial quotation from the document says,

> Considering the danger of evangelical churches' expansion in the country and the consequences that they bring on the youngsters, we have warned all the Orthodox parishes in the country to take precautions as to who these people are and take necessary measures against them. …At the same time we have ordered all administrators that they should make a close follow up as to the movement of the evangelicals and if found preaching to be punished (Guta and Sadi, 1995, 15-16; see Eide, 2000, 36).

In addition to the Orthodox Church playing a major role in subjugating other forms of Christianity, this decree suggests how much the freedom of evangelical Christianity was hampered during the last Ethiopian monarchy, which was deposed by the Marxist regime in 1974. Yet, during and after the communist era, the EOC maintained this position by being supported by the elite who were holding state power (Eide 2000, 3, 57). Although the communist regime itself was anti-Christian in general, it was much worse towards the Oromo people and all churches were closed, most property of the EECMY from that region was confiscated, and many Christian members and leaders, including Church leaders, were arrested, tortured and even murdered (Eide, 2000, 59-61; Guta and Sadi, 1995, 16-17). A number of my interview respondents stated that they had also been victimized by this persecution and shared their personal experiences with me. For example, one pastor was in prison

for four years, two evangelists were jailed for 1 year and were brutally tortured. Five other Christian members were in prison for 11 months. This may well have strengthened unevangelized Oromos to maintain their negative positions towards Christianity out of fear of what might happen to them if they converted to an evangelical Christian faith.

Furthermore, the EOC has also been implicated very recently in suppressing evangelical Christians by burning their private property (animals, accommodation and the like) and Church buildings. One of the victimized EECMY Christians told me what happened to him and his fellow Christians in North-Central Oromia as follows:

> We are from a newly planted Church. One of our members, a woman, died and we buried her body in the allocated church graveyard. Two days after the burial, villagers dug up the Christian woman's body and left it in the open air. When friends of the deceased returned to rebury the body, angry villagers attacked and injured several of the 70 Christian members. The large numbers of believers including me were forced to leave our own houses and village and given shelter by the EECMY in Addis Ababa. Our houses and properties were burned and most of our properties looted.

An Evangelist who was serving the Christian community in northern central Oromia before and after the incident stated that,

> this community was persecuted by the EOC for becoming evangelical [EECMY] Christians. Our operation in that area could have brought many unevangelized people. Unfortunately, such severe persecution has greatly blocked our Church planting operation in that area and elsewhere.

The interview responses show then that the EOC is still very active in persecuting evangelical Christians, particularly EECMY members. In this incident the action taken towards the Christian community such as digging up the buried body and leaving it in the open air, beating and killing people and burning their property was very traumatic. Such brutal action may halt the EECMY movement and discourage new people from accepting evangelical Christianity. This incident may be similar to the action taken against the Oromo people during the EOC expansion alongside Abyssinian colonization a century ago. I also visited two congregations where one of their church buildings was burnt down by EOC members and rebuilt by the EECMY. As Amanu observes, when the Christian rulers and the EOC clergy marched into the Oromo land, millions of people were displaced and their resources almost completely destroyed. Nothing was to be seen but burnt houses and destroyed fields. These

actions were carried out by people who claimed to be Christians expanding Christianity (Amanu, 1995, 74). Ironically, the EOC, using its prestigious position of being a state church, has been persecuting the EECMY Oromo members for the last hundred years in a similar manner (Eide, 2000, 33-46). The EECMY Christian members and minsters further discussed this persecution in the interviews and suggested some reasons for such persecution from their past and present experiences. One of them said 'historically, the EOC has never needed the existence of any religion particularly other Christian denomination in Ethiopia other than itself, so that using the Abyssinian colonial power; it has been persecuting the Oromo evangelical Christians of the EECMY'. This view was also expressed by another female respondent. This has become a stumbling block to the non-evangelized Oromos preventing them from accepting any form of Christianity so that the Church planting of the EECMY among the community has been much less than expected.

In general, the Oromo people have been historically suspicious of and resistant to EOC Christian mission because of the EOC's association with Abyssinian cultural and religious colonialism (cultural imperialism) as discussed in chapters one and two (c.f. Eide, 2000, 74). One of the non-evangelized Oromo respondents also said 'it is impossible to differentiate the Abyssinians colonial domination and the Orthodox Church mission activity in that both equally have worked to destroy our culture, tradition, religion and language at the expense of expanding theirs'. Two other OTR leaders' interviewees supported this view. Indeed the EOC has maintained this position of being supported by the elite, holding State power regardless of whether that power is in the hands of a monarchy, or communists, or the like. All have seriously suppressed Oromo culture, religion and language to the extent of replacing it with the Abyssinian equivalents. Indeed, evangelical Christianity has also weakened Oromos' culture and religion to a certain extent following EOC expansion. However, Eide argues that Evangelical Christianity among the Oromo people could be seen as a critical response both to EOC expansion and to the influence of Amharaziation (2000, 75; see Simesso, 2005, 40). In contrast, Evangelical Christianity has been relatively important for Oromo evangelical Christians in developing their identity by evangelizing them in their own language and by encouraging their education, notwithstanding the EOC persistent repression (Bulcha,

2002, 64). Yet, this EOC mission approach has made unevangelized Oromos more reluctant to receive any form of Christianity, including EECMY Church planting.

4.2.2 The Western missionary legacy

In this section, I will discuss two reasons for the lack of success of the EECMY Church planting relating to the legacy of western evangelical missionaries among the unevangelized Oromos. The first is the missionaries' collaboration with Abyssinian cultural expansion and the second is western cultural imposition alongside their Christianity. I argue that, although western evangelical Christianity is claimed to be seen as one of critical response to the EOC expansion in evangelizing Oromo people partly in their own language, it has itself weakened Oromos' culture, language and religion which then contributed to a lack of successful Church planting among the non-evangelized Oromo people.

Missionaries' collaboration with Abyssinian cultural expansion.

In chapter one, I discussed how the western Lutheran missionaries initially began their mission enterprise with the objective of reforming the EOC and later developed the idea of planting independent evangelical churches which resulted in the formation of the EECMY. As I further discussed above on the one hand the Western evangelical missionaries and newly planted Churches have been suppressed by EOC in collaboration with different Abyssinian governments, while on the other hand, the western missionaries are alleged to have also collaborated with Abyssinians to the extent of becoming instruments for their cultural expansion. There have been two historical events in which the missionaries were alleged to have collaborated with the Christian Abyssinian cultural expansion. These were first, soliciting the western states to gain modern technologies and expertise for their empire expansion including colonizing Oromos as explained in chapter two and second, promoting Abyssinian culture and language (Amhariziation). Given the focus of this study, I will consider only the second point and discuss how such alliances affected the success of Church planting among the unevangelized Oromo people.

During the reign of the last emperor in the second half of the 20th century, the missionaries appear to have been used as instruments of Abyssinian cultural expansion in promoting the Abyssinian culture and language after they were

officially allowed to work in Ethiopia. The way that they were used in spreading the Amharic language and its effect on Church planting among the Oromo people was discussed by numerous Oromo respondents. For example, one of the Oromo traditional religion adherents commented on their observations of how the missionaries were strategically used.

> Although different Abyssinian emperors consecutively sought to use the western protestant missionaries for their colonial agendas, it was Haile Selassie [1930-1974], who officially allowed them to run their mission enterprise with two conditions. The conditions were operating their missions only outside the EOC dominated areas [i.e., mostly northern Abyssinian and EOC heartland] and to use only Amharic for both preaching and teaching purposes in their mission schools.

Another respondent substantiated this claim by saying that,

> The last Abyssinian emperor, Haile Sellassie successfully used the missionaries almost as his instruments to fully assimilate the Oromo people who had already been conquered by emperor Menelick II [1867-1913] in destroying the Oromo culture and language by producing a decree not to use Oromo language for teaching and preaching except Amharic.

The responses explained the ways the missionaries were involved in the advancement of Abyssinian's cultural expansion, particularly during the last emperor. As demonstrated by the respondents, the emperor allowed them to run their mission enterprises in the country. Yet, the missionaries were permitted to do so only on the precondition of the expansion of Amharization alongside their intention of Church planting among the Oromos and other communities. According to the response, the missionaries were primarily permitted to evangelize the non-Abyssinian conquered areas, which were claimed to be non-Christian regions such as Oromia, and also support the Amharanizing campaign. Gnamo an Oromo writer explains that the emperor permitted the missionaries to evangelize so that they might collaborate with him for the sole intent of integrating the Oromos into Ethiopian society at the expense of Christianizing them through their entire use of Amharic (2006, 85; cf. Horace, 2003, 23). This was the systematic colonial strategy for which the Emperor used the missionaries to create a sense of Ethiopian identity among Oromos, who previously had not viewed themselves as part of Ethiopia. This could be said to be the primary reason for allowing the Protestant missionaries to evangelize Oromo people, in particular.

As noted in the above response, to use the missionaries to Ethiopianize or Amharanize the Oromo people by suppressing their culture and language, the emperor enacted certain decrees which governed their activities. Referring to Imperial decree Number 3 of 1944, Forslund observes that the missionaries were cautioned not to 'direct their activities towards converting Ethiopian nationals [Abyssinians] from their own form of Christianity [EOC] but focus on other non-Christian communities of the west and south regions such as Oromos' (1993, 53; see Mekuria, 1990, 82-86).

The decree restricted the missionaries to evangelize only the non-Abyssinian communities, including Oromos, with their own Western Christianity. On the one hand, according to Saveras (1974, 33) the permission appears to have indicated the benevolent intimation of the emperor to Christianize and civilize the Oromo people through the western missionaries. On the other hand, referring to Nordberg Eide argues, the provision of the decree seems to have intended limiting the influence of the missionaries to the greatest possible extent and manipulating them for his overall goal of Amharizing the Oromos (2000, 79). The latter argument accords with the interview responses and is supported by the subsequent decree on the instruction about language use. As many scholars extensively write, Amharic was declared to be the language of instruction throughout the Ethiopian Empire and which the missionaries were also expected to learn and use for preaching the Gospel and teaching in schools, however, they were allowed to use Oromo for oral communication (Forslund, 1993, 38; Aren, 1978, 29 note 1; Bakke, 1987, note 46). The decree appears to ensure that people such as Oromos might be indoctrinated into Abyssinian culture, thus furthering the Abyssinians' overall goal in which the missionaries were required to be involved in further Ethiopianism among the Oromos by suppressing their social and cultural identities.

Historically, however, of the missions, the German Lutheran missions (GHM) exceptionally held a strong position against the policy of using Amharic and from the beginning preferred to serve the Oromo people in their own language. For example, one female interviewee said, 'the German missionaries are always in favour of using the Oromo language both in their daily communications and for preaching.' Four other ministers (two pastors and two evangelists) strongly supported this point.

According to Aren (1978, 29) and Bakke (1987, 46) the Germans' strong position may be based on their ancient vision, as they were pioneer missionaries, attracted by the Oromo culture, religion and language and also urged the western missions to plant evangelical Christianity among the people. Conversely, the Swedish evangelical mission (SEM) and many others appear to have accepted the Amharic language instruction and imposed it on the Oromo people. Eight EECMY members and ministers in the same way agree with this viewpoint. However, missionary writers disagree on why and how they accepted this policy.

Eide (2000, 36) and Breezy (1998, 16) similarly argue that missionaries such as the SEM favoured the usage of the Amharic policy in order to secure their work permits and to solve the complex diversities of Ethiopian vernaculars. Yet it is argued that the suggested reasons may not be justifiable compared with the position of the German missionaries who, from the beginning, used only the Oromo language among the people and did not face worse challenges than these missionaries who used Amharic among the non-educated Oromos for many years. Rather, what Ujulu writes of them appears to be acceptable. Referring to Aren (1978, 170-1, 221) he argues that, since their missions were born out of their state churches, they dared to maintain the Abyssinian state plan of Amharization rather than the interests of the Oromo society (1999, 79-80; see Ulfata, 2003, 26). This might have led them to consider the Oromo language as primitive and inferior to the higher-level of the Amhara colonial language. Arguably this may suggest that the missionaries had been effectively used by the Abyssinians to consolidate the Amharization mission among the Oromo people. Likewise, as one of the respondents, an Oromo pastor, remarked, for the Oromo people, 'the possibility of being severed from their language did not only alienate them from the EOC mission but also from the EECMY Church planting among the unevangelized Oromos.'

Given this, I will now discuss how the missionaries advanced Amharic as part of Abyssinian cultural expansion. As explained above, with the notable exceptions of the German Lutheran missions, a large number of missions who have been in Oromia have employed Amharic as their prime medium of instruction for both evangelism and educational purposes. In reference to evangelism, my respondents described how

the missions were using Amharic for preaching, teaching and leading liturgies. For example, an Oromo EECMY member said,

> the language barrier was one of the reasons I left the Orthodox and joined Mekane Yesus Church. But when I sometimes saw the missionaries preaching in Amharic despite being translated into Oromo language, it has been discouraging.

Added to this, another respondent told me,

> According to my observation most of the missionaries have been using Amharic for both public [preaching, teaching and leading liturgies] and ordinary [conversations] purposes among the non-Amharic speaking communities like Oromos to the extent that they totally ignored the Oromo language despite a number of them entirely living in Oromia for more than two to three decades.

The main point emphasized in both responses was that the missionaries explicitly used Amharic for pastoral services. Accordingly, the missionaries have preached, taught and led liturgies in Amharic among Oromos particularly in the rural areas where more than 85% of non-educated Oromos live. Similarly, Forslund contends that preaching has been delivered in Amharic in both urban and rural areas of non-Amharic speaking regions including Oromia where it is sometimes simultaneously interpreted into their dialects (1993, 42). I personally observed this in a Sunday service in South East Oromia during my first fieldwork trip. Despite interpretation, as Breezy argues, for the non-Amharic communities like Oromos, Amharic has been traditionally perceived as a colonial and oppressive language among both educated and uneducated people (1998, 16), so that any service given in this language remarkably reduces the interest of the people towards Gospel expansion and Church planting activities.

As stated by the above respondents, the missionaries have also employed Amharic as the medium of instruction in the so-called Church (mission) schools and theological institutions, particularly, in the residential Bible Schools. Six of the Church ministers (three pastors and three evangelists) who graduated from the Bible Schools similarly echoed the same statement. Additionally, Ujulu in his recent academic research maintains this argument (1999, 50). However, owing to the government curriculum restriction, the missionaries have likely been unable to impose their own western culture through education systems except through the theological trainings as previously discussed in chapter one (Ujulu, 1999, 50; Bakke, 1998, 162 n. 1). I will further discuss this in the next section.

A range of respondents (both evangelized and non-evangelized) explained that most of the missionaries have been in favour of the Abyssinians' cultural expansion in speaking and using Amharic. For example, a female Church member interviewee said, 'I am so surprised and offended when the Western missionaries speak to us [Oromo people] in Amharic like the Amhara people'. Added to this one of the non-evangelized interviewees commented that, 'sometimes we see some white Amharas [Amharic speaking missionaries] when they come to our area for some development related issues'. These responses clearly show that the missionaries have greatly contributed to the expansion of Amharization. Supporting this Bulcha, an Oromo historian, argues that most of the missionaries had generally compromised themselves by using the Amharic language because of the fear of losing permission to stay and work in the Empire (1995, 55). In a report concerning the emphasis laid by the Ethiopian government on the necessity for missionaries to learn and use Amharic, the British diplomatic representative at that time wrote to London suggesting that the Ethiopian government might use the western evangelical missionaries as an instrument of Amhara imperialism in the Oromo and other colonial lands (in Bulcha, 1995, 55). This appears to be a correct observation of the situation as most of them became intentional agents of the Abyssinian policy of Amharaziation and de-Oromization. What further supports the view that the missionaries have been used as agents of the Abyssinians among the Oromo people was that they were partly ignorant of the Oromo language although they were formally allowed to use the language for daily oral communication. For example, as Ujulu argues, although the SEM pioneered support of Oromo Bible translation and lived and worked among the Oromo people neither they nor their children who were born and grew up among the Oromo people ever spoke *Oromiffa* (Ujulu, 1999, 43-44). This utter neglect of *Oromiffa* contributed to the complete lack of interest of the non-evangelized Oromo people for the Church planting mission provided by the western evangelical missionaries.

4.2.2 How western missions' cultural influence affected Church planting

Having discussed the western missionaries' collaboration with the Abyssinians' campaign to Amharanize Oromo people by developing the use of Amharic, I now turn to examine how they imposed their own western culture and theological values on the people in addition to their evangelical Christianity. As explained in chapter

one, the EECMY was established through a partnership between the western evangelical Lutheran and Presbyterian missions so that the entire method of church ministry including Church planting strategies was adopted from these evangelical Christian traditions (Bakke, 1998, 155). In order to avoid repetition, I will only concentrate here on what the western missions imposed on the Oromo people and their culture and how they did it, and consider the other aspects of their approach and its consequences as part of the discussion on EECMY existing mission strategies, in the later section. To begin, it is important to ask the following question: How have the western missionaries imposed their western theology on the Oromo's cultural values and how has this affected Church planting among the Oromo people? My fieldwork findings show three main ways through which the western missionaries suppressed the Oromo culture. These are: 1) through theological training, 2) by establishing the EECMY on a western leadership model and 3) through establishing a pattern of western liturgical worship.

As explained in chapter one, training and educating indigenous persons [evangelists, pastors and leaders] in the theological institutions was one of the strategies devised by the western missions to strengthen evangelism and Church planting among the Oromo people, a strategy which was later developed by the EECMY (Sadi, 2003, 133; Bakke, 1987, 144). Indeed, a training strategy for Church planting ministry could still be a primary method among the Oromo people today as it might help the church planters [trainees] to preach the Gospel in the peoples' immediate context. Unfortunately, however, Sadi (2003, 124) and Ujulu (1999, 72-4) argue that the training curricula of the theological institutions was designed in accordance with that of the seminaries in the west so that the curriculum and content were entirely dominated by Western theology. This statement suggests that the content of the training entirely disregarded Oromo social, cultural and religious context, without which the training was likely to be much less effective in attracting the Oromo to Christianity. The respondents held a similar view and further maintained that the western oriented theological training suppressed the Oromos' culture and affected the success of Church planting among the community. One of the respondents, a theologian (pastor) who had been trained at one of the EECMY theological seminaries spoke from his own experience,

> Our missionary instructors and their oriented indigenous teachers had entirely taught us the western church history and how the church expanded in Europe as well as reached other worlds including Africa. We had also studied entire western theology which had been developed in their cultural and religious contexts. Moreover, subjects such as how to contextualize the western theology into our cultural and religious contexts which might help us [trainees] to value our tradition and go forward for further Gospel expansion or Church planting was not even intentionally raised.

The rest of the pastors and evangelists (14 or 94.33%) who had trained at national and regional EECMY theological seminaries and various Bible Schools maintained a similar view. According to these responses domination of a western theological perspective in the training programmes of the EECMY had two substantial impacts: 1) on the culture and religion of the community, 2) on the trainees' personal and vocational lives which in turn affect Church planting among the Oromo people. Again, it seems that any opportunity to discuss Oromo cultural contexts was completely lacking. This may mean that the missionaries believed or even claimed that their western Christian theology was so advanced that it would further the Christian journey of the Ethiopian churches. Likewise, Wulfhorst (2005, 7) and Phiri (2004, 142) similarly point out that the missionaries appear to have condemned elements of indigenous cultures and religions of the non-Europeans as uncivilized and held that they needed to be replaced by Western Christianity and theology (see Hiebert, 1991, 46; Bradshaw, 1984, IV). However, there are contrasting suggestions among the writers regarding the impact of western theological training influences on the indigenous trainees. For example, Eide writes that the graduates of theological training who became evangelists and pastors have successfully contributed to the evangelism work including Church planting (2000, 84). According to Eide the western theological subjects in the training have not hampered the Church planters' ministry in fitting into the life setting of the people.

In contrast, Bakke argues that the pattern of this western dominated training has alienated the graduates from the daily life of the rural congregations because they do not recognize the significance of their own Oromo culture (1987, 260). Gudina, the late General Secretary of EECMY, agrees with Bakke and further notes that some of the ministers who were placed among the people as church planters could not assimilate themselves with the life settings of the people (2003, 151). This accords with the comment of one of the Christian interviewees who said, 'our Synod has

trained many theologians (pastors and evangelists) to serve us and evangelize others. However, except one evangelist most of them have gone to towns to run their own businesses'. This may suggest that the domination of the western theological training or rather an uncontextualized western theological approach in the EECMY training institutions has had a negative impact both on the trainees' vocational lives and on the success of Church planting among the non-evangelized Oromo people.

Leadership structure

Additionally, the success of Church planting among the unevangelized Oromo community has also been affected by the Western missionary leadership structure on which the EECMY was established at all of its levels. This was a further area of discussion among my respondents. Both church members and ministers (pastors and evangelists) of the EECMY, and particularly church planters, made similar remarks suggesting that the leadership structure of the Church is foreign to the indigenous Oromo tradition. Among them, for example, a 62 year old evangelist who had personally been challenged at different stages in his Church planting ministry said,

> As far as I observed the leadership structure which we inherited from the Western missionary is foreign to the Oromo people, as it does not reflect their culture. The lack of success among the southern and eastern part of Oromia is part of this foreign leadership model. It further made the church remain dependent on foreign financial help so that the western missionaries have continued to impose their western theological values on the church. These could be some of the factors which may jeopardize the Church planting among the Oromo people.

The interviewee explained how the Western leadership model affected the EECMY ministry particularly the Church Planting mission. From this, two main impacts of the western leadership structure can be drawn out. These are: 1) Irrelevance of the leadership to the Oromo culture and 2) Its impact on the self-determination of the Church so that the Church remains dependent.

First, let us consider the Western leadership prototype which has not taken Oromo culture into account and has created a negative attitude towards evangelical Christianity. Like the interview response, Bakke also contends that, as the missionaries were from the societies where hierarchical models of leadership prevailed; their leadership structure appears to be a hierarchal pattern of administration in which 'some had to make decisions and rule over others' (1998, 156-7). Bakke goes on to argue that it is similar to the Abyssinian and EOC

'vertical' and 'monolithic' type of leadership which was imposed on the vast communities of Ethiopia and their culture. In contrast, Legasse contends that the Oromo cultural leadership pattern differs greatly and is characterized as horizontal and egalitarian where leaders change every eight years and resolve matters through consensus in a very democratic manner (2000, 25). Since the Oromo people have had such a traditional leadership model (*Gadaa*) the Oromo people, particularly the unevangelized, were not ready to accept the EECMY evangelical faith which established and still runs its entire ministry using a structure foreign to their culture. Supporting this argument, one of the non-evangelized interviewees from the South and South East Oromia region noted that, 'we resist any religion which violates our religion and *Gadaa* system'. However, unlike the vertical Abyssinian and EOC structural leadership pattern, when examined more closely, the EECMY structure does promote the autonomy of synods' ministerial activities, ways of election and mutuality, which are partly similar to some elements of Oromo traditional leadership (Ulfata, 2003, 26-27). Indeed, this may be understood by the Oromo evangelical Christians from all the regions rather than by the unevangelized Oromos in the southern and eastern areas who strongly associate everything with the Gadaa tradition (traditional leadership) relatively more than other parts of Oromia. I also observed where similar suggestions were made in one of the workshops, in which I participated, for example, the workshop which focussed on the past and current challenges of the EECMY evangelistic mission. Consequently, this may explain why the southern and eastern parts of Oromia have been far less evangelized by the EECMY Church planting mission scheme than any other part of the region.

Second, in addition to the response discussed above, three ministers (two male pastors and one female evangelist) commented on the missionary leadership structure. For example, one of them said that, 'the centralized missionary leadership structure has been particularly unhelpful to the socio-economic development of the Oromos in the south-east in particular, and the wider Oromo community, in general, as it is irrelevant to our cultural, traditional and economic settings'. Likewise, Bakke argues that the nature of the heavily centralized missionary leadership has created a wide gap between both the national and regional leadership and the grassroots so that what the church has thus far done in mobilizing its grassroots' members to support local income is far less than expected (Bakke, 1998, 166). This also contradicts the

EECMY Church planting strategic plan approved by the 8th General Assembly (c.f. above). Consequently, the Church has been dependent on external support so that the western missionary influence has continued its domination of the Church. Bosch notes that

> in most cases the mission agencies set up structures very similar to those in their countries of origin and these expensive and sophisticated structures could often only be maintained with the help of western money and expertise (Bosch in Saayman et al 1992, 55).

Forslund similarly argues that through this structural model and financial provision the missions seemingly continue their lasting influence and possible control of the EECMY church leadership since the church could not support and maintain its leadership on indigenous income (1998, 169). Although the missionaries have readily supported the work of the EECMY and the Church has been governed by nationals, the Church is not free to maintain its indigenous identity and work in accordance with its own social, cultural and economic context. This echoes the views of one of my female pastor interviewees who said, 'the power of entire freedom lies where money comes from'. Hence, such a centralized leadership structure of the missionary legacy has been suggested as a factor for the lack of EECMY Church Planting among the Oromo people.

The western missionary worship pattern

Furthermore, the impact of the western missionary worship pattern is another factor in hampering the expansion of Christianity among the Oromo community. As explained in chapter one, the traditional worship mode of the Oromo people has been rejected as primitive by both the EOC and western evangelical Christianity. In this section, however, I will discuss why and how this rejection impacted on Church planting among the people as discussed by the respondents. Despite trusting their church tradition, a range of Oromo EECMY evangelists and pastors overtly discussed the domination of the western worship pattern in the EECMY worship. For example, one of them commented that,

> Our EECMY liturgy or worship, which developed from the Western missionary, has been and is in most cases foreign to our culture. There are only a few examples of its prayer, songs, music and instruments. Moreover, its rites and vestments and the like are all western. Indeed, a few drops of 'Ethiopianism' specifically, 'Oromonism' comprise translations of western songs and prayers as well as superficial adaptation of the ceremonies.

The respondent highlighted the supremacy of the western liturgy over aspects of traditional Oromo practices in the worship of the EECMY. From this, two particular points need to be discussed: 1) the dominance of a western form of worship over Oromo traditional worship, 2) the influence of western songs (hymns) and musical instruments over Oromo cultural dances and local instruments.

First, in accordance with the view of the respondent, it appears that the western missionary worship pattern has entirely dominated the EECMY worship in which the Oromos' cultural and traditional religious components have been degraded as primitive features. Nevertheless, as discussed in chapter one, the people traditionally practise regular prayers and religious rituals and also hold annual festivals through which they worship their *Waaqayyo*. However, according to Gehman,

> the early books about missionary work in Africa are almost inevitably negative about the traditional religions, which the Africans were practising. Missionaries of the time did not study the traditional religion and as a result they did not understand them. African traditional religions were usually considered to be evil, Satanic and something that had to be totally rejected [by] adherents if they were to be Christian (1990, 8).

Supporting Gehman's statement, Bakke argues that the missionaries inadequately studied the culture, and traditional rites and worship of the Oromo people (Bakke, 1998, 157). Rather, they seemed to have purposely abandoned and replaced Oromo traditional religious rites with their own western style of Christian worship. Similarly, Ujulu argues that the western missionaries did this intentionally in order to cleanse the Oromo mind from traditional practices or belief systems and implant their own forms of Christianity (1999, 84; see Phiri, 2004, 142; Anderson, 2001, 15; Scherer, 1964, 36). For example, Hunga writes,

> the task was perceived as one of cleansing the African minds of the effect of their primitivity (*sic*), 'ignorance' and 'superstition' and inscribing the same minds with new ideas not only in the form of Christianity, but also with Western cultural beliefs and practices from the civilized Western world, in order ostensibly to benefit them with the benefits of Western civilization (in Turkson et al 1994, 112).

It could be argued that the missionaries' ignorance of Oromo traditional practices and replacement by their own was a typical strategy employed by the western colonial missionaries and not unusual to Oromos or other parts of Africa. Supporting this assertion, a male evangelist interviewee said that, 'despite existing 110 years among the Oromo people the EECMY liturgy has entirely used its western missionaries' worship content and symbols without considering the rich and relevant

Oromo cultural and religious elements'. This western domination of Christian worship and its lack of indigenous character has been one of a contributory factor to the negative attitude of the unevangelized Oromo people towards evangelical Christianity.

In addition to the interview response given above, two young Christian interviewees (male and female) commented that, 'the absence of Oromo cultural and religious elements (for example, folk dances and local instruments) in the missionary songs and hymns have contributed to the Oromo people's disenchantment with evangelical Christianity'. Certainly, as a strategy for evangelizing the people, the western missionaries used only western hymns rather than encouraging the first generation of indigenous Oromo evangelical Christians to compose Christian songs from their own cultural elements and folkdances which might culturally enhance further gospel expansion (c.f. Angose, 1997, 6-7). If this had been done the EECMY liturgical worship would have gradually developed in a way that the liturgy may have reflected many of the Oromo cultural entities. However, this argument appears to be surrounded by two contradictory views. According to the responses of some interviewees there are still Church ministers and members who entirely favour the Western liturgical patterns. For example, one retired pastor who is in his 70s told me that, 'I am still so concerned about our liturgy [western] because we have been accustomed to it'. This response appears to show that there are some EECMY Oromo Christians, particularly missionary orientated members and seminary trained ministers, who seem to favour the western missionary songs and worship pattern, perhaps mainly to show their loyalty to the tradition as their own Christian norm. By doing this, however, they are perceived to be betraying their culture and tradition. In particular, as explained above the minsters who emphasize western worship have received less acceptance in their Church planting mission. Despite seeming loyal to their new western Christian-religious tradition, their approach has become a serious obstacle to the Church planting activities among the unevangelized Oromos.

Conversely, there are also other EECMY Oromo Christians who seem anxious to include Oromo cultural and religious expressions in the EECMY songs and worship. Reasons for disapproving of western songs and their melodies (expressions) were given by a range of such Church members and ministers. Among them, for example,

was a composer of indigenous Oromo songs with traditional melodies and expressions in *Oromiffa*.

> Once, while I was teaching a confirmation class at a particular congregation, I was also teaching them hymns of European [Western] melody. I desperately tried to help them sing with the correct melody. It was all a boring trial. I was also discouraged by their loss of interest. During the break, I sat down under a nearby tree and thought of writing a song with a traditional melody. I wrote one. After the break, I led them to sing the new song. All of them sang enthusiastically. The first dull environment now revived to have life. It was my first historical song that I composed with traditional melody.

Although the Church minister worked hard teaching western songs and their correct melodies alongside the basic Christian teaching, the members found it difficult and unappealing to learn foreign hymns as they were entirely out of context. This may suggest that Oromo converts have had western songs and worship imposed on them at the expense of their own cultural melodies and practices. Similarly, Guta argues that native cultural forms and worship practices were often rejected as pagan practices and replaced by western orders of services which were transplanted without paying any attention to the personal interest or context of the people (2003, 97; see Angose, 1997,17). The second part of the response which led the minister to take action and compose an indigenous song which the members sang enthusiastically appears to support this argument. The imposition of western worship on the Oromo traditional practices has left the western mission with a legacy of opposition to the Christian religion. An evangelist interviewee commented on this as follows: 'the less the western songs and their melodies have become favoured by most of the (new) Oromo EECMY members, the worse they would be favoured among the non-evangelized Oromos who regularly practise their own traditional worship and cultural folk-dances'. Again, this could be a message for the EECMY to take a step back and identify this legacy as an actual challenge for its Church planting mission, and work out how to develop an indigenous character of Christianity (contextual songs and worship accompanied with local musical instruments) before engaging with evangelistic activity among the non-evangelized Oromo society. Having considered how the promotion of their own western culture and theological values by western missionaries has jeopardized the Church planting among the non-evangelized Oromo people, I now move to discuss how and why the existing EECMY Church planting practices has also failed to have fully succeeded among this community.

4.2.3 The impact of the existing EECMY Church planting on the Oromo people

In this section, the main reasons for the failure of the EECMY to fully engage with the social, cultural and religious values of the Oromo people will be discussed.. Four significant issues from the fieldwork will be highlighted: overlooking the significance of the traditional Oromo *Gadaa* system and its ceremonies, inattention to Oromo vernacular, lack of Oromo religious understanding, and un-contextual church worship practices. Each issue and how it has contributed to the lack of Church planting success among the unevangelized Oromo community will be discussed in turn.

Overlooking the significance of the Oromo *Gadaa* traditional system

In chapter one, I explained the Oromo *Gadaa* system, which shapes their social, cultural, religious, economic and political functions and also expresses their worldview (Legesse, 2000, 25; Birri, 1997, 57; Hassen, 1990, 6; Melba, 1988, 59; Bakke, 1987, 40). I also explained that the western missionaries have dominated the Oromo culture in order to expand their western evangelical Christianity. In this section, then, I consider how and why the EECMY Church planting has continued to overlook significant aspects of Oromo culture which has resulted in a more negative perception of evangelical Christianity among the less evangelized Oromo areas. As already discussed above the EECMY Church planting has theoretically developed a strategic plan which would enable the Church to understand the significance of culture and language of the Ethiopian communities, including the Oromos, to evangelize them effectively. Yet, as the fieldwork results below show, the actual practice has been the opposite. Among the respondents, for example, an evangelist who was once challenged by an Oromo traditionalist told me,

> Once on my way home after Church service, a person who was involved in the *Gadaa* traditional system told me that you [a pastor] and your mission Church [EECMY] have undermined and discouraged the existence of our *Gadaa* system and its rituals and festival ceremonies which are socially, culturally, economically and religiously significant for us [Oromos'], following the footsteps of EOC Abyssinian colonial religion. Whether you like it or not, this caused the current natural disaster such as drought, starvation and infertility [lack of children, animals and agriculture] so then how can we accept your religion?

Seven other Oromo traditional *Gadaa* members and leaders (15.56%) made similar comments. As noted by the interviewee, Oromo traditionalists have been aware that

EECMY Church planting has weakened their *Gadaa* tradition, as they feared, in all aspects of their lives. For lack of space in the thesis, two traditions only will be considered: the ritual ceremony performed by the *Gadaa* leader on public occasions and the ritual ceremony conducted during the transference of *Gadaa* leadership. Firstly, according to the interview responses, like the EOC and western missionaries, it appears that the EECMY Church planting has not encouraged the *Gadaa* system and its ritual ceremonies which the Oromo people greatly value which traditionally include blessings from the *Abba Bokku* (*Gadaa* leader) during the different Oromo meetings and significant occasions. Birri agrees with the significance of these occasions among the people and further elaborates that, apart from upholding and administrating the *Gadaa* laws, the *Abba Bokku* in power sometimes conducts rituals for the people's well-being, such as the fertility of people and animals, good harvests and mutual peace. At every assembly and wherever an occasion calls for it, the *Abba Bokku* performs these ritual prayers in which Oromo politics and religious rituals intersect and overlap one influencing and the other determining the duty of the other office for the wellbeing of the Oromo community (Birri, 1997, 59; Hassen, 1988, 16). Such a performance of the Oromo *Gadaa* and religious rituals are considered to be materially and spiritually productive for the people without which natural disaster may follow. Kellbessa notes the belief that the gradual disappearance of the Oromo *Gadaa* system and traditional religion has led to the proliferation of diseases, drought, barrenness, and the migration of people to other places. This suggests that Oromo traditionalists associate the present social and economic problems of Oromia and Ethiopia with the deterioration of *Gadaa* ritual and with the expansion of the western ways of the EECMY. Both the interviewees' responses and the literature equally reveal the absence of the *Gadaa* system and its associated ritual ceremonies in the western Oromia region which may well have discouraged the other Oromia regions (central, southern and eastern) from accepting the EECMY's evangelical Christianity.

Second, in accordance with the above respondent, it appears that the EECMY Church planting has also weakened another *Gadaa* ritual ceremony which is conducted during the transference of *Gadaa* leadership. Another Oromo respondent notes the significance of this ritual ceremony.

> *Butta* is one of the *Gadaa* festivals which the new *Abba Bokku,* who takes over the *Gadaa* leadership, celebrates among the assembly, accompanied with his new leadership members to symbolize the unity of the people. Significantly, the festival commemorates the end of the previous eight years and the beginning of the next by feasting and dancing. In this festival the prominent and former *Gadaa* leaders are also remembered, the strength and weakness of the past eight years are told and the hopes for the next eight years are expressed.

According to this response, the *Gadaa* festival declares the continuation of the system and strengthens the political, social, and cultural aspects of the community. It also keeps their identity and their solidarity. However, another non-evangelized Oromo respondent claimed that, 'such a value of *Gadaa* system has been discouraged and devalued by the EECMY, particularly in the western part of Oromia following the EOC expansion'. This seems to be in agreement with Ujulu's remarks about the declining influence of the Oromo people's traditions, predominantly in western Oromia since the beginning of Gospel expansion. Ujulu further contends that the longer that evangelical Christianity existed and gradually dominated in western Oromia, the more the components of the *Gadaa* system, Oromo culture and its festivals were forgotten by the Oromos of that particular region (1999, 69). Kelbessa's observation supports this argument. He notes that a century of expansion of evangelical Christianity in western Oromia has gradually diminished the Oromo social (*Gadaa*) and religious institutions from that vicinity, consequently, the Western Oromos have tended to forget their own Oromo culture and adopted more of those of the western missionaries. This may be suggested as a key factor which has alerted the other Oromia regions not to welcome the EECMY Church planting.

Furthermore, the EECMY has also been implicated in weakening some Oromo cultural rites, such as wedding dances in its Church planting movement, considering it a primitive performance. One of the victimized EECMY members told me what happened to him and his parents during his wedding:

> I am from a recently planted Church. During my wedding, as usual, young girls from our community came together to perform wedding singing and dancing for the cultural celebration. Culturally, dancing and singing, takes place around the boy's and girl's house in the evening two or three weeks prior to the wedding and terminates on the wedding date. For example, the singers on the side of the bridegroom praise him and his relatives while degrading the bride and her relatives by their songs. During such occasions typically the dancing group for a while has to refuse the bride entry into the bridegroom's house upon her arrival accompanied by the bridegroom's wedding companions. Such activity is known as *Balbal qaba*. The same was true of the singers on the bride's side. This was therefore also done during my wedding. However, the dancing group and I were warned with the threat of excommunication from the church

membership for some time. Since this was purposely done to warn other Christians of the area and elsewhere, the community at large was aggravated.

Another Oromo Christian who recently joined the church before the incident remarked that,

> This Christian community was frustrated by becoming evangelical [EECMY] believers. Further evangelization in that vicinity could have reached many unevangelized Oromo people. Unfortunately, such Oromo cultural ignorance and the action taken against them has significantly impeded evangelical expansion in that region and elsewhere.

The interview responses highlighted then that the EECMY has been held responsible for the decline of Oromo cultural values, particularly wedding songs and dances. In this incident, the action taken towards the bridegroom and the dancing group in threatening to excommunicate them from the church was disgraceful. Ujulu's recent research supports these interview responses. He writes,

> In the western Wallega Bethel Synod (WWBS).… the general assembly officially banned Oromo traditional music [dance]. Any member who was found attending or who allowed his family to attend the traditional music ceremony was most likely suspended from Church membership. Participation in Oromo cultural songs [dances] and ceremonies were seen as sinful in the Synod (1999, 64).

Tippet, an American missiologist agrees and further suggests that this incident may be a continuation of the EOC and western evangelical missionaries' action against Oromo cultural values (1970, 230). When I visited one particular congregation, I also heard that the elders' committee of that congregation warned against any traditional wedding dances alongside the announcement of a wedding ceremony date. Sanneh, a West African scholar suggests that the abandoning of traditional festivals such as this by western missionaries was to change the value of the whole manner of life of the African people (Sanneh, 1989, 175; c.f. Hiebert, 1991, 167). Similarly, Hillman observes that religious activity, aimed at displacing Africa's traditional religious symbol systems, and replacing them with foreign imports, was the greatest threat to the survival of African cultures. This is so, because these cultures are intimately bound up with the people's traditional religious experiences (1993, 8). Yet this seems to be exactly what has happened to the Oromos' cultural dance rite through the contextually insensitive EECMY Church planting operation with the intention of cleansing the Oromo mind from such a traditional practices and planting western evangelical Christianity. Simesso contends that taking such action which goes

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against current Ethiopian social changes, in general and the Oromo community, in particular, may result in loss of church members and narrowing of opportunities to evangelize the unevangelized people (2005, 43). It is indeed exactly this kind of practical impediment which may alienate the non-evangelized Oromos from Christianity.

Inattention to Oromo language use

In previous chapters, I discussed how EECMY Church planting has been affected by rejection of the Oromo language by Abyssinian and Western missionaries in favour of the promotion of Amharic. I further argue that the inattention of the EECMY to Oromo language use has similarly hampered Church planting among the unevangelized Oromos to the extent of leading them to judge that the EECMY is similar to the EOC. How evangelical Christianity has ignored the Oromo language and how this been viewed among the unevangelized Oromos of the South-East and north-central Oromia, in particular, was reported by my respondents. Among them, a pastor who served the church for about 35 years commented:

> I am always surprised by how indigenous Oromo evangelical Christians initially began the evangelization and schooling in the western part of the Oromia at the beginning of the 20th century with an Oromo version of the Bible and other supporting educational materials. Although relentless repressions by Abyssinians marked the end of schooling in the Oromo language from 1941, evangelization in the language continued and enhanced the growth of evangelical Christianity in that part of Oromia. Unfortunately, however, a lack of similar attention in using the Oromo language has greatly affected the mission of Church planting in other parts of Oromia, like southeast and north-central.

The interviewee underlined how the use of the Oromo language was a factor for the success of Church planting in western Oromia and its lack of use a factor in failure in other parts of the region. For the purpose of clarity, I will focus only on the latter point. According to the response, the Church's inadequate use of the language in the south-east and central-north Oromia caused Church planting to be unsuccessful among the unevangelized Oromos of the areas. In further discussions with my respondents, some reasons and examples of how the Oromo language has been neglected in those areas were uncovered. For example, an evangelistic outreach co-ordinator from central Oromia commented that:

> The emergence of the Abyssinians' policy of absolute use of Amharic in 1940s, before evangelical Christianity had its base in the Oromo language is a basic reason. The missionary societies and synod leadership who were/are in charge of the areas have not

been in favour of using the Oromo language. Hence, the worship services including preaching and teaching have been in Amharic rather than in the Oromo language which has nowadays created tensions among the EECMY members who earnestly want to worship in their own Oromo language. Such restriction has not only been offensive to the Christian members but it has also closed doors to evangelization among the unreached Oromo community.

The respondent explicitly noted three primary reasons: the Abyssinians' policy, the attitudes of the missionaries and Synod leaders in undermining the use of the Oromo language in Church planting in the south-east and north-central areas, and the impact of these among the existing EECMY members and the unevangelized Oromo community. Indeed, these reasons appear to be part and parcel of the legacy of Abyssinians' policy and western missionary's use of Amharic which have already been discussed above as impacting on the Church planting movement among the unevangelized Oromo people in general. Yet, the point needs to be discussed in relation to the contemporary social changes in Ethiopia and how Oromo language use has been undermined in such changes. The EECMY Evangelism department (EVD) director in his introductory statement entitled, 'EECMY Symposium: Church, culture and ethnicity in present day Ethiopia' stated that, unlike the past regimes, the present government has improved the former deep rooted Abyssinian language policy so that in the last twenty years, all nationalities have been privileged to use their own languages in their respective regions (1997, 4). He further stated that, considering this (socio-political change) and the requests of various Christian communities, the EECMY at national level deliberately and thoughtfully decided that, wherever and whenever need arises nations and nationalists need to be allowed to worship and conduct their Church services in their own languages. In spite of such policies, Simesso (2005, 42-43) and Fufa (1999, 30-32) observe that the requests of Oromo EECMY congregation members from central and south-east Oromia regions to practise worship in their own language have been associated with the Oromo nationalism which was or is assumed as an evil or 'tribalism'. This view appears to be the legacy of Amhara domination which is still used by some of the EECMY Synod leaders as an excuse not to allow the language as a medium for worship (Olana, 1997, 37-38). This may suggest that EECMY has not yet adequately understood the structural changes in the society and in the government. Buba agrees with this statement and further argues that many of the EECMY Synod leaders have not understood that there is a better way to do evangelization in the changing socio-

political direction in the country (Buba, 2010, 2). It may be argued that the Synods intentionally or unintentionally pursue their support of Amharic against the national policy, EECMY decisions and the interests of their Oromo Christian members who need to practise their faith in their own mother tongue. Possibly, it has been such reluctance, short sightedness and insistence on continuing everything as it has been, which created tensions among the Christian members and also urged the unevangelized Oromos to maintain their unresponsive attitudes towards the EECMY Church planting.

Failure to consider Oromo religious belief and understanding

As discussed in chapter one the OTR was denounced as primitive and attempts were made to replace it by the Abyssinian EOC and by the western missionaries' evangelical Christianity. In this section, I argue that the EECMY has also ignored Oromo religion in its Church planting, and I show how this led the non-evangelized Oromo community in return to ignore evangelical Christianity. In so doing, my argument focuses on two key points, which are: Oromo belief in '*Waaqayyo Guracha'*, and religious practices. To begin with the first, a number of respondents remarked on the causes of neglect of the Oromo belief in *Waaqayyo Guracha*. For example, one OTR adherent commented,

> The offspring of western missionaries [Protestant churches] like Mekane Yesus church [EECMY]; having been subjugated by their old colonial *debtaras* [EOC priests] and influenced by their new masters [missionary teachers] devalued our belief in *Waaqayyo Guracha* [literally, *Guracha* is equivalent to the word black] without critically examining why *Waaqayyo* is designated in such way. All need to know that religiously, Oromos have been monotheists who believed in one supreme God, *Waaqayyo* whom they always consider the centre of their religion. In the case of the adjective, '*Guracha,* in the Oromos' worldview, it has deep sociological [cultural, political and religious] meanings. Thus the reason why Oromos like and use this colour for example, in their flag and national dress (among them, the religious leader - *Qaallu*'s garb), is in order to symbolize their distinctive religious and national identity (*Oromumma).*

The above respondent challenged the EECMY Church Planters for misjudging the Oromos' religion and for misunderstanding how and why Oromos designated the centre of their religion as *Waaqayyo*, using *Guracha* to express *Waaqayyo's* incomprehensibility and mystery, beyond human imagination (Melba, 1988, 59)**.** Arguably the fact that black is used in the traditional Oromo flag as well as in OTR for *Waaqayyo Guracha* does not only symbolize their religion but also reflects their social and cultural life. However, the EECMY has failed to engage with such

religious understanding behind the designation 'Waaqayyo in its Church planting enterprise.

Furthermore, the EECMY has also associated OTR with satanic and spirit possession which the Church has worked hard to eliminate and replace with an evangelical Christianity. Right from the beginning of its on-going mission, it is not clear whether the Church has understood the complexity of traditional practices among the people. For example, on the one hand, as argued in chapter one and above, neither the original OTR nor its *Qaallu* has been associated with any spirit possession. On the other hand, the foreign traditional religion, its practices and its *Qallichaa* (leader), imposed subsequent to the Abyssinian colonial expansion and EOC introduction, has been closely associated with satanic and evil spirit possession as explained in chapter one (c.f. Aren, 1999, 27; Hassen in OSA, 1994, 34; Forslund, 1993, 57; Bakke, 1987, 44-45; Bartels, 1983, 15, 41, 123). Having understood this, it is worth asking whether the EECMY has fully understood the difference between the two traditional religious practices for its attitude seems to have been the same towards both. For example, a Church planting co-ordinator from one particular Synod told me that,

> In its evangelistic outreach ministry and its strong teaching against the traditional practices, the EECMY has been more successful in the western part of Oromia than the east and south-east. Comparatively, western Oromos were one of the frontlines to have been severely attacked by Abyssinians and forced to abandon their OTR. Subsequently, their OTR was replaced by the northern (Abyssinian) traditional practices which it is claimed were built on a belief in spirit possession by which Oromos of the west were socially, culturally and economically exploited by its *Qallichaas'* (leaders of these practices). In contrast, the south and south-east Oromos have strongly maintained the OTR which has never in its history been associated with such spirit possession.

Four other respondents (minsters and members), i.e. 50%, from the south-east Oromia regions have maintained similar views. For example, one of them said that, ' the EECMY has not yet evaluated its Church planting ineffectivenesses in terms of dealing with the diversities of the cultural and traditional practices and how and why it has been relatively successful in the Western Oromo areas and not in the south-east'. Generally, the responses show that the EECMY Church planting has been effective in the west and not in the south-east. One of the practical reasons for the success of the Church in the west was that most of the people became evangelical Christians precisely as a critical response to the foreign traditional practice (the

foreign northern *Qallichaa*), which replaced their original religious practices and economically exploited them. Edie's research supports this response (Eide, 2000, 46-7, 71-3). Referring to the biography of one of the pioneer evangelical pastors (a father of an ex-president of Ethiopia), he writes that the reactions of the pastors and evangelists against the possessed *Qallichaas* who sought to terrify them with angry words from the spirit of their god such as, 'I will show what I will do to them' were 'without fear'. They confronted them through their preaching, expelled them from their areas and planted 'strong Christian churches' (Eide, 1996, 90; 2000, 72; cf. McGavran 1991, 147; cf Tippet, 1970, 257). This graphically shows how Oromo women and men of the west resisted such an exploitive foreign traditional practice and became members of the EECMY. Consequently, the Church planting of the EECMY has been generally accepted among the Oromo people of the west despite the allegation that it has further weakened Oromos' culture and religion (Bulcha, 2002, 64).

Conversely, the EECMY Church planting has been ineffective in south and south-east Oromia because the region is the heartland of the OTR where its original practice and value has been maintained without being associated with spirit possession, so that the EECMY teaching against such a practice was not relevant there (Amenu, 2001, 2; Simesso, 2005, 36). What further supports this statement is that despite the EECMY evangelizing the area for about seven decades, the region is still dominated by OTR and is the area of Oromia least evangelized (Wayessa, 2003, 35; Zeleke, 2002, 15,19).

The current EECMY worship practices

I have already discussed how and why the legacy of the western missionaries' worship which was imposed on the Oromo people has perpetually hampered the success of the Church planting among the unevangelized Oromos. I will further discuss how the existing form of EECMY worship practice has continued to impede the Church planting among the community based on the fieldwork data, focussing on just one point, which is 'the attitude of Church members towards un-contextualized liturgy performances.' A number of Oromo EECMY Christian members (youth and adults) judged the performances of the pastors and evangelists in worship services to be unsatisfactory. For example, one woman said,

> most of our pastors and evangelists cannot correctly perform the liturgy; they cannot sing some of the liturgical hymns and songs. Therefore, we could not follow them properly. Yet, when they chose locally composed music that is always sensible.

Another young man also commented that,

> Not only do we have difficulties with our worship but also the pastors themselves cannot properly perform the traditional liturgy [on their own]. Obviously, some pastors sometimes choose indigenous choruses and songs both for their liturgical services and for the whole members to sing together, which is enormously enthusiastic.

As the respondents rightly commented, the pastors are greatly challenged in performing an adapted traditional (western) liturgy as it stands, in which it is also equally difficulty for the members to participate because the liturgy has neither been adequately assimilated to the socio-cultural context of the Oromo community. What confirms this statement is that, as indicated above, when locally composed songs, which are culturally meaningful, are sung, the congregants enthusiastically worship and freely celebrate their faith. During my fieldwork, when I visited six different congregations in the central part of Oromia, I observed the same situation in three of them, fully supporting the interview responses.

Therefore, the primary problem of the EECMY liturgy seems to be lack of contextualization. Rader writes that Christian worship needs to be developed by the church within the particular cultural context in which it exists (1991, 56; see Bradshaw and et al, 1993, 75). This supports article seven of the Augsburg (Lutheran) confession, which says that it is not necessary for the Christian churches to observe identical liturgies or ceremonies, which were instituted by human beings, in all places, in all times and in all generations (EECMY Con. 4). Considering this, indeed, the EECMY has recommended that 'ways of worship should not be considered as dogma. There should be varieties in ways of worship with a proper and contextualized order according to the need of the congregations' (EECMY, 1993, 5-7). However, despite arguing that some revision and contextualizing has been made to its liturgy, in accordance with the recommendation, the reality appears to be different. If the Church had contextualized its liturgy in a culturally meaningful way according to its recommendation, there would have been no such confusion in worship performances. Thus, if such un-contextualized EECMY liturgy made the members uncomfortable, it would not be hard to realize that it would further

discourage the unevangelized Oromo people from joining the Church. If the Church wants to keep its own members and reach the unevangelized Oromos, contextualizing its liturgy and worship ministry is an urgent socio-cultural demand.

4.2.4 Oromos' preservation of their culture and tradition

Holding on strongly to preserving and reviving their social, cultural and religious values is another reason for the lack of success of Church planting endeavours among the unevangelized Oromos. Having discussed how the EOC, western missionaries and EECMY ways of evangelization have suppressed Oromo culture, religion and language and how this has negatively affected Christian expansion, in this section, I consider how and why Oromos strongly hold on to preserving their culture, language and religion in relation to its significance as a reason for rejecting Christianity. This was clearly discussed among my respondents. Among the interviewees a man in his 50s told me,

> Despite repression by Abyssinians for hundreds of years, Oromos have still maintained their culture. Particularly, *Gadaa* is the heart of Oromo culture which regulates Oromo life. Even where *Gadaa* as a political leadership system and its ritual ceremonies have been weakened due to Abyssinian colonial pressure and different religious influences, its life norms, worldviews and social life patterns has continued to lead the Oromo people as one nation. So as *Gadaa* culture is the Oromos' emblem, it would not **be** very easy for the Oromo people to welcome any foreign religion or philosophy.

Two main points can be elicited from this response: 1) the significance of Oromo culture to the people, and 2) accepting Christianity is considered a betrayal of Oromo societal life and *Oromummaa* values. First, the respondent emphasises the centrality of *Gadaa* as both their traditional leadership heritage and as a general guidance for social life, which expresses their worldview and keeps their national identity and solidarity. Jalata (1994, 1) and Kumsa (1992, 17) similarly argue that whatever form *Gadaa* takes today, it is the Oromos' unique heritage and guiding principle with which they identify themselves and also recognize it as a root feature of their culture as well as a symbol of a 'pan-Oromo national identity *Oromummaa.* It may be said, such a cultural significance has motivated the unevangelized Oromo people to hold a strong position against the expansion of EECMY Church planting among them, suspecting that it may weaken this Oromo strength.

Second, the interviewee also suggested that the unevangelized Oromos suspected that accepting Christianity could lead them to the status of abandoning their socio-cultural life, so that they may lose their *Oromummaa* value. Indeed, as discussed earlier, this was what the early Oromo evangelical Christians were confronted with when they welcomed evangelical Christianity in western Oromia in the early 20th century. This is supported by the question asked of an EECMY evangelist by the *Abba Gadaa* (*Gadaa* leader) in southern Oromia. The partial quotation from the EECMY report says,

> Recently, one of the evangelists among the Oromo of the south told a story about a man named *Abba Gadaa*, who wanted to receive the Christian faith but needed to make sure of something if he joined the Christian church. Would he be expected to abandon the *Gadaa* and other Oromo cultural practices? Indeed, the evangelist did not respond to the question (EECMY symposium, 1998, 4).

In line with this report, *Abba Gadaa's* question illustrates that, if he was allowed, he wanted to be a Christian without abandoning his *Gadaa* cultural practices which identified him as an Oromo person. In his view this would enable him to be both Oromo and Christian within his own social and cultural context. However, historically, this has not happened in the EECMY Church planting. If it had been their practice, a positive response would have been enthusiastically given to the question. McGavran argues that a community with a high consciousness of their identity may resist the Gospel because to them becoming a Christian means joining another people rather than themselves (1991, 155). The above interview and the literature therefore suggest that the unevangelized Oromos have resisted the EECMY Church planting not because of the Christian message but because of the fear of loss of their own social and cultural identity and to respect their *Orommuuma* value.

Although a number of its rituals and social institutions have been much suppressed (as discussed in chapter one and in the above sections), OTR remains relatively strong. A number of OTR followers discussed the significance of this religion and why Oromos hold on to this religion. For example, one of them told me,

> Our religion is so important for us. It is what we heard and learnt from our parents, community and wider society through various personal and communal activities. Through this religion we keep our relationship with *Waaqayyo* and are attached to him in prayers and thanksgiving celebrations. [In so doing, we obtain '*negga Oromo*' which keeps a balance between God, nature and Oromo society, so that we can live and work using whatever he created]. Additionally, as we are a communal society our religion further keeps us together through which we identify our solidarity.

Out of 15 of the Oromo traditional religion members and leaders, 13 (86.66%) made similar assertions. I consider two points from this interview. First, the interviewee asserted that Oromo people hold their religion strongly because it is their own, and their attachment to *Waaqayyo* through prayers and thanksgivings has become an essential part of their identity. Guta confirms this and further expands on the importance of various traditional festivals and celebrations in line with their daily, weekly and yearly calendar (2003, 67). Added to this, Simesso asserts that when Oromos worship their *Waaqayyo akka mukka Abbassanti* (literally 'in line with their traditional understanding'), they experience being close to God so that the balance between God, nature and Oromo society is well kept (Ujulu, 1999, 83). Furthermore, it supports peace, exchange of knowledge and rituals among the Oromo people (Loo, 1970, 25).

Second, Oromo scholars maintain that the Oromo people have strongly maintained their own religion, because they believe that having the same religion enhances their distinctive worldview and strengthens their unity as one people (Hassen, 1990, 9; Megerssa, 1993, 278; Jalata, 1994, 8; 1998, 37). Similarly, in a wider African context, Mbiti writes that African religions are more useful for the community rather than for individuals. He says,

> To be human is to belong to the whole community and to do so involve participating in the beliefs, ceremonies, rituals and festivals of that community. A person cannot detach himself from the religion of his [and her] group, for to do so is to be severed from his roots, his foundation, his context of security, his kingships and the entire group of those who make him aware of his existence (1975, 2).

Jalata further argues that Oromo cultural identity and nationalism, constructed on strong cultural and religious foundations, and their pursuit of national self-determination has strengthened them to withstand the Ethiopian colonizing structure (1998, 37; 1994, 8). It could be further contended that, despite the acceptance of Islam by a number of Oromos as a resistance ideology to Ethiopian colonialism, EOC and evangelical Christianity, their original religious and world views 'are still hidden under the surface' (Bartels,1983, 42). When I visited one of the Oromo religious festivals, I also observed that the participants of the festival were from different religious backgrounds. One interviewee who had attended this festival told me that 'it's our *Oromummaa* which always brings us together and which will

continue to restore our unity.' The Oromos seem to have further strengthened their TR against any other foreign religions, which may lead them to betray their societal life and Oromo national identity (*Oromummaa*) and unity. This is a key reason for the lack of success of EECMY Church planting among the unevangelized Oromo people.

Furthermore, the current Oromo cultural and religious revival has also been considered by my respondents as a contemporary factor for the lack of success for the EECMY evangelization among the unevangelized Oromo community. One of them said,

> Almost for the last two decades, following legislation leading to partial religious freedom, Oromos have revived their cultural and religious traditions and not only the non-Christian Oromos but also challenged many Oromo Christian and Islamic followers to be involved in it, particularly in the celebrations of different Oromo cultural and traditional festivals.

The respondent noted that the non-evangelized Oromos have been exercising their cultural practices to the extent of influencing Oromo Christians and Muslims more than ever. This new freedom can be traced back to the implementation of a new nations and nationalities based government policy (1991) which has legitimized cultural and religious revivals as well as the official use of non-Amharic languages. Accordingly, the Oromo people have officially used *Oromiffa* as their national language and revived their *Gadaa* culture and their religious rituals. Simesso, an Oromo theologian, argues that this has greatly affected Oromos' thinking, along with their lives and preferences as individuals and as one nation (2005, 40). Hassen, an Oromo historian notes that a cultural and religious revival has been demonstrated in numerous ways, for example, the *Irressa* festival, which Christians, Muslims and non-evangelized Oromos have jointly celebrated since the 1990s, in singing national songs and wearing cultural dress with the Oromo flag or the map of Oromia imprinted on it. Baxter, a Scottish anthropologist, who wrote various articles on the Oromo in southern Oromia supports this argument and further notes that such a strengthening of Oromo culture and religion 'has succeeded in gathering' the people around a common national identity: 'Oromo are now confirmed and comfortable in their identity' (1998, 58; 1985, 1).

Christian and Muslim religious institutions including the EECMY would not officially allow their adherents to take part in such Oromo traditional practice (Wayessa, 2003, 97-98; see Assegued, 2004, 53–54). According to Hassen it was when 'Muslims ate meat slaughtered by Christians and Christians ate meat slaughtered by Muslims. This was an unheard of event in Ethiopia, which outraged the Amhara ruling elites' (1996, 76; see Gnamo, 2002, 99). This exemplifies how the OTR festival brought the people together and united them from the diverse Oromia regions. It may be argued that in whichever religious environment they were/are and in whatever degree they were/are suppressed and restricted by the religions, it is their original Oromo traditional systems and worldviews which have still governed and united them as one distinctive society. During my fieldwork, when I attended six EECMY workshops conducted at regional and national levels, I also observed from the discussions of the attendees that some of the EECMY ministers and members from various Oromia regions had explicitly expressed the importance of reconsidering some relevant Oromo cultural ceremonies such as 'marriage blessing rites' and folkdance/song melodies for their socio-cultural life and liturgical worship. In my personal conversations with some of the EECMY pastors and evangelists, although they are loyal to their traditions, they emphatically stated that, if the Church is to hold onto its existing members and further evangelize the unevangelized Oromos, it must urgently revise its Church planting mission approach in a way that gives a meaningful message for all Oromos in considering relevant Oromo culture and traditional elements, such as the melodies of cultural songs and traditional gowns for choirs.

The partial involvement of Christians and Muslims in revived Oromo cultural and traditional practices (i.e., *Gadaa* assembly and *Irressa* festival) may also encourage the unevangelized Oromo religion followers to continue to ignore EECMY Church planting and maintain their stand against any religion coming in the name of Christianity. Moreover, many Oromos both Christians and non-Christians may consider Christianity as a foreign religion since the gospel preaching has not been associated with their immediate context and their deeply experienced traditions. This is a timely and contemporary missiological challenge for the EECMY to rethink its Church planting approach, taking the currently social changes in the country and the Oromos' strong hold on preserving their social, cultural and religious factors into

consideration. The next chapter will consider developing such proposals for a fully contextualized approach to Church planting among the unevangelized Oromo people.

Conclusion

I began this chapter by analysing the objectives of the EECMY Church planting which seeks to evangelize the non-evangelized Oromo. I argued that the success of the EECMY Church planting and its membership growth is limited to the Christian Church itself, either from the Christian families by baptism or by people transferring from one denomination to another. I also analysed five key reasons from the fieldwork for this ineffectiveness - the EOC colonial mission approach together with EOC collaboration with the oppressive Abyssinian colonial structure, the western missionary cultural imposition, the uncontextualized EECMY Church planting strategy and the Oromos' own strong preservation of their culture. I contended first that the approach of the EOC alongside the Abyssinian government was as much political as religious, using mass baptism, Amharization through name changes and the use of Semitic languages in worship and destroying their cultural and religious symbols. This made the Oromos suspicious of anything labelled 'Christian' because Christianity was associated with de-Oromization. The findings also showed that the western missionaries collaborated with the Abyssinian colonial expansion and extended Amharization in using Amharic in their ministries and also imposed their western cultural and theological values through their western Christian teachings. The persecution of those Oromo evangelical Christians by the EOC for using their own language was also observed. The EECMY has also failed because it failed to fully engage with the Oromo social, cultural and religious value, instead imposing western worship practices on the people. Finally, I argued that that the Oromos' strong preservation of their culture, religion, and language over against Christianity, was a further vital reason for the failure of Church planting. In order to respond to these real challenges the Church needs to construct methods for engaging in Church planting among the unevangelized Oromo community and this will be the subject of the next chapter.

Chapter Five

Contextualizing Church planting strategies for the unevangelized Oromo community

Introduction

Having demonstrated the failure of previous Church planting strategies among the Oromo through the fieldwork, supported by literature - the EOC colonial mission approach, the western missionary cultural imposition, the uncontextualized EECMY Church planting strategy contrasted with the Oromos' own strong preservation of their culture, and having also observed that the existing Oromo EECMY members have begun to ask how they can fully integrate their Christian faith into their daily social and cultural understanding **-** there is a need for alternative ways of practising evangelism and doing theology with and by Oromo people which **pays** greater attention to their own language and socio- cultural values. The aim of this chapter therefore is to develop a contextualized approach to Church Planting among the unevangelized Oromo people in Ethiopia which is more relevantly shaped and informed by theories of contextualization with the objective of evangelizing the non-evangelized Oromo people and beyond. In so doing, I will employ what Bevans, an American missiologist, describes as a 'translation model' of contextual theology (2007, 37).

The chapter starts by examining the theoretical framework of contextualization, followed by a brief consideration of a number of models of contextualisation and then discusses the process of developing the translation model. It also considers contextualizing the EECMY Christian tradition into the Oromo language and culture. The chapter also proposes some possible Church planting strategies, which may enable the EECMY to communicate the Gospel message to the unevangelized Oromo people in their own language and according to their socio-cultural perceptions. Finally, I conclude the chapter by summarizing the key contextual Church planting proposals for effective evangelization among the Oromos in their current cultural context.

5.1 Models of contextualization

5.1.1 Theory of contextualization

Hesselgrave, an American missiologist, defines contextualization as 'the process whereby representatives of a religious faith adapt the forms and content of that faith in such a way as to communicate and commend it to the minds and hearts of a new generation within their own changing culture or to people with other cultural backgrounds' (1984, 33). He further supposes that 'contextualization, culture and theology [Church planting] all have a simultaneous beginning' (Hesselgrave, 1989, 27) which possibly characterized Christian mission from its outset (c.f. Flemming, 2005, 15). Arguably, contextualization of the gospel is as longstanding as the inception of its proclamation. For instance, the Judaizers' challenge to the Jerusalem Church in Acts 15:1-5 led to the assembling of the Council of Apostles and Elders (Acts 15:6-29) that sought to address the cross-cultural dilemmas of a new gentile mission church. Kraft supports this argument as he states,

> Contextualization of Christianity is part and parcel of the New Testament record. This is the process that apostles were involved in as they took the Christian message that had come to them in Aramaic language and culture and communicated it to those who spoke Greek (1989, 389).

Historically, however, as Bevans and Schroeder point out, it is only in recent history 'as the last vestiges of the great modern missionary era were dismantled' that the 'necessity for a truly inculturated presentation of the Gospel became clearer than ever before' (2004, 386). Additionally, 'human experience and context has assumed a certain importance in theology and the contextual nature of all theology is now' widely accepted by many theologians (Sedmak, 2002, 77). Accordingly, the term contextualization was first coined in 1972 by the World Council of Churches (WCC) and has gained significant public prevalence since then (Bosch, 2005, 421). Although the term first appeared in ecumenical circles with the mandate of introducing a culture-specific approach to theological training, the theory has been adopted over the last thirty years and accepted as a significant term that considers cross-cultural gospel proclamation and Church planting themes (Hesselgrave and Rommen, 1989, 28; Fleming, 1980, 45).

Contextualization, as a term may be used interchangeably with the words like accommodation, indigenization or inculturation. These terms commonly designate ways of expressing theology in a non-western context, utilizing the native culture and

thought expressions (cultural context) as the basis of theological formation (Fabella, 2003, 59). Bosch offers broad definitions of the whole area of contextualisation and inculturation (1991, 420-421). He employs the term 'Contextual Theology' to cover, in his view, two proper contextual theologies, namely inculturation and liberation theologies. This discloses a basic issue concerning how broadly the context in contextualization is perceived. Inculturation may be taken as dealing only with culture, leaving liberation theologies to arise from injustice and socio-economic issues of poverty. Following their Church's position, Catholic authors such as Shorter (1988, 8, 59ff) take the approach of differentiation and emphasize inculturation, but Protestant writers regularly dissociate themselves from using the word inculturation, preferring the term contextualization to deal with all socio-economic contexts in which the Christian faith is set (Arbuckle, 1990, 24; Whiteman, 1997, 42 - 53). Therefore, contextualization seems a more comprehensive term than the rest, because it includes the people's cultural, socio-economic and political realities and stresses local and situational concerns.

The term contextualization has also been interpreted and defined theologically (Hesselgrave, 1989, 144-157). For many evangelicals, contextualization is simply a way to inculturate the Christian message in the context of culture. The basic difference between evangelical thought and neo-orthodox and liberal approaches to contextualization is that for the neo-orthodox and liberal, the context becomes part of and has a greater influence on the content of the message (Bevans, 2007). Conversely, the evangelical would see the message as unchanging, yet relevantly communicated into the cultural thought forms and language of a particular people group. Following the latter approach, contextualization could, therefore, be theologically defined as

> … the attempt to communicate the message of the person, works, Word and will of God in a way that is faithful to God's revelation, especially as it is put forth in the teachings of Holy Scripture and that is meaningful to respondents in their respective cultural and existential contexts (Hesselgrave, 1991, 143).

Hesselgrave further states that contextualization affects 'Bible translation, interpretation and application… evangelism, Church planting, church growth, church organization, worship style, theology' and all the components of Christian mission as reflected in the Great Commission (1991, 143-44). Hence, there will be no genuine contextualization without prior good understanding of the language, culture and

traditional practices of a particular community as a whole (Hesselgrave and Rommen, 1989, Xi).

Prior to developing a contextualized approach and engaging in Church planting among a non-evangelized community, like the Oromo people, the question that I need to answer is: What is the responsibility of the church to contextualize the Gospel into the peoples' culture without losing its essential message and without disregarding the people's cultural values? Hiebert suggests that what he calls; a 'critical contextualization' is a proactive way to balance effectively the development of contextual theology (1994, 183-190). Critical contextualization is where cultural and traditional beliefs 'are neither rejected nor accepted without examination'. According to him, 'they are first studied with regard to the meanings and places they have within their cultural setting and then evaluated in the light of biblical norms' (Hiebert, 1994, 186-192). He further asserts that this 'involves the leaders teaching converts the need to deal biblically with all areas of life, studying the Scripture in relation to the question under consideration' (Hiebert, 1985, 186-192). As to how critical contextualization may be realized, he suggests three stages. Firstly, considering cultural analysis, this may include collecting and examining traditional customs and related issues. Secondly, it will involve translating the Scripture and the interpretive link in which the Church seeks to study questions that relate to the Scripture. Thirdly, it includes critical feedback, in which the converts assess their customs from a Christian perspective and take their own action on the issue (Hiebert, 1999, 88-90; Hiebert and Meneses, 1995, 168-170). In other words, critical contextualization needs to take into consideration the culture and particularly the worldview of a people, before a process of contextualization can be practised. This way of developing a contextual theology seems relevant and similar to the contextually informed translation model which I will consider following a discussion of models of contextualization.

As discussed in chapter 4, the EECMY has been in danger of uncritically imposing western Christianity onto the Oromo people who strongly preserve their culture and this has resulted in the partial failure of Church planting among the community. Learning from this, therefore, the Church needs to critically contextualize its Western Christianity which seeks to balance its western shaped beliefs with Oromo culture, as

described above. To develop such an approach I also need to engage in discussing other models of contextualization.

5.1.2 Models of contextualization

Bevans takes into account four elements in defining a way of doing contextualization and contextual theology:

> the spirit and message of the gospel, the tradition of the Christian people, the culture in which one is theologizing and social change in that culture, whether brought about by western technological process or the grass-roots struggle for equality, justice and liberation (Bevans, 1992, 1).

In other words, contextual theology recognizes that culture, history, contemporary thought forms and the like are to be considered along with scripture and tradition as valid sources of theological expression (Bevans, 1992, 2). In this respect, both content and context are significant in the contemporary world.

Bevans further proposes six models for doing contextualization (contextual theology) that bring theology (content) and culture (context) together. They are: (1) the translation model; (2) the anthropological model; (3) the praxis model; (4) the synthetic model; (5) the transcendental model and (6) the countercultural model (Bevans, 1992, 22). These models are helpful in understanding the relationship between the gospel message and culture. As a detailed analysis of each model lies beyond the scope of this study, I will summarize some of their key characteristics. For example, the anthropological model lays particular stress on listening to culture, while the translational model stresses the preservation of church tradition, but seeks to liberate the Gospel message from captivity to imposed western categories of thought through the translation of meanings as well as words. Both models listen to culture, but in different ways. It is about different starting points and also what has priority. The praxis model relates to liberation theology dealing with issues of social change, particularly the change called for by a struggle for justice. The countercultural model was developed from the work of Lesslie Newbigin who was dedicated to the problem of the West and called for a proper *metanoia* - a change of mind in response to the gospel message in that context (2002, 117). It may be said, and Bevans himself notes this, that there is a considerable overlap between the models. It may be said, and Bevans himself notes this, that there is a considerable overlap between the models. Hence, it is likely to place his diverse models of

contextual theology at their applicable place along a continuum dependent on whether they privilege gospel and culture or neither of them.

In contrast to the six models of Bevans, Schreiter, another American missiologist, suggests three models for engaging in contextualized or local theology which he refers to as the translation, adaptation and contextual models. He explains these models in the light of a relation between cultural context and theology (cultural implications in constructing local theology) as well as the relation between theology and the community in which theology takes place (the subjects of theology). Space does not allow me to discuss the three models of Schreiter further. However, it is worth stating here how Bevans and Schreiter view these different models of contextual theology. Schreiter explains the models as 'theological approaches' in the light of how each approach relates to its cultural context in terms of theological development. Thus, he takes contextual models as a final model 'embodying the ideals of what local theology is to be about' (1985, 12). Schreiter is concerned with 'models' that are to categorize the different methodological approaches of theology, while Bevans' concern is to look at religious phenomena in the light of the interaction between the four factors of theology: scripture, the church, tradition, and social change. For Schreiter, 'a model suggests not only a procedure for engaging in theological reflection, but also some specific interests or principles that help to guide the use of the procedure' (1985, 6). For Bevans, models express an inclusive sense of certain aspects of a reality. Under these conditions of making models, each model has been clarified according to its distinctive character, cutting through the complexity of the various contextualization enterprises. In this manner, both Schreiter and Bevans agree that context influences how God is understood and the expression of faith in each contextual model. Yet, the models are not absolute of each other's practices. Rather, each brings specific emphases that enable the Gospel to actively engage with a people and their life aspect and patterns.

While all models provide useful insights, we should enquire as to how we must choose which model to follow at any given time. The translation model is the one most usually employed, yet Bevans suggests that the choice must be made accurately on the basis of which model would work best in a specific situation:

> Certain models can function more adequately within certain sets of circumstances. It seems to be that the praxis model might be better employed in a situation that calls for radical social change than the translation model, which might tend to be content with the status quo….In a situation of primary evangelization, translating one's own understanding of the gospel into the language and customs of another culture may be the only option open until indigenous Christians are able to reflectively construct their own local theology (1996, 112).

As the latter approach fits the circumstances considered so far in this thesis, I will consider the translation model as the most relevant model to the immediate context of proposing contextual Church Planting strategies for the unreached Oromo people.

5.1.3 Translation model

My use of the term model is based on that of Bevans (2004, 31),

> A model – in the sense that it is most used in theology – is what is called a theoretical model. It is a 'case' that is useful in simplifying a complex reality and although such simplification does not fully capture that reality, it does yield true knowledge of it. Theoretical models can either be exclusive or paradigmatic or be inclusive, descriptive, or complementary.

By 'theoretical' in this quotation, Bevans is referring to a simple artificially constructed example used to explain something more complex (c.f. Dulles, 1983, 30; 1978, 28). In this case 'translation' describes in simple terms the complex process of making the Christian message understandable in a culture different from the one of the 'translator'. Such models, he argues, can be exclusive – that is they are part of the requirement of faith – or like the models he proposes for theological method, they are descriptive, that is, they are more tentative, helpful for understanding but partial in their analogy of truth (2004, 30). Additionally, the types of models that Bevans describes are operational, that is, they are used to describe theological methods for doing contextual theology related to mission.

I have already described his six different models from his book *Contextual Theology* (2004, 32). Two of these (countercultural and translation) emphasize the unchanging character of Scripture and the preservation of Church tradition. As an evangelical Lutheran pastor, I have therefore chosen the translation model, as the basis of my theological method, as it is conservative in its attitude to Scripture and tradition but is also the more open of the two models towards culture. In this choice I am constrained by my loyalty to my church, However, the six models do not need to be considered mutually exclusive and may be used in conjunction with each other.

Although I have not done this formally, I have emphasized the contribution of anthropology in understanding and valuing Oromo culture and religion in order to go one step beyond the translation model in my suggestions for liturgy, which are discussed later in this chapter.

First let me explain the translation model as presented by Bevans (2004, 37). This theological method seeks to translate the Christian message from its original context into the context of a particular given culture, in my case, this is the Oromo culture within its novel context of being designated a large, single ethnic people group with a political identity recognised by the Ethiopian government. The key claim of the translation model is that the 'message of the gospel is an unchanging message' (2004, 38). However, the translation of the message of Christianity is not perceived as literal but as idiomatic (2004, 39, cf Kraft, 1979, 232), that is, it is a dynamic equivalence to a particular group at a particular time and in a particular context, and we shall return to the importance of dynamic equivalence later. As Bevans says,

> we are concerned with translating the meaning of doctrines into another cultural context - and this translation might make those doctrines look and sound quite different from their original formulation. Nevertheless, the translation model insists that there is 'something' that must be 'put into' other terms. There is always something from the outside that must be made to fit inside; there is always something 'given' and something 'received' (2004, 39)

In terms of its strengths, this model may be appreciated for its concern to preserve Christian belief, the Gospel and scripture, within a different cultural setting. It has greatly contributed to introducing Christianity **in** an interpreted form that is more adapted to local contexts. Consequently, the translation model has been at the centre of Christian expansion among the non-Christian world and in Africa in particular (Sanneh, 1999, 2). The same is true for the expansion of evangelical Christianity among the western Oromo people.

Bevans argues that the message is based on a number of presuppositions, the key one being that the essential message of Christianity is 'supracultural', that is, it has an essential core (2004, 40; cf Haleblian 1983, 101). There is significant debate about what this core is and Christians from Paul onwards have attempted to summarise the essentials of the faith (c.f. 1 Cor. 11:23f). Additionally, Bevans suggests that those who use this method argue that the essential message can be separated from its

context. A further presupposition of this method is that it requires the translator to separate the contextual accretions from the message and then inculturate the message into its new context. Drawing from his experience of local theology, Schreiter, an American missiologist, similarly suggests that the translation model is by far the most common model to fulfil the task of local theology - to free the Christian message as much as possible from 'its previous cultural accretions' and then to translate that message into the new local context (Schreiter, 1985, 7). He continues, 'the basic principle behind the translation model would begin with the church tradition and adapt it to a local cultural setting' (Schreiter, 1985, 7). The key principle in this model is to translate, or adapt, the Christian message (tradition) into a local cultural context. Bevans argues that the latter can be done using not only theology, but also anthropology and 'real religious and cultural sympathy' (2004, 40).

In responding to the presuppositions of the model, I would note first that I have taken seriously the real social, cultural and religious setting of the Oromo people with which this model seeks to engage. Secondly, I acknowledge that there is a problem with the concept of a supracultural core of Christianity in that when the core of Christianity is identified (whether that core is brief, such as 'Christ incarnate', or expansive, such as a creed), as soon as it is expressed in words, it is always culturally limited and therefore not supracultural (c.f. Bevans, 2004, 41). Therefore the supracultural core can never be known and it cannot be entirely separated from its cultural context (Bevans, 2004, 43). It might therefore be better not to use the term supracultural, but rather something like 'agreed Christian message' or 'agreed statement of faith'. However, notwithstanding this difficulty, it is the case that many cultural accretions can be removed and a genuine Christian message can be inculturated.

A further presupposition is that the Christian message consists of a set of propositional statements or beliefs which have been revealed, are free from cultural bias and must be accepted (Bevans, 2004, 41). It is indeed the case that Christianity is based on creeds and statements of faith, but their freedom from cultural influence is impossible because as we have just noted, language is always understood within a cultural context and translation of theology, liturgy or Bible always involves

interpretation. Nevertheless, the existence of a Lutheran World Federation of churches suggests that there can be an agreed statement of faith across many different cultures, even if there are subtle differences in meanings. Moreover, the Christian message is much more than a set of propositions; it is a story of good news, of a revelation of God's love in the life of Jesus Christ, expressed by writers in the thought forms of their day. Present and future translators will require the same skills and sensitivity to the message and the culture in which they are working (Bevans, 2004, 44).

Bevans suggests further that, using this method, translators do not need to be experts in the culture in order to do the work of translation because it is the Christian content that is supreme (2004, 41). However, the fieldwork shows how important it is that those who understand the culture and are sympathetic towards should be involved in translating the Christian message. Translators need to be trained theologians, skilful linguists and members of the ethnic group concerned or people who are very knowledgeable and at home in the receiving culture.

A final presupposition of the method, according to Bevans is that the context or culture plays a subordinate role in the method (2004, 41). However, I want to suggest that context and Christian message are equal features for if they are not; there can be no authentic or successful translation of the message.

According to Schreiter (1985, 7), a further weakness of the translation model is that this model adopts the positivist understanding of culture, which assumes that patterns in a culture can be easily translated and understood by outsiders, thus making an assumption of accurate translation likely. However, cultures are complicated realities with numerous layers of meaning. Sometimes there are no equivalent ways of expressing concepts among various cultures, as we have already noted. Unfortunately, this model tends to rely on surface patterns of cultures.

In his evaluation, Bevans commends the model for taking the message of Christianity seriously as recorded in the scriptures and in the Christian tradition. Clearly, a part of that work will include the translation of Scripture using the dynamic equivalence method of translation, which we shall examine later. The theological method is also helpful in recognising cultural accretions which are not part of the authentic

Christian message, for example, in the case of the Oromo people, the belief that to be a Christian it was necessary to speak Amharic and act like an Amhara is simply not true.

Having assessed its strengths and weaknesses, I have chosen the translation model as I want to develop an approach to Church planting that takes contextualization seriously, but I recognize that, for the time being at least, the only model of contextualization that the EECMY is likely to adopt is one that seeks to remain faithful to the current teachings of the Church (which I will explain later). There are limitations to the translation model itself as indicated above, but this is the most appropriate approach to contextualization if my proposals are to be adopted and used by the EECMY and if they are to have any impact on Oromo people. These are the reasons why a translation model is more likely to be the best step forward rather than other contextual models cited above.

Indeed, for unevangelized people like the Oromos the primary method of evangelization would be translating the Bible and Christianity into their own language, custom and culture. Translation of the Bible and Christianity into vernacular languages goes hand in hand with interpretation, because the process of translation is in itself interpretation into a language and its cultural setting (Sanneh, 1999, 2). In our context the translation model frequently refers to the process of translating Christian tradition and its scripture. This may remove cultural shades of the original receptors to the barest minimum, being faithful to the essential contents (Iser, 2005, 1). Iser views the model as a basic notion for 'understanding the encounter between cultures and interaction within cultures' (2005, 1). Sanneh also notes that, without translation of the Bible, Christianity could never be at home in any language, culture or context. Only through this process of translation can Christians talk about the Good News for the salvation of all humanity (1999, 2).

Kraft, an American missiologist, recommends that in translation, contextualization should be done by dynamic equivalence, replicating in another context the equivalent effect of the words in their original context. He further observes that the dynamic equivalence model has specific advantages over the formal equivalence model of contextualization (1990, 297; 1979, 261-275) as the formal equivalence aspect basically involved a literal word for word and sentence for sentence translation.

According to Sanchez, it was based on the conviction that this was an effective way of communicating the meaning and message of the Christian tradition from one language to another (Kraft, 1979, 267). Kraft describes the notion of dynamic equivalence in translation thus: 'the informed translator endeavours to be faithful both to the original author and message and to the intended impact that the message was to have upon the original readers' (1979, 268). Certainly Kraft argues that there is 'no such thing as an exact correspondence between a given word in one language and the most nearly corresponding word in another language'. In order to solve that problematic issue, the translators engage in producing a translation which might be 'true to both the message of the source documents and the normal ways of expressing such a message in the receptor language. This tends to remove the impression of stiltedness and foreignness from the translation' (1979, 270-271).

His concern is how to bring about dynamic equivalence in translating the Christian message into the various cultures of the world without cultural domination. Similarly, Schreiter illustrates this by taking an example from the effort of 'de-Hellenization' of Western Christianity, 'by which is meant a removal of Greek categories from the biblical revelation' that has been practised in Christian history over the past century (1985, 7). According to Schreiter, a translation model begins with translation of the Church tradition, such as translation of Roman liturgy or the Bible, and then adapts them to a local setting by translating them into the local language (Schreiter, 1985, 7). In this regard, the translation model presupposes the belief and teachings of the Church as the essential content, with culture as a means of expressing the message in the translation process. In other words, it recognizes the cultural superiority of traditional Christianity and suggests that the essence of Christianity and the Gospel message is supra-cultural.

Conversely, Nida comments that 'no two languages are identical either in meaning given to corresponding symbols or in the ways in which such symbols are arranged in phrases and sentences' (1964, 156). It is possible that the problem of applying the model may come in this seeking of right cultural parallels for implantation of the basic concept which could not be easy to come across as such. Yet, postulating equivalence from a different perspective, Nida maintains that equivalence lies solely in 'producing into the receptor language the closest natural equivalent' to the source message, in both meaning and form (1964, 19). In other words, the equivalence in

translation can be achieved only at semantic and stylistic (literary) levels in order to produce in the receptor language the closest natural equivalent, but this may not be identical to the original content. However, it may be possible to bridge the cultural gap between the Gospel message and receptors' culture and bring both the content and context into mutual understanding. Nevertheless, it is now widely accepted that translation involves new meaning. There is no direct equivalence between one term and another, indeed even the same word in the same language does not mean the same thing to everyone in that culture since cultures, communities, societies, and individuals give words meaning.

If this is the case, we must consider how the Gospel could be embodied in a non-Christian community in both a doctrinally authoritative and culturally translatable manner. Although the key presupposition of the translation model seems to be the Christian tradition, the process of translation needs to be reciprocal. For the gospel to be embodied in a culture it entails a mutual exchange between the gospel and the culture. Bosch agrees with this argument as he writes, 'inculturation suggests a double movement: there is at once inculturation of Christianity and Christianization of culture. The gospel must remain Good News while becoming, up to a certain point, a cultural phenomenon' (1991, 454). The question to be raised here is how to relate to culture free of trappings, which may be alien to the context, that may not convey one's own native culture, into a new culture. Hesselgrave and Rommen underline this emphasis in their portrayal of the missionary or Church task with its risks:

> The missionary's [church's] ultimate goal in communication has always been to represent the supra-cultural message of the gospel in culturally relevant terms. There are two possible dangers which need to be carefully evaded in this effort: (1) the perception of the communicator's [translator's or church planter's] own cultural heritage as an integral element of the gospel, and (2) a syncretistic inclusion of elements from the receptor culture which would alter or eliminate aspects of the message upon which the integrity of the gospel depends (1989, 1).

This invites the advocates of the translation model to engage in what Hiebert calls 'critical contextualisation' which may help them to be self-critical as well as allowing them to engage critically with the context (1994, 88ff). This could, therefore, be an effective way to balance the development of contextualization in the process of translation (Hiebert, 1994, 186-7).

5.2 Translating the Bible into a common Oromo language/dialect

In this section I discuss the importance of translating the Bible for all the Oromos into their language, as one of the contextualized Church planting strategies, anticipating that it may help the non-evangelized Oromo people to find the evangelical Christianity of the EECMY more attractive. Further I contend that a lack of Bible and Christian teaching in their dialects has been one of the barriers to Church planting among the vast areas of the Oromo people as pointed out in the fieldwork discussion. Drawing on fieldwork, a comparison will be made between the two areas of Oromia, one of which has had and one which is yet to have the Bible in their dialects. I then draw out the implications of this in the contemporary social and cultural context of Ethiopia in which the Oromo people in the EECMY have a growing sense of their Oromo identity. To achieve this, I evaluate the existing Oromo Bible version in the context of the current socio-cultural change, and then suggest a more effective method of translating the Bible. I consider the significance of Bible translation itself, and then suggest what an effective translation for Church planting might look like.

In order to make the Bible translation relevant and understandable to the target group, some considerations need to be taken into account. Firstly, both the language and cultural understandings of the sources and target groups need to be understood. According to Carman this helps both to recognize the significance of each language used and the value of each cultural medium (2005, 1). Equally important is having substantial knowledge of Hebrew and Greek (original Biblical languages) in addition to the source and target languages and cultures (Hermanson, 2002, 7-8). Necessary for the learning of cultural context is the learning of language. The impact of scriptures from one cultural context read in another is vastly different to that originally intended. Scriptures, to be adapted to local culture, need to be translated locally. Sanneh writes, '…one can demand or even require a vernacular direction for the faith in the interests of orthodoxy' (Sanneh, 1989, 174). Referring to Luther, MacKenzie strongly advocates that vernacular Scriptures proved more worthwhile than what the priests were preaching in the church, because a person can read the Bible on his/her own and understand it in his/her own language (2004, 14). According to MacKenzie, Luther greatly contributed to the German language by translating the Bible into the vernacular, which gave new prestige to the language of

the Bible and also enabled the people to accept evangelical Christianity (2004, 1-2). Likewise, if the Bible is translated into the common contemporary Oromo language Church planting may be further advanced among the people more than at any time before.

The other procedure is an acquired knowledge of Bible translation methods. This involves dealing with the degree to which the translator (church) is willing to scrutinize the gap between the two languages. Among the pioneer theorists of translation, Nida argues that there are two different types of equivalence, namely formal equivalence and dynamic equivalence (Nida and Taber, 1982, 22 and Nida, 1964, 159). The former focuses on the linguistic form and content of the source message, unlike the latter which is based upon 'the principle of equivalent effect' i.e., the relationship between receiver and message should aim at being the same as that between the original receiver and the source message' (Nida,1964, 159). As shown above, basically there are two methods to translation: the formal-equivalent approach and the dynamic-equivalent approach (Nida, 1964, 159-160). The former primarily involves literal translation, which deals with rendering the Bible from one language into another word for word. This is similar to some of the well-known old fashion translations, i.e., the Septuagint, which followed a traditional literalism approach with an unnatural form of expression. Arguably this resulted in a lack of wider acceptance, although it was of great importance among the Greek-speaking Christians and Jews (Nida and Taber, 1982, 201). This approach seems to have been disregarded by contemporary translators to a large extent because it reproduces the text from its original form without considering the meaning of the text in the receptor language (Jordaan, 2002, 20). Despite its enthusiastic acceptance as an eye-opening religious book, the Western Oromo Bible translation could not fully demonstrate the meaning of the people's language since it followed this method. Thus, the formal equivalence translation approach will not be followed.

5.2.1 An evaluation of the existing Oromo Bible translation

In this part, I briefly examine the translation model when applied to translating the Oromo Bible within the past and present socio-cultural context of the people, under two main categories. Here, I evaluate the literal translation method.. The former

translation in the western Oromo dialect used the translation model adopting the literal word for word translation method, for translating the Bible, also called, formal equivalence. It is the case that this version did achieve notable success in Church planting. For example, Digga argues that the Oromo Bible translation was not only significant for the expansion of evangelical Christianity, but also for impacting on the peoples' consciousness to develop their culture, language and literature in western Oromia (1999, 49). However, it may also be argued that there is an ambiguity about Bible translation in much of post-western colonialism reflection even though it has enabled education and articulation of culture to develop among the non-western communities. The ambiguity lies in the western cultural influence within the translation which was imposed on the non-western culture (Sugirtharajah, 2006, 73). The same is true of the western orientated Bible translation into the Oromo language and culture as an approach for Church planting (Eide, 2000, 89). Consequently, this literal translation, although using the translation model deserves less recommendation for current and future Church planting in the EECMY for the reasons which follow.

The translation method was entirely literal using formal equivalence, based on seeking equivalent words and idioms in both languages. For example, Bliese, an American linguist and advisor for the Ethiopian Bible Society in one of his interview responses comments that, as elsewhere, all translations (including the Oromo version), which took place in Ethiopia before the second half of the 20th century were entirely literal with the goal of being reliable translations from the original manuscripts by translating each word wherever the meaning allowed (in ECFE, 2010, 3; cf Wayessa, 2001, 6).). The main argument of the theorists against such translation is that two vernaculars may not necessarily correspond 'throughout in their phrases, idioms, grammatical usages and words' so that the method does not reveal the meaning expected (Nida, 1964, 164). However, Hordofa and Bulcha, Oromo scholars argue similarly that, although finding proper or corresponding words for objects often challenged the translators, the method used to bridge the gap was effective to some extent (Hordofa, 2005, 73; Bulcha, 1996, 53). For example, to find an equivalent idiom in the Oromo language from the source language of the Bible the translators used a method of combining two or more words to form a new word or phrase (Hordofa, 2005, 73). Among others, such new words include: *Seera keessa-*

Deebi 'Deuteronomy' (*seera* 'customary law' *keessa deebi'* going back'), *Hojii ergmmotaa* 'Acts' (from *Hojii* 'work'+ *errgamoota* 'messengers'; the lightening of the final vowel marks possession, thus the literary meaning is 'the messengers' work'). Consequently, the translators were confident that their translation represented clear and idiomatic Oromo (Aren, 1978, 385). As noted by Bartels, the Oromo translators were indomitable searchers for the correct and relevant word in their translations and explanations (1983, 167-8).

Nevertheless, the Bible in the western Oromo dialect does demonstrate the existence of foreign and combined amalgamated words which were an inadequate way of translation because such made-up words were not known understood or meaningful to them. Instead of merging words in Oromo and borrowing words from foreign languages, the translators could have used existing ideas and notions in the Oromo language. They could also have coined Oromo equivalents of some of the vocabulary they had borrowed (Bulcha, 1996, 50). However, whenever translation takes place, language gaps are not easily avoided. The process of translation from one language to another may mean existing meanings lost and new meanings created. This was no doubt, the case with the Oromo Bible translation. Nevertheless, it was also the case that the Oromo Bible translation was enthusiastically accepted among the western Oromo people without much difficulty, as it was the first Oromo version in the context of an Amharization policy. If Nida is right when, in another context, he argues that 'the real test of the translation is its intelligibility to the non-Christian who should be reached by its message' (1974, 21), then the Oromo translation was intelligible for it reached the western Oromo. However, judged by contemporary methods of contextualisation it is lacking.

Secondly, we examine the new Bible translation projects in different dialects. I refer to these here, not to illustrate the method of translation, but to demonstrate the need for a new translation. In order to overcome the problem of the distinctive dialects of the Oromos, the EECMY has organized a number of Bible translations during the last decade using the same method as the one described above (EECMY Report 2007, 8). However, this might have come too late, as the diverse Oromo dialects are naturally reducing into one common language. Consequently, this Bible translation

plan may not be necessary as the existing dialects may not last much longer. The following Oromo saying supports this argument. *'Gabba Gel tutii hare offuu'* (literally refers to 'driving a donkey to the returning marketers). In short it means performing very important things too late. As Jalata comments, the Oromos are in a context when they are seriously engaged in discouraging their diverse dialects following the socio-political change since the 1990s which has legitimized practice of their language as a national language (1997, 33). This has significantly affected the Oromos' 'thinking, lives and preferences' as individuals and as one nation (Simesso, 2005, 40). Consequently, whatever variations there may be from one region of Oromia to another, almost all Oromos have begun sharing basic and crucial sets of understanding, as well as core values and symbols which enable them to feel culturally and socially the same (Loo, 1991, 9). Such a coming together of both evangelized and non-evangelized Oromos towards their cultural values is a notable challenge to the EECMY in re-evaluating its Bible translation methods and utilizing the time for improving Church planting strategies. Arguably, any translation of the Bible into the vernacular language which ignores cultural dynamism is a failure because developments in translation have shown that it cannot be done in a vacuum. Therefore, the Bible translation project of the EECMY needs to consider the contemporary social context of the Oromo people and the dynamic equivalence model of translation.

5.2.2 An effective method of Bible translation

In contrast to the first Oromo Bible for which the literal, formal equivalence method of translation was used, the dynamic equivalence method is a translation approach which has been developed as a standard method by notable American linguist, Nida and widely employed for most Bible translations since the 1980s (Nida and Taber, 1982, 200; see Kraft, 2001, 268-269). In their extreme forms the two methods of translation are very different, the one being form focused and slavishly literal in its translation of words while the other is meaning focused and excessively free. Nevertheless, most scholarly translations fall somewhere between the two extremes.

Both of the methods above, and those in between, belong to the translation model. For example, they are based on the belief that the Christian message is contained not

only within Scripture, as originally given, but also that it can be translated into another language and carry the same authority (EECMY Constitution and By-Laws, 2007, 7). Both Bible translation methods also give attention to culture in that they focus on the cultural setting of both the sending and receiving languages as part of the translation process. However, the dynamic equivalence method gives much more attention to the receiving culture by attempting to translate the 'message' by drawing on meanings from the receptor's wider culture rather than simply their language. Having assessed the formal equivalent method above and noted its failure to be culturally sensitive, for example by awkward translation and the use of loan words, I turn now to explain and assess the dynamic equivalent method of Bible translation.

The dynamic equivalence method focuses on equivalent meanings in communication. Joubert clarifies this point by arguing that 'the aim of dynamic equivalent translation is to have the same impact on a modern audience as the original text had on its audience' (2002, 31). There is of course no way in which the achievement of this aim can be assessed, but the aim clarifies the vision to have a Bible translation which carries the Christian message, engages its readers, and communicates with them in their culture. This method of translation seeks to retrieve the message of the text from its original setting and to convey that message into the new context. For example in a UK context this approach has been used by the Bible Society in its dynamic equivalent translation of the Good News Bible, and in Ethiopia, to a certain extent, in the new Amharic and Western Oromo translations.

According to Jordaan it cannot be over-emphasized that the functional (dynamic)-equivalence approach, 'has to do not only with language, but also with a particular understanding of the nature of communication and a particular understanding of the nature of the Bible' (2002, 21). To make communication feasible in the context of translation of an ancient text, it needs to engage more than one language and culture and time and space. Jordaan explains its task:

> It was a message, which communicated to the readers of the time, but, because it does not correspond to the cultural situation of the present-day reader, it also cannot communicate with present-day readers. Therefore, a functional-equivalent translation wants to distinguish between the socio-historical orientation of the Bible writers/readers and the socio-historical orientation of the modern readers in order to communicate the message effectively to the modern readers [listeners] (2002, 21).

This demonstrates the potential effectiveness of the functional equivalent translation and, therefore, the functional equivalent method is considered to be the best option as far as the communication of the message is concerned. Further, it emphasises the natural receptor language style that removes much of the source language cultural ambiguities to make the new translation clearer and more easily understood.

One may ask what does being 'meaning focused' imply in this translation approach? The central concern is how well the translation communicates with the reader, how easily and accurately the average prospective reader will be able to retrieve the same meaning in their contemporary culture as the original meaning conveyed in its culture. Nida and Taber argue that the only way to know whether a translation communicates effectively with its receptors, that is, whether they comprehend its message accurately, is by their positive response or equivalent impact (1986, 71). To convey the same meaning a translator must produce a text that is equivalent to the original in respect of naturalness of expression and ease of understanding. If a translation does not express ideas in ways that are natural for the receptor language, the communication load becomes too great and the translation may fail to communicate the message effectively to its readers. Thus, naturalness of expression leads to ease of understanding, which ensures that the meaning of the original is faithfully communicated to the reader in the receptor language.

I argue that translations using functional equivalence are easier to read and understand than those produced using formal equivalence. For example, the new Amharic Bible, which has been produced using the dynamic equivalence method (to some extent), has attracted many Amharic speaking readers and users. The same is true of the revised western Oromo Bible version which was published in 1997. In particular, the latter has been favoured by many Western Oromo dialect readers (Christian members, pastors and preachers) because, among other benefits, it has reduced cultural and language ambiguities of the source languages and translated the text into the peoples' daily vernacular which reflects their culture. Out of 30 interviewed EECMY members and ministers 19 (63.33%) agreed with this statement.

In contrast, it must be acknowledged that such a dynamic equivalence translation has a more interpretative bias because it requires the translator to have a greater freedom to make many interpretive decisions. The translator has to judge the original meaning

and impact of the words in the original cultural context and then 'translate' these into a different cultural context to achieve the same meaning and impact as the original. The translator has considerable power in this context unlike the formal equivalence method, which is simpler, logically direct and more objective in which the translator's role is minimised and circumscribed, as a protection against bias (Tymoczko, 1985, 63). The translators has to guard against inaccurate assumptions about the meaning in the culture and the impact of the translation in order to avoid a reproduction of the consequences of past approaches to mission.

Nevertheless, there are difficulties and problems to address in this Biblical translation method. In my context the difficulties and problems in the process of getting back to the original intended meaning of scripture ideally require Oromo Christian linguists who are experts in Hebrew and Greek and in *Oromiffa*. However, there are currently no such qualified Oromo linguists and biblical scholars who can work on the original meaning in the biblical context. There is one Oromo currently training in linguistics in Norway. However, no-one from the Oromo is currently studying at doctoral level in Biblical Hebrew or New Testament Greek, although there is opportunity to do so. Therefore a dependence on western Christian Biblical scholars, who are expert in Hebrew and Greek, will continue. There are also challenges in discovering the original meaning of the text. For example, classic texts such as Isaiah 53 challenge the translator, not only with the identity of the servant, but also in agreeing an accurate text in the Hebrew. Similarly, in the New Testament in 1 Corinthians 14:34f, there are questions about the origin of the text itself as well as its original meaning. The effect of this is to make alternative readings of the text necessary and to accept that there must be a provisionality about the accuracy of translation. This sits uneasily with claims to certainty, and should be acknowledged, but it need not invalidate the method.

The use of western scholars working with original meanings inevitably affects meanings in *Oromiffa* for they have to translate the original meanings into a language in which they may be less specialist and have less cultural sensitivity towards it, although many have themselves lived among the Oromo, for example the translators of the new Oromo versions lived among the Oromo for just under 3 years before they began their last translation work. Additionally, they have read literature on the Oromo culture written by Christian and non-Christian Oromos and by western

missionaries. Although the western missionaries know something of Oromo culture, they are not as well acquainted with the culture and language of the people as the Oromos are. It is therefore essential that translators continue to work in teams of western Biblical scholars with Oromo Christians expert in and sympathetic towards Oromo culture

There are further problems related to translating certain Hebrew/Greek terms into the Oromo language using a dynamic equivalence approach. For example, *Yahweh* and *theos* could be equivalently translated into *Waaqayyo*. Yet, the Hebrew God *Yahweh* in the Old Testament relates to human beings directly in a personal way, for example, Abraham, Moses and Isaiah. In the New Testament the Holy Spirit also relates directly and personally with individuals, who may be 'filled' (Acts 6:3) or 'born of the Spirit' (Jn 3:5f). In contrast, *Waaqayyo* is less personal but uses spirit beings, like *Ayyannas* to reveal his will to human beings. Similarly, Spirit/*pneuma* could be equivalently translated into Oromo by either *haffura* or *Ayyannas*. However, the Holy Spirit is one, but Oromo *Ayyannas* are many, which could be closer to the different gifts of the Spirit rather than to the Spirit, in that the *Ayyannas* manifest themselves to people who are close to *Waaqayyo*. Nevertheless, the parallel is inexact. There is further discussion of this subject in 5.4.1 and 5.4.2.

Discussion of these examples here indicates how difficult it is to separate the 'message' conveyed in words in a given language from the 'cultural accretions' of the words in that language. For example, the words for 'God' in different languages convey different messages according to the religious context of that culture. *Waaqayyo* to will convey meanings to members of the OTR influenced by their OT religion and their Oromo culture. In contrast, *Waaqayyo* known and experienced through Christ as revealed in the Gospel narratives will give a further context for drawing on meanings that may gradually change the cultural understanding of *Waaqayyo*. Nevertheless, this discussion demonstrates the provisionality and the contingent nature of the method of dynamic equivalence. However, using this method appears to stand as a better approach; it reduces the Western bias by omitting combined Oromo words and the foreign terminological ambiguities, gives value to the Oromo language and culture by using words which resonate with their culture, and by these means gradually makes the evangelical Christianity of the EECMY among the Oromos more authentically Oromo.

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5.2.3 Significance of Bible translation

Historically, the translation of Scripture has enabled the spread of Christianity across the world. Likewise, the translation of the Bible and its adaptation by different cultural, tribal and linguistic groups has played a significant role in conveying the message of the Gospel to Africa (Sanneh, 1989, 51). The translation of the Bible into vernaculars does not only make it easy for African Christians to read the Bible, but has also provided African Christians with an essential element for the development of African theology which treats African languages as a basic channel for its theological communication and demonstrates the ownership of African theology by Africans (Bediako, 2000, 58). Similarly, listening, reading and interpreting the Bible in their own mother tongue may help Oromos to understand the Bible as the Word of God and help them to perceive Christianity in a more positive light, as the Word of God to them, undoing the alienation that former traditional approaches to mission have created.

Having the Bible available in their daily spoken language may also motivate Oromo people to believe that evangelical Christianity is not disdainful of their language in contrast to the EOC colonial mission (cf. Bediako, 1997, 120). In addition, the Bible in the Oromo vernacular may help both Oromo Christians and non-Christians have a direct link to the Word of God, so that they can relate it to their cultural setting as they critically evaluate it to either transform or confirm their cultural practices. Experiences suggest that such direct access to the Bible has ensured the spread of the gospel in Africa (Mbiti, 2005, 223-244). Mbiti further points out that Africans do select verses from the Bible as their personal verses while others memorize particular verses and stories to reflect on them and retell them wherever they find themselves (2005, 245). As explained in chapter one, the EECMY has not yet developed its own indigenous theology (Bakke, 1998, 155) but the translation of the Bible into the Oromo language may pave the way for local theologizing and interpreting of the Bible. Moreover, as part of their cultural development, Oromo Bible translation may become well regarded and enhance the effectiveness of further Church planting among the non-evangelized Oromo people.

5.2.4 An effective application of the translation

Having established the significance of Bible translation, I would like to make some suggestions which may facilitate the process of translation and the means by which the translated version could be used. If an effective and contemporary standard translation approach is needed, the EECMY should accept the dynamic equivalent method for translation as a guide for the translators, since it focuses on translating the meaning of the Bible with reference to culture, context and language attempting not to lose the original meaning. The approach also sits alongside the translation model which preserves its Church tradition as discussed above.

The Church ministers (pastors and evangelists), who work for the established congregations and new Church planting areas will need to be trained in how to use the new translated Oromo Bible (Breezy, 2004, 31). This is urgently needed as the whole community is in a transitional period in terms of the common Oromo dialect. Added to this, is the fact that there may be a number of Church ministers, particularly those who are older, who do not approve of a new standard Oromo dialect and are in favour of the former dialects. Seminars can be organized for such church ministers to teach them about the advantage of using common language scriptures and to give them the opportunity to update themselves in knowing and using the common language. The same action is also recommended for the Church members who can read and write. Furthermore, as such short seminars would hardly likely change views radically, the EECMY theological institutions in Oromia need to integrate language and translation subjects into their curricula.

In many areas of Oromia, there is still widespread illiteracy, such that the majority of Oromo people are unable to read the scriptures for themselves, as discussed in previous chapters. Teaching such people basic reading and writing skills is a long process. However, it can be organized as part of Church ministry with volunteer teachers teaching in Church buildings and other suitable places. Aren writes that for Onesimos, not only preaching religion but providing education to the Oromo in their own vernacular language was a passionate subject. Whenever he met people the question he asked them was: 'Can you read and write? Is it not useful to be able to read and write?' (Aren 1978, 302; Bulcha, 1996, 45). With such an approach Onesimos convinced many to read and write passages from the Bible that both he

and Aster translated. The significant role that Onesimos played in encouraging people to learn how to read and write one hundred years ago for the purpose of evangelization greatly may provide the EECMY with a helpful model regarding what could be done in these days to reach the unevangelized people with a relevant approach to literacy through the medium of Bible teaching.

5.3 Contextualizing EECMY liturgical worship

This section considers the significance of contextualizing or translating the EECMY liturgical worship into an Oromo cultural context, hoping that it may promote the acceptance of the evangelical Christianity of the EECMY among the non-evangelized Oromos. However, I will first concisely review the status of the existing liturgical worship of the Church as it currently stands.

5.3.1 Inadequacy of the EECMY liturgical worship among the Oromo people

Worship has been the one of the EECMY Church planting strategies as discussed in chapter one. Along with other Oromo regions, the western Oromo welcomed evangelical Christianity, as a result of which they were evangelized and encouraged to worship in their own dialect from the early stage of Church planting. However, findings from the fieldwork disclose a number of specific shortcomings of the strategy as analysed in chapter four. One of the problems of the liturgy and worship is said to be its method of translation into the western Oromo dialect and also using an Amharic version of it among the diverse dialects of the different Oromo areas. In respect to the former, like the Bible translation, some parts of the liturgy as well as songs of the western missionaries have been inadequately contextualized into the western Oromo context (Ujulu, 1999, 43). This shortcoming is due to the weakness of the formal equivalence method by which the liturgy was translated literally, as was the Oromo Bible translation. As with the Bible, it seems that the liturgy was translated firstly, by finding the closest words, secondly, by creating/combining two or more words together and thirdly, by borrowing unknown words from the source language, like Greek, Latin and possibly Amharic. Since the translation tends to be no more than a literal translation, to the point of ignoring the linguistic characteristics of the Oromo people, it fails to communicate the message effectively. Accordingly, examples of combined and borrowed words can be traced easily in the translated

EECMY liturgy. Consider such common words as *Serra-kadhanna* (worship or liturgy)*, mana-kadhannaa* (temple), *and Dhalachuu Yesus kiristoos* (Christmas) (Hordofa, 2005, 71-3; Bulcha, 1996, 44). Although such combined translated words have been adapted to the Oromo language, they do not sufficiently enrich the people's perception of what the liturgy is talking about. To be specific, the evangelized EECMY members have become familiar with these foreign words, yet such a familiarity may not necessarily mean that they have become a part of the cultural consciousness of the Oromo people.

The effect of the unhelpful nature of the literal translation is that the EECMY Oromo liturgical text lacks an adequate reflection of Oromo cultural and religious concepts and, therefore, introduces a serious risk that Oromo Christians worship without a full understanding of the liturgy (c.f. Haile, 2008, 24). Although some attempts at improvement were made in the years between 1991 and 2008, including some local components such as newly composed or adapted indigenous songs and a small number of orders of worship (2.5%), worship is still largely dominated by the western liturgical contents and forms (Behrends, 2008, 5). However, the past and present socio-cultural factors of the Oromo people and their strong desire to preserve their cultural identity may suggest that there may not be any better alternative strategy for the EECMY to reach the unreached Oromo community other than contextualizing its liturgical worship. This leads us to discuss the need to translate the EECMY liturgical worship for effective Church planting.

5.3.2 Contextualizing EECMY Liturgical worship for the Oromo people

Having concluded that the EECMY liturgical worship has been less effective as a Church planting strategy among the diverse Oromo communities primarily because it is not effectively contextualized into an Oromo linguistic and cultural setting, the EECMY, if it is to effectively evangelize such a people must prioritize their culture, in a way that reduces the foreignness of the worship by integrating the social and cultural elements of the people. The intention of translating the liturgical worship of the EECMY into a standard Oromo language is to maintain a practice of worship that is culturally appropriate to the native Oromo worshippers, which the community may be able to claim as their very own. This may further enable the members to practise the worship actively and perceptively and this will also greatly motivate the non-

evangelized Oromo community to accept the evangelical Christianity of the EECMY. Moreover, the translated liturgical worship, appropriately understood and rightly performed, will further lead the worshippers to a reflective appreciation of Christ's mystery made present in the liturgy through the dynamism of cultural signs and symbols (LWF, 1998). Translation, in other words, intends to deepen the spiritual life of the assembly through a fuller experience of Christ who is revealed in the people's language, culture and symbols.

5.3.3 Translating the Liturgy into the standard Oromo dialect

For Lutherans translating the liturgy into local vernaculars is said to be a principle of the Reformation. For example, during the Reformation, one of the steps Luther took was considering 'the obvious employment of the vernacular' by translating the Latin liturgy into German. He also adopted popular songs for church services which enabled the local congregations to participate in the celebration of worship services through singing and understanding the words they were singing (Augsburg Confession 24, 56). In this context, the German vernacular, unlike Latin, was a living language and was thus a sure vehicle of culture which expressed the people's thought and behavioural patterns and was an established bearer of their values and institutions (Bradshaw, 2001, 8). This suggests that the adoption and use of the vernacular is a primary work of liturgical contextualization which allows Christians to participate in worship fully and actively. In a wider African context Lumbalala, an African liturgist, asserts that, 'All peoples [Christians] must worship God and remember Christ from within their own imaginative and language patterns' (1998, XII). During my fieldwork I observed the impact of the use of the vernacular in six Sunday worship services in my sample areas. The congregation engaged thoroughly and enthusiastically with the worship on every occasion. Emphasizing the rationale of employing the native language and its implications, Chupungco further remarks that 'The result is a liturgy whose language, rites and symbols admirably relate to the community of worship as they evoke experiences of life, human values, paint vivid images of God's creation and call to mind the peoples' history' (1992, 38). It could be said that this is what the EECMY liturgical worship needs to be in form, content and approach. Accordingly the EECMY may be challenged to urge its Synods in Oromia to avoid using other vernaculars rather than the Oromo language for worship without which its Church planting may not advance due to their high consciousness

of culture and fast growing socio-cultural revival. It further requires an entire translation of the liturgy into a standard Oromo language, which thoroughly draws meanings from the Oromos' culture and daily social experience and may lead the people to worship actively.

Having noted this, the challenge is how to translate the existing EECMY liturgical worship into corresponding Oromo cultural values. Primarily, in the context of our translation model, employing the method of dynamic equivalence in contrast to the formal/literal translation is applicable as discussed above. This suggestion agrees with the Lutherans' approval of the method for contextualizing their liturgy, as a result of the four consecutive international consultations in 1990s. A partial quotation from the document says,

> Among the various methods of contextualization… dynamic equivalence [is] particularly useful. Dynamic equivalence is the re-expression of components of Christian worship with elements from a local culture which have an equal meaning, value, and function (LWF, 1998).

Accordingly, the dynamic equivalence model re-expresses the liturgical order in the living language, rites, and symbols of a target community (Chupungco, 1996, 4-5). All Lutheran member Churches, including the EECMY have been strongly urged to contextualize their liturgy using this method. Such a call from its original Lutheran tradition and a demand of the Oromo cultural evolution may pressurize the EECMY to contextualize its liturgy by translating it into the standard Oromo language in drawing meanings from the Oromo culture for effective evangelism ministry among the community (Grenstedet, 1997, 13).

It could also be argued that identifying a source for a liturgical text is another vital issue. As previously noted, the western Oromo and Amharic versions of the EECMY liturgy were literal translations of the western Lutheran missionaries' liturgical books which were adapted from various western vernaculars. To avoid the complexity of these different languages, which consist of different cultural ambiguities, I suggest that the western Oromo liturgy might be used as a primary source and the Amharic liturgy used as a supplementary source with other additions, for example, indigenous songs (discussed in the next section).

Both suggested source texts do have distinctive weaknesses. The former text (western-Oromo) is slightly different from other Oromo dialects and the other communities cannot fully understand it, although their source and linguistic character are alike. The latter is a completely different language with a different script and its own distinctive linguistic nature. Despite such problems, however, it was through these languages that the EECMY evangelical Christianity adapted itself to Ethiopian society; including Oromo Christians, and these two source texts are more Ethiopian than the western liturgical texts. In one way or another, therefore, the Oromo people have already had some attachment to the vernaculars. Thus, it may be preferable to consider them as sources for liturgical texts. Given this, I now suggest how the EECMY liturgical text might be contextually translated in a way that may enable the unevangelized Oromo people to accept the evangelical Christianity of the EECMY and actively participate in the worship. Worth discussing are two points: 1) translating the EECMY liturgical text into a standard Oromo language and 2) making some suggestions as to how the EECMY liturgy would further be enriched.

In translating the liturgical text into a standard Oromo language, using the method chosen, at least two steps may be followed. Firstly, close analysis of the historical context of the liturgy is imperative. Certainly, the liturgy in its western form has cultural patterns inherited from the Jewish, Greco-Roman, medieval Europe and Lutheran Reformation with some hints of Ethiopian elements (Grenstedet, 1997). According to Grenstedet, it is such centuries-old liturgical customs and pre-Reformation Catholic Church usages that the Lutherans omitted as they considered them abusive elements. Instead, they adopted important components of their own heritage and identity, believing that they are not unique to any church body (1997, 15). However, the Augsburg Confession Article 7 further maintains that the main components of the Lutheran liturgy are not typically Lutheran and do not necessarily mirror the culture of 16th century Germany and Scandinavia or the culture of the 20th century America, rather they reflect the faith of Christians of all times and places (McDonnell, 1980, 181). Therefore, it can be argued that the Lutheran church of any generation, including the EECMY, can diligently contextualize its liturgical worship according to its own cultural and social context for effective evangelism mission (EECMY CMCS, 1993, 3). Yet, the Lutheran statement above contends that the main transcultural elements of the liturgy and the signs of Christian unity are

unchangeable since they are the strong centre of all congregational life and mission, as well as the basis for contextualization (LWF Statement 1998, 3). These unchangeable transcultural elements are said to be the liturgical tradition. According to Shorter, Christian tradition 'concerns the truth about Jesus. It is the testimony to that truth which is preserved in unwritten form and in the inspired writings of scripture, and which is the subject matter of dialogue with culture…' (1997, 65).

However, Shorter also notes, 'Tradition constitutes an inherited body of meanings and conceptions clothed in symbolic forms and this inheritance is called culture' (1997, 33). In our translation, therefore, the balance between these two types of tradition need to be maintained due to the fact that liturgy bespeaks a 'trans-cultural' and 'trans-temporal' message in every age (Grenstedet, 1997, 15). Moreover, the translators may also need to closely comprehend the worshippers' understanding of the transcendence of God, yet the use of expressions not prevalent in the speech of the people and the use of ancient words and idioms actually disallows that purpose and makes the gospel message irrelevant.

Secondly, the translators also need to articulate the linguistic nature of the Oromo language and how meanings of Oromo words are deep-rooted in the culture. The meaning of each Oromo word, idiom and concept comes out of the Oromo culture. Thus, the translators need to explore the cultural patterns, history and life experience of the community in order to identify relevant meaning in the process of translation. Furthermore, it is not only the Oromo's language and culture that is required, but the knowledge of the source culture as the cultures are bridged, i.e. 'the past and the present, classical and contemporary idioms' in the translation process must be considered (Grenstedet, 1997, 16).

The liturgical text needs to be translated into the ordinary language of a contemporary Oromo context which reflects their everyday social and cultural interactions and be heard and prayed in their culture. If liturgical translation cannot reflect the cultural context of the worshippers, they lose fluency and weaken the full and active participation of the worshipping community. In the current EECMY Western Oromo liturgical text we encounter numerous examples of literal translations which have resulted in an impoverished Oromo worship text making it

impossible for the people to understand. As stated above, some of these inappropriate translations are borrowed foreign words while others are newly adopted words in the Oromo language which still have not yet been given full meaning in the Oromo culture. One such word is written in one of the liturgical prayers of an ordinary Sunday service and Eucharist service; we read the word 'Hosanna' in both Amharic and western Oromo liturgical versions. Words such as this and many others need to be explored to find out how they were expressed in Hebrew and Greek languages and cultures. Once the translators understand this, they may also need to investigate their equivalences in the Oromo language and culture. In this manner, the translation must make sense, because it is not simply a translation of words from one language into another, but the translation of a communication from one language into another. That is why translators need to know the precise meaning of the message in the source language of the liturgy before they can accurately express that meaning in the Oromo language.

Therefore, for effective translation work to take place, some prerequisites need to be in place. The translator/s need to be Oromo nationals and have expertise in both standard and diversified Oromo dialects as well as culture. It would be an advantage to have a good knowledge of the linguistic structures of the Greek and Hebrew languages as well as that of the Bible translation, since the liturgy is full of Biblical language and expression. According to Nida, this means that the translators need to know how the language in question produces sentences and how the structures so generated are related to one another. Without that knowledge they may not be able to manipulate the structures readily and effectively (Nida, 1986). It is also certainly vital that the translators be versed in the knowledge of the meanings of syntactic structures. Lack of this knowledge is often a weakness because, in consequence, they will lack not only an understanding of the meaning of individual words and phrases, but also a fundamental appreciation of the meanings of constructions. Their biases and preferences may also inevitably be reflected in their choice of which meanings are essential.

Through such an on-going process of contextualization, it is anticipated that the liturgical text to be used among the Oromo EECMY members would emerge from their own people, so that they would be able to express their faith, their cultural

perception and their worldview. The language of the worshipping community has an important role to play in the proclamation, understanding and sharing of the word. Both language and liturgical text which originate from the people are elements of contextualization because they help to bring about new meaning and understanding.

5.3.4 Some suggestions for contextualizing/inculturating the EECMY liturgy

The need for, and significance of, translating the EECMY liturgy for further Church planting mission among the Oromo people has been discussed. However, translating what has already existed may not fulfill the process of contextualization without integrating some appropriate Oromo cultural artifacts into the liturgical worship. Hillman comments,

> It is not enough to present Christianity to the people in their language, understood in a merely semantic or literary sense. A more comprehensive language in the anthropological sense… must also be appreciated, assumed and used. This language consists of the people's indigenous cultural symbols, signs, myths, rites, images, customs and gestures' (1993, 68-9; see Hiebert and Meneses, 1995, 372).

This comprehensive statement asserts that, beyond replacements of equivalent expressions by translations, there are some more cultural forms and symbols which need incorporating for further understanding and expression of Christian faith. Similarly, the LWF urges all member churches

> to give serious attention to exploring the local or contextual elements of liturgy, language, posture and gesture, hymnody and other music and musical instruments and art and architecture for Christian worship so that their worship may be more truly rooted in the local culture (LWF 1998).

Thus it could be argued that the EECMY liturgy needs to be further contextualized rather than considered as a law book that has to be followed slavishly (Grenstedt, 1997, 13). Both statements equally commend the necessity of integrating some relevant cultural elements to liturgical content and form so that the people may consider the liturgy as their own Christian entity. Worth mentioning are the following: native Oromo songs, naming ceremony (*hammachiissuu*), *Irressa* annual festival, liturgical vestments, wine and forms of bread, vessels, cups and dishes, and church architecture. All these are areas where the process of contextualization must take place and where Christian Gospel values should influence and shape attitudes. All elements may not have the same effect in Church planting among the unevangelized Oromos, but they are equally important. Consideration of the native Oromo song will suffice to illustrate the point. It is what is most needed but still suffers from lack of recognition by the Church leadership because of their respect for

the western tradition. The second reason I chose this indigenous contribution was the fact that Oromos considerably value their folk-dances and cultural songs through which they mostly express themselves in their wider social, cultural and religious dimensions. Additionally, there have been strong opinions expressed among the traditional and the new Christian generations about whether to include the Oromo indigenous songs.

Indigenous songs need to be recognized and encouraged

Recognizing the value of music in Africa, Chibiko comments, 'In Africa, every festivity is accompanied by music even though the type of music varies from one celebration to the other and will only be considered good music when it gives the celebration the grandeur the latter deserves' (2001, 9). Similarly, as previously stated, cultural songs and folk dances are very important and highly valued by the Oromo people. It is through these that they express their sorrows, happiness and victory. This suggests that adapting some words and melodies for Christian songs could contribute to making the liturgy a genuinely Oromo Christian practice so that it may advance Church planting among the unevangelized Oromos. Conversely, despite having strong encouragement through policy decisions to contextualize its liturgical worship, the EECMY has hardly contextualized the western hymns and liturgical melodies for the Oromo community as discussed in chapter four. Ironically, the Church has been using the Amharic version of western songs among the different Oromo communities with the exception of western Oromia. It could be argued that employing the Amharic translation for advancing a western form of Christianity may be considered as a double cultural entity (Hiebert and Meneses, 1995, 372). Consequently, many Oromo EECMY members and ministers have found it difficult to adapt to the content of theology and liturgy to the melodies of the western liturgy except for a few loyalists to the tradition (Angose, 2000, 7). If western Christian songs have become strange to Oromo EECMY members, how hard would it be for unbelievers in the strong socially and culturally changing context of Oromia to relate to such liturgy? I argue that critically inculturated Christian Oromos songs which draw meanings from the cultural melodies are demanded. As Kato states 'Let Christianity truly finds its home in Africa [Oromo] by adopting local hymnology, using native language, idioms and concepts to express the unchanging faith' (1987, 182; 1985, 39). He continues to say 'Not only should the message be preached in the

language best understood by the congregation, but the terminology of the Theology should expressed the way common people understand' (1985, 24). 'Context has therefore become primary for the theological task' (Parratt, 2004, 8). Accordingly, in order to have culturally expressive and fully understandable hymns, the Church urgently needs natively contextualized songs to enrich its liturgical worship for the well-being of its nurturing and evangelistic outreach endeavours.

Interestingly, such a basic work of contextualization in developing native Oromo songs has remarkably emerged from the grassroots in which both young and adult Oromo Christians have composed ingenious hymns in their cultural context more than ever before in the history of evangelical Christianity in Oromia. Olana further notes that Oromo Christian songs with cultural tunes are flourishing in every part of the region in the Oromo language and have generated a strong enquiry of the inculturation processes of Christian faith (2010, 7). The songs have originated from Oromo cultural melodies and accompanied by local musical instruments and national dress which are intensively used by the soloists and choirs of the Oromo EECMY congregations. This is notable contextual progress from the grassroots. However, the questions to be asked here are: could the songs be formally adapted to the liturgical worship as they stand or do they need to be critically assessed? What is the attitude of the Church leaders towards these songs? I will discuss one particular song and another specific Gospel concert to show both the significance and the necessity of adapting these for liturgical worship.

It is worth beginning with a chorus of a particular song which is adapted from one of the Oromo folkdances. '*Yaa Yesuus gooftaa yaa mootii kooee, Yaa ilma Waaqayyo yaa mootii kooee, Fayyisaa Lubbuu yaa abdii kooee'* (Angose, 1999, 14). Literally it says 'Oh Lord Jesus my king, the Son of God my king, Saviour of my soul and my hope'. The song attempts to express the lordship, Sonship and kingship of Jesus as well as his act of salvation. Furthermore, it emphasises the transcendence of Jesus, which the Church teaches as its tradition. The composer then contextualizes this tradition in his/her language accompanied by a well-known Attette folkdance melody, which could label the song as contextually orientated. It is also one of the few songs recently accepted for liturgical worship that is liked enormously by most of the EECMY western Oromo members. When I visited certain congregations at

particular Sunday services, I also observed that most members overwhelmingly sang this and other similar songs. However, according to Angose some Western traditional hymns' orientated members and ministers are not in favour of this or other similar songs, suspecting that they might remind the members of the cultural dance in the middle of worship. Angose further comments that such incident happened once in western Oromia. Whilst this song was sung in a particular Sunday worship service one person unusually stood up, began walking here and there and sang the original words. Consequently the congregation was disturbed and this story was then often used to justify the rejection of contextualised songs (Angose, 1999, 14). However, singing such a song emotionally naturally leads to dancing and worshipping for the people. Olana, a contemporary Oromo researcher observes that Oromos music is not only founded on melody, but also on a rhythmical stirring of the whole body which leads the whole body to be set in motion, irrespective of the circumstances (2010, 15). This may mean that movements could be aroused even though they sing songs of sorrow. In a wider African context what Maboee maintains supports this: 'Traditionally, when Africans worship, they sing and dance together. They have a tendency to become emotionally or spiritually involved in the service' (1982, 131). Thus it could be argued that, using a single instance for justification of discouraging such a culturally and theologically accepted hymn may be said to be oversimplification. Additionally, despite the movement being seemingly less relevant to the context of the congregation because of the western traditional impact, singing a song in a folk-dance melody without its natural movement is also equally irrelevant. Therefore, it might be better if the EECMY encouraged their Oromo members to express their own feeling in worshipping God.

The second comment focuses on the Oromo Gospel concerts which have been taking place in some of the EECMY rural and urban areas of Oromia and which show further development of inculturated Oromo songs. Among others the one which was conducted by the Biftu Bole EECMY Oromo congregation in the Ethiopian capital, Addis Ababa from September 23-24, 2006 at the national exhibition centre will be considered. In what follows, its objectives and importance are explained. Gudina writes that the primary aim of the festival was to spread a contextual gospel message to the non-Christian Oromos residing around the central part of Oromia. Accordingly, the festival was performed in the Oromo language and in a culturally

reflective manner, accompanied by a wider variety of Oromo traditional musical instruments and national dress (GTM, 2006, 5). Kato supports such an approach as he says, 'The New Testament has given us the pattern for cultural adaptations … contextualization can take place in liturgy, dress, language, church service and any other form of expression of the Gospel truth' (1985, 24). Presenting indigenously composed Oromo songs in the way that it was done is significant religiously, culturally and socially. Religiously, it partially contextualized the gospel message in the language and cultural context of the Oromo people. Culturally, this particular concert seems to have been deliberately scheduled to be performed at the time of the *Irressa* festival. As discussed in chapter one and two, the original Oromo *Irressa* (thanksgiving) festival was mostly celebrated during the month of September. Socially, the festival both reduced the Amharization legacy and brought many Christian and non-Christian Oromos together (Pankhurst, 1994, 941). The performance may, therefore, suggest the importance, significance and benefits of contextualizing Church planting strategies among the Christian and non-Christian Oromo community.

However, the festival report asserts that there was a negative reaction from some Church leaders to the extent of denying permission to their choir members and solo singers to sing at the concert particularly in relation to wearing culturally significant gowns (GTM, 2006). One suggested reason for the Church leaders not to be keen on the song festival could be to show loyalty to the western tradition that opposes any relations between Oromo traditional culture and Christian worship (Berehands, 1997, 31). However, this explicitly illustrates the gap between the leaders' attitude and the grassroots in devising strategies for evangelism in a contextualized approach within the changing cultural context. Bediako writes, 'the significant transforming impact of the Gospel upon the non-western world arises from non-western responses to the Gospel in its own terms and not in terms of western expectations' (Bediako, 1995, 174).

Likewise, the importance of contextualizing western Christianity into their own cultural context has gradually developed from the Oromo Christian grassroots members rather than from the leaders, who seem to be loyal to the western tradition, regardless of the Church policy decisions and contemporary socio-cultural context of

the Oromo people as discussed earlier. For example, a young Oromo EECMY member comments that 'in the name of keeping traditional liturgy we are always told to sing songs that we can not understand simply because it is out of our culture'. Hilary, a Nigerian missiologist is conveying something similar when he says, 'what meaning have Christmas songs that describe the white snow and the wintery wind that blows cold and dreary for the millions of Igbo who have never been to the temperate regions?' (1995, 344). The European Christmas and white snow will hardly speak to the Oromo!

When both local musical instruments and indigenous songs are being used in the EECMY worship services, the members do feel comfortable as their cultural sentiments are being met. It is indeed of great importance that the people's indigenous music should be counted as matter of relevance and value, and eventually it will become a way of conveying meanings of the Gospel and thus the church music will be recognised as being to the glory of God. Furthermore, inculturating the traditional Christian element by composing songs from their experiences 'from the core of their being' which well expresses their faith with the risen Christ who is present among his people today as he was in former times is much better than holding the historically conditioned tradition without conviction (Hiebert and Meneses, 1995, 372). I, therefore, suggest that the contextual aspects of the Oromo people and their performance needs to be carefully considered and highly valued by the responsible Church planters and theologically educated ministers for the well-being of the liturgical services in line with the intended Church planting strategies. I further contend that accepting after due critique and assessment contextually composed songs and adapting them to the liturgical text may enrich the Church liturgy and enable the members to participate in the worship and consider the Christian practices to be fully their own. Most importantly, it may also motivate the unevangelized Oromo people to accept the evangelical Christianity of the EECMY.

In conclusion, the EECMY needs to learn this important cultural lesson from both the past and present. If the Oromo Christian members' normal daily speech and forms of cultural expression are not evidenced in the liturgical worship text, there will be an isolation of the liturgy from the contemporary life of the people. While I argue for the significance of recognizing contemporary Oromo cultural

understanding in liturgical translations, I am not encouraging the utter subordination of the liturgy to all cultural elements. There must be a balance between preserving the received liturgical expression of the Gospel message and expressing it in a way which is relevant and understandable.

5.4 Contextualizing EECMY Christian teaching

This section seeks to construct a way of contextualizing EECMY Christian teaching for effective evangelization primarily among the non-evangelized Oromo community. Indeed, the EECMY has a range of formal and non-formal Christian teaching for different groups of members, including new converts, through which it promotes its key Christian instruction for further evangelistic mission. These formal teachings have been established since 1967 under a programme called the Christian Education Curriculum (EECMY Christian Education curriculum manual/CECM 1989). The teaching content for different target groups has been expanded from the main EECMY Christian belief/tradition as recorded in the Church constitution and will be explained below. The findings of the fieldwork demonstrated that the teaching as a whole seems to be far less relevant to the Oromo socio-cultural perception and needs to be contextualized into their worldview so that it may be better used for Church planting. While it is important to acknowledge the purpose of the teaching in the making and development of Christian formation discourses among the Oromo people and other Ethiopian communities in the EECMY, it is also necessary to critique it in order to see how adequately or inadequately it has been understood within the Oromo cultural context. For the purpose of clarity, therefore, I examine this under three headings: 1) the efficacy of the teaching, 2) Contextual approach of using the name of *Waaqayyo Tokkicha* and 3) Contextual perception of *ayyanna*/deities and *Waaqayyo Guracha*. I consider these elements primarily because the teaching raises broad questions both among the non-Christian and the Christian Oromos. The discussion begins by evaluating the value and efficacy of the teaching and its availability in native Oromo languages as presented in the documents of the Church before moving on to suggest the way in which the EECMY Christian teaching needs to be contextualized for effective Church planting.

5. 4. 1 The efficacy of the teaching

The doctrinal basis for all EECMY ministry is the Western Lutheran Christian tradition. According to article two of its Constitution the EECMY believes and confesses that 'the Old and the New Testaments of the Holy Scriptures, the three creeds [Apostles', Nicene and Athanasian], the two sacraments [Holy baptism and Holy Communion] the Unaltered Augsburg Confession and Luther Catechisms all together are the unalterable permanent principles of faith of the Church' (EECMY Constitution, 2005, 7). This is the doctrinal basis which is used as the guiding principle for the whole evangelism ministry of the Church (EECMY 5th GA 1967).

The main aim of Christian education is to help people to believe in Jesus Christ for salvation and acknowledge the trinity as their central belief, to be mature in their Christian faith and to serve God and the wider society (EECMY CECM 1989, 4). Based on this general aim, the syllabus has been spirally developed for different target groups in order to extend its Christian tradition among the Oromo people. The main grassroots' ministries are Children's ministry, Youth ministry, Women's ministry, Confirmation class, Bible teaching for Church-run Schools and Bible Schools. It is for these target groups that the Christian teaching is spirally set up to shape their Christian attitudes. Furthermore, each area has its own particular contribution towards the faith and ministerial formation of the members and towards Church growth in terms of spiritual maturity (Ofga'a, 1999, 35). For example, the teaching theme entitled 'Growth in Faith' which is given for Confirmation candidates marks the entry of members into full membership by receiving Holy Communion. The teaching further enables the candidates to be involved in all ministries of the Church according to their talents, gifts and calling, from the grassroots to the national level. All are equally important in their place. However, one may also ask whether or not the content of the teaching and the approach used have been contextualized into the cultural context of the Oromo people in order that the effectiveness of the teaching might be measured.

Ofgaa, an Oromo researcher, points out that 'the Christian education teaching materials' have not been translated into the Oromo language, so that the evangelists and the pastors have faced difficulties in using them' (1999, 75). This is a clear indication that a lack of teaching materials in their native language has hindered the

expansion and further development of Christianity among the Oromo people. The EECMY Department for Mission and Theology (DMT) quarterly report of 1998 supports this contention. The EECMY Christian education teaching materials have hardly been used among the Synods in Oromia due to the language problem (1998, 3). To solve this problem, the Church passed a resolution which urges the Synods to translate the teaching materials into their respective vernaculars (EECMY GA-16-63-2000-1:5 EC; EECMY EVTC, 1996, 9). Despite this decision, however, recent research reveals that the translation so far made into the Oromo language is still far less than expected (Gutama, 2006, 59). Negative outcomes arising from the lack of materials in the Oromo language are perhaps the least visible to the EECMY Synods who have been very slow in implementing the decision for the well-being of Christian expansion among the members and non-evangelized Oromo people. To the Church Synods all may seem well, but there is a question as to what damage is being done. It would seem that the majority of the Oromo EECMY members possess little knowledge of the EECMY Christian teachings and the Church has inadequately expanded in various Oromia regions and elsewhere. A people with a strong sense of culture and identity find the Church teaching in another language and culture dull and unimpressive.

However, Oromos have begun to revive and develop their language, culture and tradition. Hence, they may not further tolerate being taught and preached to in non-Oromo languages in their vicinities. I suggest that, given the current social and cultural changes among the people which have consolidated the dialects into one common language, the EECMY Synods in Oromia need to move forward in translating the teaching materials into a common language in order to hold the existing members by serving them in their own mother tongue and to influence the non-evangelized Oromos. Hence, the Church needs to be leading the field in reducing the foreignness of its Christian instruction and increasing the linguistic ability of its ministers in order to contextualize the teaching in order to nurture and establish Church planting missions. Beyond translation, the EECMY teaching needs to be contextualized for the Oromo people so that it may address their cultural and religious understanding and narrow the difference between the theological discourse of the Church and the reality and meaningfulness of their current belief in *Waaqayyo*, as will be discussed below.

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5.4.1 A contextual approach to using the name *Waaqayyo*

In chapter one, I explained that the Oromo people traditionally believe in one God whom they call *Waaqayyo Tokkicha*. To gain further access into the existing ideas of the Oromos' perception, we need to examine the names they ascribe to *Waaqayyo* (God). The reason for the use of this approach is primarily because naming is a powerful tool many Oromos employ to describe the nature, character and actions of things, both human and spiritual, as previously discussed through the chapters. Accordingly, they describe *Waaqayyo* by using different adjectives which suggest that Oromos could be monotheists rather than polytheists. *The Encyclopaedia of Religion* defines monotheism as 'experience and philosophical perception that emphasizes God as one, perfect, immutable, creator' (Ludwig, 1987, 68–69). However, as argued in chapters one and four, the Oromos' belief in *Waaqayyo Tokkicha* has been misunderstood in EECMY Christian teaching just as it was by the EOC and Western missionaries. For example, a non-evangelized Oromo interviewee said that, 'when the so-called Christian religion preachers, perhaps as they were told by their missionaries, preached to us saying, come to Church and believe in one God rather than following your multiple gods, this was offensive to the Oromo people.' It has been such connotations, which has led the non-evangelized Oromo people to be uncomfortable about EECMY Church planting activities. It is also observed that existing EECMY members themselves, to some extent, seem to have been dissatisfied by EECMY teaching carried out in such a manner (Ujulu, 1999, 54).

The Oromo belief in *Waaqayyo Tokkicha* needs to be better understood in order to contextualize EECMY teaching according to their understanding as described in chapter one. Almeida argues that the Oromo people are neither Christians nor heathens, as they do not worship idols (Kenno, 2006, 23). Rather, they believe in the existence of a Supreme Being, hence they may be said to be monotheist (Hassen, 1990, 7). Kelbessa also describes the way Oromo people perceive *Waaqayyo* as monotheism.

> *Waaqayyo* is he who is before everything else. *Waaqayyo* is one and the same for all. Waaqayyo is *Uumaa* (a creator of everything in the world). Waaqayyo is *Hunda beeka*a (omniscient). Waaqayyo is *hundaatolaa* (Omnibenevolent). Waaqayyo is *hunda danda'aa* (omnipotent). *Waaqayyo* is the source and lover of *dhugaa* (truth). Waaqayyoo is *qulqulluu* (literally pure--holy). *Waaqayyo* is intolerant of injustice and

all falsehood. The Oromo never worshipped carved statues, trees, rivers, mountains or animals as substitutes (2001, 22).

Although the statement does not explain the source of their belief, it describes the nature and character of God's being and provides a gateway into the indigenous theology of the people. The Oromo elite, anthropologists and historians of the religion agree that the idea of the Supreme Being of *Waaqayyo* permeates the religious outlook of the people. Aguitar says that belief in *Waaqayyo* 'correspond[s] to the image of any of the supreme beings in a world religion', one may wonder where the idea of monotheist religion of the Oromo came from (1998, 11). As regards to this question, there are arguments which emphasize the concept of *Waaqayyo* as originating from different sources. Some scholars have argued that the idea of a Supreme Being is foreign to the indigenous religious thought of Oromo people. Others have rejected this assumption and have argued that the idea of the Supreme existed among Oromos before the advent of Christianity and Islam. For example, some scholars consider the Oromo concept of monotheism to have originated from either Christian or Islamic influence following the people's contact with either of the two religions (Tilstone in Bekele, 2009, 16; Trimingham, 1965, 53).

In contrast, Awolalu argues that Oromos' belief in One God (*Waaqayyo Tokkicha*) had existed long before either Christianity or Islam was introduced to them (2005, xix). Accordingly, the Oromo concept of God as *Waaqayyo Tokkicha* has its origin in indigenous Oromo tradition; hence the concept of monotheism is borrowed neither from Christianity nor Islam because the idea of one God is also found in the Oromos' worldview. Adding my own observation as an Oromo to the other Western anthropologists' research on the subject, I argue that the perception of Oromos' belief in *Waaqayyo Tokkicha* as one God seems conceivable given that the knowledge of the Supreme Being has from time immemorial been an integral part of OTR belief systems. Therefore, they could be described as monotheists. Although the Oromos' *Waaqayyo Tokkicha* is not identical to the Christian God, it could be considered equivalent. Hence, if the EECMY has to effectively promote its Church planting among them, it needs to take this into account and undertake further missiological studies on this subject and carefully contextualize its teaching approach

so that it respects *Waaqayyo Tokkicha* as one God, that is monotheism rather than as polytheism which is considered as offensive to Oromos.

5.4.2 Contextual perception of *ayyanna*/deities and *Waaqayyo Guraacha*

In contrast to the previous argument that Oromo religion is monotheistic, sharing characteristics with the Christian understanding of God, OTR seems to have fallen under the suspicion of polytheism after contact with the EOC, when the foreign nature of traditional religion was imposed on the people to the extent of replacing their original religion, particularly in Western Central and Northern Oromia (Hassen, 1994, 34; Forslund, 1993, 57; Bakke, 1987, 44-45; Bartels, 1983, 41). Notably, after this contact, there were two types of *Ayyannas*, one of which was imposed on the Oromos and the other which was traditionally known to the people. With regard to the former, Megerssa, an Oromo anthropologist, explains that there are 'other peripheral attributes of *ayyaana which* have been acquired through interaction with Christianity, Islam and other belief systems with which the Oromo world has interacted' (2005, 68). As previously discussed, these Ayyaanas are said to be the strange cults which had been built on belief in spirit possession and rejected by the community. Conversely, Megerssa supports the view that 'the Borana [the Southern and possibly the South-east Oromo people group] are considered to be living guardians of the Oromo culture and religion'; one may not observe the 'peripheral attributes of *ayyaana'* in that part of Oromia (2006, 2).

If this is the case, how do the Oromo people perceive their original *Ayyaanas* and what is their relationship with *Waaqayyo Tokkicha?* The term *ayyaana* is part of a living tradition that implies several technical meanings. Among these, 'divinity, spirit and grace, fortunes' (Bitima, 2000, 41) are the main ones which provide a good entry point for our present discussion. According to Megerssa a further meaning of *ayyaana* refers to that by and through which *Waaqayoo* creates everything. Ayyaana is, therefore, that which exists before and after that which it causes to come into existence' (2005, 72). In this manner *Ayyaana* is the spiritual deity through which *Waaqayo moves and* acts in this world and creates everything. It is also through this *ayyaana* that *Waaqayo* is always approached (Davidson and Gitlitz, 2002, 590). Additionally, the *Ayyaanas* are believed to have different duties as helpers and

messengers of *Waaqayoo* as well as guardians of all creatures. Bartels further comments that *Ayyaanas* are believed to appear in multiple approaches, each which manifest the Oromo *Waaqayoo Tokkicha* (1983, 14; see also Tiassam, 2005, 100-119). Accordingly, they manifest in persons, particularly the Oromo religious and ritual experts, *Qaallus*, who maintain an effective relationship between the Oromos and *Ayyaanas* (Kenno, 2006, 46). By having relationships with the *Ayyaanas, Qaallus* are also responsible for safeguarding the Oromos' religion from foreign influences, blessing individuals or groups, as well as social and ritual meetings, and consecrating newly elected *Gadaa* leaders as religious and ritual experts as explained in chapters one and four (Melba, 1998, 24; Djillo, 1997, 6; Bakke, 1987, 48). Traditionally, therefore, Oromos perceive *Ayyaanas* as mediating spirits between the high divine *Waaqayyo* (God) and humans as manifestations of *Waaqayyo Tokkicha.* Thus, the concept that the multiple *Ayyaanas* manifest *Waaqayyo Tokkicha* alone rather than themselves, and the safeguarding office of *Ayyaanas* from foreign religious influences (for example, in denouncing witchcraft and reacting against the evil spirit possession cults in their religious practices) may suggest that the Oromos' belief in *Ayyaana* divinities is not a convincing argument for associating the Oromo religion with evil spirits and man-made gods. Furthermore, if polytheism means a belief in the existence of independent gods, it can hardly be an acceptable explanation of the indigenous views of the *Waaqayoo Tokkicha* (Supreme Being) and the *Ayyaanas* (lesser gods) who are believed to be the messengers of the Supreme. Accordingly, Oromo religion adherents' belief in the existence of many *Ayyaanas* may not necessarily warrant the claim that the Oromo believe in the existence of other independent gods or evil spirits needs to be taught against in order to Christianize the non-evangelized Oromo people. As Melba argues the Oromos have never worshipped false gods or carved statues and substitutes (1988, 19), thus the EECMY teaching may be said to be erroneous. Supporting this view, an interviewee suggested that, as the original Oromos' religion does not historically have any relation to false gods, the existence of Ayyannas' deities may not justify Oromos' religion as multiple religions'. It is arguable, therefore, that from a Christian point of view the Holy Spirit could be understood as a mediator who establishes a link between *Waaqayyo* and human beings. In my understanding, although it is not **to** be equated with *Ayyaanas,* it could be another way of saying the Christian Holy Spirit that continues to live, to influence the lives of people and to give them abundant life

according to his promises. This is one way in which I propose that Christianity could be contextualized among Oromo people and it is ideas such as this that should be developed theologically further by the EECMY.

The Oromos' designation of their God as *Waaqayyo Guracha* has also been associated with *Ayyannas* and taught against. However, as discussed in chapter four, it is verified in literature and through the fieldwork that in their worldview the term *Guracha* (black) determines the social, cultural and religious life of individuals and community. For example, religiously it symbolizes the incomprehensiveness and mystery of *Waaqayyo* beyond human imagination, yet it is to be revealed and this identifies his transcendence. If this is the case, arguably the expression the Oromo people use for *Waaqayyo Guracha* may not only symbolize their religion but also their wider social and cultural life aspects from where they may interpret their spiritual and material matters. Megerssa argues that the Christian churches in Oromia borrow 'their faith from the Judaeo-Christian tradition….revered a Western God [sic] and reduced the Oromo Belief in *Waaqayyo Guracha* to a form of devil worship' associated with the foreign nature of traditional practices imposed on the people (Megerssa, 1996, 97). Although Megerssa's statement seems an oversimplification it indicates that the churches in Ethiopia, including the EECMY, have understated and undermined the Oromos' perception of the name *Waaqayyo Guracha* without making any significant critical theological evaluation. The fact that some Oromos seem to have been loyal to the traditional practices imposed on them, or willingly express their allegiances to the *Waaqayyo Tokicha* (One-God) and to other gods such as imposed by *Ayyaanas*, is hardly a convincing argument against the claim that the idea of a One-God has always been part of the structure of their indigenous religious outlook (Guta, 2003, 57). It is possible that the churches might have undermined the Oromo's religion as a whole, contending that the people whose indigenous religious worldview is monotheistic should not seek other gods or be loyal to other sources. Since the Oromo community are susceptible to seeking other gods, it follows that their traditional worldview is polytheistic and not monotheistic. This supposition is unjustified. According to Guta even some adherents of monotheistic religions sometimes consult other gods (2003, 56). For example, it is evident that many Jews at different times discarded Yahweh to worship other gods. As discussed above, despite acknowledging that some Oromos' belief in the existence of many *Ayyannas*

is a possible legitimate description for some people's multiple religious fidelities, it may be argued that the existence of such multiple allegiances does not necessarily justify the assertion that the idea of a *Waaqayyo Tokkicha* (One-God) is foreign to the Oromo traditional religious practices. Therefore, considering the Oromos' religious worldview towards *Waaqayyo Tokkicha* as one God, and their connotations for *Ayyannas* and *Waaqayyo Guurachaa*, the EECMY needs to undertake further theological studies and devise some strategies to contextualize its western version of Christianity into such a rich religious understanding of the community. This could be another way of helping the unevangelized Oromo people to accept the Gospel message.

EECMY Christian teaching largely reflects a one-sided (unbalanced) process. The Church ministers (theologians, pastors, evangelists and leaders) who construct various teachings for the Church have considered a western-based teaching, a belief which does not take any account of the worldviews and religious experiences of the Oromo people. As I have argued through the chapters, it is such attitudes and teaching which have resulted in the alienation from Christianity of the people. Thus, the Church needs to include an explanation of Christian teaching in light of Oromo worldviews and their experiences, as well as an examination of their worldviews and experiences. This also challenges the EECMY to have a culturally informed or revised theological training curriculum as will be discussed next.

5.5 Contextualizing theological training for Church planting

In chapter one analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of theological training was made, and in chapter two how this weakness has impacted on the success of Church planting was analysed. Based on these analyses, I suggest that a contextually informed theological training curriculum needs to be created and developed. This includes: firstly, short courses/workshops, secondly, primary theological training and thirdly, advanced theological education.

5.5.1 Contextualizing short courses/workshops

It is evident that short courses/workshops have been an effective basic training trend for Church ministries, including Church planting. Traditionally, such short training courses, which range from a single day to about 90 days, are particularly designed

for awareness raising and the like for various people groups of the Church. My primary focus in this proposal is the newly planted church members and their lay ministers (i.e. congregation elders, choir members, lay preachers, Sunday school teachers, and various committees' members). Such training is vital for them because most are not eligible for other advanced training due to their educational backgrounds (Bakke, 1987, 144). Rendering a contextually informed theological training for new Church planted areas is very important. For example, contextual teaching such as that regarding the possibilities of using cultural resources such as church buildings, musical instruments, liturgical vestments, wine and forms of bread, vessels, cups and dishes that are made and used locally, rather than tending to have expensive foreign imported items which culturally and economically exploit the local community. Missiological teaching such as this would encourage them to be more comfortable with the Christian religion and also attract unevangelized Oromos to accept the religion.

5.5.2 Contextualizing theological training

Primary theological training

As discussed in chapter one, there are two primary theological training categories: the Residential Bible Schools (RBS) and Theological Education by Extension (TEE). More than half of these training institutions are located in Oromia (EECMY-CEC, 1999, 7). According to the discussion and analysis made in chapters one and four the theological training schemes have not been entirely successful in preparing people for Church planting among the Oromo people. The primary reason is that very little Oromo culture has been integrated into the curriculum. This includes language and tradition with the result that the evangelists and pastors could not properly contextualize the western oriented EECMY Christian belief into the context of the people which appears to be another contributing factor for the lack of success of Church Planting among them (c.f. Bakke, 1987, 260). Ujulu argues that the EECMY theological education curricula must consider the local context (1997, 73). Similarly, Ngally, in a wider African context contends that 'the training of ministers and the passing-on of the gospel to Africans should take our traditional heritage into account' (1975, 33). In this respect I suggest that integrating Oromo culture and religious teaching into the EECMY primary theological training curriculum and carefully considering Oromo traditional values would improve the effectiveness of Church

planting. The theological training institutions in Oromia should also use the Oromo language as the medium of instruction and produce text books in the currently consolidated common dialect. Furthermore, Samuel suggests that 'Bible School students should not be allowed to graduate until they are able to explain the Gospel in their own language' (cited in Breezy, 2003, 17). This is what is earnestly needed in order to successfully plant Churches among the non-evangelized Oromos.

Advanced theological training

There is a third theological category, which is that of advanced theological training. It comprises one national seminary (MYTS) and three regional seminaries, two of which are located in Oromia. As demonstrated in previous chapters their curricula are entirely predominated by western Lutheran theology as well as EOC tradition (Sadi, 2003, 122). Not only is there a lack of local socio-cultural studies, but the western oriented theological education appears to have impacted on the life of the trainees to the extent that they are slowly encouraged to leave their culture and take on much of the western influence, viewing themselves differently from the local community (Nambala, 1997, 8; Bradshaw, 1984, IV). The ministry they render and the lives they then live become foreign to the people around them. This is evident in Oromia and, consequently, Church planting has been ineffective among many Oromos. Arguably, this should urge the EECMY to adequately contextualize the training curriculum. I would suggest that the advanced theological training institutions, which train students from various ethnic groups in a different way, should also consider integrating into the theological training curriculum the study of African Traditional Religion including the various Ethiopian ethnic groups' anthropology, as well as methods of contextualizing the EECMY Christian belief and methods of evangelizing the non-evangelized people. This would enable the trainees to translate western Christianity into the context of the local people and assimilate themselves into community life in order to be more useful to the Church planting mission.

Conclusion

This chapter has responded to the cultural and religious impediments of the EOC, the western missionaries and the EECMY which together have characterized the failure of the Church planting strategies. In view of the number and range of problems

facing attempts to contextualize the Gospel I have argued that it would be impossible to solve all the hindrances at one time. Nevertheless, I have suggested that implementation of some proposed methods of contextualizing the Christian tradition might improve the situation and lessen the impact of the obstacles to EECMY Church planting among the unevangelized Oromo community. I have also discussed some approaches of contextualization and the translation model used in this thesis. For example, I argue that translating the Bible, liturgical worship and Christian teaching into a common Oromo dialect would improve the success of Church planting among the non-evangelized Oromos. While there are limitations to the translation model, partly in recognizing western-based belief and teaching of the Church, I argue that it may offer a contextual approach to enable the Oromo people to interpret the EECMY beliefs into their own context in a way that is faithful and relevant. However, in order to develop further Christian praxis and to reduce the colonial perspective of tradition I suggest that indigenous songs from the very local culture of Oromo are adopted, which is a step beyond a one direction translation approach. This would further extend the Church planting mission. I have also suggested some ways of contextualizing the EECMY Christian teaching into Oromo socio-cultural contexts in order to evangelize them in a culturally informed way. In order to promote this, the Church is urged to integrate the study of Oromo anthropology into its training curriculum so that trainees are able to translate western Christianity into the context of the local people and assimilate themselves into community life in order to be more useful to the Church planting ministry. Furthermore, the translation model that I employed for this study seeks smooth contextual progress which balances Christian tradition with Oromo culture and may encourage the EECMY to benefit from the proposals so that the Church planting process among unevangelized Oromos and other communities can be improved.

Conclusion

At the outset of this research the stated goal was to explore the reasons why the Church Planting of the EECMY has not been effective among the non-evangelized Oromo community and to suggest some possible strategies which might enable the Church to evangelize them in their socio-cultural context. I argued from the evidence of the participant observation and interviews (fieldwork), supported by literature, that the EECMY has not achieved its own objective of reaching the non-evangelized Oromo people. Rather EECMY has grown by means of existing church members having children and through those who have transferred from other Christian denominations. Further, I have argued from the findings of the fieldwork that there have been five main reasons for the limited success of the evangelization of this people. These are: the EOC mission approach by imposition and its collaboration with the Abyssinian colonial expansion, the Western missionary cultural and theological influence and the uncontextualized EECMY Church planting approach and Oromos' strong preservation of their culture and tradition. In response to these cultural, political and ecclesiastical impediments, I have argued that there are certain contextualized methods of Church planting which may challenge such barriers, respect the peoples' cultural values and attract the non-evangelized Oromos to welcome an evangelical Christianity which is sensitive to their contexts. I have further argued that some contextually orientated approaches which give some positive recognition to Oromo culture and which challenge the EECMY in their limited use of contextualization, developed by grass-roots EECMY Christians, are yet to be recognized as helpful phenomenon by the Church leadership.

The introduction to the thesis explained the rationale - how my experience, as a pastor in the EECMY, had led me to recognize the ineffectiveness of the Church planting strategy of the EECMY among the non-evangelized Oromo community as a problem to be explored and addressed. In order to clarify my task, I established the aims of the thesis which were to evaluate existing approaches to Church planting in the EECMY among Oromo society, to explore ways in which the Christian Gospel and Church planting could be contextualized among Oromo society, to examine Oromo culture and religion, to examine current revival movements in Oromo religion and culture and the effect of these on Church planting, and to develop an

approach to Church planting that takes into account the role and significance of contextualization. I structured the project round these four main aims each of which became the subject of a chapter of the thesis.

In chapter one, in order to locate the thesis in its context, within the wider Ethiopian social setting I reviewed the social, cultural and religious background of the Oromo people. I showed that the Oromo people have their own history, culture, religion and language which identify them as a distinct community notwithstanding Abyssinian suppression by means of the Amharization policy over the past hundred years and longer. I argued that, if during such colonial times, either the Abyssinians or the EOC thought that the Amharization policy could bring an end to the Oromos' national and cultural identity, religion and rituals associated with the past, they have been disproven since they have continued to share a common culture, language (with diverse dialects) and forms of social communication.

I also explained that it was in the context of such a political and ecclesiastical struggle that western evangelical Christianity was introduced through various evangelistic mission strategies which were later adopted by the EECMY for further evangelization among the Oromos and other Ethiopian communities. In evaluating these traditional Church planting strategies adopted and employed by the EECMY, I showed how training indigenous persons and translating the Bible into the western Oromo dialect formed an important part of the missionary vision. However, I also argued that it was a serious weakness of most of the methods that they used both Amharic and traditional western theological and general education. Thus, I showed how they failed to engage in any serious way with the culture, language and religion of the Oromo people. I further argued that the mission strategies employed for Church planting have been only partly successful in producing approximately three million Oromos after one hundred and ten years of their Gospel expansion.

In chapter two I reviewed a historical survey of the EOC and European colonial mission approaches employed among Oromos and the non-Western world respectively. For this survey, I used the very small amount of unpublished Ethiopian literature by recent theological graduates and historians which provided important information about the Ethiopian context alongside the work of both African and

western missiologists. Important historical mission practices were analysed from David J. Bosch, Andrew F. Walls, John Parratt, Tadesse Tamrat, Oyvind M. Eide, Johnny Bakke and Gustav Aren, but the lack of academic sources from Oromo or Ethiopian writers or theologians gave a further reason for using fieldwork as a key research methodology. The literature was valuable in showing how different mission models have impacted differently on the cultures of other peoples. As the result of the survey, I argued that the two colonial missions of the EOC and the European missionaries in Ethiopia had both imposed their version of Christianity appearing to assume that their cultures and ways of life were superior and more advanced than those of the recipients. I noted that such mission models still shape EECMY's approach to Church planting and are an obstacle to the acceptance of evangelical Christianity by the non-evangelized Oromo people. Notably, as the study showed, the EOC mission approach was a clear example of imposition of the Abyssinian language and culture (Amharization) on the Oromo people.

In chapter 3, I discussed fieldwork, which was my primary research method because of a gap in the literature on mission in Ethiopia. Equally significantly, I used fieldwork in order to listen to the voices of and observe the interaction of the Oromo cultural and traditional leaders and common people as well as the Oromo EECMY members and ministers. My purpose was to collect information about how and why Church planting has been unsuccessful among the non-evangelized Oromo people. I employed qualitative methods of data collection as the best way of gathering detailed information and guaranteeing accurate data. The methods selected were interviews and participant observation using purposive sampling. I therefore interviewed members of the non-evangelized Oromo traditional community and religious members and leaders in very rural areas of the regions. My semi-structured interviews addressed their past and contemporary situation, to discover why they have not yet been evangelized. Additionally, I interviewed the EECMY members and ministers and investigated their observations about the success of Church planting among the non-evangelized Oromos from the four sample areas. I also observed a number of social and cultural community meetings and religious practices of the Oromo as well as certain EECMY evangelistic workshops and Sunday worship services. The data confirmed my initial hypothesis and appeared to provide further evidence of the accuracy of the previous two chapters.

Having discussed in chapter 3 why and how I used fieldwork, in chapter 4, I argued from the fieldwork data that the success of the EECMY Church planting and its membership growth seems to have been only within the Christian Church itself, either from the Christian families by baptism or by people transferring from one denomination to another. This suggests that the specific strategy of 'Church planting' i.e., establishing new Christian communities among non-evangelized persons, is not taking place in line with its objectives. In the second part of the chapter, I discussed five key reasons from the fieldwork which demonstrated why Church planting has not operated as a successful strategy among the Oromo people. These were the EOC colonial mission approach together with EOC collaboration with the suppressive Abyssinian colonial system, the western missionary cultural influence, the uncontextualized EECMY Church planting strategy, and the Oromos' own strong preservation of their culture and tradition.

I argued first that the approach of the EOC alongside the Abyssinian government was as much political as religious, using mass baptism, Amharization through name change and the use of Semitic languages in worship, compelling people to build churches using their own financial and human resources, and destroying their cultural entities and religious shrines. The effect of such coercion was to make the Oromo suspicious of anything labelled 'Christian' because Christianity was associated with de-Oromoniaztion and colonization. A second reason was the cultural influence of western missionaries. The study showed that the western missionaries collaborated with the Abyssinian colonial expansion by extending Amharization through the state education curriculum and employed the Amharic language for both preaching and teaching. Through their Christian teaching they also imposed their western cultural and theological values (e.g. western forms of liturgy). Moreover, the persecution of those Oromo evangelical Christians by the EOC for allegedly using their own language and being foreign agents seeking to influence Ethiopian society with a western religious form of colonialism was noted. I also argued that Church planting failed because the EECMY failed to engage fully with the Oromo social, cultural and religious value, for example the *Gadaa* system, the language and religion instead imposing missionary worship practices on the people. Finally, in this chapter, I showed that the Oromos' strong preservation of their

culture, religion, and language over against the foreign (Abyssinian and Western) colonial orientated versions of Christianity, which they believed would weaken their *Orommuuma* (Oromo identity), was a further significant reason for the relative failure of Church planting.

The aim of chapter 5 was to respond to the preceding chapters which had discussed the colonial legacy, and cultural, ecclesiastical and theological impediments of the EOC, the western missionaries and the EECMY which characterised the failure of the Church planting strategies. In view of the number and range of problems facing attempts to contextualise the Gospel I argued that it would not be possible to remove all the cultural, traditional and theological hindrances. However, I proposed that through implementation of contextualizing strategies they might pave the ways and relegate the impact of the obstructions to EECMY Church planting among the unevangelized Oromo community.

My objective was to develop an appropriate model of contextualization and that identified draws on what Bevans calls the 'translation model' (Bevans, 2006, 37). This was chosen because a model was needed that took contextualization seriously, but recognized that, for the time being at least, the only model of contextualization that EECMY is likely to adopt is one that seeks to remain faithful to the current teachings of the Church. Recognizing the limitations of this model, any alternative approach to contextualization would have probably been rejected by EECMY and so a model was needed that was practical and acceptable to the tradition to which this thesis is addressed. This model was the one that EECMY would be most likely to adopt and therefore, the only possible model that could be chosen to transform mission praxis among Oromo people at the present time.

In the first part of the chapter, I discussed the theory of the chosen contextualization and translation model and then I made suggestions about how the theory might be implemented to contextualize the Church planting of the EECMY among the Oromo. Beginning with the theory of contextualization, I discussed the process of developing the translation model that is employed in this thesis. After comparing and contrasting the term contextualization with the terms inculturation and indigenization, both of which seem to concentrate on particular or local culture, I decided to use the concept

of contextualization as it deals with the cultural, socio-economic and religious lives of the people in a wider manner than the rest. I then proposed contextualization as an incarnational/interpretive tool in terms of translating the EECMY western version of Christianity into a given Oromo socio-cultural and economic context where the people may become able to accept, own and practise it as their own faith. From the three types of approaches for contextualization that I investigated - uncritical, rejecting and critical - the last approach (critical) is relevant to my thesis as it critically assesses both western Christianity and the Oromos' culture and tradition in the process of developing a contextual Church planting strategy. To achieve this, I discussed a number of other models of contextualization but selected the translation model. While there are limitations to the translation model partly in recognizing a Western-based belief and teachings of the Church, I argue that it will also provide a contextual approach which may enable the Oromo people to interpret the EECMY beliefs into their context in a way that is reliable and relevant and also paves the way for further theological work.

In the second part of the chapter I argued that translating the Bible into a common Oromo dialect would improve the Church planting among the non-evangelized Oromos. My discussion included a number of issues: an explanation of translation, evaluation of the existing Bible translation, an effective method of translation and its significance for Church planting. Evaluation of the existing version of the Bible in the Western Oromo dialect showed that despite its substantial contribution to the expansion of evangelical Christianity and its groundwork for contextualization, its standard of translation, exclusiveness of dialect and cultural poor fit made it unsatisfactory for the current and future evangelism ministry of the EECMY. To address such a problem, I suggested a functional equivalent translation approach which preserves the equal value of the source but also draws meanings from the culture one step beyond the tradition in order to pave the way for further missiological development.

A further task of translation was the contextualization of EECMY liturgical worship for the Oromo. Again, one of the suggestions made was to improve the translation of the liturgy into a common Oromo language by Oromo nationals who have expertise in both common and diversified Oromo dialects as well as culture. Yet I argued that

translation alone might not be enough to complete the process of contextualization without integrating and inculturating some appropriate Oromo cultural elements into the liturgical worship which might enable the people to consider the Christian liturgy as their own. To respond to such a need I considered the use of the native Oromo song which might be an effective strategy for Church planting among the Oromo people because the Oromos value highly their cultural dances and songs which they use to express themselves in their wider social, cultural and religious contexts. I suggested that accepting contextually composed songs and melodies and adapting them to the liturgical text may enrich the Church liturgy and enable the members to participate fully in the worship and fully consider the Christian practices to be their own. While recognizing the significance of contemporary Oromo cultural understanding in liturgical translations and contextualization, I did not suggest the complete subordination of the liturgy to cultural elements. The liturgy and culture must be balanced in an expressive and relevant way.

I also discussed and suggested some ways of contextualizing the EECMY Christian teachings into Oromo socio-cultural contexts in order to evangelize them in a culturally informed way. For example, the Oromos' belief in *Waaqayyo Tokkicha* as one-God and how this could be contextually understood were discussed. I began arguing that the whole EECMY teaching materials which have been produced for various evangelism projects including Church planting mission have not taken contextualization seriously in their preparation both for nurturing members and reaching the unreached ones in Oromia. The materials also seemed foreign because they were produced entirely in Amharic and did not reflect the Oromos' socio-cultural context. Therefore, as an essential step, I suggested that the teaching material needs to be translated into a common Oromo language and contextualized along with other Christian traditions suggested earlier to adequately meet the purpose of nurturing and evangelizing the new converts. This may also pave the way for further theological work.

I also contended that the EECMY Christian teaching against the Oromos' belief in *Waaqayyo* as one God is a result of partial misunderstanding. I showed that the Oromos' belief in *Waaqayyo Tokkicha* as one-God or monotheism is not a new development since the introduction of Christianity and Islam into the country.

However, I showed that there are two types of *Ayyannas*, one of which was imposed on the Oromos and rejected by the community as a result the Western Oromos welcomed evangelical Christianity; the other *Ayyaanas* are traditionally known as fortunes, messengers and spirits which bring God's messages to the people through *Qaallus* (religious leaders). In the Oromos' worldview the word *Guraacha* religiously symbolizes the mystery of *Waaqayyoo* yet to be revealed and this identifies his transcendence. Adding my own observation as being an Oromo to the other Western anthropologists' researches on the subject, I argued that the Oromos have believed in *Waaqayyo Tokkicha* as one-God before and after the introduction of Christianity and Islam. In this context, I suggested that if the following two points were considered in the EECMY Christian teaching it would motivate the unevangelized Oromos to accept evangelical Christianity. Firstly, despite the fact that the Oromos' understanding of *Waaqayyo Tokkicha* is not identical it could be considered equivalent to the Christian God, *Ayyannas* to Spirit of God and *Waaqayyo Guracha* to God mysterious. Secondly, I suggested that it would be helpful for the EECMY to undertake wider critical missiological studies on this subject and on its Church planting experience in Western Oromia where embracing the equivalence of Oromo monotheism, belief in a great spirit and in the mystery of God has been partly successful.

Contextually informed theological (primary and advanced) training was also proposed to improve Church planting. In short course training, such as workshops, I argued that the newly converted Christians need to be aware of recognizing and acknowledging the importance of using their local financial and cultural resources for culturally informed an innovative low cost church buildings and use musical instruments, liturgical vestments, wine and forms of bread, vessels, cups and dishes that are made and used locally, rather than tending to have expensive foreign imported items which culturally and economically exploit them. Additionally, I also suggested that the Theological Training Institutions in Oromia should integrate the study of Oromo Anthropology and the National Mekane Yesus Theological Seminary (MYTS) and other regional seminaries which train students from various ethnic groups should also consider the study of African Traditional Religion including the various Ethiopian ethnic groups' cultures and religions as well as methods of contextualizing the western based Christian beliefs and methods of

evangelizing the non-evangelized people into the theological training curricula. This would enable the trainees to translate Western Christianity into the context of the people and also to assimilate themselves into the community life in order to be more useful to the Church planting mission.

I concluded the last chapter by recognizing the conservative nature of the EECMY and the partial newness of the suggested contextual approaches for advancing Church planting among the unevangelized Oromo and other communities as well as its acceptance as a feasible and effective methodology. I acknowledged that change may not be a smooth process. However, as the current social and cultural changes which are affecting the Church are stronger than at any other time in the past, accepting a contextual approach for the Church mission is an imperative. Additionally, the translation model that I developed for this study seeks smooth contextual progress which balances Christian tradition with Oromo culture. Amongst others, these two reasons may encourage the EECMY to accept the proposals so that the evangelization process among the unevangelized Oromos and other communities can be improved.

In the light of the introductory work in this thesis, further work needs to be done on constructing an advanced 'contextual theology' of mission among Oromo people, that perhaps goes beyond the translation approach I have developed in chapter five. In order to do this, further research work on Oromo social, economic, cultural and religion needs to be undertaken. In particular, this could be done as a result of an ongoing reflection on mission praxis that may be adopted in light of the proposals made in this thesis.

The concluding statement above reflects the fundamental significance of the study anticipated at the beginning of the thesis. In this thesis I have stepped again into the pathway of missiology; I am standing at the closure of the study-based academic journey but in reality I am at the beginning of a new approach to Church planting among my people.

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Appendix 1

Gadaa: The Oromo age-grade system

Gadaa(Age-grade)	Period	Rite
Dabballee	0-8 years of age	From childhood to boyhood Cannot go away from home Usually taken care of by mothers at home areas
Follee	8-16 years of age	Circumcision (Muslim and Coptic) Initiated into adolescence Tending cattle and crops Can go to oversight dances Minor hunting practices Games/wrestling/sports Ploughing or tilling
Qondaala	16-24 years of age	Initiated into manhood Major hunting Oversees the Follee, hunting and playing games
Kuusa	24-32 years of age	Initiated into full manhood Can go to war Takes care of household needs Responsible for the needs of extended family Interact with community life at all levels Period for wife searching
Raaba-Doorii	32-40 years of age	Time to establish own family House construction Marriage Full community member
Gadaa	40-48 years of age	Government Politics, religion and rituals leadership
Lubba/Gadaamojjii/ Jaarsa	48 years of age and above	Seniority / Advisory work Circumcision (Very rare nowadays) Butta and Qaallu

Appendix 2.1

Three Different Semi-structured Interviews

Guide Interview Questions 1

These interview questions will be conducted with the EECMY Evangelistic Outreach or Church Planting Mission Co-coordinators and Evangelists, those who have been in these positions in the past, as well as those who are still in service.

The purpose of the interviews is to identify the challenges these people face and the efforts they make towards evangelizing the Oromo people and the mission strategies they have used in the past or are currently using.

1. What is your position in the EECMY Evangelistic Outreach Mission?
   For how long have you been in this position?
2. What was your religious background, how and why did you leave it to join the EECMY and when?
3. How do you feel about EECMY Church Planting among the Oromo people?
4. Who do you think is the main focus of the EECMY Church planting/outreach mission?
5. How do you feel about the EECMY Evangelistic Outreach Mission approach to the Oromo community?
6. How do you consider the success of the EECMY mission among the Oromo people?
7. What do you think is the obstacle to EECMY Church planting?
8. What do suggest for the success of the EECMY among the non-evangelized Oromo people?
9. From your experience as a Church minister how do the Oromo communities consider the mission of the EOC, western missionaries and the EECMY?
10. How do you evaluate the EECMY Christian teaching, worship and Church planting?
11. What do you think is the best approach or strategy for the EECMY Evangelistic Outreach or Church Planting Mission?

Appendix 2.2

Guide Interview Questions (2)

These interview questions are for former and new EECMY congregation members, elders and young people, for the purpose of understanding how they accepted Christianity, and how they view the traditional (western) worship practices (hymns, melody, liturgy, music instruments and the like).

1. What was your religious background before coming to Christianity? How did you accept Christianity?
2. Have you faced any problems due to accepting Christianity? If so, how did you manage them?
3. What do you consider to be the main focus of the EECMY?
4. To what extent has the EECMY evangelistic approach considered the Oromo culture, language and world views?
5. Do you think there is any Christian belief or teaching or worship system which you still find difficult to understand or follow? To what extent are you familiar with your churches' liturgical structure?
6. Which do you prefer: the traditional style of liturgy and hymns or the contemporary indigenous ones? How do you feel about them?
7. What would you think if all Oromos wore their cultural dress when they come to Church?
8. How do you view the choir wearing cultural dress when they sing?
9. What do you think are the strengths and weaknesses of the EECMY Evangelistic or Church planting mission approaches?

Appendix 2.3

Guide Interview Questions three.

Questions for identifying the indigenous Oromo cultural and traditional religious value and the impact of Christianity.

1. Would you tell me your religious background? For how long have you been in this religion?

2. What is your status in the Oromo Traditional Religion? How did you come to this position and for how long have you been in this Position? What is your main responsibility according to Oromo Religion?

3. What is your status in the Oromo community of your area?

4. How would you describe the significant aspects of the Oromo language, culture and religion in Oromia today?

5. What is the status of the Oromo Traditional Religion in Oromia today?

6. How do Oromo people practise this religion and how often do they get together to do so?

7. What is the main part of the religion? What would happen if God (*Waaqaayo*) is not part of the religion?

8. How do the Oromo people understand the Christian religion? How do you see the Oromo Christians?

9. How do the Oromo people view the EOC, Western missionaries and EECMY missions and their attitudes towards their culture and the Oromo Traditional Religion?

Appendix 3.1

Interview transcript number one – interview conducted with a Church Planting Mission Co-coordinator who was also a pastor

These interview questions will be conducted with the EECMY Evangelistic Outreach or Church Planting Mission Co-coordinators and Evangelists, those who have been in these positions in the past, as well as those who are still in service.

The purpose of the interviews is to identify the challenges these people face and the efforts they make towards evangelizing the Oromo people and the mission strategies they have used in the past or are currently using.

1. What is your position in the EECMY Evangelistic Outreach Mission? For how long have you been in this position?

    I am a Pastor and have been serving the EECMY for the last 30 years as congregations' pastor, parish pastor and Parish leader.

2. What was your religious background, how and why did you leave it to join the EECMY and when?

    Starting from my parents and my own family we were from the Orthodox Church. Later on we all joined the EECMY. The reason we left the EOC was that, historically, the Church is the main instrument of the Abyssinians' oppressive ruling system. Additionally, except for being baptized and celebrating the Epiphany once a year during the month of January, we do not clearly know about Christianity. Even when we go to the church we cannot understand *'degamma Kesota'* the priests' prayer or liturgy and teaching as they speak in Geez and Amharic alternatively.

3. How do you feel about EECMY Church Planting among the Oromo people?

    The EECMY Church planting mission among the Oromo people is much better than the other religions, such as Islamic religion, EOC and even other protestant churches. Although the non-Christian Oromos still resist the EECMY and other evangelical Christianity because of the EOC mission legacy, Abyssinian cultural influences and linguistic problems, the western Oromos appreciate the Church in many ways. It is this Church which opened our eyes through the Gospel teaching, translated the Bible into our western dialect and established educational sectors and medical facilities. In general, despite western missionary cultural influences which have not fully considered Oromo tradition, relatively, it is better than others.

4. How do you feel about the EECMY Evangelistic Outreach Mission approach to the Oromo community?

The EECMY is the pioneer evangelical Church to be planted among the Oromo people about 110 years ago when it started its work among the Western Oromo people. The mission approach of the EECMY has been comparatively appreciated. But nowadays people have started to complain about their culture and tradition which have not been seriously considered in the liturgical worship. There are many relevant Oromo cultural and religious elements which could be adapted to Christian worship.

5. Who do you think is the main focus of the EECMY Church planting/outreach mission?

Theoretically, the EECMY Outreach programme [Church planting] mainly focuses on the non-Christian communities. Indeed, as far as I know, as a pastor of this Church, our Church proclaims the Good News for all human beings and our door is also open to accept whoever wants to accept Jesus Christ as his or her own saviour and needs to be our Church member. This could be how many Orthodox Christians became our members. Of course, we do also have people from Islamic and traditional religions and other protestant churches.

6. How do you consider the success of the EECMY mission among the Oromo people?

According to my understanding the EECMY seems to have been relatively successful in the western part of Oromia, due to the fact that its mission has been accompanied by both spiritual and material help as I mentioned before. Despite severe persecutions, the Western Oromo people accepted this mission in order to escape from the EOC domination and the foreign traditional practices of *Qallichaa* which tended to replace the original Oromo traditional religion and its *Qaalluu* office or practices as a cultural domination. However, in many other Oromia regions, such as the south and east, north and central, the EECMY Church planting mission is yet to reach out successfully.

7. What do you think is the obstacle to EECMY Church planting?

Good question. From my experience, I can mention a lot of things. The severe persecution of our members by the Orthodox Church and its Amharization expansion mission in the name Christianity has badly affected the Church planting. The western missionary cultural and theological influences and the lack of Oromo cultural considerations are substantial reasons. For example, our missionary instructors and their trained indigenous teachers had taught us the entire western church history and how the church expanded in Europe as well as how it reached other worlds including Africa. We also studied the entire western theology which had been developed in their cultural and religious contexts. Moreover, subjects such as how to contextualize the

western theology into our cultural and religious contexts which might help us [trainees] to value our tradition and go forward for further Gospel expansion or Church planting was not raised.

8. From your experience as a Church minister how do the Oromo communities consider the mission of the EOC, Western missionaries and the EECMY?

The Oromo community largely consider the Orthodox Church as an Amhara colonial organization with some exceptions. The Oromo people cannot see the difference between the Amhara oppressive ruling system and Orthodox Christianity. In general, both of them are anti-Oromo identity, culture, religion and language. In the case of the western missionaries, in particular, the evangelized Christians who have gained different humanitarian assistance like education and so on really appreciated them. However, in terms of using the Amharic language, disregarding Oromo culture and tradition the missionaries and the EECMY are also criticized.

9. How do you evaluate the EECMY Christian teaching, worship and Church planting?

Our EECMY Christian teaching, liturgy or worship and Church planting largely reflect western cultural and theological ways and symbols so that it still in most cases seems foreign to our Oromo culture. For example, its rites and vestments and the like are still all western. Of course, attempts have been made to indigenize, but there are only a few examples of prayer, songs, music and instruments and translations of western songs and Bible into western Oromo dialect.

10. What do you suggest for the success of the EECMY among the non-evangelized Oromo people? What do you think is the best approach or strategy for the EECMY Evangelistic Outreach or Church Planting Mission?

I personally suggest, if the Church is to hold onto its existing members and further evangelize the unevangelized Oromos, it must urgently revise its Church planting mission approach in a way that gives a meaningful message for all Oromos. These could be translating the Bible, liturgy and other teaching literature into the single and common Oromo *Oromiffa.* Additionally, the Church also needs look for relevant Oromo cultural and traditional elements, such as melodies of cultural songs, musical instruments and traditional gowns for choirs and also reconsider some social cultural ceremonies such as 'marriage blessing rites' in order to adapt them into its liturgical worship. These may help as an effective Church planting approach.

Appendix 3.2

Interview transcript number two – interview with a congregation memeber

These interview questions are for former and new EECMY congregation members, elders and young people, for the purpose of understanding how they accepted Christianity, and how they view the traditional (western) worship practices (hymns, melody, liturgy, music instruments and the like).

1. What was your religious background before coming to Christianity?
   How did you accept Christianity?

   I was told that I was baptized at the Orthodox Church and my parents and I used to be Orthodox. However, we did not know what Christianity meant. Of the many things that I can tell you about this church is that we were told to fast 280 days a year and also to venerate all of the Saints' days and miss work in order to do so. If we did not do this we were called *'aramaenne'* and *'tsera-mariam'* (literally, pagan, non-religious, anti-Mary and so forth). We also could not understand the language used in the Church so that we could not fully participate in the Church practices. Finally as we were seeking where the Christian faith would be practised well, we joined the Mekane Yesus Church. Since then I have clearly understood my Christian faith.

2. Have you faced any problems due to accepting Christianity? If so, how did you manage them?

   By chance, personally I have not faced problems except the tension. But I know many members, pastors and evangelists have faced many problems. For example, from our area, one pastor was in prison for four years, two evangelists were jailed for 1 year and were brutally tortured. Other Christian members were in prison for 11 months.

3. What do you consider to be the main focus of the EECMY?

   I think the main focus of the EECMY needs to be evangelizing the non-evangelized people including the Oromos as many of them are yet to be reached. In order to do this the existing members need to be mobilized to witness to their relatives and friends. Secondly, the Church needs to use their language and consider the culture and tradition of the Oromo people.

4. To what extent has the EECMY evangelistic approach considered the Oromo culture, language and world views?

   The EECMY has, on the one hand, made some attempts to consider people's language, culture and tradition in its policy decisions as we heard. On the other hand, however, it appears that the Church violates its ambition and decisions. I was personally a victim of such an incident. For example, I am

from a recently planted Church. During my wedding, as usual, young girls from our community came together to perform wedding singing and dancing for the cultural celebration. Culturally, dancing and singing takes place around the boy's and girl's house in the evening two or three weeks prior to the wedding and terminates on the wedding date. For example, the singers on the side of the bridegroom praise him and his relatives while degrading the bride and her relatives by their songs. During such occasions typically the dancing group for a while has to refuse the bride entry into the bridegroom's house upon her arrival accompanied by the bridegroom's wedding companions. Such activity is known as *Balbal qaba*. The same was true of the singers on the bride's side. This was, therefore, also done during my wedding. However, the dancing group and I were warned with the threat of excommunication from the church membership for some time. Since this was purposely done to warn other Christians of the area and elsewhere, the community at large was aggravated. Unfortunately, such Oromo cultural ignorance and the action taken against me and others have significantly impeded Gospel expansion in our region and elsewhere.

5. Do you think there is any Christian belief or teaching or worship system which you still find difficult to understand or follow? To what extent are you familiar with your church's liturgical structure?

Yes, indeed. In the case of the Christian teaching, sometimes our pastors and preachers use some foreign examples and words which do not have any root in the Oromo culture so that we cannot understand such things. Most of the Church liturgy or worship is foreign to our culture so that I still also find it difficult in some of the worship content and forms. My familiarity with the liturgy is still in question. Not only me and other members, but most of our pastors and evangelists themselves also sometimes cannot correctly perform the traditional liturgy; they cannot sing some of the liturgical hymns and songs. Therefore, we could not follow them properly. Yet, when they chose locally composed music that is always sensible.

6. Which do you prefer: the traditional style of liturgy and hymns or the contemporary indigenous ones? How do you feel about them?

I personally feel that in most cases, the traditional style of worship is foreign to our culture. I do not dare to say everything should be changed overnight. But I feel it is time for the EECMY to critically evaluate its western traditional style of liturgy and gradually replace it with the contemporary indigenous cultural and religious components because the absence of Oromo cultural and religious elements (for example, folk dances and local instruments) in the missionary liturgical worship and hymns have contributed to the Oromo people's disenchantment with evangelical Christianity.

7. What would you think if all Oromos wore their cultural dress when they come to Church?

I think it would be magnificent. It does not do any harm. For example, on some traditional and national and even some Church holy days like, Easter and Christmas and also Holy Communion days, some of our members wear their cultural dress. Therefore, it would be delightful if Christians wear their cultural dress.

8. How do you view the choir wearing cultural dress when they sing?

I personally accept this. Our choirs in some of our congregations have already started wearing the Oromo cultural dress gowns. I know that many Christians are also happy. But some of our Church leaders are quite uncomfortable with this, I think due to the Church tradition and the Abyssinians' and EOC oppressive political and ecclesiastical legacy. However, our leaders need to recognize that the Oromo people have been reviving their culture and tradition regardless of religion. As I mentioned earlier, if people come to Church wearing their cultural dress there is no reason to feel the choirs' gowns is a different issue.

9. What do you think are the strengths and weaknesses of the EECMY Evangelistic or Church planting mission approaches?

I think the strengths of the EECMY Evangelistic or Church planting mission approach is that its evangelization is to some extent accompanied with relatively better Christian teaching and humanitarian services (education, medical and various social facilities), which the Church calls 'Holistic Ministry'. It also has some policy decisions in order to contextualize its Church mission although it has not yet shown in practice. So its training, teaching and liturgy are still dominated by the western cultural and theological content and forms which disregard the peoples' culture and tradition. Thus, as a Church member I suggest that the Church needs to totally evaluate its Church mission in all aspects in order to reach the unreached communities and nurture the existing members in culturally informed ways.

Appendix 2.3

Interview transcript number three - interview with an Oromo traditional religious leader

Questions for identifying the indigenous Oromo cultural and traditional religious value and the impact of Christianity. This interview will be held with the Oromo community leaders, Oromo Traditional Religious leaders and other Oromo community members (lay people).

1. Would you tell me your religious background? For how long have you been in this religion?

   I do not have any religious background, except the Oromo Religion, *mukkaa Abbaa Keegnaa* [literally refers to 'our fathers' tree']. Since my birth I have been worshiping *Waaqayyo Tokkicha.* We do not know any religion except worshiping *Waaqayyo Tokkicha.*

2. What is your status in the Oromo Traditional Religion? How did you come to this position and for how long have you been in this Position? What is your main responsibility according to Oromo Religion?

   I am *Qaalluu* Oromo [Religious leader]. As *Qaalluu* Oromo is traditionally hereditary, I inherited it from my father since then I have been leading our *Qaalluu* institution. In *Qaallu's* institution (office) I look after and protect the Oromo religion from foreign religious influences and safeguard the correct teachings. I also open the religious festivals and lead the festivals by prayer.

3. What is your status in the Oromo community of your area?

   As a religious leader, I can say I am responsible for reconciliation whenever there is any conflict and disputes between individuals and communities. I also consecrate '*Muduu'* (refers to ritual anointment) the newly elected '*Abba Bokkuu/Gadaa'* leader and observe the Gada assembly and the proclamation of new laws of the Oromo national assembly *every* eight years.

4. How would you describe the significant aspects of the Oromo language, culture and religion in Oromia today?

   This is a very good question. The significant aspect of Oromo culture, language and religion is great nowadays. Despite repression by Abyssinians for hundreds of years, Oromos have still maintained and revived their culture, religion and language. Particularly, *Gadaa* is the heart of Oromo culture which regulates Oromo life. Even where *Gadaa* as a political leadership system and its ritual ceremonies have been weakened due to Abyssinian colonial pressure and different religious influences, its life norms, worldviews and social life patterns have continued to lead the Oromo people as one

nation. So as *Gadaa* culture is the Oromos' emblem, it would not be very easy for the Oromo people to forget it any time in any situation.

5. What is the status of the Oromo Traditional Religion in Oromia today?

As I mentioned before, nowadays the status of the Oromo religion in Oromia is remarkable. The present Oromo socio-cultural change has also greatly contributed to its revival movement and strengthened the Oromo people to further develop their religious practices, which went underground and simply survived until the present time.

6. How do Oromo people practise this religion and how often do they get together to do so?

They pray to their *Waaqayyo* daily every morning when they get up and every night before they go to bed. They also worship every week together, every year during their festivals, like *Irressa, attette* and so on. They do this at their homes, under the trees, on the hills, mountains and river banks and also in their *Galmas* (shrines). The have their own religious reasons for each place they worship.

7. What is the main part of the religion? What would happen if God (*Waaqaayo*) is not part of the religion?

The main part and centre of our religion is *Waaqayyo Tokkicha*. The Oromo people do not know or accept religion without *Waaqayyo.*

8. How do the Oromo people understand the Christian religion? How do you see the Oromo Christians?

The Oromo people understand the Christian religion as a colonial and oppressive religion which came to our land to destroy our religion, culture and language. So Oromos view this religion as our anti-religion and anti-Oromo identity. I also consider the Oromo Christians as the people who betrayed their own identity.

9. How do the Oromo people view the EOC, Western missionaries and EECMY missions and their attitudes towards their culture and the Oromo Traditional Religion?

Firstly, the Oromo people consider the EOC as the Abyssinians' colonial and political institution which has suppressed our religion, culture and language and changed our peoples' and places' names into Amharas' and destroyed our worshipping places from the hill tops and high places and replaced them with its oppressive Church buildings. Secondly, although the missionaries seem to be relatively better they are also not in favour of Oromo religion practices. Most of them are also white Amaharas' who speak to us in Amharic. Thirdly, the Mekane Yesus Church, however, seems better than the EOC for the Oromo people in its holistic ministry (humanitarian services,)

yet in some cases, maybe as if it has inherited some approaches from the EOC and the western missionaries; the Church destroyed the Oromos religious shrines and our religious instruments (tools) wherever it reached. I could not understand why they destroy the symbols and resources, which could be used as tourist attractions after some years.