Socio-Cultural Impact of Orthodox Christianity among the Oromo People of Wallaggaa Province, Western Ethiopia: Historical Perspective

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ABSTRACT
This paper deals with assessing the socio-cultural impact of Orthodox Christianity among the Oromo of Wallaggaa. The former Wallaggaa province consisted of the present day four zones namely East Wallaggaa, West Wallaggaa, Horro Guduru Wallaggaa and Qellem Wallaggaa. The socio-cultural changes and continuities among the Oromo was not studied comprehensively particularly in relation to the impact of the Orthodox Christianity. The researchers used both primary and secondary sources which were collected and analyzed qualitatively. Most of the oral sources were collected through semi-structured interviews and focus group discussion. Wallaggaa province was among the areas of Western Ethiopia where no new religion was imposed on the indigenous socio-cultural lives of the people for long period, up until the last decades of the 19th century. This was until the Gojjame and then the Shawans conquered the area in the last quarter of the 19th century. In 1897, some of the returnees of the battle of Adwa were arrived in the region. They were allowed to reside in different parts of the province. During and after the Darg period (1974 – 1991), both self-initiated and government sponsored resettlement took place in the zones. Orthodox Christianity which was expanded in Wallaggaa province following the conquest and the re-settlement brought about remarkable socio-cultural changes. Due to the impact of Orthodox Christianity, people of the study area remained at crossroad. They adopted the order of the new religion but still retained some aspects of their value system and indigenous religion. As the people mixed the ideologies of the new religion to their own, many of them modified their ways of life such as social cooperation, food and food habits, working habits and funeral system among the others.

Keywords: Christianity, conquest, culture, gadaa, indigenous, impact, imposition, religion

Introduction
Society and culture are inseparable in human history. Giving a precise definition for socio-cultural life is a very difficult task. This is because culture as a term constitutes a very broad concept. According to Wemlinger (2008), it involves all of the learned conceptual aspects of human society. It is a primary tool through which identity is expressed. Religion, language, ways of life and social structure are all aspects of cultural expression. Culture determines the day-to-day activities of the people. Human behavior is shaped by the culture in which he/she is grown. Therefore, historical investigation of a given people would become incomplete unless their culture is examined thoroughly. As a form of people’s expression culture is created, expanded, imposed, modified and/or is changed due to various factors. Cultural changes would happen due to cultural interactions, fusions, modernization, technological transformation, globalization or other dynamism in the socio-cultural aspects of the society. It happens in a continuous, prolonged and gradual process. One of the main elements of culture is religion. Introduction and expansion of new religion(s) would adversely affect the indigenous religion and ways of life. The Oromo people of north east Africa have an indigenous religion known as Waageffanmaa. It is a monotheistic religion where people believe in one-supreme God known as Waaga or Waagaayyoo (Daniel, 1983, Tesema, 2012, Bedassa, 2016, and Wemlinger, 2008).
There have been three main religions among the Oromo in Wallaggaa since the last quarter of the 19th century. These were indigenous religion or Waaqeffanna, Christianity and Islam. Until the then, the Qaalluu institution, Waaqeffanna religion and the gadaa system had guided the socio-cultural lives of the people without any interference from alien religions and systems. The only initial and slight problem that had affected but not totally forbade the gadaa system before the 1870s, particularly since 1850s, was the rise of some power mongering semi-monarchical kings (mootii) in different parts of Western Oromia (Gemechu and Surafel, 2018). When the gadaa system was functioning among the Oromo people in general and that of the Wallaggaa province with its full-fledged, the social cooperation, customs, practices, ceremonies, rituals and each of the day to day activities of the Oromo had been conducted in accordance with the will and laws of Waaqa (Daniel, 1983, and Bartels, 1983). The Oromo people and their religion had been suffered challenges from heavy-handed government intervention and alien religions’ imposition as well as persuasion (Bedasa, 2016).

The more recent work of an Ethiopian historian, Professor Tesema Tu’a briefly stated the adverse effects of the weakening of the gadaa system among the Oromo people. According to him, the assembly of the Oromo for the purpose of gadaa system was forbidden during the imperial conquest. During the period of conquest, the official discussion on the Oromo culture and identity issue was labeled as amovetowards disintegrating the country of Ethiopia. The weakening of the gadaa system resulted in the weakening, distortion and syncretism of the Oromo indigenous knowledge (Tesema, 2021). However, most of the related scholarly studies the researchers reviewed are not in position to provide comprehensive socio-cultural impact of the Orthodox Christianity in the daily life of the Oromo in Wallaggaa. Most of them focused on the political, economic and administrative effects of the conquest on the Oromo in general.

**MATERIALS AND METHODS**

This article is assessment of the impact of the Orthodox Christianity on the socio-cultural life Oromo in Wallaggaa. The study was conducted from historical perspective. In fact, the contents and sub-contents of the study were very broad the matically and spatially. Thematically, the paper focuses mainly on the impact of the Orthodox Christianity on the indigenous religion, social life, social cooperation and association, and working habits of the society. This is because, to the best knowledge of the researchers, the impact was worse in these themes. And spatially, the researchers collected sources considering similar themes in the four zones of Wallaggaa at different times.

In conducting this study, the authors used qualitative research method both in the collection and analysis of the sources. Both primary and secondary sources were collected carefully. These include oral sources from semi-structured interviews and focus group discussion, and written sources like articles, thesis, books and seminar papers. For the collection data from oral sources, the researchers selected the key informants by purposive sampling mainly through snowball sampling technique. In one way or in other ways, almost all of our key informants were affected by the impact of the Orthodox Christianity. The data collection and analysis were done by the researchers themselves. Accordingly, the researchers made interview with eleven (11) key informants who were from different parts of Wallaggaa province. Here are list of the key Informants.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Name of Informants</th>
<th>Sex</th>
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<th>Places and Years of Interviews</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Awoke Biterf</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>Giddaa Ayyaanaa April 2018</td>
<td>An Amhara re-settler in Guttin area of Eastern Wallaggaa who came originally from Gojjam. He told us the way the re-settlers arrived in the settlement sites in the area.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Dessalegn Fayisa</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>Giddaa Ayyaanaa January 2018</td>
<td>He is an abbaagadda in Eastern Wallaggaa and knows the socio-economic, cultural and historical experience of the Oromo.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Desta Algeda</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>Gidda Ayyaanaa January 2018</td>
<td>Re-settler in Guttin who came from Tigray. He knows the pushing factors that brought them to the area and the interactions with the indigenous people.</td>
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RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
Expansion of Orthodox Christianity in Wallaggaa Province
It was during the period of emperor Yohannes IV of Ethiopia that the then Wallaggaa province was conquered by the vassals and agents of the central power. In this way, the present day Horro Guduru Wallaggaa became the first part of the province to be conquered by the force of Tekle Haymanot of Gojjam under the leadership of Ras Darasu in the second half of 1870s. After almost a decade, other parts of the province were annexed mainly by the agent of Menilek II of Shawa (Ginbaar Nagaraa, 2010; Informants: Taddasa Bayana and Tesfaye Megersa).

The two regional lords of the period, Tekle Haymanot and Menilek II, were able to conquer the province because it was inopportune time for the then chiefs of Wallaggaa province including Moradaa Bakaree (r.1868-1889) of Naqamteey and Jootee Tullu (1855-1918) of Qellem. It was unfortunate time at least for two reasons. One reason was the fact that the content of the period were preoccupied with consolidating their control over their local rivals (Tesema, 2008). The second and more general reason was that the chiefs were ruling not based on the popular gadaa system and they became among the victims of the decline of the system. Had they been the abbaa gadaa (gadaa leaders); they would have neither been surrendered nor forced to submit to the enemies in the second half of 19th century. With the conquest, the gadaa system, Waaqeffannaa religion and the Qualluu institution were affected. At the expense of Waaqeffanu, people were forced or at least pushed to accept Christianity. The Orthodox Christianity became first branch of its kind that got into Wallaggaa mainly through Christian conquest of the area in the last quarter of the 19th century. During the period when the two were contending for suzerainty over Wallaggaa, Emperor Menilek of Shawa defeated the Gojjame at the battle of Embabo in 1882, and declared the Orthodox Christianity as the only official and legally established religion in Eastern and Northern part of the province (Gemechu Adjumari, 2018 and Gemechu, (June 2018)). Similar episode took place in the Southwestern and Western part of the province mainly after 1886 due to the conquest of the area (Badilu, 2014, Negaso, and Crummey (1972); Informants: Tesfaye Megersa, Taddasa Bayana and Gusse Mersha).

In 1897, the year after the battle of Adwa, many soldiers who were Christians in their religion and had participated in the battle were distributed to different parts of Wallaggaa province from their first camp at Arjo Avedja. This was a kind of ‘reward’ given to them by the then Ethiopian government and its agencies. According to oral sources, the soldiers of different ranks including Shealeqa (leader of thousand), Metoaleqa (leaders of hundred) and Amsalaqa (leader of fifty) had asked for the coming of their wives and the Orthodox Churches to the respective areas they had settled. The returnees had special privilege in the area they were re-settled. The two questions for bringing of their wives and that of the Churches were raised at the same time. The request was provided to the government bodies just after the soldiers were distributed to different districts of the province. The government reacted to their question positively. Since then, many numbers of the Orthodox Churches were built in Wallaggaa province to village level (Informants: Cherinet Wackeyya and Kebeda Biftu).

During the reigns of Menilek II and Haile Selassie I, the issue of conversion to the Orthodox religion and accepting its ideology was not a kind of democratic option rather it was an obligation to be saved from ideological and psychological humiliation. Therefore, many of the Oromo people accepted the religion almost unwillingly. This was because the people conceived the conversion as a means of saving themselves from the suppression by the governments and their agents. Therefore, many people including those of the countryside accepted the religion nominally and retained some of their socio-cultural practices. Majority of the rural people became the members of the Ethiopian Orthodox churches for at least two major reasons. One was the fact that the Orthodox Christianity had
been the official religion. And the second factor was because people opted to get burial places in the churches’ graveyards which became the order of the day. The indigenous burial practice of the Oromo which had formerly done in kistaana (graveyards) was almost regarded as outdated and therefore ceased (Informants: Kebeda Biftu and Gusse Mersha).

Therefore, the Ethiopian Orthodox churches had not faced hardships in converting the people because it was a religion and ideology of the then imperial court, and the only religion allowed to be practiced in the country. However, the Churches failed to carry out deep propagation and there had been weak follow up. Hence, the ‘subjects’ did not totally abandon their traditional practices but added the Orthodox Christianity to their indigenous religion (Daniel, 1984; Tesema Ta’a, 2012; Informants: Kebeda Biftu and Gusse Mersha).

However, the practices of the churches were found to be exclusive and failed to attract followers of other religions. For example, religious fathers in the Church used offensive terms to refer to the followers of other religions. They used terms like menafeq (heretic) to people who had religions that were not the Orthodox Christianity. Since the laities had learnt from their religious fathers, they had interacted less likely with other group members in local institutions (Kumilachew, 2015).

Yet, unlike Catholicism and Protestantism which employed diplomatic and persuasive mechanisms, the Orthodox churches had not provided social services to the people. In addition, no one attempted to translate the Bible into Afaan Oromo particularly before 1991. The only services that the churches had delivered to the people were limited to spiritual ‘healing’ through tsebel (anointment), advice and conflict resolutions for its members (Ibid). The Churches used no appropriate persuasive and diplomatic techniques in the propagation of the Orthodox religion. The only major way of expansion remained imposition. Thus, it is most likely to conclude that lack of other alternative techniques affected the expansion of the Orthodox Christianity as the attachment of the religion with the government was ended in 1974. Hence, the number of the Orthodox Churches established after 1991 was far less than that of the Protestant Churches.

From 1974 to 1991, the Darg government overlooked the significance of all religions including Orthodox religion and ritual practices but not for the concerns of the people who were oppressed by dominance of the Orthodox Christianity and the qaallichaa. It did so only for the fact that Darg’s ideology had given almost no place for the significance of any religion. Therefore, the impact of the Orthodox religion among the Oromo remained intact even during the Darg government. The already established Orthodox churches, and new Churches built following the footsteps of the new re-settlers continued to downplay the roles and status of Waageffannaaw and other indigenous socio-cultural practices of the Oromo. Though the Darg government carried out persecution against pious individuals, the intensity of persecution against Orthodox Christians had been less severe than that of other religions (Informants: Kitata Gerbi and Duressa Gonfa).

Since the second half of the 20th century, the combinations of diversified peoples mostly from the Amhara, Tigre and Gurage background who were stricken by natural and manmade problems in the Northern and Northwestern Ethiopia madere-settlement in almost all parts of Wallaggaa. In this way, great number of re-settlers, both self-initiated and government driven, arrived in different parts of Wallaggaa. This was after almost a century of the Gojjame conquest of northeast Wallaggaa. In addition to those who came due to conquest and re-settlement scheme, there had been gradual and continual influx of the Christians to the area for various personal contacts. This included the coming of the Christians for business activities. This had been the case both before and after the conquest. The coming of the conquerors, Christian returnees of the battle of Adwa, re-settlers and natural contacts between the Oromo people and the neighboring Amhara Christians increased the number of the Orthodox churches and its subsequent impact on the socio-cultural life of the people (Triulzi, 1975; and Informants: Gemechu Birra and Duressa Gonfa).

Socio-Cultural Impact of the Orthodox Christianity
The expansion of the Orthodox Christianity brought about changes or at least modification in the daily life of the Oromo. The interaction between the indigenous ways of life of the people and that of the newly expanded religion was almost dominated by the influence of the latter over the former. The hatred between the Orthodox Christianity and the Oromo indigenous religion dates back to the period of the conquest of Wallaggaa by the Tekle Haymanot of Gojam in the 1870s (Gemechu and Surafel, 2018).

Among the targets of the conquerors were waageffannaaw religion, Qaallhuu institution, and the gadaaw system. As the gadaaw system has been the preserver of the Oromo socio-cultural practices, its deterioration mainly by the conquest and the subsequent impact of the alien religions in turn means a decline of many features of the social, economic and religious life of the people.

After careful analysis of the sources, the researchers found that the impact of the Orthodox Christianity had been almost similar across the whole parts of Wallaggaa province. While some of the indigenous practices of the people
were totally disappeared, the others were modified by the impact of the newly introduced religion. In fact, not all socio-cultural changes were brought about by the influence of the newly introduced religion. There were transformations which were occurred as a result of globalization, influence of the Western technologies and modernization (Informants: Dessalegn Fayisa and Gusse Mersha).

The Ethiopian Orthodox Church clergies had cultural prejudice towards the Oromo. They considered that the Oromo culture is unable to coexist with Christianity. The clergies hated the Oromo, who in turn hated the Christian clergies (Mohammed, 200; Etana, 2018). In the process of conversion from the Waaqeffannaa to the Orthodox Christianity, the state and church worked together(Gemetchu, 1993). The processes of conquest as well as that of Christianization were carried out by organized efforts. This had boasted the morale of the Christians to conduct extensive propagation and brought cultural transformation.

Accordingly, the Orthodox Christianity had worked against the Oromo indigenous ways of life such as indigenous religion, food and food habits, working habits, burial practices (Gemetchu and Surafel, 2018), social cooperation mechanisms and indigenous moral values. Following the conquest of the area, the various local chiefs were ordered to ban the indigenous religion in favour of the Orthodox Christianity (Daniel, 1984). Through this manner, the Orthodox Churches had dominated the social and cultural lives of the people. The superior status and governmental attachment to the Orthodox Christianity was maintained until Emperor Haile Selassie was deposed in 1974 (Karlo, 2013).

As it had been a religion of imperial court, the Orthodox Christianity used to propagate its ideology by threatening the people at least psychologically. Economically too, the people were obliged not only to pay money to the churches but also provided the priests with products of different kinds in the form of tithe and other kinds of payments (Informants: Gusse Mersha and Dessalegn Fayisa).

The first to be Christianized were the local chiefs (balabbots). This was what had happened to Kumsa Moroda of Leeqaa Naqamtee. After the battle of Embabo (June 6, 1882), Kumsa was submitted to Menilek’s agent, Goobanaa Daaccee. Then after, Kumsawas Christianized, baptized and renamed with ‘Christianized name’ of Gebregziabher that is to mean ‘servant of the lord’. The ‘lord’ in this context was to mean Menilek II. The submission of Kumsa Moroda of Naqamtee had affected the fate of the local chiefs in West and Qellem Wallaggaa either directly or indirectly. Goobanaa Daaccee crossed to West and Qellem Wagaa. Their respective chiefs Gonde Tuva and Jote Tullu were submitted, and their respective regions were incorporated. The calculation was that the local chiefs had to push the mass towards conversion. Therefore, people were expected to follow the chiefs (Negaso, 1983:p.331; Informants: Tadassa Bayana, Cherinnet Wakweyya and Tesfaye Megersa).

Due to the adverse impact of the Orthodox Christianity, however, some people including the local chiefs either refused the conversion totally or were reluctant to practice its orders. One of the many orders of the Ethiopian Orthodox Christianity is abstinence from eating and drinking animal products like meat, egg, milk, yogurt, butter and cheese on the specified days and months of fasting. This habit was totally new to the Oromo. According to the existing oral tradition in the area, for instance, a local chief from Daallee Sadii of Qellem Wallaggaa by the name of Leeloo Doti was asked to practice the Christian fasting. But he gave negative response by saying “Ani waan sa’a koottii hin lagadhu [hindhisu], sa’aa koottis kirri naaf hidhua malee” roughly translated as “I will not abstain from eating products of my cows, if necessary let you Christianize my cows too by stringing up fibers on them” (Informants: Dula Runde and Tesfaye Megersa).

As it is already stated, the Oromo traditional burial places had beeninthe graveyards, in the area known as kistaana. After the coming of the Orthodox religion, the people were forced to conductburyingin the compound of the Church to which they were members. This was partly because people who had conducted the system out of the churches would have been either threatened both by the churches and government authorities or minimally considered as unbelievers. Waaqeffannaa religion and the gadaa system were considered as ceremonies conducted for the evil spirits (Informants: Kebeda Biftu and Dessalegn Fayisa). In reality, however, they have been important preservers and protectors of Oromo culture, more or less in the same way the Orthodox churches had been the preservers of Christians’ culture (Alemayehu, 2001).

The expansion of non-native religions in general and that of the Orthodox Christianity had affected the social life among the Oromo people. Before the introduction and expansion of the alien religions, there had been good communication, invitation, cooperation and interaction among the people and the gadaa system works effectively. According to Bartels, every Maccaaa Oromo keeps with him for life the social status ascribed to him by his descent (Bartels, 1983). After the last quarter of 19th century, however, the people experienced slight but multifarious forms of favoritism between the followers of different religions including the followers of the indigenous religion (Waaqeffataa), Orthodox and protestant Christians as well as the Muslims. Throughout the period of conquest, the
Orthodox Christians were considered as the only adherents of the legally established religion. In this way, the expansion of ‘new’ religions had affected cooperation among the people (Informants: Cherinnet Wakweyya and Dessalegn Fayisa).

After the expansion of the Orthodox Christianity, people who had the skill of speaking Amharic language were considered by the Orthodox Churches as superior and better groups than those who could not speak it. Therefore, the Oromo people were forced or at least influenced to be assimilated to the Christians’ culture. The imposition of the Amharic language was started in Wallaggaa from the 1870s. Recognition of the language continued during the reigns of emperor Menilek II, Haile Sellassie and the Darg regime, and it was formalized by the 1995 FDRE constitution. According to Mekuria, the assimilated Oromo spoke Amharic among themselves, taught their children only Amharic and behaved as if they were Amharas (Mekuria, 1996:57).

The higher status attached to the Amharic language and its speakers before the 1991 came from the influence of the government. The same episode of the post 1991 was the elongation and continuation of the psychosocial and cultural makeup planted before this period. The administrative system during the imperial periods imposed Amharic language at the expense of other languages. Therefore, the people were not encouraged to develop their own language (Fixee, 2013; Informants: Dessalegn Fayisa and Gemechu Birra).

The nature of societal association and cooperation among the people were also affected by the influence of the Orthodox religion. As Tesema (1996) had already stated, new forms of human cooperation were introduced among the Oromo people following the advent of the Orthodox Churches. They were alien to the Oromo people of the area. These include mahiber and senbete. They were more or less consumption-oriented association where members met and celebrated it monthly. The members rarely engaged in cooperative works (Tesema, 1996).

While senbete was attended by men often attached to a given saint recognized in the Ethiopian Orthodox church, mahiber was attended by both men and women. Senbete ritual was conducted on Sunday once a month. Based on a rotating order arranged by the agreement of the group, every member of the senbete must prepare what would be consumed on the day. Food and local drinks provided by the bale-tera (order owner) would be eaten and drunk after prayers was conducted usually by the priests of the Churches whose language most of members would not understand (Tesema, 1996; Informants: Dessalegn Fayisa and Kebeda Biftu).

The days of the Mahibers were identified with particular saints recognized in the Orthodox Churches. A few of these saints for whom the people prepared the mahibers include Michael, Gabriel, Mariam, Giorgis, Medan-Halem and Baleziari on the days of a month on 12, 19, 21, 23, 27 and 29 respectively. Therefore, various mahibers were celebrated by different groups. Followers of the Orthodox Christians should not work their fieldwork on these days. Furthermore, distinctive commemorations were conducted for observance of the saints. This had been held annually. These were on the days ‘the tabots came out of the churches to drunken water and accept sacrifices, vows as well as endowment from the followers’. Interestingly, however, the people practiced their own traditional dances and songs on the days of yearly commemorations (Informants: Dessalegn Fayisa and Kebeda Biftu).

Moreover, the expansion of the Orthodox Christianity had its own impact on the working habits of the society. Before its introduction to the area, the people had been working on their agricultural fields all days except Sundays on which the people were prohibited from work. On this day, they took rest, visited the sick and their relatives or close friends who were detained in prison. After the advent of the Orthodox Christianity, the ‘prohibition days’ of the week were multiplied. In addition to the six days mentioned above, there were other days of observance for the saints on which the people were forbidden to work on their agricultural fields. Working on these ‘holy’ days was considered by the Christians as one of the taboo practices and believed to bring God’s punishment. Moreover, the newly built Orthodox Churches took large track of land attached to it in the name of “Ixaana Zuria” that means area nearby the churches ‘toward which the incense had to be smelt’. In this way, the expansion of the Orthodox Christianity and Orthodox Churches reduced the working days of the people as well as the size of agricultural fields of the people (Informants: Kebeda Biftu and Dessalegn Fayisa).

However, minor positive steps had taken place in relation to the advent of the Ethiopian Orthodox Churches. As Kumilachew (2015) has stated, the priests of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Churches had played a great role in settling various kinds of conflicts. Especially, when there is a conflict between husband and wife, between neighbors, or among the members of the Orthodox Churches, the first person where the victims choose to solve their problem became a neseha abbat (father confessor) or leaders of the church in the Ethiopian Orthodox Churches. But it adversely affected the position of Jaarsa biyyaa (local elders) whose role was overtaken by priests.

DOI: 10.9756/INT-JECSE/V14I3.595
Generally, the Orthodox Christianity had interrupted the traditional religion, belief system, and ways of life, practices and cooperation systems of the local people. Nevertheless, the people had not yet internalized the Orthodox Christianity as much as they did for Waageffannaa. The Oromo who were converted half-heartedly were not satisfied by the Orthodox Christianity and they remained open to accept other religions. This was because the people identified the Orthodox Christianity as the religion of oppressors. When the Protestant religion was introduced to Eastern part of the province mainly after the mid 20th century and to the Western and southwestern part of Wallaggaa even before the mid 20th century, the Orthodox Christianity had already disrupted the indigenous religious practices and belief system. Through this manner, Protestantism became successful more easily among the Oromo of Wallaggaa. Many people welcomed Protestantism simply because they were in hard times when various alien concepts and divinities were threatening them. At this junction, Protestantism was taken as almost better alternative of liberating oneself from the ambiguities, hardships and terror related utmost with the new divinities including saytan (devil) and Qaallicha. The Qaallicha were the corrupted form of Qaalluu which were established in different parts of Wallaggaa for the purpose of confiscating the people’s property. It is totally different from the indigenous Qaalluu (Beekaa) of Oromo people (Informants: Gemechu Birra, Gusse Mersha and Kitata Gerbi).

In the post 1991, the re-settlers started to act as if the areas on which they had settled belongs to their homeland, and had shown interest of transforming the gadaa sites to that of the gedam (Amharic translation of ‘abbey’ which is a building for the residence of monks and nuns of Ethiopian Orthodox Churches). This was particularly true to the Injero gadaa center, found near the town of the Angar Gute in the present day Giddaa district of East Wallaggaa zone. In fact, blaming the re-settlers for they had practiced their religions and established their religious centers was illogical. Since the early years of the large scale conquests of the region, many Orthodox Churches were built in the area. However, the ritual places of the local people should have been out of their target. There have been other alternative places for the establishment of the gedam centers. The request of transforming the gadaa centers to the gedam had created inter-ethnic suspicions and disagreements between the local people and the Christian re-settlers (Informants: Dorsis Duguma and Cherinnet Wakweyya).

Christianization was not only limited to the people. The re-settlers tried to erase the original names of the land on which they were re-settled by giving the more ‘Christianized’ names. The local people were agitated by the change of the original names of the places. The Oromo people opted to keep the very original naming for it had historical and cultural values. For instance, it helped them to remember their past and the very reasons behind its naming. The habit of renaming the places was also politicized for some other reasons. On the side of the re-settlers, the justification behind the change of the names was related to the settlers’ inability to pronounce the original names. Therefore, it is most likely that the re-settlers have renamed the places not only for a single factor rather for various reasons (Fiixee, 2013; Informants: Dessalegn Fayisa and Dorsis Duguma).

Conclusion

The study focuses on assessing socio-cultural impact of the Orthodox Christianity among the Oromo of Wallaggaa. The Orthodox Christianity was expanded in different parts of Wallaggaa province mainly after the last quarter of the 19th century. This was the result of conquest of Wallaggaa first by the Gojjame and after 1882 by the gun-holders of Menilek II. Then after, the advent of the Christian returnees from the battle of Adwa in 187, and that of the re-settlers mainly after the second half of the 20th century increased the phase of expansion of the Orthodox Christianity in the Whole parts of Wallaggaa province.

The Orthodox Christianitiyis analien religion to the Oromo people and had worked against their indigenous socio-cultural practices. Among many other problems, the impact of the Orthodox Christianity on the Oromo indigenous religion, gadaa system and the Qaalluu institution had been affecting the lives of the people in many ways. This was because Waageffannaa, the gadaa system and the Qaalluu institution are cornerstone of the Oromo indigenous knowledge, identity and preservers of the Oromo indigenous ways of life. Therefore, as they were declined, the Oromo people lost many of its important elements that regulate their social and cultural life. Among the others, the expansion of Orthodox Christianity affected the interaction between human and creator as well as among the people themselves. Hence, it disconnected the people from its own indigenous religion, way of life and worldview. Despite this interruption, the Oromo people had not totally lost many of its indigenous socio-cultural principles. The people retained most of it because they have internalized their culture and identity than the Orthodox Christianity.
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