

ABSTRACT

GILCHRIST, HORACE ERIC. Haile Selassie and American Missionaries: Inadvertent Agents of Oromo Identity in Ethiopia. (Under the direction of Owen J. M. Kalinga.)

This thesis analyzes the dynamics among the Ethiopian government under Emperor Haile Selassie, American Protestant missionaries, and the Oromo during the period of 1960-1975. The thesis argues that Selassie and the missionaries had different agendas for helping the Oromo and shows how this resulted in political and social outcomes which neither the missionaries nor emperor intended to create. One such consequence was the evolution and entrenchment of the Oromo sense of identity. Using the unpublished records of the Christian Missionary Fellowship (CMF) the thesis examines the efforts of this particular mission and that of its counterpart, the Sudan Interior Mission (SIM) of which more is known. The speeches and decrees of Haile Selassie and other government officials have also been helpful in this study, and for the Oromo particular, the thesis has had to rely on published works by the Oromo themselves.

**HAILE SELASSIE AND AMERICAN MISSIONARIES:
INADVERTENT AGENTS OF OROMO
IDENTITY IN ETHIOPIA**

by
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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my father, Horace Earl Gilchrist, who instilled in me a love and appreciation for history, and my mother, Joyce Diane Gilchrist, who instilled in me the belief that I can achieve anything with hard work.

BIOGRAPHY

The author, Horace Eric Gilchrist, was born in Hamlet, North Carolina, to Horace and Joyce Gilchrist on September 22, 1974. He obtained a Bachelor of Science degree in history from the United States Naval Academy in 1997. He is the husband of the former Melanie Denise Harrell of Portsmouth, Virginia.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Multi-ethnic nations have contended for years with the issue of how best to determine eligibility for citizenship. Democratic nations, such as the United States, use certain litmus tests, such as a belief in human rights, as one test for citizenship. Other entities, such as the Roman Empire, considered language and culture as prerequisites for citizenship, regardless of the ethnicity or race of the people. Until the twentieth century most African peoples based their citizenship on shared culture and ethnicity. One exception was Ethiopia (Abyssinia), united since the time of King Solomon around one language, Amharic, and one religion, Christianity. Most people outside Ethiopia accepted this idea as fact, but within Ethiopia this was far from the case. In fact, Ethiopia had nearly forty different ethnic groups, all of whom were subjugated by the Semitic-speaking people, the Abyssinians. Thus, in the twentieth century, being “Ethiopian” required an acceptance of the dominating Semitic culture and Christian religion. During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the Abyssinians conquered the Oromo of southern and western Ethiopia, imposing this concept of being Ethiopian on them.

Protestant missionaries entered Ethiopia, starting in the late nineteenth century, with the goal of proselytizing non-Christian ethnic groups of Ethiopia, including the Oromo. The great majority of people outside Abyssinian areas continued to practice their traditional religious beliefs or Islam until the arrival of missionaries. The Ethiopian government alienated the majority of its non-Semitic peoples through its pro-Abyssinian and pro-Orthodox Christianity policies during this period. Thus, the question arises of what role missionaries groups, such as the Christian Missionary Fellowship (CMF), played

in helping to integrate these groups, such as the Oromo, into Ethiopian society. The government of Haile Selassie encouraged Protestant missionaries to evangelize to the Oromo people, with the expectation that these groups would aid government efforts to force the Oromo to assimilate into the Abyssinian-dominated Ethiopian society.

This chapter addresses the main literature concerning religion and politics in Ethiopia. While traditional African historiography has tended to portray Ethiopia as never experiencing the type of colonial rule that dominated the rest of Africa, it did indeed experience colonialism perpetrated by the Abyssinians (Amhara and Tigreans) on Ethiopia's other ethnic minorities.¹ Ethiopians experienced many of the traditional social and political problems that arose from colonialism and its ethnic minorities had to deal with the cultural impact of colonialism on their society in the same manner as other African peoples had to endure European authority. Likewise, the issue of ethnic identity inside a colonial system became an issue of contention among Ethiopia's colonized people. Finally, Christianity and Christian missionaries played a major role in the Ethiopian colonial society, just as they did in countries colonized by Europeans.

The relationship between the role of Protestant missionaries and Haile Selassie's government in integrating the Oromo into Ethiopian society presents several historiographical challenges. Scholars have written extensively on Ethiopian politics, Orthodox Christianity, and Protestant missionaries, and they have also examined Oromo

¹ Ethiopia is divided into three major linguistic groups: Semitic, Cushitic, and Nilotic. The Cushitic speakers make up the largest majority, but the Semitic speakers are the dominant group. The Oromo are the largest Cushitic speaking people, while the Amhara are the largest Semitic groups. The Amhara and Tigreans comprise the Abyssinian culture of Ethiopia.

society and traditional religious practices.² However, no one to date has examined the role of religion in integrating individual Oromo people into the political culture. Historians tend to write exclusively about religion or about Ethiopian politics, without thoroughly examining how these topics interrelate. For instance, literature on missionary work deals solely with religious issues, with no reference to anything else. Historians have not examined adequately the religious reforms of Emperor Haile Selassie, especially as they affected the Oromo; instead, they have studied his religious reforms only as part of his political reforms.³ The lack of first-hand accounts from the Oromo about their reactions to the emperor's reforms and to missionary activities plagues all missionary literature about the group. Traditional Ethiopian historians ignore the Oromo and their plight, whereas modern historians examine the Oromo culture with a new appreciation. This review focuses on the issues of Abyssinian colonialism, the role of Haile Selassie as a political reformer, Oromo ethnic identity inside the Ethiopian colonial system, and the role of Orthodox Christianity in Ethiopian society.

Many historians argue that the Amhara and Tigreans colonized the non-Semitic-speaking people of Ethiopia in a manner similar to the European occupation of Africa at the end of the nineteenth century. Mekuria Bulcha provides a convincing argument in support of this idea. He uses credible evidence from governmental decrees and policies enacted by emperors Menelik II and Haile Selassie to suppress the Oromo language as

² For a thorough examination of Oromo traditional religious practices see Lambert Bartels, *Oromo Religion: Myths and Rites of the Western Oromo of Ethiopia—An Attempt to Understand* (Berlin: Dietrich Reimer Verlag, 1983). Mohammed Hassen also analyzes traditional Oromo society prior to Amharic domination in *The Oromo of Ethiopia: A History 1570-1860* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

³ Haile Selassie was the last emperor of Ethiopia. Marxist rebels overthrew him in 1975 after nearly fifty years of his rule.

proof of Abyssinian imperialism. He directly attributes the deficiency in Oromo literacy as “mainly attributable to Amharization policy of consecutive Ethiopian governments over the last one hundred years.”⁴ Bulcha’s use of material that shows a concerted effort by the ruling Amhara to undermine and weaken the Oromo people resembles the same type of evidence that Mahmood Mamdani uses to critique British colonialism in Nigeria and Uganda. Bulcha and Mamdani identify the assaults on cultural traits such as language as one means by which colonial regimes maintained power in Africa. Other historians, such as Edmond Keller, support Bulcha’s assessment of colonialism in Ethiopia.⁵

Edmond Keller presents another strong case for Abyssinian imperialism and examines the fallout from it in the twentieth century. He relies primarily on the policies of Haile Selassie’s government to support his argument. Keller states clearly the belief that, “the state [Ethiopia] was held together mainly by the ethnic hegemony of Shawan Amhara and other ethnic elites who had been assimilated into ‘Ethiopian’ culture, the myth of a unified Ethiopian nation state.”⁶ Once again, similarities between Abyssinian imperialism and European imperialism become readily apparent. There is a similitude between Keller’s emphasis on the Amharic government’s creation of an artificial state held together by force and Mamdani’s description of British colonialism in places such as Uganda and

⁴ Mekuria Bulcha, “The Language Policies of Ethiopian Regimes and History of Written Oromo 1884-1994,” *The Journal of Oromo Studies*, 1-2 (1994): 91.

⁵ Bulcha and Mamdani both articulate how the colonial governments implemented language programs to force the colonized groups to give up their native language.

⁶ Edmond Keller, “Regime Change and Ethno-Regionalism in Ethiopia: The Case of the Oromo,” in *Oromo Nationalism and the Ethiopian Discourse*, ed. Asafa Jalata (Lawrenceville, Red Sea Press, 1998), 111.

Nigeria.⁷ In fact, Selassie's attempt to create a stratified bureaucratic state where regional governors ruled the various ethnic groups of Ethiopia was similar to the system of indirect rule initiated by Lord Lugard in Nigeria and elsewhere in Africa.⁸

Like Bulcha and Keller, Mohammed Hassen, Asafa Jalata, and Thomas Zitelmann view Amharic imperialism as having a negative impact on Oromo society. The first two authors deal specifically with Oromo nationalism as a response to Amharic imperialism. Hassen carefully lays out the case for the emergence of the Oromo liberation organizations as a reaction to Amharic colonialism, and he contrasts the poverty that dominated most Oromo areas against the affluent Amharic areas to illustrate the negative impact of Amharic domination. He backs up his arguments with statistical data which show that less than 1% of Oromo received a formal education during the reign of Haile Selassie.⁹ Hassen states that the only difference between Ethiopia and other colonized African nations is that "Ethiopian colonial power was centered in the country itself . . . the rulers were natives."¹⁰ His assessment that Amharic domination helped to create Oromo nationalism has parallels to Mamdani's analysis of how Tutsi domination under the Belgians in colonial Rwanda

⁷ Mahmood Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject* (Princeton University Press, 1996), 37. Mamdani does an in-depth analysis of the British colonial rule and its impact on African society, using Uganda and South Africa as case studies.

⁸ Mamdani, *Citizen*, 37. Lord Lugard helped to create the preferred method of governing, called "indirect rule," for the British colonial government starting in India and Nigeria.

⁹ Mohammed Hassen, "The Macha Tulama Association and the Development of Oromo Nationalism," in *Oromo Nationalism and the Ethiopian Discourse*, ed. Asafa Jalata (Lawrenceville: Red Sea Press, 1998), 187. The Oromo peasant, workers, and intellectuals formed the Macha Tulama Association in 1967 as a response to the repression by Selassie's government of Oromo peasant revolts during the 1960s.

¹⁰ Hassen, "The Macha Tulama Association," 188.

helped to create Hutu nationalism.¹¹ Asafa Jalata also focuses on the manner in which Amharic imperialism created the framework for the rise of Oromo nationalism. He uses the *Macha Tulama* Association's creed and the historical evidence from the Oromo peasants' rebellions in the 1960s to demonstrate the existence of Abyssinian imperialistic policies.¹² Yet, Hassen's and Jalata's heavy reliance on material from Oromo political groups makes their work susceptible to a skewed view of Amhara policies.

By carefully examining the origins of the Amharic name for the Oromo, *Galla*, which means stranger, Thomas Zitelmann approaches the topic of Amharic imperialism from the perspective of its impact on Oromo society as a whole. According to Zitelmann, the Amhara have always viewed the Oromo as outsiders and not as Ethiopians. He uses a variety of sources to present a balanced perspective of Abyssinian imperialism in a way that more traditional Ethiopian historians do not.¹³ Among the latter group of scholars are Harold Marcus and Edward Ullendorff, both of whom downplay the negative impact of

¹¹ Mahood Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 116. Mamdani provides a detail examination of the emergence of Hutu nationalism called "Hutu Power" and how it led to the 1994 genocide of Tutsi. He demonstrates how the Belgian colonial system promoted the Tutsi to the detriment of the Hutus in a fashion similar to how Abyssinians advanced over the Oromo.

¹² Asafa Jalata, "The Emergence of Oromo Nationalism and the Ethiopian Reaction," in *Oromo Nationalism and the Discourse: The Search for Freedom and Democracy*, ed. Asafa Jalata (Lawrenceville: Red Sea Press, 1998), 1-27. Jalata argues that the Oromo had no sense of national unity until the Abyssinians started actively repressing them under Menelik II's and Haile Selassie's reigns. This repression caused the Oromo to no longer view themselves as independent federations as they had traditionally done. The Macha Tulama Association originated from the Oromo desire and the Selassie regime push for the Oromo to help themselves by providing social services, starting in the early 1960s. However, as the group became more powerful and political, the Selassie regime oppressed it.

¹³ Thomas Zitelmann, "Re-Examining the Galla/Oromo Relationship: The Stranger as a Structural Topic," in *Being and Becoming Oromo: Historical and Anthropological Enquire*, ed. P. T. W. Baxter, Jan Hutlin, and Alessandro Triulzi (Lawrenceville: Red Sea Press, 1996), 105.

Abyssinian colonialism on the Oromo and other ethnic groups in Ethiopia. These scholars take the position that the Amhara and Tigreans acted as a civilizing and beneficent influence on the Oromo; each downplays or totally ignores the notion of Amharic colonization of their periphery. Ullendorff portrays Abyssinian culture as inclusive and representative of Ethiopia as a whole. Relying exclusively on Abyssinian sources, he excludes the contributions of other ethnic groups to Ethiopian society. Ullendorff specifically states, “We shall mainly confine ourselves in this survey to the Semitic languages of Ethiopia, since they express the ‘real’ Abyssinia as we know it and are the virtually exclusive carriers of Ethiopian civilization, literature, civilization, and intellectual prestige.”¹⁴ In fact, Ullendorff’s use of “people” in his book title instead of “peoples” indicates that he sees the other ethnic groups of Ethiopia as unworthy of attention, and thus he excludes them from study. Similarly, Harold Marcus bases his opinion of Abyssinian imperialism on Abyssinian sources as well.¹⁵ These authors’ obvious biases greatly influence their arguments. Ullendorff and Marcus, like many European scholars, are clearly more impressed by societies with monarchical institutions than by those without.¹⁶

¹⁴ Edward Ullendorff, *The Ethiopians: An Introduction to Country and People* (London: Oxford University Press, 1973), 111-12.

¹⁵ Harold Marcus, “Does the Past Have Any Authority,” *Ethiopian Review Magazine* (1991): 18-21. Marcus attacks recent scholarship on Oromo society and Amharic colonialism as based not on facts but on hearsay. He directly accuses some scholars, such as Mohammed Hassen, of trying to “fabricate a glorious history nonexistent country” called Oromia.

¹⁶ For instance, when the British went into modern Uganda, they encountered the Baganda, who were a highly centralized monarchical society. Other groups such as the Acholi did not have monarchies, so the British promoted the Baganda over the other noncentralized groups. They viewed these groups as superior to less centrally organized groups.

Mordechai Abir presents solid historical evidence that downplays the extent of Abyssinian imperialism. Abir depicts a different perspective of Ethiopian history in which Oromo, Amhara, and Tigrean principalities competed for control over each other. Unlike Jalata, he does not simply portray the Oromo as a passive people, oppressed by the Abyssinians, nor does he deny the power and influence of the Oromo, as in the case of authors such as Marcus and Ullendorff. Abir uses a wide variety of sources, including Oromo and Amharic ones, to show how an Oromo principality under Ras Ali constantly battled the Amhara and Tigrean kingdoms during the Era of Princes.¹⁷

The role that Haile Selassie played in either perpetuating Amharic imperialism or in attempting to reform it also dominates the debate about colonialism in Ethiopia. Most traditional scholars, including Harold Marcus and Hans Locket, portray Selassie as a political reformer who attempted to modernize Ethiopia. Locket states with certainty that “Haile Selassie, the ruler was a man obsessed by his task of leading Ethiopia into the modern world,” and describes the emperor as a reformer who sought to integrate all Ethiopian ethnicities into one society. He aptly notes that, in Selassie’s government, “there was no government institution which did not have a Galla [Oromo] heading one of its subdivisions.”¹⁸ Yet, Locket does not demonstrate how many of these Oromo had given up their cultural identity to assimilate to the Amharic-dominated society.

¹⁷ Mordechai Abir, *Ethiopia, Era of the Princes: The Challenge of Islam and the Reunification of the Christian Empire 1769-1855* (London: Longmans, Green, 1968), 95. The *Zema Masifent* (Era of Princes) was an era from 1769 to 1855 when the local Ethiopian nobility deposed the Solomaic line of emperors and competed for control. No one noble was able to gain the upper hand until Yohannes IV. He ended the period in 1855, when he gained the throne and defeated the remaining powerful nobles.

¹⁸ Hans Wilhelm Locket, *The Mission: The Life, Reign, and Character of Haile Selassie I* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1989), v, 92. Locket’s use of the term *Galla*, which Oromo considered derogatory, indicates the biased view that he possessed. He worked for Selassie’s government 1951-1975.

Harold Marcus also portrays Selassie as a political reformer who attempted to remedy the ills of colonialism and, like Lockett, he focuses on specific reforms that the emperor constructed, but he ignores Selassie's overall colonial policies. Marcus shows Selassie moving cautiously to reform a hierarchical society; as an example, he notes that Selassie did not outlaw slavery itself when he prohibited the slave trade in 1918.¹⁹ Ironically, Lockett's and Marcus's portrayal of Selassie as a political reformer who attempted to hold together an ethnically diverse population resembles the description of Patrice Lumumba of the Congo, another African reformer who faced similar problems, including Belgian interference in attempts to institute political and economic change.²⁰ Lockett and Marcus evaluate Selassie from the Amhara's perspective only, relying on their documents while ignoring Oromo sources. Both scholars focus primarily on Selassie's sociopolitical reforms and not on his religious changes.

Other historians use Selassie's work with Protestant missionaries to argue that he tried to reform Ethiopia's colonial system. Most researchers who write about missionary activities in Ethiopia praise Selassie as a religious reformer who stood up for the rights of all missionary groups. Writers such as Brian Fargher and Harold Fuller present strong evidence for the case of Selassie as a religious innovator who often battled against an intransigent Orthodox Church. For instance, Brian Fargher describes Selassie's "good will" as the only thing that enabled the Sudan Interior Mission (SIM) to remain in Ethiopia.²¹ Protestant missionaries' personal accounts and annual letters also describe

¹⁹ Harold Marcus, *Haile Selassie I: The Formative Years 1892-1936* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 40.

²⁰ Ludo De Witte, *The Assassination of Lumumba* (London: Verso, 2001), 65.

²¹ Brian Fargher, *The Origins of the New Churches Movement in Southern Ethiopia, 1927-1944* (New York: E. J. Brill, 1996), 129. In this work Fargher traces the

Selassie in laudatory terms as a stalwart advocate of religious toleration.²² Harold Fuller recounts his work in Ethiopia by praising Selassie for his innovation in allowing missionaries to preach to Ethiopia's un-Christianized people.²³ Yet, Fargher and Fuller examine Selassie's policies only from their narrow religious perspective, without reference to his policies as a whole. Like traditional Ethiopian scholars, these authors do not examine Selassie's policies toward non-Christian groups in Ethiopia and do not use all available resources to evaluate Selassie from a full perspective.

Other commentators portray Selassie as a manipulator rather than a reformer of Ethiopia's colonial system. Authors such as Peter Schwab, Asafa Jalata, and Mekuria Bulcha argue that Selassie manipulated several processes to maintain power. Bulcha shows how Selassie required missionaries to use Amharic in dealing with the Oromo, despite the fact that most of them did not understand it. Bulcha argues that Selassie used this policy as a way to further colonize and repress the Oromo people.²⁴ Peter Schwab also portrays Selassie as a political manipulator who constantly sought an advantage to maintain his power in an Amhara-dominated Ethiopia. Schwab postulates that Selassie never willingly took his political reforms to their logical conclusion, including the creation of a tolerant multicultural system, because he would have had to relinquish his power and position. In describing Selassie's reforms, such as his creation of a written constitution in

proselytizing efforts of the SIM with the Sidamo, a Cushitic-speaking people of Ethiopia. Fargher places great emphasis on Selassie's friendship with Dr. Charles Lambie, the SIM's director at the time.

²² CMF Prayer Letters 1963-1977. CMF is a relatively young mission group and started working with the Oromo people of Wollega province in the 1960s.

²³ Harold Fuller, *Run While the Sun Is Hot* (New York: Sudan Interior Mission, 1967). Fuller describes the work of the SIM in Nigeria, Ethiopia, and Somalia during the 1960s.

²⁴ Mekuria Bulcha, "The Language Policies," 99.

1955, Schwab states that “the cards were stacked in heavily in favor of tradition, for Haile Selassie was fearful of allowing modern forces to get out of hand and threaten the landlords who would then turn their anger directly upon him.”²⁵ Both Schwab and Bulcha take a more balanced approach than supporters of Selassie by examining all available material and not just material that puts Selassie in the best possible light.

The matter of ethnic identity versus national identity in colonial society is a constant theme in modern African historiography, and students of Ethiopian affairs have been part of the debate.²⁶ Many commentators believe that the Oromo possess a distinct and separate identity outside of that of the Ethiopians. Scholar Asafa Jalata argues that the Oromo possess a diametrically opposite culture from that of the Abyssinians, and he goes on to the idea of a separate Oromo nation, called Oromia, which Ethiopians conquered in the nineteenth century. He accuses Abyssinians of suppressing “the production, reproduction, and dissemination of the intellectual knowledge of the Oromo.”²⁷ Likewise, Mekuria Bulcha advances a similar idea of the Oromo possessing a distinct culture. He even identifies the “erroneous belief that Ethiopia is an ancient and immutable natural

²⁵ Peter Schwab, *Haile Selassie I: Ethiopia's Lion of Judah* (Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1940), 86. Schwab espouses the notion that Selassie was unable to effect true reforms because of psychological fear of losing control, which resulted from his turbulent childhood, in which he lost both his parents before his teenage years.

²⁶ See, for example, Mamdani's *Citizen and Subjects*.

²⁷ Asafa Jalata, *Oromia & Ethiopia: State Formation and Ethno-national Conflict 1868-1992* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1993), 15. Most historians agree that the Oromo originated in the southern highlands of modern Ethiopia and northern Kenya. No solid evidence exists that a unified state called Oromia ever existed. Jalata attempts to argue against the traditional scholarly view of the Oromo as *Galla*, which equated to “invaders” or “outsiders.”

entity” as part of the reason for scholarly ignorance of Oromo culture.²⁸ Bulcha argues that ancient Oromo did indeed possess a common culture, despite the lack of one unified state, and that Amharic imperialism essentially undermined Oromo society.²⁹

Jan Hultin also advocates the idea of a distinct Oromo identity and criticizes the traditional scholarly view of the Oromo as a people who invaded Ethiopia and disrupted the Amharic Christian empire. Hultin carefully dissects the negative views of the Oromo of scholars such as Ullendorff and Harold Marcus, and shows how they base their opinions only on Amharic evidence, without researching the Oromo point of view. As an example of the scholarly misinterpretation of the Oromo in Ethiopian history, he cites the common theme that the Christian Abyssinians were surrounded by “barbaric” Oromo.³⁰ Scholars such as Jalata, Bulcha, and Hultin use Oromo oral history and previously ignored written material as the basis of their support for a distinct Oromo culture. Harold Marcus remains unconvinced and criticizes Jalata and others for attempting to “fabricate a glorious history for a nonexistent country [Oromia].”³¹ Marcus bases his criticism mainly on personal admiration of Amharic culture and Emperor Haile Selassie himself; he ignores oral and written evidence on the Oromo. Like Marcus, Ullendorff portrays the Oromo and other non-Semitic ethnicities of modern Ethiopia as lacking any culture at all. Despite the fact

²⁸ Mekuria Bulcha, “The Survival and Reconstruction of Oromo National Identity,” in *Being and Becoming Oromo: Historical and Anthropological Enquiries*, ed. P. T. W. Baxter, Jan Hultin, and Alessandro Triulzi (Lawrenceville: Red Sea Press, 1996), 49.

²⁹ Bulcha, “Survival and Reconstruction,” 55. Emperor Menelik II completed the effective subjugation of all Ethiopia’s ethnic groups by the start of the twentieth century.

³⁰ Jan Hultin, “Perceiving Oromo: ‘Galla’ in the Great Narrative of Ethiopia,” in *Being and Becoming Oromo: Historical and Anthropological Enquiries*, ed. P. T. W. Baxter, Jan Hultin, and Alessandro Triulzi (Lawrenceville: Red Sea Press, 1996), 85-87.

³¹ Marcus, “Does the Past?” 18-21.

that the Oromo make up the largest ethno-linguistic group, surpassing the Amhara and Tigreans, Ullendorff renders a two-hundred-page narrative of Ethiopia that only mentions the Oromo as a minor footnote in the history of the empire.

Ethiopianists differ on the complexity of traditional Oromo society and its place in the greater Ethiopian narrative. For example, Herbert Lewis carefully analyzes the origins of the Oromo and provides clear evidence that the Oromo originated in southern Ethiopia.³² Lewis portrays the Oromo as a complex people who expanded into central Ethiopia as a response to sociopolitical pressure from other ethnic groups in the south.³³ He goes to great lengths to demonstrate the intricacy of Oromo culture by examining the Muslim monarchy of Jimma Aba Jifar, and he provides direct written evidence from the monarchy to demonstrate how the Oromo organized this principality, which lasted from 1830 until 1932.³⁴ On his part, Mohammed Hassen gives a broad view of the structure of Oromo society and analyzes its traditional democratic governmental system, known as the *gada*, and he does so in the context of the intricate religious beliefs of the Oromo. He challenges directly the traditional scholarly disdain for Oromo culture, describing such views as “unsubstantiated myths and untruths were created and the Oromo were arbitrarily degraded to a lower stage of culture, as people who needed the ‘civilizing mission’ of their

³² Herbert S. Lewis, “The Origins of the Galla and Somali,” *Journal of African History* 7, no. 1 (1966): 27. Lewis argues that, despite traditional scholarly views, the Oromo originally inhabited a region covering southern Ethiopia to northern Kenya. They moved north into central Ethiopia in response to social pressure from other ethnic groups.

³³ Lewis, “Origins,” 34.

³⁴ Herbert S. Lewis, *A Galla Monarchy: Jimma Abbaa Jifar, Ethiopia 1830-1932* (Milwaukee: University of Wisconsin Press, 1965). Jimma was one of several Oromo monarchies that arose in the area near the Gibe River in the early nineteenth century. It managed to maintain its independence until the time of Menelik II, who skillfully incorporated it into his unified empire.

Abyssinian neighbors.”³⁵ Lewis and Hassen rely on overlooked written and anthropological evidence to support their theories.³⁶

Oromo experts Marco Bassi and Lambert Bartels focus on specific aspects of Oromo culture to argue for the idea of a highly developed Oromo society, rivaling that of the Amhara. Bassi skillfully analyzes the traditional Oromo governing system, the *gada*, demonstrating how its impact varied among Oromo groups.³⁷ Relying on his personal study of the Borana Oromo of southern Ethiopia to draw his conclusions, Bassi articulates the belief in the complexity of the Oromo political system and says that “*gada* is certainly a very strong symbol of Oromo identity, but . . . it manifests itself in a wide range of social phenomena, including prescriptive rules, ceremonies, rites, public officers, and physical villages.”³⁸ Bassi’s depiction of the Oromo government as a victim of Amharic colonialism is like Jomo Kenyatta’s description of the fate of the Gikuyu’s government in Kenya at the hands of British colonialists.³⁹ Clearly, Bassi does not view Oromo society as any less advanced than the Semitic cultures to the north, since he goes to great detail to

³⁵ Mohammed Hassen, *The Oromo of Ethiopia*, 2.

³⁶ Lambert Bartels provides an excellent case study of the Oromo perception of their own history in “Studies of the Galla in Wollega: Their Own View of the Past,” *Journal of Ethiopian Studies* 8, no. 1 (1970): 135-59. Asafa Jalata’s *Oromia & Ethiopia* provides another excellent examination of Oromo history and society in relation to Ethiopia as a whole.

³⁷ Marco Bassi, “Power’s Ambiguity or the Political Significance of Gada,” in *Being and Becoming Oromo: Historical and Anthropological Enquiries*, ed. P. T. W. Baxter, Jan Hutlin, and Alessandro Triulzi (Lawrenceville: Red Sea Press, 1996), 153.

³⁸ Bassi, 150.

³⁹ Jomo Kenyatta, *Facing Mount Kenya* (London: Martin and Secker, 1938), 10. The similarities between Gikuyu and Oromo governing system were probably more than coincidence, given that Oromo homeland stretches into Northern Kenya. The two groups undoubtedly came into contact.

highlight aspects of the Oromo culture that traditional historians such as Marcus Harold ignore. Anthropologist Lambert Bartels establishes the complexity of Oromo society through carefully examining the traditional religion of the Matcha Oromo in Western Ethiopia, highlighting their intricate theological beliefs.⁴⁰ Through the use of first-hand accounts from Oromo traditional priests and everyday worshippers, Bartels presents convincing evidence of an Oromo society as advanced as the Abyssinian society. Thus, both Bassi and Bartel rely upon solid evidence to make unbiased analyses supporting the argument for a complex Oromo society.

Jalata also argues in favor of an advanced Oromo society but he does so more with polemics than with solid evidence. His attempts to show a complex Oromo society fails because he presents his case in such a manner that it moves from the realm of scholarly work to an anti-Amhara diatribe. For instance, he attributes the Amharic domination over the Oromo to an “alliance with European imperialism.”⁴¹ However, he does not provide convincing evidence that European imperialism played a decisive role in the Amhara’s domination over the Oromo. He also presents the Amhara in a manner reminiscent of Nazi Germany during World War II, showing them as ardent imperialists out to destroy Oromo culture. Consequently, Jalata’s obvious bias suffuses his entire work.

⁴⁰ Lambert Bartels, *Oromo Religion*. Bartel describes the Oromo complex theological cosmology, where the Oromo prayed to one major deity known as *Waqqa*, the sky god, and other lesser spirits. His description of *Waqqa* closely resembles the Gikuyu main deity, *Ngai*, which Kenyatta describes in his work.

⁴¹ Asafa Jalata, “The Cultural Roots of Oromo Nationalism,” *Oromo Nationalism And The Ethiopian Discourse: The Search for Freedom and Democracy*, ed. Asafa Jalata (Lawrenceville: Red Sea Press, 1998), 29. This book is a series of articles that debate the emergence of Oromo nationalism and its causes. Jalata’s essay is vehemently anti-Amharic.

In the study of Christianity in Ethiopian society the subject of whether the Christian clergy helped to perpetuate the Amhara-Tigrean colonial system is a major topic of debate.⁴² Traditional commentators present Ethiopia as a monolithic culture in which everyone practiced Orthodox Christianity. The myth of Ethiopia as a Christian nation whose kings descended from the Hebrew king Solomon originated with the *Kebra Negast*, the Amhara and Tigreans' sacred religious book, second only to the Bible.⁴³ Archbishop Yesehaq presents the image of Orthodox Christianity permeating Ethiopian culture for nearly two millennia, and he clearly shows the symbiotic relationship that existed between the Abyssinian nobility and the Orthodox clergy in which they served to support each other. Using religious chronicles to support the argument for the pervasiveness of Orthodoxy, Yesehaq fails to examine the traditional religions of other ethnic groups such as the Oromo.⁴⁴ For instance, he never acknowledges that, while Orthodoxy dominated

⁴² Bengt Sundkler has written two major works: *Zulu Zion and some Swazi Zionists* (London: Oxford University Press, 1976) and *Bantu Prophets in South Africa* (London: Oxford University Press, 1961). These books deal with Christian missionaries' approaches in South Africa and the response of the Africans. The so-called Ethiopian or Independent Christian Church Movement emerges from this, claiming a connection (albeit a fictitious one) to the Ethiopian *Tewahedo* (Orthodox) Church.

⁴³ Ethiopian emperors claimed descent from Menelik I, the son of King Solomon of Israel and the Ethiopian Queen Sheba. Legend has it that Menelik I stole the Ark of the Covenant from David and that it resides in a monastery in Ethiopia. The *Kebra Negast* (Glory of Kings) describes this legend, with the emphasis being on presenting the Abyssinians as the new Chosen People of God. All Ethiopian Orthodox Churches carry a model of the Ark called *Tabot*.

⁴⁴ Archbishop Yesehaq uses sources such as the *Kebra Negast* and the *Fetha Negast* (Law of Kings) to chronicle Orthodox Christianity's influence in Ethiopian society.

Semitic cultures of Ethiopia, it did not do so with the other groups until the unification of Ethiopia in the late nineteenth century.⁴⁵

Ephraim Isaac argues similarly to Archbishop Yesehaq that, despite their ethnic differences, virtually all Ethiopians practiced Orthodoxy. He accepts the limitation of Orthodox Christianity's reach, which he describes as extending only to the Ethiopians. "The Ethiopians are the only people of Semitic speech who hold Christianity as their national religion."⁴⁶ Thus, Isaac defines an Ethiopian as an Abyssinian, excluding groups such as the Oromo. Both Yesehaq and Isaac give a clear picture that to be Orthodox Christian meant that other ethnic groups had to abandon their culture and adopt the Semitic culture of the Amhara and Tigreans. To support his claim, Isaac examines Christian sources only and does not consult those of the other groups, such as the Oromo; the result is that he fails to give a complete picture of the impact of Orthodoxy on all Ethiopians.

Other historians recognize the predominance of Orthodox Christianity in Ethiopia but they acknowledge its primacy among Semitic ethnic groups only and not among all other Ethiopian groups. Steven Kaplan traces the origins of monasticism in early Ethiopia. Through his discussion of the ecumenical battle that raged between Amhara and Tigrean monastic sects for control of the Orthodox Church, Kaplan demonstrates how Christianity remained strictly in the Semitic communities of Ethiopia. For instance, he notes how a sect of Tigrean priests known as the Ewostatioans threatened the unity of the church

⁴⁵ With the end of the *Zema Mansifent*, successive Amharic and Tigrean emperors, starting with Tewodros II and ending with Menelik II, imposed Christianity among conquered groups such as the Oromo, who practiced it in name only. See Abir.

⁴⁶ Ephraim Isaac, "Social Structure of the Ethiopian Church," *Ethiopian Observer* 14, no. 4 (1971): 240.

because they challenged some of the Orthodox hierarchy's religious tenets.⁴⁷ Yet, in all of these discussions about the spread of Christianity, Kaplan fails to mention any Christian-practicing ethnic groups in Ethiopia other than the Amhara and Tigreans. However, unlike Yesehaq and Isaac, Kaplan concedes, "Christianity remained restricted to Semitic speaking people."⁴⁸

Other scholars directly contest the notion that Orthodox Christianity had any true influence among Ethiopians outside of the Abyssinian areas. Johnny Bakke and Olav Saeveras use a wide range of resources from Orthodox material to missionary accounts to provide a balanced view of the role of Orthodox Christianity in all Ethiopians' lives. They argue that the great majority of Ethiopians did not practice Orthodoxy because of its hierarchical nature and because of their perception of the church as an organization of Amharic imperialism. Johnny Bakke examines the success of various Lutheran missionary groups in Ethiopia during the early 20th Century. He notes that these missionaries succeeded in proselytizing to the Oromo because they did not force them to deny their culture in the manner that the Orthodox Church required.⁴⁹ Olav Saeveras articulates an identical point to Bakke's about the success of Lutheran missionaries in greater Ethiopia.⁵⁰

⁴⁷ Steven Kaplan, *Monastic Holy Man and the Christianization of Early Solomonic Ethiopia* (Wiesbaden, Germany: GMBH, 1984), 37.

⁴⁸ Kaplan, 28.

⁴⁹ Johnny Bakke, *Christian Ministry: Patterns and Function within the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus* (New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1986), 121-22. Bakke highlights how Lutheran missionaries came to Ethiopia with the intent of founding churches run by Africans independently of the Europeans. The German Lutheran, Swedish Lutheran, and Norwegian Lutheran missionary groups all worked in Ethiopia among the Oromo. The Norwegians proved to be the most successful. The churches founded by these three groups eventually came together, along with a church started by the American Presbyterian missions, to found the Mekane Yesus Church of Ethiopia. This contrasts sharply with how most Christian missionaries operated in the rest of Africa. In particular, Bengt Sundkler explains how European missionaries in Africa greatly disliked and worked

Basing their arguments on the syncretistic religious practices of most Ethiopians, the second group of Ethiopian scholars argues against the influence of Orthodox Christianity in Ethiopia. Missionary scholars Raymond J. Davis and W. Harold Fuller argue this point in their publications on the SIM's activities in Ethiopia.⁵¹ Fuller explains how missionaries discovered that most Ethiopians who professed to be Orthodox Christians actually worshipped Satan and practiced their traditional religious beliefs as well. Fuller states that "many of the people worship the devil himself" and espouses this point further by articulating the belief that most Ethiopians, in fact, practiced their traditional beliefs within the veil of Orthodoxy.⁵² Both writers served as SIM missionaries in Ethiopia and, as a result, they may have not examined all of the available evidence in an attempt to present the Orthodox Church in a negative light. The approach and outlook taken by these two missionary writers reflect typical missionary biases seen in other parts of Africa.⁵³ Neither work provides accurate footnotes for the reader to verify sources of information. Missionary accounts and diaries from the Christian Fellowship Missionary and the SIM support both the imperialistic and syncretistic arguments against the influence

against the so-called Independent Church Movement among the Zulus and Swazis in his books: *Zulu Zion* and *Bantu Prophets*.

⁵⁰ Olav Saeveras, *On Church-Mission Relations in Ethiopia 1944-1969* (Norway: Lunde Forlag og Bokhandel A/S, 1974). Saeveras argues a point similar to Bakke's but focuses specifically on missionary work of the Norwegian Lutheran group with the Oromo.

⁵¹ SIM started work in Ethiopia at the turn of the century. It was the first American missionary group in Ethiopia and maintained good relations with Emperor Haile Selassie. SIM mainly worked among the Sidamo people of Ethiopia. SIM founded the largest Protestant Church in Ethiopia.

⁵² Fuller, 203.

⁵³ Nancy Rose Hunt describes similar missionary cultural biases in *A Colonial Lexicon* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999), 53-54, in which she traces Baptist missionary work with Congolese societies and their attribution of traditional practices as devil worshipping.

of the Orthodox Church. The accounts describe many pseudo-Christian groups such as the Wollega Oromo as practicing their traditional religious beliefs while claiming to be Christians.⁵⁴

The issues of Ethiopian identity, Amharic imperialism, Orthodox Christianity's influence, the complexity of Oromo society, and Emperor Selassie as reformer of the Amharic colonial system dominate the scholarly discourse on modern Ethiopia. The works represent the major issues of contention about missionary activity in Ethiopia. The failure of previous Ethiopian scholars to examine these contested issues as interrelated topics means that the matter of Protestant missionaries as agents of Selassie's designs to unify Ethiopia remains unexamined.

This thesis tries to fill the gap by showing the extent to which Haile Selassie used religion to suppress the Oromo identity and to extend his hold on the peoples of greater Ethiopia.

⁵⁴ CMF and SIM missionaries came from an American Christian fundamentalist background. It is unclear whether the missionaries presumed that any traditional religious practices of the Oromo had to be connected with Satan, even if not expressly stated.

CHAPTER 2

THE ABYSSINIAN AND OROMO CONTEXT

An examination of what scholars have traditionally called Ethiopia or Abyssinia yields insight into the historical developments that led to the influx of missionary groups into the country during the twentieth century. This study will use “Abyssinians” to refer to the Semitic-speaking populace (Amhara and Tigreans) of modern Ethiopia, which historians have generally used to represent Ethiopians as a whole.¹ The chapter also examines the traditional society of the Oromo people and the issue of ethnic identity to understand how and why these people readily welcomed Protestant missionaries in the twentieth century. The section highlights the aspects of traditional Oromo society that made it ideally suited for work with Protestant missionaries. The chapter also proves that no unified Ethiopian society existed prior to the late nineteenth century and that the Oromo and Abyssinians had separate and distinct societies during this period.

Abyssinians developed a unique sociopolitical culture which differed fundamentally from those of most Africans. Cushitic-speaking humans occupied the area of modern Ethiopia for thousands of years. The Abyssinians traced their heritage back before the time of ancient Egyptians, with roots outside of Africa. Around 1,000 BC Arabic-speaking people, the Sabeans, invaded Ethiopia and intermarried with the local Cushitic-speaking people of the area.² The offspring of these two peoples developed an

¹ Edward Ullendorff and Harold Marcus espouse this view in their works. Harold Marcus, *A History of Ethiopia* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994).

² Herbert Lewis, *Galla Monarchy*, 20-21. Historians consider the Cushitic-speaking people to be the original inhabitants of North Africa. In fact, the ancient Egyptians claimed descent from the ancient kingdom of Cush, located in Sudan.

Afro-Semitic language similar to Arabic and known as Ge'ez.³ This new Afro-Semitic group founded the first recognized Ethiopian city-state, Axum, in 500 BC. The Axumites went on to develop a substantial commercial and economic empire, trading with Greek and Arab city-states on the Arabian Peninsula. The Axumite Empire lasted until 970 AD.⁴ The decline of the Axumite Empire led to the creation of several new Semitic-speaking peoples in northern Ethiopia known as the Amhara and Tigreans, collectively called Abyssinians. During this period the Abyssinian culture developed a complex feudal system with defined noble and peasant classes similar to the system found in Medieval Europe. The Abyssinian feudal system consisted of an emperor (*negus negusa*), lesser kings (*negus*), dukes (*rases*), and earls (*dejazmatcha*). At any given time, the various nobles of the Abyssinian states of Shoa, Gojjam, and Tigre competed for control and domination of Abyssinia as a whole. Abyssinian peasants, *gabbars*, like their European counterparts, worked the land and gave a considerable portion of their goods to the nobles in exchange for the right to reside on their property.⁵

The Semitic-speaking people of northern Ethiopia also adopted Judaic religious beliefs from their Arab trading partners. Abyssinians traced their religious beliefs back to Biblical times, when King Solomon married the Queen of Sheba and produced Menelik I, the first Ethiopian emperor. All Ethiopian emperors claimed descent from the Solomonic line of Menelik, and historical evidence suggests that the Abyssinians adopted Judaism

³ Ullendorff, 111.

⁴ Edmond Keller, *Revolutionary Ethiopia* (Indianapolis: Indiana University, 1988), 16-21.

⁵ Ullendorff, 120-21. Some variation in the feudal land system exist in Abyssinian states. For instance, the Tigreans practiced more communal ownership than feudalism, but the feudal system dominated in all Amhara states.

from the Arab merchants with whom they traded during the Axumite period.⁶ Judaism had a profound impact on the Abyssinians, but the arrival of Christianity in Abyssinia during the fourth century AD dramatically altered the course of history for the Abyssinian people. Syrian Orthodox monks, Frumentius and Aedesius, introduced Christianity to the Abyssinians in 340 AD by converting first the nobles and later the peasant population. From its very inception in the Abyssinian city-states, Orthodox Christianity became associated with the Abyssinian nobility, primarily because Abyssinian masses could not speak Ge'ez, the language of the church, while the nobles could. Later, two groups of Syrian monks, the Sadaqans and the Nine Saints, introduced monasticism to the Semitic population of the north, which became another dominating feature of Ethiopian Orthodoxy.⁷ The Egyptian Coptic Church clergy provided the necessary resources for the founding of the *Tewahedo* (Orthodox) Church. As a direct result of this, the Egyptian clergy subordinated the Abyssinian clergy to the Egyptian church by making their patriarch the head of the *Tewahedo* Church. Likewise, the Coptic patriarch exercised further influence over the church by appointing its bishop, the *abuna*.⁸ The Abyssinian Orthodox Church retained many of its Judaic practices, such as observing the Sabbath on

⁶ Keller, *Revolutionary Ethiopia*, 16-21. Despite their practice of Judaism, some of the Semitic-speaking people also worshipped a Serpent god. Ullendorff, 93.

⁷ Kaplan, 15-16, 40. Evidence suggests that the Falasha Jews of Ethiopia practiced a form of monasticism that greatly influenced the Abyssinian monastic orders such as the Ewostatians of Tigre.

⁸ Kaplan, 29. Legend holds that Frumentius asked for permission to found the Ethiopian Church but the Patriarch of Alexandria consented based on the church remaining subordinate to the Egyptian Church. The Egyptians even ensured that this prohibition on an Ethiopian patriarch and bishop was placed in the Ethiopian Church's religious laws, called the *Fetha Negast*.

Saturday as well as Sunday. Similarly, the Abyssinians continued to adhere to the strict dietary laws of the Jews as well.⁹

Orthodox Christianity transformed fundamentally the sociopolitical system of the Abyssinians and changed the nature of their interaction with the other non-Semitic peoples of Ethiopia. The Orthodox clergy and Abyssinian emperors shared a symbiotic relationship, which began with the Orthodox monks' initial conversion of the Semitic nobility.¹⁰ Although the emperor did not act as the head of the church, the clergy yielded a great deal of influence through its association with the monarchy. For instance, the *abuna* acted as political advisor to the emperor, determined the celebration of religious holidays, and decided who could enter the priesthood.¹¹ The clergy also served as mediators in social and political disputes.¹² The clergy became inextricably linked to the Abyssinian emperor by receiving *bala gults*, or feudal land grants, from him to raise crops and tax peasants.¹³ Orthodox Christianity unified the Abyssinian nobility under one religious belief and culture, making them even more distinct from the non-Semitic-speaking people of Ethiopia. However, the Orthodox clergy did not seek to proselytize to any non-Semitic

⁹ Ullendorff, 97.

¹⁰ Ibid. Emperor Ezana was the first Ethiopian emperor to convert to Christianity.

¹¹ Kaplan, 32-37.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Kaplan, 55. The hierarchical and Byzantine nature of the *Tewahedo* Church no doubt contributed to the lack of drive among its clergy to proselytize to groups other than the Abyssinians.

people, with the result that Christianity had an insignificant influence on Ethiopia's other peoples.¹⁴

A picture emerges of what it initially meant to be Abyssinian during the period prior to the twentieth century. First, being part of the Semitic culture, which emerged from the ruins of Axum, became the first characteristic of an Abyssinian. Next, a person had to practice the Orthodox Christian faith to be considered Abyssinian. In addition, a person had to speak one of the dominant Semitic languages, Amharic or Tigrean, to be Abyssinian. Scholars such as Harold Marcus and Edward Ullendorff readily cite these two characteristics as the major factors in helping to define an "Ethiopian." The question then arises as to the role that Orthodox Christianity played in uniting the Abyssinian people. One must examine the nature and characteristics of the Orthodox Church to understand why it remained exclusively among the Abyssinian population and why, in a late stage, foreign missionaries went to work in areas such as that of the Oromo.

Orthodox Christianity defined the Abyssinian people in a manner similar to the way in which Judaism defined the Israelites. Few African people defined themselves so exclusively by their religious beliefs as did the Amhara and Tigreans in Ethiopia. The *Tewahedo* Church epitomized a hierarchical structure at its finest. This characteristic in particular ensured that Orthodoxy remained a religion exclusive to the Semitic-speaking people. The structure of the Orthodox Church's clergy represented the hierarchical nature of the church. Since the Coptic Patriarch in Egypt served as the official head of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, the Church's hierarchy felt little to no pressure to proselytize to non-Abyssinians. The fact that the patriarch resided in Alexandria instead of Ethiopia

¹⁴ Archbishop Yesehaq, *The Ethiopian Tewahedo Church: An Integrally African Church* (New York: Vantage Press, 1989), 176. The first Ethiopian Orthodox mission did not take place until 1952 in the nation of Sudan.

only encouraged this neglect.¹⁵ The Coptic Patriarch appointed an Egyptian as the bishop of the *Tewahedo* Church; thus, the local head of the church remained a stranger even to the Abyssinian elites. The Egyptian patriarchs did not appoint the most intellectually astute bishops as head of the Orthodox Church, which meant that the church suffered from intellectual and managerial neglect.¹⁶ The Egyptian bishops also demonstrated very little interest in spreading Orthodoxy beyond the Abyssinians to any other ethnic groups in reach. The metropolitan (*etchege*), an Abyssinian, ranked second to the *abuna* and served as a direct advisor to the emperor. After the *etchege* came the priests and then the deacons. The priests divided into two groups: celibate monks and married priests.¹⁷ The priests chose young boys to serve as deacons or helpers in the church, and these young boys then became priests.

The training and religious practices of the Abyssinian clergy also helped to limit Orthodox Christianity's appeal among non-Abyssinian people of Ethiopia. Unlike the Catholic clergy in Europe, Abyssinian priests did not establish any institutes of higher learning to train their clergy; instead, the clergy trained each other in an ad hoc manner. Thus, many priests could not read or write Ge'ez, the ancient liturgy of the church, making it even more difficult for the clergy to convert non-Semitic speakers to Orthodoxy. The Orthodox clergy designed their churches in a manner similar to the Jewish synagogue, with

¹⁵ Often, the patriarch appointed inept Egyptian clergy to fill the posts. This resulted in years of intellectual neglect among the Ethiopian clergy. In fact, unlike the Catholic or Eastern Orthodox Churches the *Tewahedo* Church lacked any significant theological thinkers such as Saint Augustine or Thomas Aquinas.

¹⁶ For instance, the entire congregation of one bishop, Abuna Mikael, converted to Islam. Kaplan, 29.

¹⁷ Yesehaq, 146. Priests selected young boys to serve as deacons or helpers in the church. These boys often became priests, even though many had no formal theological training.

a replica of the Ark of the Covenant called the *tabot* at the center of the church and concentric circles emanating from it. Only the priest could enter the circle containing the *tabot*, while worshippers had to remain on the outside. Likewise, the priest conducted the entire church ceremony in Ge'ez, which most Amhara peasants did not understand. These two characteristics in particular illustrate that the practice of Orthodox Christianity in Ethiopia centered less on the individual parishioners than on the clergy—a feature that fitted perfectly into a stratified society like that of the Abyssinians.

The prevalence of monasticism among the Orthodox clergy also hindered the influence of Orthodoxy among non-Semitic groups. Monasticism remained very popular among the clergy, and the monks and nuns remained secluded in monasteries in Tigrean and Amhara areas. Abyssinian nobility and soldiers helped to make up the ranks of the monks and nuns, factors that contributed to the clergy's inability or refusal to reach beyond the Semitic communities. Monastic orders often competed for influence and control inside the church organization, leaving very little time for them to proselytize. For example, the Ewostatian, an order originating in Tigre, competed for theological influence in the church with the Stephanites, an order originating in the Amhara regions.¹⁸ In fact, the tension among the Orthodox clergy often mirrored the political conflict that raged among warring Abyssinian states of a particular time.

Orthodox Christianity played a major role in the lives of the Semitic-speaking people of Ethiopia. The church and the state had a close relationship, each depending on the other to legitimize its authority. Thus, the traditional scholarly view of Orthodox

¹⁸ Kaplan, 40-43. The Ewostatian theological beliefs eventually became the dogma of the *Tewahedo* church, while the crown persecuted the Stephanites because of their refusal to literally bow down to him. Other clergy persecuted them as heretics for their worship of Mary.

Christianity as the foundation of Abyssinian culture remains valid. Language and religion at least helped nominally to unify the Abyssinian people but this did not extend to non-Abyssinian ethnic groups such as the Oromo, who continued to have their own languages, sociopolitical practices, and religious beliefs. Indeed, Christianity and the Abyssinian culture had little to no influence on the Oromo people prior to the late nineteenth century. To appreciate the limited influence of the Abyssinian culture and Christianity in Ethiopia prior to the twentieth century, one must examine the culture of the Oromo, the largest non-Semitic group in Ethiopia.

Abyssinians traditionally referred to the Oromo as *Galla*, which in Amharic means stranger. Abyssinian authors portrayed the Oromo not only as separate from them but also as a barbaric people because they did not practice Christianity nor possess a written language.¹⁹ The myth persisted that the Oromo invaded Ethiopia and essentially ransacked the Abyssinian culture.²⁰ The historical evidence, however, presents quite a different picture than the one that Abyssinians held. Archaeological evidence indicates that the Oromo inhabited south central Ethiopia near Lake Abaya for as long as the Abyssinians did. In fact, the Oromo comprise the Eastern Cushitic linguistic group that originally inhabited the area of Ethiopia prior to the arrival of the Sabeans.²¹ The Oromo claim to have descended from a common ancestor known as Orma, from whom their name derives. Although Asafa Jalata speculates that the Oromo probably had one unified state prior to

¹⁹ Zitelmann, 105.

²⁰ Harold Marcus and Edward Ullendorff are the major proponents of the Oromo as barbarians, compared to the Abyssinians. Traditional Ethiopian historians attribute great qualities to the Abyssinians because of their written language and practice of Christianity, while they generally portray the Oromo as barbaric because they lacked those aspects.

²¹ Lewis, "Origins," 38.

the 1500s,²² the facts show that they started to move into central Ethiopia in the vicinity of the kingdom of Bali early in the sixteenth century AD.²³ The impetus for the Oromo people to move remains a mystery; it is evident that they managed to occupy some of the most agriculturally productive land of Ethiopia. The internal fighting between the Amhara states, such as Shoa and Gojjam, and the non-Amhara states enabled the Oromo to occupy central Ethiopia without any resistance. Thus, the myth emerged of the Oromo as invaders when, in fact, it is more than likely that they found the land of central Ethiopia unoccupied due to the fighting.²⁴

The Oromo emergence as a political power in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries also marked their separation into distinct subgroups.²⁵ Originally, they consisted of two major groups: the Borana and Barentu. From these two groups emerged the twenty-two major subgroups: Borana, Ala, Wallo, Matcha, Garrii, Guraa, Arsi, Karrayyu, Itu, Ala, Qaiio, Anniyya, Mrawa, Roma, Akkichuu, Liban, Jile, Gofa, Sidamo, Sooddo, Galaan, and Gujji.²⁶ Most of these formed democratic states, while others formed monarchies, such as the Matcha, who lived in the Gibe River area.²⁷

²² Bulcha, "Survival and Reconstruction, 50.

²³ Lewis, *Galla Monarchy*, 23. The Amhara priests first recorded the Ethiopian king Galawedos fighting the Oromo in 1580.

²⁴ Lewis, *Galla Monarchy*, 25.

²⁵ The Amhara also had principalities that warred with each other constantly. For instance, the Shoa Amhara sought and obtained control over other Amhara states during the late 19th century.

²⁶ The Oromo believed that Borana and Barentu were the wives of the Oromo founder, Orma. "Oromia and the Oromo people," *Oromia Online*, available from <http://www.ormia.org/OromiaBriefs/Oromo&Oromia.htm>.

²⁷ Bartels, "Studies of the Galla," 135.

Traditional Oromo groups shared many similar social practices that made them distinct from the Abyssinians. A patriarchal family with a husband, wives, and children formed the basic organizational unit in Oromo society, known as the *k'he* (homestead).²⁸ Age played a major role in the status of an individual in Oromo society and, ironically, while the Oromo emphasized maintaining their extended family and genealogical roots, they also emphasized familial incorporation, by which they brought outsiders into their families and community through a process known as *mogaasa*.²⁹ The Oromo held marriage as a fundamental institution—so much so that they discouraged premarital pregnancies and required that a widowed woman marry her husband's brother.³⁰

The Oromo organized their villages based on cooperation and social flexibility, which characterized their basic familial structure. As a result of the *mogaasa* process, families from several clans (*gosa*) and subclans (*qomoo*) made up Oromo villages and confederations.³¹ In Oromo villages several social classes existed that played specific roles in the maintenance of their society. The *borana* made up the highest class in the society, owned the most land and slaves, and claimed to be of pure Oromo descent, giving the

²⁸ Lewis, *A Galla Monarchy*, 58. In Oromo groups that practiced their traditional religious beliefs or Christianity the eldest son inherited his father's property, but in Muslims groups the land was divided equally among the sons.

²⁹ Lewis, *A Galla Monarchy*, 59, 38. In this process the Oromo initiated outsiders into their society by giving them Oromo names.

³⁰ P. T. W. Baxter, "Towards a Comparative Ethnography of the Oromo," in *Being and Becoming Oromo Historical and Anthropological Enquiries*, ed. P. T. W. Baxter, Jan Hultin, and Alexandro Triulzi (Lawrenceville: Red Sea Press, 1996), 180-81. The Oromo did not have a word or concept for widow, which indicates the importance of marriage to them. The Booran and Arsi Oromo practiced this custom a great deal.

³¹ Bulcha, "Survival and Reconstruction," 52.

justification for their leadership in all Oromo society.³² The *gaboro* came next on the social hierarchy because they descended from freed slaves or mixed parentage of pure Oromo and freed slaves. They held the same privileges as the *borana* but other Oromo did not hold them in the same reverence.³³ Both *borana* and *gaboro* cultivated their land, but the classes below them, the metal smiths (*tumtu*) and tanners (*faqi*), did not have this privilege. The *borana* and *gaboro* looked down upon this class and prevented them from either farming their own land or purchasing it without the *borana*'s permission.³⁴ Likewise, the lower classes could not participate in any warfare. Finally, slaves made up the lowest level of the Oromo society, with three distinct classifications: *garbata*, *manbata*, and *yabata*. The Oromo captured *yabata* slaves from war and considered them to be the highest class of slaves. The *garbata* slaves worked in fields, while *manbata* slaves lived and worked amongst their masters' families. However, the Oromo did not practice chattel slavery because their slaves had opportunities to become *gaboro* through a process known as *luubasasu*.³⁵ Thus, traditional Oromo society was as diversified as the Abyssinian society but was certainly more flexible and accommodating than the latter society. The Oromo had clear social practices that allowed the incorporation of new

³² Bartels, *Oromo Religion*, 134

³³ Ibid., 163. For instance, the *borana* were the only ones who served as priests in the Oromo religion.

³⁴ Ibid., 182. Ironically, it appears Oromo slaves often had better social opportunities for advancement than did metalworkers, who were ethnically Oromo.

³⁵ Ibid., 186-87. Because of the *luubasa* process, it is difficult to distinguish clearly which groups originally were Oromo and which groups had been incorporated into the society. Oromo and Abyssinians conducted slave raids on Bantu-speaking people of Ethiopia such as the Gumuz (Shankilla) of the south Ethiopia well into the 1960s. Abir, 54.

people and ideas without stigmatism; the *mogaasa* and *lubabasu* processes illustrate this point. Further, the Oromo placed more importance on the individual than did Abyssinians.

The political culture of the Oromo also distinguished them from the Amhara and Tigreans. The Oromo practiced mixed agriculture and probably developed their democratic system of government, known as the *gada* system, in response to the need for a flexible and adaptable governing system.³⁶ The *gada* system influenced every aspect of Oromo society, from politics to religion. The Oromo founded this system on the principle of age groupings, mirroring the practices of other Cushitic groups such as the Somali. Eleven age groups, based on eight-year increments, comprised the *gada* system, and male Oromo gained particular sociopolitical privileges with certain stages of the *gada* system.³⁷ For instance, they started hunting and voting in the stage known as *qoondaaiia* and married in the stage called *raaba doorii*. However, the most significant stage in the political life of Oromo males came when they entered a stage referred to as *gadaa*, in which they gained full privileges and acted as the political leaders of their village or federation.³⁸

The Oromo age sets clearly distinguished them socially and politically from the Abyssinians, who were to be clearly identified with feudalism. The Oromo governmental institutions highlighted their unique cultural identity and societal openness. They established governmental institutions that embodied the principle of checks and balances,

³⁶ Keller, "Regime Change, 116.

³⁷ Bassi, 152.

³⁸ "Oromia and the Oromo people," 9-10. The eleven stages of the *gada* system were as follows: *Dabbaallee* (0-8 years old), *Folle* or *Gamme Titiqaa* (8-16 years old), *Qoondaaiia* or *Gamme Gurgudaa* (16-24 years old), *Kuusa* (24-32 years old), *Raaba Doorii* (32-40 years old), *Gadaa* (40-48 years old), *Yuba I* (48-56 years old), *Yuba II* (56-64 years old), *Yuba III* (64-72 years old), *Gadamojjii* (72-80 years old), and *Jaarsa* (80 and older).

often attributed to Western liberal democracies. An executive branch consisted of a president (*abbaa bokku*), who had a cabinet of ministers (the *hayyu* council) and two deputy presidents.³⁹ A parliament (*chaffe*) headed by a prime minister (*abbaa chaffe*) passed laws and had a spokesperson (*abbaa dubbi*), similar to the modern speaker of the house, who proclaimed the laws that the parliament passed. Finally, they had a judicial branch of government, with a judge (*abbaa alanga*) who enacted the legislation passed by the parliament.⁴⁰ Unlike the Abyssinian rulers, Oromo officials did not hold power in perpetuity, but only for the eight years of their *gada*'s reign, a de facto term limitation.⁴¹ Evidence also exists that the Oromo had political parties known as *miseensas*, in which eligible candidates competed for votes.⁴² The same democratic governing structures existed on the federation and village levels.

Contrary to the majority of the Oromo, the ones in Wollega and near the Gibe River eventually formed centralized monarchies known as *mooties*.⁴³ These monarchies operated very differently from the Abyssinian ones in that most kings did not retain absolute power. Oromo rulers retained some semblance of the *gada* system's check on

³⁹ Lemmu Baissa, "Contending Nationalisms in the Ethiopian Empire States and the Oromo Struggle for Self Determination," in *Oromo Nationalism and the Ethiopian Discourse: The Search for Freedom and Democracy*, ed. Asafa Jalata (Lawrenceville: Red Sea Press), 84.

⁴⁰ "Oromia and the Oromo people," 10.

⁴¹ Baissa, 84.

⁴² Jalata, "Cultural Roots," 38.

⁴³ Bartels, "Studies of the Galla," 141.

absolute power; a good example was the king's council of advisors, who could depose him, in the Oromo kingdom of Jimma Abba Jifar.⁴⁴

The governing system of the Oromo reflected the society's openness and flexibility, which contrasted with the Abyssinians' rigid and autocratic government system. The Oromo clearly placed a value on individual liberty and freedom, which was reflected in their political organizations and social customs. Their acceptance and incorporation of other ethnicities reflected the society's mutability; they also saw themselves not as a unified nation but as individual federations with a common culture.

The Oromo held religious beliefs as complex as the Abyssinians' beliefs. Contrary to traditional scholarship, the Oromo practiced a monotheistic religion distinct from Christianity and Islam long before they came into contact with Abyssinians and Westerners.⁴⁵ The Oromo believed in a sky god, *Waaqa*, whom they believed created the universe and, like many pre-Christian societies, the Oromo held a pantheistic belief that *Waaqa* resided in all living things yet remained a distinct entity.⁴⁶ The Oromo also had Jesus and Abraham figures, known as *Orma*: a demigod and son of *Waaqa*, whom the Oromo saw as their progenitor. *Orma* set down *Waaqa's* law to the *abbaa muudaa* (father anointed), who acted as the chief priest of the religion.⁴⁷ The similarities with Christianity

⁴⁴ Lewis, *Galla Monarchy*, 86-87.

⁴⁵ Mont Smith, *The First Trip In* (Indianapolis: Christian Missionary Fellowship, 1964), 7-8. Missionaries claim that the Oromo worshipped the devil, *adbar*, which proved to be a misinterpretation of their traditional beliefs.

⁴⁶ Bulcha, "Survival and Reconstruction," 53; Bartels, *Oromo Religion*, 91-92, 111, 124. Bartel notes that this belief was why the Oromo easily accepted the Christian religious practices such as slaughtering animals. The Oromo also believed in a goddess known as *Maram*, who represented motherhood in a fashion similar to Mary in Christianity.

⁴⁷ Bulcha, "Survival and Reconstruction," 53.

should be noted: first, *Waqqa* functioning as God the father, *Orma* as the Son, and finally a figure similar Abraham in the form of the *abbaa muudaa*. The complexity of the Oromo religion went beyond monotheism.

The Oromo also believed in a complex theological system, with many similarities to Christianity. According to their tradition, their god created spirits, known as *ayaana*, who could be evil or good. However, they did not have the concept of a devil (*setana*) until the advent of Christianity.⁴⁸ Some scholars might describe the Oromo concept of *ayaana* as a simple pagan belief, yet they resembled Christianity's angels and functioned in a similar intercessory role for the Oromo as did angels with the Christian god.⁴⁹ The Oromo also believed in a divine moral code (*saffu*), created by *Waqqa*, which guided all things in nature (*uuma*), and the *saffu* served to achieve and maintain earthly peace called *nagaa oromoo*.⁵⁰ This moral concept of *nagaa oromoo* carried over into the Oromo belief in cooperation with each other so that they never formed alliances with non-Oromo against other Oromo groups.⁵¹

The concept of Oromo peace also influenced their beliefs regarding the social development of humanity (*finna*), which they believed passed through five stages to reach the *nagaa oromoo*. They called the first stage the *gabbina*, where humanity learned from their past mistakes to create the *gada* system. After this stage they progressed to the

⁴⁸ Bartels, *Oromo Religion*, 120. The Oromo also believed that evil spirits existed and called them *ayaana hamaa*.

⁴⁹ Bartels, *Oromo Religion*, 115.

⁵⁰ Jalata, "Cultural Roots," 34. Oromo believed that *Waqqa* created *ayaana* and *uuma* and instilled them with *saffu* to guide them.

⁵¹ Bulcha, "Survival and Reconstruction," 51. The *gada* system, in effect, acted as a balancing force to ensure societal equality and peace, which prevented quarrel (*lela*) and war (*duula*).

ballina, which involved greater cooperation between them and increased wealth. The *badhaadha* marked the third stage, where unity and tranquility persisted among the Oromo, which pleased *Waqqa*. After humanity had made peace with itself, it next made peace with nature, represented by the *hoormaata* stage. Finally, the *daaga* was the level on which humans integrated all lessons learned from previous stages in order to live in perfect harmony.⁵²

The Oromo developed a religious class as complex and distinct as Orthodox Christian priests. Oromo called their priests *qaallu*, and choose them at birth, the position passing from father to son. These priests acted as intercessors for the Oromo with the *ayaana* and *Waqqa* much like Orthodox priest did for the Abyssinians. Unlike the Orthodox priests, the Oromo priests did not live apart from the people. They also had prophets, called *ragas*, who foretold the future. Religious historians called *ayaantus* committed to memory all significant religious and social events in Oromo society.⁵³ Finally, the *abbaa muuda* acted as the patriarch or pontifical figure in the Oromo *qaallu* system. The Oromo believed that he obtained his powers directly from *Orma*. Certain Oromo subgroups such as the Matcha Oromo made yearly pilgrimages to the *abbaa muuda* to seek blessings.⁵⁴

⁵² Bartels, *Oromo Religion*, 30-31. It is not clear in which developmental stage most Oromo felt they were. This belief persisted primarily with the Oromo of southern Ethiopia.

⁵³ Jalata, "Cultural Roots," 35. Jalata argues that Ethiopian governments tried to specifically destroy the *qaallu* system. He also argues that *qaallu* continues to influence even Christian and Muslim Oromo.

⁵⁴ Bartels, *Oromo Religion*, 64. The *abbaa muda* was supposedly descended from the first Oromo group, the Boorana. Oromo travelers would abstain from sexual intercourse as part of a complex purification process before seeking the *abbaa muda*. The Oromo also had a mortician (*abbaa laga*), who handled all funeral arrangements. Lewis, *Galla Monarchy*, 62.

Several important factors characterized Oromo political, social, and religious life. First, the Oromo clearly valued societal openness and flexibility over a rigid hierarchical society like that of the Abyssinians, and their willingness to incorporate other ethnicities into their groups is one proof of this. Likewise, the Oromo felt closely connected to nature with their religious beliefs and practices. Unlike Orthodox Christianity, which had an elaborate system focused on clergy, the Oromo religion centered on the individual. These religious beliefs easily meshed with their democratic practices, similar to Protestant Christianity's closeness to liberal democracy in the United States and other Western nations. This contrasted sharply with Orthodox Christianity, which matched more with the Abyssinian feudalistic governing system. This combination mirrored the way in which Catholicism suited the monarchical societies of Europe. Any attempt to convert the Oromo to Christianity and to integrate them into greater Ethiopian society required that aspects of their sociopolitical culture also be incorporated.

The Oromo and Abyssinians possessed distinct cultures with different religious practices prior to the late nineteenth century. No unified Ethiopian nation existed during this period, except as represented by Abyssinian culture. Hierarchical political and religious structures characterized the Abyssinian culture, while democratic political and religious structures marked the Oromo culture.

CHAPTER 3

A CLASH OF CULTURES

The previous chapter established that the Oromo and Abyssinians had distinct cultures with different religious, social, and political practices. These two cultures managed to coexist relatively peacefully until the centralization of the Abyssinian empire in the late nineteenth century. Emperor Haile Selassie (1920-1974) continued and expanded this centralization process well into the late 1960s. The process of building the Abyssinian empire brought together different peoples under the dominion of the Semitic speaking populace. The Abyssinian ruling elite specifically used Orthodox Christianity and their language to promote their domination of peoples in their periphery. This chapter discusses the impact of Abyssinian imperialism on the Oromo and the manner in which the Abyssinians used Orthodox Christianity to promote their agenda. Haile Selassie, the prime mover behind this imperial expansion, used political might and Orthodox Christianity to destroy the cultural identity of the Oromo, making them receptive to eventual proselytizing efforts by Protestant missionaries during the 1960s.

Abyssinians commenced the political unification of Ethiopia in the middle of the nineteenth century by destroying the sociopolitical and religious institutions of the Oromo. In 1852 the Amhara, under *Dejazmatch* Kassa (who later became Emperor Tewodros), defeated the most powerful Oromo city-state controlled by *Ras* Ali.¹ Within three years *Dejazmatch* Kassa conquered all of his Tigrean and Amhara rival leaders and assumed the

¹ Abir, 111-112, 140. Ras Ali initially defeated the Abyssinians at the Battle of Debre Tabor in 1842, when the northern Oromo initially appeared poised to dominate all of Ethiopia but proved incapable of unifying the country.

title of Emperor of Ethiopia.² Once the Abyssinians had unified the country, they initiated political and religious procedures to pacify other ethnic groups, including the Oromo. Emperor Menelik II (1885-1913) destroyed the Oromo *gada* system, replacing it with the military feudal structure known as *nafxanya*. Abyssinian soldiers confiscated the Oromo land and turned the Oromo into *gabbars* (peasants), who began to pay a feudal homage to their new conquerors by contributing one third of their crops and paying a monetary tax.³ A small minority of Oromo elite in provinces such as Wollega acquiesced to the Abyssinian domination and readily assimilated.⁴

The Orthodox Church played a key role in the pacification of the Oromo in the twentieth century. Emperor Menelik II initiated this campaign through a mass Christianization process in Oromo areas. He used his soldiers to conquer the Oromo, made them all Orthodox Christians by imperial decree, and then sent Orthodox priests to pacify his newly conquered subjects with religion.⁵ He also supported the construction of Orthodox churches throughout the conquered Oromo territory; he accomplished this by granting *bala gults* (feudal grants) to the Orthodox priests with Oromo peasants on the land. Meanwhile, all Oromo had to attend Orthodox services conducted entirely in Ge'ez,

² Abir, 142, 179-81. Tewodros first defeated his main Tigrean noble *Dejazmatch* Wube on 9 February 1855 and next he conquered his main Amhara rival, Haile Meleket of Showa, in November 1855, unifying north and south Ethiopia.

³ Baissa, 84-85. Menelik was the third Ethiopian emperor (1885-1916). The British had defeated the armies of his predecessor and Tewodros' immediate successor, Yohannes IV, and caused him to commit suicide. Yohannes tried to establish Tigrean dominance over the crown, but Menelik's rise to power ensured Amhara domination of the imperial throne until Selassie's demise in 1974. Menelik initiated the formal process of creating a true Ethiopian state but his nephew and successor, Haile Selassie, actually perfected the system.

⁴ Keller, "Regime Change, 117.

⁵ Bulcha, "Language Policies," 95.

the ancient Abyssinian language that most Amhara and Tigreans did not understand.⁶ Like most imperial powers, the Abyssinian rulers naturally sought to make their language and religion the dominating one. Although to date the government's efforts at colonization had been more haphazard than coordinated, they achieved results. By the beginning of the twentieth century the Abyssinians had made significant inroads into destroying Oromo culture and creating in them a new Ethiopian identity.

Haile Selassie's ascendancy to the throne marked the beginning of perfected efforts by the Abyssinian government to pacify the Oromo.⁷ Selassie wanted to create a unified Ethiopian state under his control and devised several means to accomplish this goal.⁸ Through a project called *Teklay Gizat* (pulling together) he attempted to manufacture an Ethiopian identity with a campaign of uniting all disparate peoples. Selassie's effort to centralize his power and create a new national identity manifested in many forms.⁹ In his philosophical outlook the Abyssinian culture, particularly that of the Amhara and Orthodox Christianity, represented his concept of Ethiopia and, under him, being Ethiopian

⁶ Hassen, "Macha Tulama," 188.

⁷ Bulcha, "Language Policies," 98. Selassie actually came to power in part because he opposed Emperor Lij Iyassu (1913-1916), who initiated liberal policies toward Muslim Oromo and other ethnic minorities. The Abyssinian nobles and clergy consider Iyassu's action to be blasphemy.

⁸ Bulcha, "Survival and Reconstruction," 56. Selassie initiated this as direct result of the Italian invasion and support that the Oromo people gave them.

⁹ John Spencer Trimmingham, *The Christian Church and Missions in Ethiopia: Including Eritrea and the Somalilands* (New York: World Dominion Press, 1950), 22-23, 25. For instance, Selassie made several religious reforms to shore up his authority and contribute to Ethiopian identity, such as assuming the right to appoint bishops in 1929. Selassie also issued religious Decree 2 in 1942 that, among other things, limited the role of the clergy strictly to religious matters. It also created a church bank account. In 1916 Selassie used missionaries to produce the first Bible in Amharic, since up to this point they all had been in *Ge'ez*.

became synonymous with accepting his view of Abyssinian culture. The emperor expressed this sentiment in public speeches throughout his reign. In a 1959 college speech Selassie clearly expressed this sentiment: “The Amhara race must know that it has an obligation on its part to work in the technical field no matter at what level. To preserve the heritage of one’s honor and culture....”¹⁰ This statement indicates that, for Selassie, being Ethiopian meant being Amhara. The emperor continued to express the belief that being an Amhara Orthodox Christian represented the qualities of Ethiopians when he stated on 15 January 1965, “Ethiopia, an island of Christianity, has made her own distinctive contribution to the Christian faith; forever since her conversion to Christianity she has remained faithful, her age-old ties with the apostolic church uninterrupted.”¹¹ This shows that Selassie believed that Orthodox Christianity represented all of Ethiopia’s peoples and their non-Christian religions. In his Ethiopia, no room existed for people who did not assimilate to the Abyssinian culture and religion.

Selassie’s attempt to create a national Ethiopian identity appeared harmless on the surface but, in fact, he took the *nafixanya* system to its logical conclusion by destroying the traditional Oromo provinces and creating new ones controlled by military governors. He employed a technique that communist governments would later use to pacify ethnically diverse populations: He forcibly split up the Oromo and other ethnic groups.¹² Selassie also continued Menelik’s policies of church building and forced conversions in conquered Oromo areas. These policies helped to weaken substantially the political cohesiveness of

¹⁰ Haile Selassie, *Selected Speeches of His Imperial Majesty Haile Selassie First* (Addis Ababa: The Imperial Ethiopian Ministry of Information, 1967), 11-12.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 637. Selassie made this speech at the Conference of Oriental Orthodox Churches held in Addis Ababa.

¹² Bulcha, “Language Policies,” 102.

Oromo communities. The Ethiopian government enacted legislative policies to weaken the Oromo politically as well. In 1941 Selassie passed a decree to ban the Oromo language, *Oromoo afan*. His bias against the Oromo became readily apparent when he went so far as to forbid them from speaking their own language.¹³ The emperor followed this in 1944 with Decree Number 3, which required all missionaries to teach in Amharic, despite the fact that the majority of the Oromo and other ethnic minorities did not speak the language.¹⁴ According to the decree, “The general language of instruction throughout Ethiopia shall be the Amharic Language, which language all missionaries will be expected to learn.”¹⁵ Selassie’s government entrenched the Abyssinian culture further by making Amharic the national language of Ethiopia in 1955. During the early 1970 the regime recognized and used four other languages (Tigrinya, Tigre, Somali, and Afar) but not *Oromoo afan*, thereby demonstrating the leader’s level of disdain for the Oromo.¹⁶

In its continued effort to unify Ethiopia, Selassie’s government actively limited the political activities of the Oromo. The regime provided the Oromo only limited participation in the government. The Oromo officials selected by Selassie to work in the public service were those who had completely abandoned their culture and adopted that of the Amhara. One such person was Major General Mulugeta Bulli, an Oromo *balabat*, who

¹³ Ibid., 99. The Italians under Benito Mussolini invaded Ethiopia in 1935. The British eventually helped Selassie to drive the Italians out in 1941.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Haile Selassie I, “Regulations on the Establishment on Missions,” *Negarit Gazeta*, Decree No. 3 of 1944, 161.

¹⁶ Bulcha, “Language Policies,” 101.

became Minister of National Community Development.¹⁷ Selassie was an autocratic constitutional monarch who tolerated no political opposition, not least from the Oromo.¹⁸ After several coup attempts in the 1960s, primarily by Amhara officials and some Oromo, Selassie further restrained the advancement of the Oromo—even the assimilated ones.¹⁹ In 1966 he banned the Oromo political party, *Macha Tulama* Association, and harassed its leaders with imprisonments and executions.²⁰ In one episode the government jailed one hundred party members and executed two of them (General Tadesse Birru and Lieutenant Mammo Mazamir) on grounds of subversion in spite of the fact that, earlier that year, they had helped to put down an actual coup attempt by Amharic officials. The regime also executed leading Oromo intellectuals and human rights advocates, including Marno Mazamir, the author of an Oromo book; also executed was Haile Mariam Gamada, a famous lawyer.²¹

¹⁷ Haile Selassie, *My Life and Ethiopia's Progress*, vol. 2 (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1994), 157. Coup leaders of the December 1966 rebellion against Selassie killed Bulli. Although Bulli's story was impressive, it still was unusual and, no doubt, Bulli had become so assimilated that Selassie did not know his true ethnic origins.

¹⁸ Selassie had initiated cosmetic reforms to the monarchy, such as creating a constitution in 1931 and 1955, but he retained absolute power and discretion to appoint and dismiss legislators at will. Schwab, 52, 86.

¹⁹ Hassen, "Macha Tulama Association," 198.

²⁰ Bulcha, "Language Policies," 105.

²¹ Hassen, "Macha Tulama Association," 202. It is interesting to note that both belong to the Macha Tulama Self-Help Association. Gamada's situation represented the particular predicament that many Oromo leaders faced: He had assimilated to the Amhara-dominated society, taking an Amharic name but he still realized the injustice the Selassie regime perpetrated on the Oromo.

Imperial authorities also used social neglect to subjugate the Oromo.²² The government failed to provide adequate educational facilities for the Oromo, while encouraging them and other minorities to help themselves. In a speech on education in 1962 Selassie stated, “And similarly if you [Ethiopia’s non-Amhara ethnic groups] continue to consult one another and strive to get rid of the other handicaps, say problems of obtaining clean water, better roads, and sanitation for your community, you will find that the accomplishment within your capacity.”²³ This indicates that Selassie did not feel personally responsible for providing even basic social services to the Oromo in the manner that most governments provide for their citizens. The regime required all teachers to instruct students only in Amharic, ensuring that Amhara teachers made no effort to be culturally sensitive or accommodating to Oromo children.²⁴

Statistical data from the Selassie era show the harmful effect that the policy of social neglect had on the Oromo, educational reforms benefiting the Abyssinian elite only. For example, sometime in 1947 Selassie created an education tax via Proclamation 94, and the Abyssinian elite managed to ensure that Oromo peasants paid most of it. This policy resulted in Oromo peasants paying for Abyssinian children’s education to the detriment of their own.²⁵ Nearly 88% of Oromo school children between the ages of seven and twelve

²² For instance, as late as 1966 Christian missionaries described entering the Oromo-dominated areas as “leaving behind such links with civilization as roads and telephone lines.” Don Johnson, “Johnson Prayer Newsletter,” *Christian Missionary Fellowship Prayer Newsletters Ethiopian Mission* (December 1965).

²³ Selassie, *Selected Speeches*, 83. Selassie gave this speech on 15 October 1962.

²⁴ Bulcha, “Language Policies,” 103. Bulcha supports the position that Amhara teachers took perverse pleasure in ridiculing Oromo children with physical and emotional harassment. Bulcha offers no direct accounts from Oromo students to substantiate this, but the educational statistics point to neglect of the Oromo by Amhara teachers.

²⁵ Schwab, 82.

years did not attend school, as well as 97% of those in the age range of thirteen to eighteen years. In the 1960s the majority (83%) of Oromo children who attended school dropped out by sixth grade. The result of all this was that the Oromo had limited opportunities for basic employment and for secondary and college education. By 1974 only 10% of college-age Oromo students were enrolled in Ethiopia's universities.²⁶

The government of Haile Selassie also failed to provide economic opportunities to the Oromo. Subsistence feudal agriculture formed the basis of the Ethiopian economy from its earliest history through the 1960s, with Amhara aristocrats benefiting from the labor performed by peasants on their land. The Selassie administration consisted primarily of nobles who came from this feudal tradition and had no incentive to alter the system. By the late 1960s 60% of Oromo farmers remained in a feudal system of land tenure because Selassie failed to dismantle it, contributing to the economic disparity endured by the Oromo by allowing Abyssinian nobles to avoid government taxes, while the peasants paid them.²⁷ Earlier, in 1942, he had issued Proclamation 8, which established land taxes that were paid primarily by the Oromo peasants.²⁸ Proclamation 60 of 1944 set out details of an income tax but, when the Abyssinian nobles refused to pay, the emperor substituted it with a regressive tax on labor and rented land that, once again, placed the onus on Oromo peasants.²⁹

²⁶ Bulcha, "Language Policies," 102-4.

²⁷ Jalata, *Oromia & Ethiopia*, 102.

²⁸ Schwab, 79. Selassie's decree actually divided the land into three categories: fertile, semi-fertile, and poor, which he taxed. Yet, in Proclamation 7 on 11 September 1944 Selassie excluded the Abyssinian nobles from the tax—the very people who had the most revenue.

²⁹ Schwab, 81.

All major industrial projects were in areas dominated primarily by the Amhara. The provinces of Arssi, Gamu Goffa, Illubar, and Wollega, which had Oromo majorities, had no industries by the late 1960s.³⁰ The same Oromo provinces had, respectively, only 6%, 3%, 3%, and 3% of their population living in urbanized areas, while the Amhara-dominated province of Shoa had 21% of its population in cities.³¹ Since industries accompany urbanization, these figures clearly demonstrate the socioeconomic disparity between the Oromo and Amhara areas. Economic disparity, along with political and social disenfranchisement, characterized the Oromo community by the late 1960s.

Haile Selassie bore a great deal of responsibility for the poor conditions of the Oromo people, even if he was not directly involved with all of the policies. Although he ascended to power as a modernizer, he readily sacrificed true reforms for political convenience.³² For example, in 1924 he attempted to abolish the slave trade by making it a capital crime, but he did not enforce this law, and he allowed the problem to continue well into the late 1960s.³³ The emperor also demonstrated his exclusive commitment to himself by his failure to enforce his own tax codes on the Abyssinian nobles, and he personally oversaw most of his governmental initiatives through the 1960s. For example, he reportedly used merit to appoint all government ministers, and he personally chose 1,000

³⁰ Jalata, *Oromia & Ethiopia*, 98. This figure is from 1977.

³¹ "Ethiopian Population Statistics," *Central Statistical Office* (1974).

³² Lockot, 7. As provincial governor, Selassie banned slave trade in the province of Harar.

³³ *Ibid.*, 33, 20. Selassie pledged in 1932 at the League of Nations to end slavery within 25 years.

of them.³⁴ Since Selassie exerted such great personal control, he had to realize that his policies benefited the Amhara to the detriment of groups such as the Oromo. Yet, obviously, he believed that his drive to create an Ethiopian identity justified his policies toward the Oromo and others.³⁵ However, as the next chapter discusses, Selassie hoped to extend the Amharic culture to non-Amharic peoples through foreign missionaries by having them provide these social services.

The successive policies of the Abyssinian governments through the 1960s require some comment. The evidence presented thus far shows that Abyssinian rulers were determined to form a unified state under their domination and used Orthodox Christianity as one means to subjugate non-Semitic speakers such as the Oromo. Haile Selassie perfected the system of colonization through the use of legal measures, political repression, and socioeconomic neglect to subdue such peoples, and he supported and established the notion of accepting Orthodox Christianity and the Abyssinian culture of the Amhara as the prerequisite for being Ethiopian. His government's actions allowed no room for groups such as the Oromo to retain their cultural identity and still be Ethiopian. One would expect the oppressed people to respond to this assault on their culture in a negative manner, and there is no doubt that the Oromo viewed the Orthodox Church as a tool of their subjugation. Indeed, they did respond in a negative way to this onslaught of Abyssinian culture.

³⁴ Lockot, 69-70, 93. Selassie's merit system resulted in the overwhelming majority of his officials being Amhara, in a nation with 40 ethnic groups.

³⁵ Selassie, *Selected Speeches*, 232. Ironically, Selassie also championed the rights of African nations against European colonialism, as a founding member of the Organization of African Unity.

During the 1900s to the 1940s the Oromo reacted to Abyssinian imperialism by applying their traditional societal flexibility, which allowed them to adapt easily to new situations. Most non-Muslim Oromo accepted the mass conversion to Orthodox Christianity and wore circles around their neck to symbolize their acquiescence.³⁶ However, American Protestant missionaries witnessed many Oromo, including those of Wollega, practicing their traditional religion in secret.³⁷ Christian missionaries in the 1960s testified that “while most Oromo feigned adherence to the Orthodox religion, they secretly worshiped other spirits.”³⁸ Some Oromo attempted genuinely to accept Christianity on their own terms. Among such converts was the religious scholar Onesimos, who translated the Bible into *Oromoo afan*.³⁹ The Oromo elite also responded to the political domination by taking Amharic names and cooperating with the local Abyssinian officials. However, as before, the Abyssinian rulers responded negatively by limiting the advancement of Oromo officials because of the fear that this would help to promote a sense of a national identity. Had the Amhara-dominated government approached the Oromo in a different manner, taking into account the Oromo traditional societal flexibility, the outcome might have been different.

The Selassie government’s negative response to the attempts of the Oromo to adapt their system subtly, while retaining some cultural independence, caused them to become

³⁶ Ray Giles, interview by author, tape recording, Johnston City, TN, 6 January 2003.

³⁷ Smith, *First Trip In*, 7-8.

³⁸ Giles, interview.

³⁹ Bulcha, “Language Policies,” 96. Lutheran missionaries from the SEM trained Onesimos, who translated the Bible in 1870. SEM initially helped to train Oromo to be Christians in the Orthodox Church, but the hostility of the Orthodox hierarchy encouraged them to set up an independent Lutheran church in the 20th century.

more militant in their actions. Their dissatisfaction with Selassie's regime manifested in the form of several peasants revolts. The Raya Oromo initially revolted in 1935 in response to the brutal tactics of Selassie's military governor, *Ras Mulugeta*, as he attempted to force them into the national army.⁴⁰ With the initiation of the Italian Invasion in 1936, another group of Oromo, who described themselves as the Western Oromo Confederation, declared their independence from the Ethiopian government.⁴¹ Eventually, Selassie defeated the two groups, but the fact that the Oromo had rebelled at all indicated their level of frustration with the government.⁴² Many Oromo cooperated with the Italians during their occupation because the Italians reorganized Ethiopia's provinces along linguistic lines and constructed mosques for Oromo Muslims.⁴³

The negative feelings and actions of the Oromo toward the Abyssinian government intensified as the twentieth century progressed; by the 1960s, peasants became increasingly belligerent toward the Selassie regime.⁴⁴ The Oromo peasant populace became enraged by the blatant disparity between themselves and the Amhara elites, including the heavy taxes that they paid without tangible socioeconomic benefits. In fact, by the 1960s, many

⁴⁰ Bulcha, "Language Policies," 100.

⁴¹ Selassie, *My Life*, 136. The idea of a Western Oromo Federation had emerged, partly in England and prior to the Italian invasion, with British army captain Hubert Erskine, who advocated for their protection against Italian invasion. Selassie eventually discovered this and actively opposed British operations led by the captain in Ethiopia.

⁴² Bulcha, "Language Policies," 100.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 98. Although the Italians did this for the obvious reason of pacifying the populace, they did more than Selassie's government or any previous Abyssinian government in accommodating the Oromo.

⁴⁴ Selassie, *My Life*, 130. Another British army officer, Lieutenant Colonel Courtney Brocklehurst, traveled to Cairo, Egypt in December 1940 to get Oromo to rebel against the Italians, with a guarantee of independence. Selassie acted to thwart him as well.

Oromo simply had no land on which to live or farm because of the pro-Amhara policies of Haile Selassie.⁴⁵ In a series of revolts starting in 1963 in the province of Bale, Oromo peasants unleashed their anger on the central government over its increased property taxes and favoritism toward Amhara Christians.⁴⁶ The assimilated Oromo elite responded to the tactics of the imperial authorities by developing sociopolitical organizations that instilled a sense of a national Oromo identity that transcended their traditional divisions.⁴⁷ The small number of Oromo who managed to achieve positions in government organizations, such as the civil and military services, felt disenfranchised by the Ethiopian government.⁴⁸ Oromo civil servants and military officers could expect to achieve only nominal advancement in the imperial government, from which they obviously felt a certain amount of alienation.

The disgruntled assimilated Oromo started to form self-help groups to provide political expression and to help their communities to advance. Activists formed organizations such as *Arfannn Qallo*, *Biftu Ganamo*, and the *Macha Tulama* Self Help Association, which sought to improve Oromo communities.⁴⁹ The *Macha Tulama* became

⁴⁵ Jalata, *Oromia & Ethiopia*, 100. Asafa Jalata asserts that this large populace of landless Oromo, proletariat working class, and various capitalist social classes served to further polarized Ethiopia and eventually lead to the revolution of 1974.

⁴⁶ Bahru Zewde, *A History of Modern Ethiopia 1855-1974* (Addis Ababa: Addis Ababa University Press, 1991), 215. Somali farmers also participated in the rebellion, which would last off and on until 1970.

⁴⁷ Jalata, "Cultural Roots, 4. Jalata asserts that Oromo peasants were more resistant to assimilation than the Oromo elite because of their rebellions. However, Christian missionaries testified that many Oromo peasants continued to hold to certain Orthodox customs and traditions.

⁴⁸ Bulcha, "Language Policies," 106.

⁴⁹ Jalata, "Emergence of Oromo Nationalism," 5. Selassie had allowed formation of so-called self-help groups under Article 45 of the 1955 constitution and Article 14 of the civil code. Hassen, "Macha Tulama Association," 195.

the most important and influential of the self-help organizations in expressing the political angst of the Oromo elite. On 24 January 1963 the *Macha Tulama* organization emerged from three older groups with the goal of creating educational, medical, and religious facilities for the Oromo.⁵⁰ Initially, the top leadership of the *Macha Tulama*, consisting of educated Oromo, managed to achieve some success by working within the confines of the Abyssinian-dominated government for the advancement of the Oromo people.⁵¹ For example, General Tadesse Birru had served under Selassie against the Italian invaders and had even married an Amhara woman. Like other educated Oromo, he attempted to use legal means to push through reforms such as a literacy campaign for the Oromo, but he met resistance from imperial officials at every step.⁵² The leadership of the *Macha Tulama* also attempted other progressive measures by opening their membership to other ethnicities such as the Afar and Sidamo.⁵³ In spite of such an approach, the *Macha Tulama* attempts at self-empowerment ran counter to the Selassie regime's ultimate goal of Amhara domination.

The Selassie government alienated the *Macha Tulama* Self-Help Organization and radicalized its members by the mid 1960s. The leaders of the group continued to petition the Ethiopian emperor for more reforms, including freedom of the press, but with no

⁵⁰ Jalata, "Cultural Roots," 6. The three older groups were the *Jibat-Macha*, *Tulam Shaawe*, and *Meta-Robbi*.

⁵¹ Hassen, "Macha Tulama Association," 199. The organization also organized along democratic lines, with an executive board of 13 members and 7 subcommittees.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 200. In fact, Selassie's prime minister, Akelilu Habete Wolde, told Tadesse in no uncertain terms that the emperor's educational objective was to keep the Oromo below the Amhara. Wolde did not realize that Tadesse was Oromo, since he had married an Amhara and practiced Christianity

⁵³ Hassen, "Macha Tulama Association," 202. The group had 26 non-Oromo members in the 1960s.

success.⁵⁴ Mohammed Hassen identifies three distinct phases that led to the group becoming militant in their approach to achieve Oromo autonomy. The first stage came with the government's rejection of the Oromo who had adopted Orthodox Christianity and had assimilated into the Abyssinian society. Next, the Oromo leaders realized that, despite their best efforts, the government continued to discriminate against them. In the final stage (1966) the government purged the group and set the association on a militant track.⁵⁵ As a result, the leaders of the *Macha Tulama* started to make inroads with the peasant leaders of Bale, which eventually led to formation of the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) in 1973.⁵⁶

The Oromo-Abyssinian interaction during the twentieth century was to assist foreign Protestant missionaries in their proselytizing to the Oromo. The increased pressure from the Abyssinians to subjugate the Oromo inadvertently created a sense of national identity among the Oromo, who previously had not viewed themselves as one nation. Remarkably, the 1960s represented the time when the Oromo attempted to eliminate the term *Galla*, which they perceived as derogatory.⁵⁷ The Oromo saw the Amhara's language and Orthodox Christianity as the tools that the Abyssinians utilized to oppress them. While many Oromo feigned adherence to Orthodox Christianity, they continued to practice many of their traditional religious beliefs in a new syncretistic form. Since the Oromo

⁵⁴ Bulcha, "Survival and Reconstruction," 58.

⁵⁵ Hassen, "Macha Tulama Association," 196.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 208. Ahmad Buna was an Oromo school teacher and Tulama member who worked with Bale leaders and eventually founded the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF). The Bale peasant revolts proved to the Oromo leadership the effectiveness of military operations, as they had seized 75% of Ethiopian government area around the regional capital of Goba by 1967. The OLF proved to be a constant problem for Selassie's regime and later the Marxist regime.

⁵⁷ Jalata, "Cultural Roots," 8.

traditional religion allowed them to express their angst and Orthodox Christianity did not, they became more receptive to religions that would let them do so. Both Oromo peasants and elites came to view the Abyssinians in this negative manner during the 1960s. Oromo animosity toward the Abyssinian culture and their burgeoning nationalism made them receptive to groups that provided social services and allowed them to express their culture without fear. Protestant missionary societies were to provide such opportunities.

On his part, Haile Selassie learned from the Abyssinians' interaction with the Oromo that they had not effectively assimilated the Oromo into society. The emperor understood that his government and the Orthodox Church did not have the support to create a national Ethiopian identity among the Oromo. Selassie proved unwilling to dedicate any of his government's financial resources to accomplish his mission of the Ethiopianization of the Oromo. He looked for a means to aid in his national unity drive, while not having to bear the financial cost of providing the social services that accompanied such a campaign. Selassie found the answer to his problems in Protestant missionary groups.

CHAPTER 4

IN SERVICE OF GOD OR MAN?

The previous chapter explained the clash of cultures that took place with Emperor Haile Selassie's creation of modern Ethiopia during the early twentieth century. The Abyssinians firmly established their culture as the model for Ethiopian society as a whole and attempted to force other ethnic groups, such as the Oromo, to assimilate by practicing Orthodox Christianity and by speaking Amharic. The outside observer might find it ironic that Haile Selassie I, the defender of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and Abyssinian culture, invited Protestant missionaries to proselytize in Ethiopia. The questions arise concerning the motive or motives that Selassie had for doing this and how this fit into his master plan for Ethiopia. This chapter shows that Haile Selassie and the missionaries had their own separate agendas concerning the Oromo that had nothing to do with addressing socioeconomic and political deprivation.¹

An examination of the history of Protestant missionaries in Ethiopia lends insight into understanding how Haile Selassie used them in the 1960s to further his own agenda. Interaction between missionary societies and the Oromo goes back to the 1830s, when the British-based Church Mission Society (CMS) became the first Protestant group to enter the province of Shoa in Ethiopia. The primary goals of CMS were to evangelize to the Oromo

¹ This chapter and the preceding chapter rely heavily on missionary records from the CMF, which worked exclusively with the Wollega Oromo. The CMF worked during the sociopolitical upheaval of the 1960s and early 1970s. The chapter also uses material from the SIM to a lesser extent. The SIM represented the first American missionary effort to reach Ethiopia, and it greatly influenced nascent American groups such as the CMF. The CMF's efforts represent the evangelical approach taken by most nonliturgical Protestant missionary groups in Ethiopia. An examination of the CMF role in Ethiopia serves as an excellent microcosm of how Haile Selassie used missionaries in Ethiopia to further his agenda.

and reinvigorate the Orthodox Church, but it failed in its attempt to reach the Oromo.² In the 1860s a Swedish Lutheran group, the Swedish Evangelical Mission (SEM), followed the CMS into Ethiopia with the sole intent of revitalizing the Orthodox Church, and they achieved some initial success in this endeavor.³ However, the Ethiopian Orthodox Church's hierarchy became hostile to their efforts, causing the group to seek converts from the Oromo in the 1930s.⁴ In the meantime Lutherans from Germany, the German Hermannsburg Mission (GHM), started work among the Oromo in the early twentieth century, followed by the Norwegian Lutheran Mission (NLM) in 1948.⁵ By 1959 these groups, along with the American Lutheran Mission, established an independent Lutheran Oromo church called the Ethiopian Evangelical Church, *Mekane Yesus*.⁶ The Lutheran groups proved extremely successful at reaching the Oromo, as demonstrated by an increase in SEM's converts from 1,000 in 1935 to nearly 20,000 by 1942.⁷ The success of the

² Saevaras, 15. The CMS missionaries were unable to evangelize to the Oromo because they could not travel in Oromo areas. They did cause a short-lived evangelical rivalry in the Orthodox Church.

³ Ibid., 17-18. This led to Orthodox priest Gebro Ewostatewo Zemikael and Daniel Lulu becoming the first Orthodox priests to proselytize to the Wollega Oromo. Yet, evangelism did not become a trend among Orthodox clergy; instead, forced conversion became the norm.

⁴ Saevaras, 22. The SEM had a very liberal theology and practices. For instance, they accepted baptism from the Orthodox Church and other missionary groups.

⁵ Bakke, 98-100. The NLM was the most conservative of the three groups, insisting on baptisms performed by them.

⁶ Ibid., 104,157. These three Lutheran groups also founded Ethiopia's first true theological seminary in 1960, called the Joint Theological Seminary.

⁷ Saevaras, 40.

missionaries with the Oromo demonstrated their effectiveness not only to future American missionaries but also to Haile Selassie.⁸

The American missionary groups came to Ethiopia with a different intent than had the European missionaries; they also had a different ideological background. After successful missionary work in the Sudan, the SIM became the first American group to enter Ethiopia in the 1900s.⁹ In 1927 the mission merged with the Abyssinians Frontier Mission to maximize their evangelical efforts in southern Ethiopia.¹⁰ The SIM had originated from the American Christian fundamentalist movement of the early nineteenth century and it came to Ethiopia with the intention of creating a new church, rather than to revitalize the Orthodox Church, as the Lutheran groups had desired.¹¹ As a result of their fundamentalist beliefs, SIM missionaries viewed all non-Christian religious practices as evil, and they demanded that their converts completely change their life style, with no compromise to accommodate local customs.¹² The SIM proved as equally successful as

⁸ Selassie issued a decree on missionary activities in 1945 detailing specific orders of operation. The Lutheran missionaries' successes no doubt influenced this decision.

⁹ Bakke, 35-36. Menelik allowed them in the Sidamo area, partly because Muslims dominated the area.

¹⁰ Helen Willmott, *The Doors Were Opened: The Remarkable Advance of the Gospel in Ethiopia* (London: Sudan Interior Mission, 1967), 32. Dr. Lambie had founded the Abyssinian Frontier Mission and he became the director of the SIM, proving to be extremely effective. Dr. Lambie merged his group with the SIM on the request of Dr. Bingham, the SIM's general director.

¹¹ Bakke, 27, 32.

¹² *Ibid.*, 30. The SIM went so far as to re-baptize persons who had been baptized by Orthodox clergy.

the European missionary groups and founded the *Kale Heywet* Church, an independent denomination that, by the 1960s, had 1,214 prayer houses.¹³

The SIM set the example for American missionary groups by using social services as a vehicle to provide fundamentalist Christian doctrine to the local populace, with the intent of creating a new Church. During the 1920s they founded nine missions in the province of Sidamo that provided social services such as medical clinics along with religious indoctrination.¹⁴ By 1949 the SIM had established seventeen schools and eventually created 200 schools that educated nearly 30,000 students. The group also founded a clinic in Ethiopia to treat patients suffering from leprosy.¹⁵ Thus, the activities of the SIM provided tangible benefits to the peoples of Ethiopia.¹⁶

During the 1940s Haile Selassie had learned from the influential success of the Lutheran missionaries and the SIM and decided to use this to his advantage. Selassie attempted to do this by establishing Decree Number 3 of 1944, which regulated all missionary work in Ethiopia. The first principle of the decree established that the missionaries could evangelize only to non-Christian people of Ethiopia, the non-Abyssinians, which the second paragraph of the decree made clear by pronouncing the following:

¹³ Fuller, 153.

¹⁴ Bakke, 41,52. The SIM also founded a leprosarium prior to the Italian invasion.

¹⁵ Trimingham, 36; Fuller, 193. By 1949 the SIM missionaries established seventeen schools in areas where they worked. Willmott, 52.

¹⁶ Another American mission group—the Mennonites—trained nearly 10,000 dressers (orderlies) for Ethiopian Hospitals and established the Nazareth Hospital to train them. Nathan B. Hege, *Beyond Our Prayers: Anabaptist Church Growth in Ethiopia, 1948-1998* (Scottsdale: Herald Press, 1998), 78, 98.

Whereas, it the desire of this government that Missions should not direct their activities towards converting Ethiopian nationals from their own form of Christianity which has existed from the beginning of the Christian era, but rather that they should concentrate on non-Christian element of the population.¹⁷

The document stated the principle that education was the primary area of focus for the missionaries and delegated authority to the Ministry of Education to make the ultimate decision on whether to allow missionary groups in Ethiopia.¹⁸ Furthermore, by declaring that “missions may not be established in an Ethiopian Church Area for the purpose of proselytizing, although they may be permitted to establish hospitals or non-denominational schools there in,” the decree also firmly established that missionaries had to provide social services.¹⁹ This indicates that Selassie did not intend to diminish the power or influence of the Orthodox Church in any manner; it also shows that he already wanted to ensure that foreign missionary efforts would provide social services and educational facilities. The decree did not mandate missionaries to open medical facilities in the non-Abyssinians areas but it subtly encouraged them to do so in the Abyssinian areas. Had Selassie been genuine in his plan to use the missionaries to help the Oromo, he would have dictated explicitly in the decree that they provide wide-ranging services to those other areas.

Other provisions of Selassie’s decree show clearly his will to manipulate the missionaries for his own goals. Selassie allowed missionaries to “teach and preach the Christian Faith of their own denomination without restriction” in areas where Christianity

¹⁷ Tshafe Tezaz Welde Guiorguis, “Decree No. 3 of 1944,” *Addis Ababa Negarit Gazeta*, 27 August 1944, 158.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 159.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 160.

was not practiced.²⁰ This appeared to be a benevolent gesture on Selassie's part; however, it fitted into his overall goal of Amharization of Ethiopia. After all, the decree dictated that all classroom teachers instruct in Amharic, and it gave the Ministry of Education final approval over the curriculum of the missionary schools.²¹ These two provisions ensured that peoples such as the Oromo would be indoctrinated into Abyssinian culture, thus furthering Selassie's overall goal. The emperor used this document to steer the missionary groups such as the CMF in the direction of helping to unify Ethiopia.

Haile Selassie's national government's action toward foreign missionaries illustrates the emperor's grand plan to manipulate them to further his unification agenda. The emperor invited the missionaries into his domain after the defeat of the Italians in 1942 with the specific intent of providing social services to the non-Abyssinian Ethiopian peoples, and he devised a rigorous procedural system to ensure the missionaries' proper compliance with his decree.²² The government allowed only "recognized" missionary groups with experience in other parts of the world to work with the Oromo.²³ This requirement probably originated from Selassie's desires to determine whether these groups

²⁰ Ibid. The decree established two types of missionary areas: Open Areas and Ethiopian Church Areas. Open Areas consisted of parts of Ethiopia where the population did not practice Orthodox Christianity, and Ethiopian Church Areas were locations dominated by Orthodox Christians. Missionaries could not evangelize in the Ethiopian Church Areas but could provide social services. Addis Ababa, the capital of Ethiopia, was an Open Area.

²¹ Ibid., 161.

²² Willmott, 54.

²³ Guiorguis, 159.

would be compliant by examining their past performances in other countries.²⁴ The imperial government also implemented the policy that missionaries had to demonstrate a specific skill that the government could use to further causes, such as education.²⁵ The government provided the missionaries with no financial assistance to start schools or medical clinics, as is obvious from the missionaries' constant petitions for donations to support their efforts in Ethiopia.²⁶

The CMF's interaction with the national government demonstrates the intent of Selassie to manipulate the missionaries for his purpose. Missionaries lamented the procedural nightmare they endured it: "Among the major responsibilities of the job were the securing of Priest and Kirkpatrick's visas and procuring our 4 radio permits. The permits were obtained only after months of negotiations and finally obtaining clearance from the head of security himself."²⁷ The national government even forced the CMF to obtain licenses from the Ministry of Community Development to build missionary schools.²⁸ Yet, when the missions did something that directly benefited the Abyssinians, Selassie's officials were extremely accommodating to them. For instance, CMF missionary Mont Smith discovered that the government had allocated land for a mission school in Addis Ababa, the nation's capital, with a large Abyssinian population, without

²⁴ Selassie was probably not concerned about the standard of education that the mission societies would provide to the Oromo, since his government had made no serious attempts to educate them.

²⁵ Giles, interview.

²⁶ Johnson, "Johnson Prayer Newsletter" (December 1965), 1.

²⁷ Don and Beth Alice Johnson, "Johnson Family Annual Report," *Christian Missionary Fellowship Annual Report Ethiopian Mission* (1971): 7A/17.

²⁸ Ibid.

him having to endure the normal procedural quagmire.²⁹ Selassie ensured that he maintained a tight control over the activities of the missions by making them go through eighteen separate agencies, just to function. For example, the CMF had to submit regular progress reports to the Ministry of Education, while obtaining hunting licenses from the Ministry of Agriculture. The missionaries had to register with the Ministry of Interior and to obtain visa approvals from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.³⁰ Mont Smith described this laborious process to obtain visas for a CMF doctor in the following manner:

My, the number of documents needed. Pictures, notarized copies of college work, letters of good morals, letters of professional proficiency, letters of financial responsibility, location of temporary station, location of permanent assignment, type of work to be done, permission of Department of Health for doctor's entry, committee examination of doctor's credentials, getting letters from this department clearing this project, getting letters from the visa committee to Department of Foreign Affairs for actual visa issuance, getting letters from Dept. of Foreign Affairs to Department of Interior for residency permits and so it goes.³¹

This procedural system might appear to be simply a thorough process but, given Selassie's autocratic leadership style, he probably intended to limit the influence of the missionaries by maintaining stringent control over them. An example of this was his requirement that government examiners test the missionaries' proficiency in Amharic, ensuring that they could properly communicate in the imperial language.³² Selassie

²⁹ Mont Smith, "The Open Door In Ethiopia," *Impact* 6, no. 8 (September 1963): 1. Selassie saw this school as benefiting the Abyssinians more than any other group.

³⁰ Tom and Wanda Kirkpatrick, "Kirkpatrick's Annual Report," *Christian Missionary Fellowship Ethiopian Mission Annual Report* (1968): 15. The missionaries also worked with the Ministries of Telecommunications, Finance, and Community Development, to name a few.

³¹ Mont Smith, "Mont Smith Prayer Newsletter," *Impact* 7, no. 3 (March 1964): 3.

³² Martin and Inis Mitchum, "Mitchum Prayer Newsletter," Christian Missionary Fellowship Prayer Newsletters Ethiopian Missions (May 1966): 1.

established this requirement to guarantee the proper implementation of his acculturation process; if this was not his intention, he would have not established such a mandate.

The actions of Selassie and his national officials indicate a certain indifference to the services that the missionaries provided. While on one hand Selassie wanted the missionaries to provide limited services such as education in Amharic, he did not want the missionaries to become too influential. By maintaining a cumbersome procedural process, he sought to guarantee that the missioners operated in a manner that strictly supported his agenda. For instance, the missionary education curriculum for the Oromo consisted primarily of teaching Amharic and the Bible. CMF missionaries never mentioned teaching science or engineering to the Oromo, and almost certainly the curriculum was the minimum functional education that the Oromo needed to remain subservient to the Abyssinians.

An examination of CMF's contact with the Oromo yields great insight into the overall dynamic between the Haile Selassie government and the Oromo. To appreciate this relationship, one must understand the philosophy of the CMF and how they came to work in Ethiopia. The CMF developed out of the work of two missionaries, Pat Johnson and Bill Lown, who belonged to an evangelical Protestant denomination called the Christian Church. Lown and Johnson founded the organization on the principle that there "could be a more effective manner of getting the gospel around the world."³³ Thus, evangelism rested at the core of the organization. These individuals, along with others, formed the CMF with the guiding principle that "conservative" God-fearing individuals would manage the organization with input from field missionaries, placing minimum burden on

³³ Charles Cook, "The Fifties," in *Five Decades: A Foundation: CMF International and Global Evangelization* (Indianapolis: Christian Missionary Fellowship, 1998), 4.

the individual missionary. The founders also wanted the CMF to be a combination of the two classic types of missionary groups: sending and supporting missions. This meant a combination of support from the head organization and self-support from the missionaries.³⁴ The group also claimed to be nondenominational. All of these principles led to the incorporation of the group in Kansas, with Pat Johnson as the executive director.³⁵

The CMF started work in Ethiopia by chance rather than by actual design. The group first sent missionaries to Japan and Brazil in the 1950s; they attempted to obtain visas in 1963 to start a mission in India but they were not successful. Then they chose Ethiopia because of Selassie's friendly policy toward missionary groups.³⁶ Mont Smith successfully petitioned Haile Selassie on 22 May 1963 to allow the CMF to establish a mission in the country with twelve to fifteen families, and between 1965 and 1967 the society founded four mission outposts in the Horo-Guduru Awarja district of the Wollega province.³⁷ CMF records do not indicate whether the group itself chose the province of Wollega or Selassie made the decision; regardless, the impoverished area badly needed social aid. Wollega had approximately 1.2 million people and suffered from a low literacy

³⁴ *CMF: A History* (CMF International: Indianapolis, 1999), 2.

³⁵ Cook, 4-5. The group also created its magazine, *Missionary Fellowship*, in 1950.

³⁶ "Plans For Mont Smith Family Altered," *Impact* VI, no. 4 (April 1963): 2.

³⁷ "Mont Smith in Ethiopia Seeking Audience with the Emperor," *Impact* 6 (May 1963): 1. The initial cost for each family was \$2,638.67. The missionaries' willingness to raise a large sum of money for their mission indicates their dedication to their evangelistic effort. See also Wanda Kirkpatrick, *Christian Missionary Fellowship: Ethiopian Mission Fact Book* (Addis Ababa: CMF, 1973), 7. They founded these outposts at the villages of KIRAMU, HARO, ADDIS ABABA, and TOSSE in May 1965, November 1966, December 1966, and January 1967, respectively. Later they founded a station at Akayu, along with several smaller stations called preaching points.

rate, with only 7.9% of the total populace and only 0.4% of the women able to read.³⁸ Thus, Wollega presented a clear social need to the government of Haile Selassie but a religious need to CMF missionaries.

While the CMF claimed to be nondenominational, the Christian Church denomination's dogma influenced their theological and methodological approach to missionary work.³⁹ Specific features of the Christian Church guided the CMF missionaries. This included the requirements that they declare that Jesus Christ was the Son of God, that baptism should be by immersion, and that social services should be provided as a means of evangelism.⁴⁰ The clear majority of the CMF personnel came from the Christian Church denomination and were all guided by these principles.⁴¹

The CMF missionaries adhered to a theological and ideological school of thought that emphasized evangelism, Christian conversion, and church planting. Constantly, they spoke of the need for evangelism and conversion as their top priorities, much in keeping with their handbook, which states clearly that they were established "to evangelize to the non-Christian people of the world."⁴² This desire for evangelism and conversion became the dominating goals of the missionary group and, like many other foreign missionaries

³⁸ Wanda Kirkpatrick, 5.

³⁹ "Disciples History," *Christian Church: Disciples of Christ*, available from <http://www.disciples.org/general/dchist.htm>. Alexander Campbell and Barton Stone formed this group in 1832, which had the guiding principle of being totally Biblically based, with no adherence to tradition, creeds, or liturgy.

⁴⁰ "Practices and Beliefs," *Christian Church: Disciples of Christ*, available from <http://www.disciples.org/general/dcliefs.htm>. The Christian church also elected their ministers like the Presbyterians and organized its governing body along democratic lines.

⁴¹ Mont Smith, "Open Door," 1; "Supporters Respond with \$19,844.64" *Impact* 11, (November-December 1968): 4.

⁴² *CMF: A History*, 2.

operating in Africa, provision of social services to their converts was secondary. As Mont Smith, who from 1963-1969 served as the CMF's first missionary in Ethiopia, put it, "The conquest of this tribe [Oromo] by the Christian Gospel could be the noted mission work of the entire country."⁴³ This statement indicates a competitive drive on the CMF missionaries' part to convert the Oromo. The need for evangelism and conversion caused the CMF in many instances to ignore all facets of Oromo life unrelated to conversion, including signs of social and political disquiet among the Oromo. CMF reports from 1967 make no mention of the Oromo social unrest, despite the fact that they had a station in Addis Ababa, a center of many protests.⁴⁴ Certainly, CMF missionaries saw a need to provide social services to the Oromo, but it was not their main priority.⁴⁵ As CMF directors plainly expressed in their newsletter:

Are we not then to avoid the social service and cultural rift? Certainly not! In many cases as in Ethiopia these are the keys to unlock the doors so men can be found, but care must be taken that turning the key does not become the whole activity of the mission nor a substitute for the mission.⁴⁶

This statement exposes the CMF's principle that providing social services was a means of aiding evangelism and conversion but definitely not the main priority of its effort in Ethiopia. Later, CMF missionaries observed that missions taking the sole responsibility

⁴³ Smith, "Open Door," 1.

⁴⁴ Johnson, "Johnson Family Annual Report," 7A/17.

⁴⁵ Wanda Kirkpatrick, *Christian Missionary Fellowship*, 7.

⁴⁶ "Ethiopian Mission News: First Impressions," *Impact* 12 (November-December 1969): 2.

for providing social services to the Oromo only limited evangelism; for them, therefore, the solution lay with working in coordination with relief agencies.⁴⁷

“Church planting” was the second highest priority for the CMF. The American missionaries took their cue from the SIM in that they came to Ethiopia with the clear intent of establishing a new denomination, separate from the Orthodox Church in Ethiopia. The missionaries constantly reiterated this fact, albeit subtly, in their news publications. In a 1969 article the CMF missionaries opined that “we must be interested not only in producing indigenous fruit [Christian members], but planting indigenous trees [Christian Churches] that will produce fruit long after we are gone.”⁴⁸ To establish this new church, the missionaries had first to obtain Christian converts among the Oromo population.

The CMF missionaries saw Christian conversion as the third component of their missionary goal, one that they pursued with vigorous zeal. The missionaries felt compelled, whether out of genuine religious fervor or a competitive edge with other missionary groups, to convert the Oromo to Christianity. Annual reports and missionary accounts of the CMF place an extraordinary emphasis on the number of Oromo who converted to Christianity. One annual report begins with the stated objective to “foster growth rate of one-third each year in number of Christians and congregations: 3,000 baptized believers and 40 congregations in 1976.”⁴⁹ In fact, all CMF annual reports start with a statement concerning the number of Christian converts that the missionaries desired.

⁴⁷ Ray Giles, “The Hand That Gives the Cup of Cold Water,” *Christianity Standard* (April 1983): 356. Ray Giles went further to declare that missionaries often neglected the Gospel to provide social services.

⁴⁸ “Ethiopian Mission News,” 2.

⁴⁹ “Bold Growth Plans,” *Christian Missionary Fellowship Annual Report Ethiopian Mission* (1973): 12.

Often, emphasis on the quantity appeared to override quality in the missionaries' thinking. A case in point is the time when missionaries relayed the success story of a lady who expressed a desire to become a Christian but failed to mention whether she had shown any true adherence to the faith. Regardless of her outward actions, the missionaries immediately baptized the lady—evidence of the great emphasis that they placed on mass Christian conversion.⁵⁰

The theological beliefs of the missionaries impacted the type of training that they received as well. The CMF personnel underwent diverse training grounded in Christian fundamentalism to prepare them for work with the Oromo. A great majority of the CMF missionaries came from the Christian Church denomination, which belonged to the Christian fundamentalist movement; most of them also attended missionary classes at seminaries that emphasized Christian fundamentalism. For instance, Ray Giles (served 1968-1977), one of the first CMF missionaries in Ethiopia, was originally a Christian Church minister and had attended Fuller's Theological Seminary for World Mission, one of the leading fundamentalist Christian colleges.⁵¹ Giles's training and background demonstrate how the organization specifically looked for persons with a fundamentalist background and encouraged training that cultivated this belief. In fact, the CMF's first four missionary recruits for Ethiopia—Don Johnson, Beth Alice Johnson, Rex Jones, and Donella Jones—were all Christ Church ministers, and they went into the Oromo areas with

⁵⁰ Bob and Karen Chapman, "Tosse, Ethiopia Annual Report 1974," *Christian Missionary Fellowship Annual Report Ethiopian Missions* (1974): 16. The fact that the missionaries immediately baptized her was strange, since CMF missionaries such as Ray Giles expressed dismay with the Oromo continuing to practice their traditional religion while feigning adherence to Orthodox Christianity. The question arises as to what litmus test the CMF had for Christian conversion.

⁵¹ Giles, interview. Giles also studied anthropology while at the seminary, which showed the diverse training that missionaries had to endure to prepare for fieldwork.

the mindset of battling the forces of evil and establishing a new church. As Ray Giles pointed out, the goal of CMF was to “plant churches that were spiritually alive.” Giles described how the Oromo actually worshiped “dark forces” such as the devil. Before missionaries began work, they had to pass a final interview board of the CMF’s hierarchy, thus making certain that they held the appropriate religious beliefs and ensuring that religious indoctrination formed the basis of CMF training.⁵²

CMF missionaries endured intense language training and medical training as part of their preparation for fieldwork. They went through a long process that included medical and psychiatric examinations, besides taking intensive courses in Amharic that normally lasted from six months to one year.⁵³ Initially, missionaries did not learn *Oromoo afan*, preferring to use local interpreters to communicate; naturally, this lack of knowledge of the local language affected the way in which the missionaries perceived the Oromo and, in a way, was to help the imperial project of the Amharization of greater Ethiopia.⁵⁴ Despite their emphasis on evangelism, the missionaries learned the skills necessary to deal with the social needs of the Oromo and, to this end, they took additional medical classes.

Missionary Effie Giles (served 1968-1977), wife of Ray Giles, attended a seminar on tropical diseases at Loma Linda University as part of her preparation, and some of the other CMF personnel were medically trained and licensed physicians, including Dr. Bob

⁵² “Four Candidates Become Recruits To Ethiopia,” *Impact* 6 (August 1963); Giles, interview.

⁵³ Tom and Wanda Kirkpatrick, “Hi-Lites from Then ‘til Now: April 1966-April 1967,” *Christian Missionary Fellowship Annual Report Ethiopian Mission* (1967): 9/17. They often trained in Addis Ababa at a school established by the SIM.

⁵⁴ Giles, interview. Despite having worked nearly 30 years with the Oromo, Giles still did not speak *Oromoo afan* with any proficiency but was fluent in Amharic. The CMF missionaries learned *Oromoo afan* until around the early 1970s, nearly ten years after their start with the Oromo.

Chapman (served 1970-1977).⁵⁵ The CMF expected most of their missionaries to remain with the Oromo for eight to ten years.⁵⁶

In addition to training, CMF personnel spent a great deal of time in raising funds to support their work with the Oromo. CMF claimed to be a nondenominational mission and, as a result, placed the financial burden of starting a mission on the missionaries themselves. It cost from \$7,000 to \$10,000 to send a husband and wife team to Ethiopia in the 1960s.⁵⁷ Missionaries normally spent a few months to a year in petitioning churches for financial support, and the CMF lent its support to help the missionaries by frequently petitioning its reading audience for financial support in its monthly magazine, *Impact*. A good example of this is the May 1963 edition of *Impact*, in which it was announced that “gifts for the Smith Outgoing Fund continue to be received in Aurora. These now total \$2,638.67. Additional resources are needed to make possible the transportation to the mission field.”⁵⁸ One year later, in March 1964, the group asked its audience again for \$10,000 to support the trip of its second missionary family, Don and Madonna Yates, and in 1965 the CMF missionaries made known that they needed a budget of \$850,000 but had raised only \$19,679 thus far.⁵⁹ As late as 1970 the group was campaigning for outside

⁵⁵ Ray Giles and Effie Giles, “Christian Missionary Fellowship Haro Station 1968,” *Christian Missionary Fellowship Annual Report Ethiopian Mission* (1968): 22.

⁵⁶ Giles, interview. He expressed this belief and complained about younger missionaries serving only the minimum time of two years.

⁵⁷ “Mont Smith Seeking ‘Official Status’ from Ethiopian Officials,” *Impact* 6 (November 1963): 1. This was the cost for the first three missionary families in Ethiopia: Mont and Elaine Smith, Don and Madonna Yates, and Don and Beth Alice Johnson.

⁵⁸ “Mont Smith in Ethiopia,” 1.

⁵⁹ “Sailing Date Offered To Yates Family,” *Impact* 7 (March 1964): 2; “Financial Facts on Ethiopian Advance,” *Impact* 8 (1965): 2.

money to fund its effort in Ethiopia, such as asking for \$8,000 to build medical and school facilities.⁶⁰

The theological influence and the training of the CMF missionaries require some commentary. The CMF started with a goal of founding a new, separate denomination among the Oromo. Their theological emphasis on evangelism and conversion influenced the way in which they viewed providing social services. The lack of vital social services such as schools and medical facilities in the Oromo areas did not motivate the CMF missionaries; rather, it was a desire to spread their religious beliefs that drove them to work in Ethiopia. Thus, the organization's primary reason for ministering to the Oromo differed fundamentally from the Selassie government's reason for allowing them into Ethiopia. Moreover, the Christian fundamentalist beliefs of the missionaries affected the way in which they viewed Oromo religious beliefs and practices. The missionaries' inability to speak *Oromoo afan* influenced the way in which they viewed the Oromo and Abyssinian cultures in relation to each other. The missionaries held a religious and cultural disdain for traditional Oromo society as well as a paternalistic sympathy for them, in a manner reminiscent of other missionaries in Africa. The Christian fundamentalist beliefs of the missionaries caused them to view traditional Oromo religious practices with disdain. The CMF missionaries saw the world in terms of good and evil, black and white; for these missionaries, as with those of the SIM, the world consisted of Christians and non-Christians. The missionaries viewed those who did not practice Christianity as being in the grasp of evil—an attitude adopted by many other foreign Christians working in other

⁶⁰ "Houses for Construction," *Impact* 13 (March-April 1970): 2. By 1973 the CMF project ran a total of \$140,000 for future missions, \$289,841 for new stations, and \$2,218,800 for personal field funds. *Impact* (May-June 1973).

parts of Africa.⁶¹ Ray Giles conveyed this attitude when he articulated that the Oromo, who practiced Orthodox Christianity in the countryside, actually worshipped the devil because they blended it with their traditional religious practices.⁶² This absolute belief that all religions outside of Christianity originated with the devil caused CMF personnel to view traditional Oromo religious practices as devil worship. The CMF missionary Mont Smith believed that *adbar*, the spirit venerated by the Oromo, was Satan, and he expressed a desire to confront this demon that the Oromo worshipped.⁶³ In fact, the missionaries misinterpreted a Thanksgiving-type festival that the Amhara and Oromo celebrated each year during the harvest season under trees. The Amhara called the festival *adbar*, while the Oromo called it *irressa*; the missionaries did not speak *Oromoo afan* and often used Amharic interpreters to communicate with the Oromo.⁶⁴ CMF missionary letters contain titles such as “The Place Where Satan Dwells,” describing the missionaries’ contacts with

⁶¹ Ray Giles and Effie Giles, “Giles Prayer Newsletter,” *Christian Missionary Fellowship Prayer Newsletters Ethiopian Mission* (November 1970): 1. The missionaries’ constant preoccupation with the Oromo having been in the grasp of Satan was interesting. The missionaries apparently viewed the world as a dichotomy, with the forces of good (Christians) on one side and the forces of evil (non-Christians) on the other side. No “between” existed for the CMF missioners; people such as the Oromo who did not believe in Christ were in the grasp of Satan. Baptist missionaries also held disdain for traditional religious practices of the Congolese ethnic groups in the Belgian Congo. For instance, these missionaries forbade Christian Congolese from participating in their traditional ceremony known as *libeli*, which signified a boy’s entry into manhood. Nancy Rose Hunt does details this process in-depth in *A Colonial Lexicon*.

⁶² Giles, interview. Giles describes the example of Oromo being baptized in the Orthodox Church and then practicing their traditional beliefs.

⁶³ Martin Mitchum, “Mitchum Prayer Newsletter,” *Christian Missionary Fellowship Prayers News Letters* (October 1966): 1; “Jones Settling in at Tosse—Air Strip Ready,” *Impact* 10 (February 1967): 1.

⁶⁴ “Sacred Groves,” available from <http://members.lycos.co.uk/ethiopianpalnts/sacredgove/>

the traditional Oromo society.⁶⁵ There is no doubt that the missionaries completely misinterpreted what *adbar* represented in Oromo theology, based on their own religious biases and lack of cultural understanding. For the CMF missionaries, the Oromo traditional religion epitomized “ignorance, superstition, and illness.”⁶⁶

The missionaries had equal disdain for the traditional Oromo religious priests, whom they referred to as “shamans” out to fleece the local people. They took particular pride in relating stories of defeating these priests with the power of God.⁶⁷ A missionary chastised an Oromo Christian convert for attempting to resort to traditional customs to exorcise a demon from a young woman, and he forced him to say a Christian prayer instead.⁶⁸ Just as had happened in other parts of Africa, this preoccupation with combating the forces of evil influenced the way in which the missionaries viewed themselves in relation to the Oromo.⁶⁹

The missionaries’ perception of the Oromo as people caught in the grasp of evil caused them to see themselves as their spiritual saviors; they felt a divine calling to minister to the Oromo, whom they saw as Africans “lost” in the world of sin. In the words

⁶⁵ Effie Giles, “Memo from a Missionary Wife: The Place Where Satan Dwells,” *Ethiopia Mission* (October 1971): 1. The missionaries carried this same fundamentalist thinking when they encountered the Kazza people of Ethiopia. This shows that, regardless of the traditional religious practices, the CMF saw them as devil worship.

⁶⁶ Don Johnson, “Johnson Prayer Newsletter,” (January 1967): 1.

⁶⁷ Giles, interview; Don and Beth Johnson, “June Newsletter,” *Christian Missionary Fellowship Prayer News Letter* (June 1969): 2.

⁶⁸ Giles, “The Other Side,” 1.

⁶⁹ For example, missionary doctors in present Africa associate diseases that arise among the Africans with their non-Christian life style. Megan Vaughan traces the history of racial-religious stereotyping by missionary doctors in *Curing their Ills: Colonial Power and African Illness* (Oxford: Polity Press, 1991).

of Mont Smith, “Who will come to these people who dwell in happy seclusion, deep in sin? Lost!”⁷⁰ The CMF personnel viewed the greatest need of the as spiritual and not as socioeconomic or political in nature. This conviction became evident when another missionary, Rex Jones, stated, “Ethiopia: whose greatest most urgent need is Christ. . . . There are the pagan men [Oromo], most who know only a religion of fear.”⁷¹ The missionaries attributed their eventual success with the Oromo to divine providence and not to the social services that they provided nor to the cultural openness of the Oromo.⁷²

There is no doubt that the CMF missionaries had a higher regard for the Abyssinian culture of the Amhara than for that of the Oromo. They accepted the term *Galla*, which the Amhara used to describe the Oromo. The missionaries referred to the Oromo as the “Hamitic Gallas” who spoke “Gallinya.” They used this condescending term to refer to the Oromo in their reference manual on Ethiopia and in newsletters and journals as late as 1973, nearly ten years after working with the Oromo.⁷³ This indicates that the missionaries had only a superficial appreciation for the Oromo and their view of the world and, especially, the subtle differences between them and their neighbors. Had they bothered to understand the Oromo, they would have learned very early that the term *Galla* was offensive to their hosts. The missionaries showed more contempt for Oromo culture when describing them to outsiders. For instance, Ray Giles characterized the Oromo as

⁷⁰ Mont Smith, “Untold Millions Still Untold,” *Impact* 6 (July 1963): 1.

⁷¹ Rex Jones, “Here Am I, Send Me,” *Impact* 6 (July 1963): 1.

⁷² Ray Giles, “Giles Prayer Newsletter,” *Christian Missionary Fellowship Prayer Newsletters Ethiopian Missions* (September 1970): 1.

⁷³ Kirkpatrick, *Christian Missionary Fellowship*, 1-2. Eddie Elliston and Donna Elliston, “Kiram, Ethiopia Elliston Annual Report 1973,” *Christian Missionary Fellowship Annual Report Ethiopian Mission* (1973): 20.

possessing a certain amount of “deviousness” and “selfishness” in attempting to take advantage of one another.⁷⁴ While missionaries described the Oromo as family oriented and hospitable, they also believed that the Oromo hid their opportunistic tendencies. Ray Giles gave an example of this when he described Oromo church leaders secretly maneuvering to get their children jobs in the church.⁷⁵ The missionaries believed that they had rescued the Oromo from a culture of ignorance and superstition by converting them. Another missionary, Doug Priest, articulated this point of view when he portrayed the Oromo existence before their Christian conversion:

The lives of the Galla people in general were one round after another of drunkenness, adultery, thievery, lying, fighting, cheating, and worshipping false gods. It was into this type of situation that we and our fellow missionaries entered and began teaching the gospel. Today, many of the lives in our area have changed greatly.⁷⁶

This quotation demonstrates not only the general scorn that the missionaries felt toward the Oromo culture but also the idealistic manner in which they saw themselves as the saviors of the Oromo.

The missionaries exhibited a more subtle disdain for the Oromo culture when it came to the use of the local language. As previously mentioned, they did not make a serious effort to learn *Oromo afan* until the mid-1970s. A good example of this was Ray Giles, whose command of the Oromo language was superficial even after working with

⁷⁴ Giles, interview. Giles gave an example of Oromo church leaders who attempted to win advantage for their children in the church organization

⁷⁵ Ibid. The missioners appeared to make great generalizations about the Oromo culture without looking at the people as individuals. Missionaries also disliked the Oromo polygamist practices and forbade them from taking any more mates after their conversion.

⁷⁶ Doug Priest, “The Gospel: God’s Power,” *Impact* 6 (November-December 1971): 2.

them for nearly thirty years.⁷⁷ Furthermore, the missionaries did not attempt seriously to implement an Oromo literacy program until June 1974, ten years after working with them.⁷⁸ A CMF missionary even criticized Oromo church members for insisting on using *Oromoo afan* instead of Amharic at the church meetings.⁷⁹ Indirectly, some missionaries even expressed concern about the difficulty that they experienced in learning Amharic but, apparently, they could not appreciate why the Oromo wanted to use their own language instead of the one preferred by the imperial authorities.⁸⁰ Even though the Oromo developed an alphabet that used Roman script instead of Amharic script, missionaries disapproved of it because they felt that it only polarized Ethiopian society.⁸¹ The missionaries' attitudes about *Oromoo afan* demonstrate even more that they accepted the concept of the Abyssinian culture as pan-Ethiopian, leaving no place for the culture of

⁷⁷ Giles, interview.

⁷⁸ Eddie Elliston and Donna Elliston, "Addis Ababa, Ethiopia KIRAMU, Ethiopia," *Christian Missionary Fellowship Annual Report Ethiopian Mission* (January 1975); Eddie Elliston and Donna Elliston, "Annual Report 1974," *Christian Missionary Fellowship Annual Report Ethiopian Mission* (1974): 20; Mickey Smith and Joyce Smith, "Addis Ababa Ethiopia Haro Station January 1975 Annual Report 1974," *Christian Missionary Fellowship Annual Report Ethiopian Mission* (1974): 30. This was also the first time that the missionaries did not refer to the Oromo as *Galla* in their missionary letters. This change no doubt arose with a recognition of increased Oromo nationalism and demand for respect.

⁷⁹ Giles, interview. The missionaries' refusal to learn the Oromo language led to many interesting conundrums. For instance, missionary Don Johnson related a story about trying to comfort an Oromo lady in Amharic after some unknown tragedy; however, the lady did not speak Amharic. Johnson related how awkward it felt but he did not commit to learning *Oromoo afan*.

⁸⁰ Ray Giles, "Ethiopia Mission," *Christian Missionary Fellowship Prayer Newsletters Ethiopian Mission* (November 1968): 1. The missionaries acknowledged that they had more success in teaching Bible classes in English than in Amharic, but once again they never questioned why this was the case.

⁸¹ Giles, interview. Giles also stated that the Roman alphabet caused many speakers to mispronounce *Oromoo afan*. Yet, *Oromoo afan* was a Cushitic language and not Semitic, so the use of the Roman alphabet had no bearing on this.

other people. They often spoke in laudatory praise for the Amhara. When Mont Smith met a local Amhara military ruler for the village of Jar Digga in Wollega, he described him as “handsome as all Amhara are,” and in all of the missionary descriptions of the Oromo they never used words such as *handsome* or *noble* to describe them.⁸² They also expressed a romantic admiration for the emperor. One missionary described Selassie with the following praise: “It is due to the genius of the present Emperor Haile Selassie that these barriers of separation are being broken down and the true beginnings of a unified state are being achieved.”⁸³ The commentator appeared to be oblivious to the political repression of the Oromo that accompanied Selassie’s unification process.

The CMF’s personnel possessed paternalistic feelings for the Oromo that transcended both their theological and cultural biases. They viewed the Oromo as children in need of guidance from them, which was often how missionaries have viewed Africans as a whole. The missionaries’ perception of the Oromo as children can be seen through statements such as this: “About a month before leaving for Haro we baptized Temusgun, our Galla helper whom I hired to be a teacher at Haro. He is a wonderful boy and has proved invaluable in many ways here in Haro.”⁸⁴ The fact that the missionary referred to an adult Oromo male as a “wonderful boy” indicates that he saw the Oromo as children. This paternalism resonated in many other missionary descriptions of the Oromo. An example of this attitude can also be seen in Don Johnson’s description of an Oromo festival that he attended in 1967.

⁸² Mont Smith, *First Trip In*, 4-5.

⁸³ Trimingham, 10.

⁸⁴ Johnson, “Johnson Family Annual Report,” 7A/17.

Last week Martin and I were urged to attend a celebration held a few hills away. We went and were welcomed by the hundreds who gathered, as we were the first white people ever to attend. We never did arrive at an understanding of just what occasioned all the merriment, but there was much singing and dancing, the young men and women in separate groups, while their elders watched. Undoubtedly, later there was much drinking.⁸⁵

His tone resonates with paternalism, and Johnson never attempted to understand the ceremony that he had attended; he stated with certainty that alcohol had been involved.

The missionaries' paternalistic attitude toward the Oromo also contributed to their view of themselves as the saviors of the Oromo. Tom and Wanda Kirkpatrick (served 1966-1977) described their success with the Oromo: "The advances toward penetrating the spiritual darkness, ignorance, and dire physical needs which surround these Galla in Wollega Province, have been significant."⁸⁶ Like their colleagues, they saw themselves as shouldering a new "White Man's Burden" that was to uplift the Oromo people, whom they viewed as lost in ignorance. A clear example of this new "White Man's Burden" type of paternalism appears in a poem that Martin Mitchum used to close his Bible meetings in Haro, Wollega:

In the heathen village there, darkness deepened to despair. Fallen, stark and dead, the chief. Stricken every soul with grief. But the black man made a vow, will you hear it white man? We will tell your God on you! Tell him your brothers too. . . . May it never be suppressed. May it prod and prick you thorough till you rise and duty do. . . .⁸⁷

⁸⁵ Don Johnson and Beth Alice Johnson, "Prayer News Letter," *Christian Missionary Fellowship Prayer Newsletters Ethiopian Missions* (November 1967): 1.

⁸⁶ Tom Kirkpatrick and Wanda Kirkpatrick, "Missionary Kirkpatrick Writes Summary of the Mission to Ethiopia," *Impact* 10 (November 1967): 4.

⁸⁷ Martin Mitchum and Inis Mitchum, "Mitchum Prayer Newsletter," *Christian Missionary Fellowship Prayer Newsletters Ethiopian Missions* (August 1967): 1. Mrs. Royal J. Dye wrote the poem, "I Will Tell Your God on You."

This missionary insisted on ending all his meetings with this poem and, like his CMF contemporaries, obviously felt a paternalistic duty to aid the Oromo. CMF missionaries also characterized their success as totally beneficial and life altering for the Oromo involved. A CMF missionary described one conversion of an Oromo named Afeta:

The rewards of mission work do not come from nameless numbers of ‘souls saved,’ but from individuals whose lives have been transformed and afford us inspiration. Afeta is one such individual who radiates this new life. . . . He was formerly a drunkard, thief, adulterer, despised, and feared by most. But now that he is a Christian, his life is proof to doubters of the power of Christ has over our lives.⁸⁸

Thus, the more childlike and ignorant the Oromo appeared, the more the attitude fed into the missionaries’ sense of accomplishment by converting them to Christianity.⁸⁹

The motives of the CMF for working with the Oromo had nothing to do with their social needs. While Selassie had primarily envisioned the CMF as one more tool in helping to unify Ethiopia under Abyssinian domination, the missionaries saw themselves as the spiritual saviors of the Oromo. Their own personal biases and theological beliefs allowed them to dismiss easily the traditional Oromo society and religion without regard to how this might help or hinder their own missionary effort. The missionaries also accepted the artificial construct of the Abyssinian concept of Ethiopian society and the Oromo role in it. Yet, despite the disdain that the missionaries had for Oromo society, they did provide many vital services to the Oromo. Within the greater context of Oromo history, the

⁸⁸ Ray Giles and Effie Giles, “Giles Prayer Newsletter,” *Ethiopia Mission* (May 1971): 1.

⁸⁹ Smith, “Untold Millions,” 1. Many missionaries showed a certain preoccupation with the color of the Oromo as well. For instance, missionary Mont Smith mentioned the color of the Oromo at least twice in the diary of his first meeting with the Oromo by describing them as “brown skinned” and with “brown faces. Obviously, readers of Smith’s accounts would have known the color of the Oromo, since he worked in Africa. His constant referral to race indicates the traditional preoccupation that missionaries had with race.

missioners unwittingly aided the Oromo push for social equality and Selassie's push for Ethiopian unification, which the next chapter examines.

CHAPTER 5

INTENDED AND UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES

The government of Haile Selassie and the CMF had different views on the proper role of missionary work in Ethiopia. As the previous chapter demonstrates, Selassie saw the missionaries' role as being utilitarian, aiding his overall objective of the unification of Ethiopia. However, the CMF saw their primary goal as spiritual, saving the Oromo from a life of sin through the acceptance of Christianity. Neither agenda had as its primary goal elevating the depressed sociopolitical and economic levels of the Oromo society. The question arises regarding the success of the CMF in evangelizing to the Oromo and the extent to which the Oromo benefited from CMF efforts. Related to this is the manner in which the Amhara-dominated government and Ethiopian Orthodox Church responded to the success of the CMF.

As pointed out in the preceding chapter, providing social services to the Oromo was not the primary goal of the missionaries. However, they had to attend to this aspect of their work in order to attain their religious goals. Rex Jones, one of the CMF missionaries, articulated this concept in 1968: "Our new clinic facilities, into which we move on March 31 will make it possible to expand our evangelistic emphasis by use of taped messages."¹ The CMF missionaries took this theme of evangelism through social services from the group's own theological history and the work of other missionary groups, particularly the SIM.² The CMF established primary schools at all of their mission stations that taught

¹ Rex Jones, "Tosse," *Christian Missionary Fellowship Annual Report Ethiopian Mission* (1968): 24.

² Fuller, 193. The SIM actually founded 200 missionary schools, serving nearly 30,00 students during its years in Ethiopia.

Bible education, agriculture, music, and Amharic, according to government regulations.³ Personal accounts of individual missionaries emphasize that provision of basic education to the Oromo served their greater objective of Christian conversion. As Rex Jones put it, “The work of the past year [social services] has been primarily that of foundation laying.”⁴ For the missionaries, “foundation laying” was the same as sowing the seeds of a new Christian Church, and they saw clear benefits from their educational efforts. Mont Smith, a colleague of Rex Jones, linked the two clearly: “As a result of the school teaching [at Kiramu], the church growth potential has risen considerably.”⁵ The missionaries put major effort into their schools and into indoctrinating the Oromo with their theology. At the Kiramu station Doug Priest taught ten Bible classes a week, indicating that they viewed schools as a means to attaining their main goal of converting the Oromo.⁶

The missionary schools served purposes other than aiding the CMF’s goal of Christian conversion. The Oromo profited tremendously from the educational endeavors of the CMF in the province of Wollega, according to the group’s education statistics. The CMF started in 1965 with one school that served first through second grade and had eighty-five students. By 1973 the group had established three schools and seven outposts,

³ Jones, “Tosse,” 24. Missionaries never specified whether math and science were taught. It is doubtful that advanced math was taught, since this would not have coincided with the Selassie government’s overall plan to keep Oromo education at a minimal level.

⁴ Rex Jones, “Field Report—Rex Jones May, 1966-March, 1967,” *Christian Missionary Fellowship Annual Report Ethiopian Mission* (1967): 8/17. In this report Jones also described the preparation for grade schools up to the third grade.

⁵ Mont Smith and Elaine Smith, “Mont and Elaine Smith Annual Report,” *Christian Missionary Fellowship Annual Report Ethiopian Mission* (1967): 14/17. In fact, at Kiramu from 1966-1967 they had an attendance of 150 students for grades 1 through 4.

⁶ Kirkpatrick, “Missionary Kirkpatrick,” 3.

ones with a total of 1,450 students attending first through the sixth grades.⁷ These numbers are impressive, considering that the area had had no schools prior to the arrival of the CMF. The CMF founded nearly one school annually over a ten-year period and increased its student body by 1,700% over the same period. The Oromo benefited from the creation in 1970 of two literacy schools, where the CMF used converted Christian Oromo to teach.⁸ The fact that Oromo teachers taught these classes probably encouraged their people to attend school; it also instilled a sense of pride and accomplishment in them. At Tosse, the mission schools had tremendous appeal, with nearly 100 students attending the two literacy schools in their opening year.⁹ The Oromo also benefited from the CMF's initiation of *Oromoo afan* literacy courses in 1971. Through this measure, the missionaries acknowledged that the Oromo had a language and culture worthy of study—something that Abyssinians had never accepted.¹⁰

The educational figures from the CMF's individual mission schools illustrate the social benefits that the Oromo reaped from the mission. The missionaries did particularly well at their Kiramu station, where they founded the first school in 1965 with eighty-five students.¹¹ By 1968 the Kiramu school student body had increased to 190.¹² Three years

⁷ Kirkpatrick, *Christian Missionary*, 7.

⁸ Ray Giles, "Giles Prayer Newsletter" (Nov 1970): 1.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 1.

¹⁰ Bob and Karen Chapman, "Chapman 1971 Annual Report," *Christian Missionary Fellowship Annual Report Ethiopian Mission* (1971): 27. The question arises as to why it took so long for the CMF to initiate this program. Certainly a combination of fear of government and lack of cultural appreciation for the Oromo culture contributed to the missionaries' delay.

¹¹ Kirkpatrick, *Christian Missionary*, 11.

later the enrollment at the school grew to 300 students, with an additional 125 at a satellite school, representing 150% increase from 1968.¹³ The KIRAMU station and its three satellite schools expanded their student body to a total of 750 students by 1973, a 250% increase from 1971.¹⁴ The mission started a school at its TOSSE station in 1967 with ninety-seven students, and here the results were similar to those at KIRAMU.¹⁵ By 1971 TOSSE had three satellite schools that taught 488 Oromo students, along with its main mission school.¹⁶ The missionaries had 213 students at their HARO station in 1971, compared with just 75 in 1967.¹⁷ The Oromo also benefited from the establishment of a basic seminary, called the RAINY SEASON LEADERSHIP TRAINING PROGRAM, that educated 155 preachers in 1973 alone.¹⁸

The number of Oromo students that the CMF missionaries educated might appear relatively small compared to the overall population of Wollega, but the accomplishments were significant. The CMF's success with the Oromo of the Horo-Awadju district of Wollega represented the type of success that all missionaries groups had in Ethiopia in

¹² Doug Priest, "Christian Missionary Fellowship KIRAMU Mission Station 1968," *Christian Missionary Fellowship Annual Report Ethiopian Mission* (1968): 20.

¹³ Eddie Elliston and Donna Elliston, "Elliston 1971 Annual Report," *Christian Missionary Fellowship Annual Report Ethiopian Mission* (1971): 25.

¹⁴ Doug Priest, "KIRAMU Ethiopia Doug Priest Annual Report," *Christian Missionary Fellowship Annual Report Ethiopian Mission* (1973): 34.

¹⁵ Kirkpatrick, *Christian Missionary*, 11.

¹⁶ Ray Giles and Effie Giles, "Giles 1971 Annual Report," *Christian Missionary Fellowship Annual Report Ethiopian Mission* (1971): 17.

¹⁷ Don Johnson and Beth Alice Johnson, "Johnson 1971 Annual Report," *Christian Missionary Fellowship Annual Report Ethiopian Mission* (1971): 19; Kirkpatrick, *Christian Missionary*, 11.

¹⁸ *Christian Missionary Fellowship Annual Report Ethiopian Mission* (1973): 11. The missionaries expressed a desire to increase this number to nearly 2,500 ministers by 1988. This would have further contributed to the creation of an educated Oromo class.

educating the country's disenfranchised people. The efforts of the missionaries remained significantly greater than the effort put forth by Selassie's government to educate the Oromo. For instance, between 1968 and 1969 the CMF and other Protestant missionaries taught close to 60,000 students out of a total of 616,271 students enrolled in all Ethiopian schools. The mission schools nearly tripled the enrollment of Orthodox Church schools.¹⁹ In addition, missionary societies such as the CMF aided in the genesis of a Western-educated Oromo class that, naturally, benefited the Oromo as a whole by providing advocates to articulate their view points more effectively in the political arena.

The CMF also supplied much-needed medical care to the Oromo, even though the Selassie government did not expect them to operate medical facilities in Oromo-dominated areas. The CMF personnel did exactly this by founding medical clinics at all of their stations—a measure that they perceived as a social service to their adherents.²⁰ The missionaries expressed, very explicitly, their awareness of this need in articles such as one from November 1964:

The physical ills of thousands of Ethiopian are vividly evident even to the casual observer. They include: parasitic conditions, trachoma, malaria, typhus, yellow fever, yaws, tuberculosis, leprosy, etc. Malnutrition is common, especially among children. The Great Physician [God] has inspired doctors to missionary service for the sake of the body. The soul and mind are his concerns as well.²¹

¹⁹ Sudan Interior Mission, "Ethiopia" (1966-1971): 5. The total population of Wollega was around 1,214,000 during the late 1960s.

²⁰ Giles, interview. Although the Selassie decree had stated that the missionaries could establish hospitals in Ethiopian Church areas and Abyssinian areas, it did not mandate that the missionaries had to open medical facilities in non-Abyssinian-dominated areas.

²¹ "Africa," *Impact* 8 (November 1964): 3.

This statement highlights the divine calling that the CMF missionaries felt to aid the Oromo to meet this medical need. Of course, such services extended their Christian work, but it is also true that the missionaries had a genuine concern for the well-being of the Oromo. As Bob Chapman's daily account of his activities at Tosse shows, provision of health care was an important aspect of their work: "Examined one of our Christian ladies there. Found disturbing breast masses. Advised excision and pathology at the Nekempte Hospital. Saw two elderly neighbor ladies there suffering from arthritis. Invited Merga to come to the clinic and get medicine for them."²²

Again, it should be noted that this concern for the medical needs of the Oromo was inextricably tied to the missionaries' ultimate goal of Christian conversion of the Oromo people. Thus, the missionaries often attributed the resolution of many of the medical needs of the Oromo to their conversion to Christianity. Bob Chapman described treating an Oromo woman for psychiatric problems that arose from "her parents wanting her to marry a non-Christian." He resolved the problem by baptizing her, which miraculously caused her problems to go away!²³

The CMF's medical records illustrate how the group affected the Oromo positively. The missionaries managed to bring medical facilities to an area that had had none prior to their arrival. In 1968 the KIRAMU station's personnel treated fifteen to twenty people daily; in one year this equated to the treatment of over 7,000 Oromo who otherwise would have remained untreated. At Haro the missionaries treated 1,973 Oromo during 1971 and within

²² Ed Chamberlain and Berth Chamberlain, "Plateau Missions," *Christian Missionary Fellowship Annual Report Ethiopian Mission* (1975): 16.

²³ *Ibid.*, 16. The attribution of medical problems to sin was a typical approach of missionary medicine in other parts of Africa. Vaughan's *Curing Their Ills* is an excellent case study of this phenomenon.

three years the Haro clinic treated 10, 800 people in a year, a 500% increase from 1971.²⁴ The figures might appear insignificant until one takes into account that the CMF alone may have treated around 50,000 patients just in Wollega at its five stations.²⁵ This, coupled with the work of other mission groups throughout Ethiopia's Oromo areas, may have equaled close to a million Oromo treated. Such progress can be seen in the fact that, by 1976, CMF's clinics treated nearly 3,500 patients a month, or 42,000 patients in a year.²⁶ The missionaries also helped to prevent outbreaks of diseases that easily could have decimated the Oromo. For example, they vaccinated 1,150 Oromo against cholera before the epidemic.²⁷ The Oromo also profited from the various specialty surgeries that CMF doctors performed. The CMF brought in surgeons who performed 139 eye surgeries at the Akayu station in one year.²⁸ The benefits that the Oromo reaped from the medical efforts of the group cannot be overstated, since the CMF created medical clinics where none had existed.²⁹

²⁴ Priest, "Christian Missionary Fellowship," 20; Johnson, "Johnson 1971," 18. Don Johnson and Beth Alice Johnson, "Haro Ethiopia Annual Report 1974," *Christian Missionary Fellowship Annual Report* (1974): 25.

²⁵ This is an estimate based on each of the five stations treating around 10,000 people, as the Haro station did in 1971.

²⁶ Bob Chapman and Karen Chapman, "Dr. Bob and Karen," *Christian Missionary Fellowship Annual Report Ethiopian Mission* (1976): 6.

²⁷ Don Johnson and Beth Alice Johnson, "Johnson November Newsletter," *Haro Mission Ethiopia* (November): 1.

²⁸ Doug Priest, "Priest Prayer Newsletter," *Akayu Mission: Christian Missionary Fellowship* (March/April 1977): 2. They also performed eye examinations on 325 people.

²⁹ Sudan Interior Mission, "Summary of SIM Medical Ministry in Ethiopia" (February 1975): 1. For instance, the SIM operated three hospitals and twenty-five clinics that treated 27,000 patients in one month.

CMF personnel enjoyed great success with proselytizing to the Oromo as result of the social services that they provided. Obviously, at some level, they answered a basic need of the Oromo to be spiritually filled. Missionary records indicate that the Oromo felt a certain appeal to the CMF's evangelical message; many converted willingly, despite harassment from local government and Orthodox Church officials. The imperial policy of the Abyssinians to assimilate the Oromo effectively destroyed Oromo religious institutions that had been at the heart of their society. This left a void for missionaries to fill, and the missionaries responded accordingly. According to Ray Giles, the zealotness of the Oromo was evident: "Instead of a small group dwindling under harassment, they have become aggressive, growing in number," tangible evidence of the success of the missionaries.³⁰ Mont Smith initially baptized three Oromo and two Amhara at the Kiramu station in 1965, and within two years the Kiramu station had 172 Oromo converts, an enormous increase.³¹ The attendance figures for Kiramu's church indicate that the Oromo genuinely committed themselves to Christianity: Approximately 150 of the 172 converts regularly attended worship services.³² Yet, an increase in the number of students at the Kiramu mission school, from 85 in 1965 to 150 in 1967, accompanied the increase in Christian converts. This correlation shows that the appeal of the CMF's Christian message

³⁰ Ray Giles and Effie Giles, "Mission Ethiopia," *Christian Missionary Fellowship Prayer Newsletters Ethiopia Mission* (August-September 1973): 2.

³¹ Mont Smith, "Mont Smith Reports First Fruits," *Impact* 8 (August 1965): 2. One Amhara was an Orthodox priest; the missionary law forbade his conversion. His conversion indicates the lack of education and appeal of the Orthodox Church for missionaries to be able to convert a priest. Kirkpatrick, "Hi-Lites," 10/17.

³² The missionaries had to conduct three to four services to accommodate the Oromo.

was partly the result of the education that accompanied it. Yet, the true motives of Oromo cannot clearly be determined, since the CMF converts left no written records.

Records from the Tosse and Haro stations also demonstrate the success of the CMF's evangelical effort and its symbiotic relationship with social services. Initially, the CMF converted twenty-three Oromo in 1968, holding eleven education classes and nine worship services at Tosse.³³ Once again, this combination of social services and evangelism paid off for the missionaries: By 1971, 175 Oromo had converted to Christianity at the same station.³⁴ The number of students at the Tosse school also rose from 93 in 1968 to 306 in 1971.³⁵ Figures from Haro also illustrate this dynamic of increase in conversion accompanied by an increase in social services provided. In 1971 the missionaries baptized eighty-two Oromo and served 1,973 patients at their clinic; at the same station in 1974 they converted 205 Oromo and saw an average of thirty patients per day at the medical clinic, totaling 10,800 patients in a year.³⁶ These figures indicate that the Oromo responded well to the missionary effort both in the area of social service and in the area of Christian conversion.

The foundation and growth of Oromo churches illustrates that the CMF missionaries met an inner spiritual need of the Oromo that went beyond answering physical needs. The conversions that took place among the Oromo appear to be genuine, given the fact that actual churches ran by Oromo arose from this effort. The Kiramu

³³ Rex Jones, "Christian Missionary Fellowship Tosse Station 1968," *Christian Missionary Fellowship Annual Report Ethiopian Mission* (1968): 23.

³⁴ Giles and Giles, "Giles 1971," 16. It must be noted that some Oromo went back to the Orthodox Church from fear of not being able to be buried with their families.

³⁵ Kirkpatrick, *Christian Missionary*, 11.

³⁶ Johnson, "Johnson 1971," 18; Johnson and Johnson, "Haro Ethiopia," 25.

station had founded six churches and fourteen preaching points (informal churches) by 1974.³⁷ Similarly, the Akayu station personnel established three churches and eighteen preaching points by the same year.³⁸ The CMF set a goal of creating forty churches with 3,000 members by 1976 and 320 churches with 48,000 members by 1988.³⁹ By 1977 they had surpassed their goal, converting 3,992 Oromo and building one hundred churches.⁴⁰ Eventually, these Oromo churches united to form the *Christos Adinet* (Unity in Christ) Church based on the CMF's Christian fundamentalist theology.⁴¹ With the aid of CMF personnel, the Oromo eventually established a central governing body, the Church Mission Council, which set a budget for the entire denomination and paid the salaries of its preachers.⁴² The foundation of an "independent" denomination among the Oromo demonstrates clearly the missionaries' effectiveness. Since the *Christos Adinet* Church continued to grow even after the government forced the missionaries to leave in 1977, it is clear that the CMF answered a desire among the Oromo that transcended social services.

The Oromo traditional values also contributed to the CMF success in the area. Historically, the Oromo had been open to new ideas and ready to incorporate them into

³⁷ Johnson and Johnson, "Haro Ethiopia," 25.

³⁸ Priest and Priest, "Akayu," 28.

³⁹ "Harvest Now in Ethiopia," *Christian Missionary Fellowship Annual Report Ethiopian Mission* (1975): 12.

⁴⁰ James C. Smith "The Giles Are Back in Ethiopia," *Impact* 28 (January-March 1985): 2; and Ray Giles, "While The Sun Is Hot Run . . .," *Impact* (October-December 1991): 6. They had only 10,000 members by 1991, missing their goal by 38,000. However, the volatile political situation contributed to this low number.

⁴¹ Giles, interview. The church membership grew to 40,000 by 1996. "Hello Again," *North American Christian Convention, CMF Luncheon* (1996): 1.

⁴² Giles, interview.

their own society, which made them more open to the CMF missionaries. The traditional Oromo religion mirrored Christianity in many aspects, allowing to Oromo to identify easily with the basic Christian tenets, including belief in the trinity. Thus, their traditional religious beliefs must have made the CMF's message much more palatable than the missionaries realized. Finally, the CMF's emphasis on non-hierarchical church structure easily fit into the traditional Oromo democratic value system as cultivated in their *gada* system. Traditional Oromo society and religion emphasized democratic participation and not hierarchical system, as was the case in the Orthodox Church and Abyssinian society. The missionaries encouraged a democratic style, which suited the Oromo situation more so than Orthodoxy, as is evident from an article in *Impact*, the missionary publication.

The role of the Christian is that of servant. In early days he considered himself a galley slave for Christ. Mont Smith and his wife Elaine are servants for Christ among a people [Oromo] whom some consign to the status of slave. . . . Quite in contrast is the Coptic priest who is the spiritual superior of his churchly children.⁴³

The educational and medical services that the CMF brought ameliorated some of the deplorable conditions that the Wollega Oromo had endured. When coupled with the work of other missionary groups, including the SIM, one can easily see how this affected Oromo society for the better. At the same time, the CMF met other metaphysical needs of the Oromo, namely, the foundation of a new Christian denomination. Had the Oromo seen the missionaries only as vehicles for social services, Christianity would not have spread so rapidly in the area and the churches would have collapsed once the missionaries left. The creation of *Christos Adinet*, *Mekane Yesus*, and *Kale Heywit* churches all testify to the success of the missionaries.

⁴³ "Boot Blackers for Christ's Sake," *Impact* 8 (February 1964): 4.

CMF missionaries saw their primary goal as Christian conversion. They ignored the political repression that the Oromo suffered at the hands of the Amhara-dominated government of Haile Selassie. In 1969 Bob Johnson described with great excitement the number of Oromo wanting to convert:

The first week we were daily amazed as people came from far distances in all directions to tell us they no longer wanted to worship Satan but wanted to follow Jesus Christ. We sold many Bibles and New Testaments. Sunday services have grown until this Sunday we had more people than the school could accommodate, so we met outside.⁴⁴

Like most missionaries, Johnson did not indicate any introspection as to why his efforts had proved to be so successful, except to attribute it to divine providence.

CMF personnel made no attempts whatsoever to address the politically charged environment in which they worked during the 1960s and 1970s, and the CMF handbook on Ethiopia does not mention the political upheavals taking place in Ethiopia, despite the fact that the group published it in 1973 at the height of Ethiopia's political turmoil.⁴⁵ In fact, the missionaries described Selassie's overthrow only as a "series of governmental changes that eventuated in a total change of Cabinet, Provincial Governors, and finally of the Emperor himself."⁴⁶ The minimizing of the event by the missionaries indicates that the political situation of the local people did not play a major role in their work. Although the emperor had used the CMF to affect the Amhara's influence among the Oromo, the CMF

⁴⁴ Don Johnson, "Johnson Newsletter," *Impact* 12 (September-October 1969): 2-3.

⁴⁵ Kirkpatrick, *Christian Missionary*, 8.

⁴⁶ Ray Giles and Effie Giles, "Yasow Ethiopia Annual Report 1974," *Christian Missionary Fellowship Annual Report Ethiopian Mission* (1974): 22. The commentary could also indicate monitoring of mail by communists, but this is doubtful, since the letter was written in 1974, before the communists had established a domestic spying apparatus.

remained uninterested in the politics of the country. When the Oromo expressed any sentiment about reclaiming their ethnic identity, it was often dismissed. A good example of this is Ray Giles' criticism of the Oromo decision to use the Latin script instead of Amharic for their written language. The missionaries made no effort to study the Oromo traditional democratic system of government. When invited to observe a *gada* meeting, the Johnsons declined, indicating a lack of curiosity about other aspects of Oromo life.⁴⁷ If the missionaries had appreciated the Oromo culture, they would have welcomed the opportunity to observe this system. Once the CMF established the Oromo church, they actively sought to establish another church among the Gumuz people of Ethiopia.⁴⁸ Had they been concerned with the depressed political state of the Oromo, they would have aided and encouraged this educated Oromo class to enter into the Ethiopian political arena. Yet, the evangelical success with the Oromo remained the greatest and only important success in the eyes of CMF personnel.⁴⁹

Ethiopian Orthodox Church officials responded in a negative manner to the success of the missionaries with the Oromo, just as they had done historically to any outside Christian groups, no matter what their stated purpose. The Orthodox clergy worked hard against the SIM personnel to harass and even imprison them, once the group became popular as a result of the social services that they provided.⁵⁰ Even when other missionary groups such as the Baptists came to Ethiopia with the intent of helping to revitalize the

⁴⁷ Johnson and Johnson, "Prayer Newsletter," (27 November 1967): 1.

⁴⁸ Ray Giles, "Initial Strategy for Ethiopia," *Christian Missionary Fellowship* (31 March 1993): 2.

⁴⁹ Giles, interview. Ethiopia became the CMF's largest missionary effort in the world. They felt justifiably proud of their spiritual accomplishments there.

⁵⁰ Willmott, 139.

Orthodox Church, the Orthodox clergy was always hostile toward them because they felt that their authority was threatened.⁵¹ The clergy actively persecuted Ethiopian nationals whom the missionary groups had converted. For example, the Orthodox clergy forced people converted by the Protestant missionary society called the Nazarenes to be buried in graves open to all religions instead of in Christian cemeteries.⁵²

The Ethiopian Orthodox clergy showed the same disdain toward the CMF that they had for other missionary societies. The CMF's personnel detected that the Orthodox clergy believed that all Ethiopian peoples fell under their purview, even the non-Christians. The Orthodox priests attempted to hinder their efforts, even in those areas that the government had opened to missionaries.⁵³ Apparently, the clergy's contempt for missionaries went so far as not even being willing to take advantage of many of the tools that the CMF offered them. For instance, CMF personnel offered to provide Bibles in Amharic to the Orthodox Church in place of their Bibles that were in Ge'ez, which the vast majority of Abyssinians could not read. The Orthodox clergy flatly refused this gesture, despite the potential impact that it might have had on increasing its own membership.⁵⁴ Ethiopian Orthodox Church adherents attacked the missionaries in more subtle ways, including bringing forth false charges against their converts. Don Johnson described one such incident:

⁵¹ Giles, interview. The Baptists responded to this negative reaction by starting an independent church during the 1980s. The Orthodox clergy's fear was justified from historical perspective, since Catholic missionaries from Portugal had attempted to dominate Abyssinia in the seventeenth century and convert the populace.

⁵² Hege, 132.

⁵³ Giles, interview.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

Uppermost in our minds right now is something which many of you have been praying for with us for months. The court case in Lechempti, our provincial capital, is closed. When I went for our October appointment the three men accused with me of preaching against the Orthodox Church (a false charge) and I were standing in the prisoner's box when it was discussed among the three judges and the "Defender of the Law" that I had been out far more money in coming monthly since last February to court than if I had been found guilty and fined, so they decided to throw the case out of court.⁵⁵

This shows how often the Orthodox clergy manipulated the legal and local governmental systems to hinder CMF efforts, and in 1970 a missionary described a local decree at one mission station that prohibited them from gathering with the Oromo outside their church buildings.⁵⁶ These examples show that missionary groups such as the CMF represented both cultural and religious threats to the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, the backbone of Abyssinian society. The empowerment that the missionaries provided to the Oromo and other peoples through education worried the Orthodox clergy, who benefited from the Abyssinian-dominated system that rested on the subjugation of the Oromo.

The Orthodox Church was not the only institution that had a vested interest in harassing the missionaries. The local Abyssinian government leaders in Wollega also responded in a negative manner to the success of the CMF. While the CMF received cooperation from the Selassie regime on a national level, they did not receive it on a local level. The CMF's guidebook for Ethiopia from 1973 describes the major obstacles to its work in the following manner:

Some local authorities are uncooperative and resist or reject mission overtures as a threat to their power and authority over the people. Old, established cultural

⁵⁵ Johnson, "Johnson November Newsletter," 1.

⁵⁶ "The Ethiopia Story," *Oregon Christian Convention* (2000): 2. This eventually worked in favor of the missionaries because they had to found more mission schools to do work instead of going out to the people.

patterns and traditions often conflict with Christian teachings. Periodically much time, energy and money is expended in prolonged court cases, orders are received to confine teaching to compound, and threats (in some cases bodily injury to believers create a climate of fear and oppression).⁵⁷

Thus, the missionaries believed that two of their major obstacles originated from the efforts of the local government officials to hinder their progress. The statement also indicates that the missionaries felt that the local Abyssinian officials perceived them as a menace to their control over the Oromo. This perception probably originated in part from the fact that the Oromo were obtaining an education, which the Abyssinians believed contributed to the desire on the part of the Oromo to obtain some measure of equality within Ethiopia.⁵⁸ The local officials routinely jailed and tortured Oromo whom the CMF missionaries had converted.⁵⁹ Ray Giles described an incident in which local leaders arrested an Oromo convert for preaching; as a way to demean him, they shaved his head and placed him in chains.⁶⁰ Giles's colleague at the Haro station reported how the police arrested five Oromo men on their way from church one Sunday for no apparent reason.⁶¹ Local Abyssinian officials even devised innovative ways to hinder the evangelical efforts of the missionaries. These included forcing Oromo to hunt wild animals on Sunday to prevent them from destroying crops. If the Oromo decided to attend church instead, the

⁵⁷ Kirkpatrick, *Christian Missionary*, 8.

⁵⁸ The missionaries did not appear to pick up on the reason for the fear on the part of the local officials, which they simply attributed to their desire for power. It appears that the Abyssinians desired an educational system that taught only subservience to them, such as the South African government's "Bantu Education" for Blacks.

⁵⁹ Smith and Smith, "Mont and Elaine Smith Annual Report," 15/17.

⁶⁰ Ray Giles, "Giles Prayer Newsletter" (July 1970): 1.

⁶¹ Johnson, "Johnson 1971 Report," 18.

officials made them pay a monetary fine.⁶² In fact, harassment by local officials remained such a great issue for the missionaries that the KIRAMU station identified it as a major cause for decline in its church membership in 1971.⁶³

The local leaders also hindered the efforts of the CMF, even in the arena of social services to the Oromo. The missionaries testified that the local officials regularly instituted policies that confined them to their mission compounds in order to prevent them from administering medical treatment or providing educational services.⁶⁴ Another example of the local government's interference was the torture of the headmaster of a mission school by government officials; these same officials often interfered with the missionaries' efforts to provide medical care to the Oromo.⁶⁵ A 1966 edition of *Impact* reported one such case:

The medical phase of the Fellowship's operation in Wollega hit a snag toward the end of 1965 when the government altered its opinion regarding the area where medical work could be undertaken. This new location was unacceptable to Dr. Yates. . . . Every effort will be made by our missionaries in Ethiopia to negotiate a medical arrangement that is mutually satisfactory to the government and to the Christian Missionary Fellowship.⁶⁶

⁶² Don Johnson and Beth Alice Johnson, "Johnson March 1970 Newsletter," *Haro Mission Ethiopia* (March 1970): 1.

⁶³ Elliston and Elliston, "Elliston 1971 Annual Report," 25. The missionaries also attributed low turnout to family harassment.

⁶⁴ Giles, interview.

⁶⁵ Johnson, "Johnson March 1970 Newsletter," 1.

⁶⁶ "Medical Phase of Work Hits Snag," *Impact* 9(1966): 1. They did not specify whether it was local or national government, but it was probably local officials, given their proclivity to hinder the missionaries.

This illustrates that, for most local Abyssinian officials, any efforts by the missionaries to improve the lives of the Oromo represented a threat to them, which they felt impelled to hamper by any means possible. This harassment from local officials remained a permanent fixture for the missionaries, so much so that in 1974 Don Johnson expressed great joy that his station had managed to go through the year without governmental harassment.⁶⁷

Harassment by local government officials remained so pronounced that the CMF missionaries initially welcomed the overthrow of the national government because it ended the feudalistic system that had brought them so many obstacles.⁶⁸ Yet, the reaction of the local officials did not represent the reaction of the Ethiopian government as a whole.

Selassie's national government did not openly harass the missionaries as the local governments did. Haile Selassie himself always showed affection for missionaries and their work; most missionaries had the highest regard for the emperor and viewed him as their protector.⁶⁹ In 1963, the emperor released two Soddo women whom the SIM had converted and whom local officials had imprisoned because of their conversion.⁷⁰ This cooperative spirit extended to the military governors whom Selassie personally appointed, such as *Dejazmatch* Kasa of Wollega, described by the CMF missionaries as being

⁶⁷ Johnson, "Haro, Ethiopia," 25. This was no doubt a direct result of the political turmoil at the time with Marxists that swept the whole nation.

⁶⁸ Bob Chapman and Karen Chapman, *Christian Missionary Fellowship Annual Report Ethiopian Mission* (1975): 19. Eventually, the missionaries regretted making this statement because the Marxist government forced all missionaries out by 1977.

⁶⁹ Selassie had actually been trained by Catholic missionaries early in his life, learning French and Latin from the individual.

⁷⁰ Raymond J. Davis, *Fire on the Mountain* (Zondervan, 1966), 143. Selassie also declared freedom of religion in Ethiopia as well but did not enforce the edict.

extremely cooperative.⁷¹ However, Selassie and these governors apparently did not act to exert any influence over the local officials related to the persistent harassment. The imperial government could not use ignorance of the situation as an excuse, since the missionaries had to submit regular progress reports to the Ministry of Education in which they probably mentioned harassment from the local government.⁷² Selassie's failure to institute a policy to enforce cooperation by local officials indicates that, at minimum, he allowed the missionary groups such as the CMF to provide basic education to the Oromo with the sole intent of pacifying them, and not because he wanted their overall conditions to improve.

Thus, CMF personnel and Abyssinian elites all had different expectations for what they wanted missionary work to accomplish with the Oromo. The missionaries expected to found a denomination independent of the Orthodox Church, based on their religious ideology. They succeeded in doing so. The Oromo benefited from the work of the missionaries and came to view them as a source of social services. The results were that the missionaries gained more converts as they educated more Oromo. Thus, the missionaries clearly reaped benefits from their mission efforts as well. The positive impact of missionary societies on the Oromo is readily evident. In fact, the effect on the Oromo upset the Abyssinian elites, who had a vested interest in keeping the Oromo in a depressed state. Amhara officials expected the missionaries not to alter the status quo but to reinforce their domination in Oromo country; when this did not happen, the Abyssinians were further enraged. No doubt, these elites realized, as Southern slave owners in the United

⁷¹ Don Johnson and Beth Alice Johnson, "June Newsletter," *Haro Mission Ethiopia* (June 1969): 1.

⁷² Kirkpatrick and Kirkpatrick, "Kirkpatrick's Annual Report," 15.

States had realized in the nineteenth century, that providing education to repressed people only encourages them to want to rise above their subservient state. If the Amhara had not felt this sentiment, they would have left the missionaries to themselves. The success of the CMF and other missionary groups coincided directly with the upsurge of Oromo nationalism and attempts for political independence. The CMF's creation of more Western-educated Oromo only aided this cause, which no doubt upset the Amhara.

CONCLUSION

Haile Selassie encouraged Protestant missionaries to work in Ethiopia with its non-Abyssinian ethnic groups for the sole intent of using them to consolidate his power, while the missionaries intended to found new Christian denominations independent of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. The missionaries did indeed act as agents of progress for the Oromo people, to the disdain of the Abyssinian-dominated government of Haile Selassie. This study has shown that, prior to the late nineteenth century, no unified Ethiopian culture existed. Instead, the Abyssinians, comprising the Amhara and Tigreans, a Semitic-speaking people, made up a distinct society that scholars generally attributed to Ethiopia as a whole. The Ethiopian Orthodox Church and a feudalistic system laid the foundation of this Semitic society. Despite the tremendous achievements made by the Abyssinians, they were not the only advanced people of Ethiopia. The Oromo had a distinct culture that was as highly organized and complex as that of the Abyssinians, based on a distinct language (*Oromoo afaan*), a distinct religion, and a democratic system of government (*gada*). Through the creation of the modern Ethiopian state the Abyssinians eventually subjugated the Oromo in a political system reminiscent of European colonialism in the rest of Africa. Missionary groups such as the CMF generally accepted this artificial notion of an Ethiopian identity and did so at the expense of understanding the culture of the Oromo.

Although scholars have traditionally assumed that Ethiopia possessed a unique experience, free from many of the social and political troubles that plagued the rest of Africa, this study has shown that assumption to be incorrect. First, Ethiopia experienced a colonial period that mirrored the rest of Africa in terms of duration and tactics. The major difference was that the Ethiopian colonial system originated with Africans (the Abyssinians) colonizing other Africans (the Oromo). The issues of ethnic and national

identity that plagued colonial Africa with the creation of artificial nations that had no historical basis also plagued Ethiopia and continue to plague it. The use of missionaries to help in spreading the imperial government culture and to pacify the populace was also present in Ethiopia. The Amharic government actively sought to use Protestant societies such as the CMF to promote its agenda. The creation of independent churches in Ethiopia among its repressed ethnic groups, such as the Oromo, mirrored the dynamic that took place in other colonial African societies, such as South Africa. The colonial governments' disapproval of such denominations as threats to their power was present in Ethiopia as well, as seen through its harassment of the churches created by the CMF. Thus, there are certain inherent qualities that all colonial systems possess, regardless of their origins.

The study demonstrates that Ethiopian historiography should be reexamined to understand the true dynamics that led to the creation of this state. The traditional scholarly approach of regarding Ethiopia as a monolithic culture centered on Abyssinian society has proven inadequate to understand the sociopolitical conflicts that trouble modern Ethiopia. Only through examining all of Ethiopia's ethnic groups and their interactions with one another can Ethiopian historiography be advanced.

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