

The Expansion of Protestantism and Culture Change among Gedeo



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ABSTRACT: This paper was primarily concerned with the expansion of Protestantism and culture change among the Gedeo people. It attempted to document the coming of branches of Christianity and their methods of expansion and the conversion of the people. Special emphasis is given to examine the impacts of expansion of Protestantism on the Gedeo traditional culture. The researcher employed qualitative paradigm; primary data were collected by formal and informal interview, document analysis, the use of oral tradition and secondary sources such as reports, journals and electronics media. Finally, the collected sources will be cross-checked and analyzed by using content narrating and descriptive method. Based on the study findings and analysis, it is deduced that, in the study area, before the introduction of Christianity, most of the people practiced indigenous belief known as *Maganno*, literally meant the “Sky God”. Mainly, the research reveals that Christianity arrived among the Gedeo before a century ago, following the conquest of the area by Emperor Menilek’s force. Protestantism expanded in the area by convincing method of donations and often by pulling factors that attract the people from traditional religion to Protestantism. The then general contextual background: political oppression, low economic status, lack of infrastructures, the event of epidemic and other world historical incidents have contributed to the peoples’ active conversion to Protestantism. The mass conversion of the people resulted in creating new spiritual orientations, which brought hollistic change, including the missing of indigenous cultural practices. Accordingly, the Gedeo indigenous culture was changed in many aspects: social customs, material cultures, oral literature and verbal arts or oral performance.

KEYWORDS: Protestantism, Culture, Orthodox Church, Traditional Religion, Change, Gedeo, Kale-Hiwot and Mekane Yesus

I. INTRODUCTION

Protestant Christianity introduced in Gedeo in 1949 with the arrival of the Sudanese Interior Mission (SIM) in the area led by Mr. Albert Brandt who was an American (Demisse, 1988) and Mr. Gilen Keyen, who was Canadian (Wondiye, 1990). The SIM established their center at Koffe, southern outskirts of Dilla town. Starting with a small school and clinic, the mission expanded branch social facilities in other areas of the Gedeo in the 1950s, as the number of their converts increased (Zewdu, 1994; McClellan, 1978)

Tewodros (2015) and Tsegaye (2019) argued that Protestants found their evangelical operation among the Gedeo very easy, as the Gedeo were already familiar to the concept of Christian God, as they had been introduced to it earlier by the Orthodox Christians. What was new, however, to the Gedeo was, the method the Protestants associated this concept to the condition of the Gedeo, i.e., to their unfair and cruel oppression by the feudal regime (Tewodros; Tsegaye). Concepts of democracy such as equality before God of all races of man, of all nations, of all men and women as emphasized by the Protestants attracted the attention of many Gedeo to the new version of Christianity (Tewodros, 2015; Asebe, 2007)

Accordind to Tesso (2011), education was one of the tools used by the Protestants to expand their religion through opening schools, running literacy campaigns and training indigenous leaders at different status. The prime objective of it was to evangelize the learning community and train them for further church and religious expansion. Accordingly, the opening of schools has interrelated advantages to the expansion of Protestantism. First, many early converts among the literacy school attendees and those who completed their elementary grades influenced their families, neighbors and relatives and built churches among the community. Moreover, these groups also became ordinary preachers and religious elders in their respective areas (Tesso)

Religious conversion is one of the major themes in the socio-cultural history of the Ethiopian society (Steven, 2004). The

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people of Gedeo were converted from indigenous religion, secular life and Orthodox Christianity to Protestantism. Conversion to Protestantism started as soon as it arrived at Gedeo and still people are converting into the religion at individual level.

Regarding the context in which the Gedeo were converted, it is essential to examine, the then political system, religious organization and economic system of the Gedeo that influenced their conversion to Protestantism. Politically, they were subjected to an empire that had never known before. They were subjected under the imperial regime and there were activities that show harsh burden had been imposed upon the Gedeo. It was an exploitative hierarchical system and quite contradicting with the political experience of the society. The Gedeo were also under pressure of Orthodox Christianity, which was completely different from their tradition and belief system. Within the political context, and the forced conversion to Orthodox Christianity, the arrival of Protestantism had a liberal role. Many people felt liberated not only in religious sense, but also politically. This could be considered an element of regeneration for a society that felt degraded, impregnated by the psychology of the defeated (Wondiye, 1990; McClellan, 1978)

However, the conversion of the Gedeo to Protestant Christianity was not positively seen by the feudal ruling classes. The feudals held the view that “a trained and enlightened” people could not be exploited and could no longer be tenants. As a result, they exerted heavy pressures upon the natives who were converted to Protestant Christianity. Solomon aptly expressed that “persecution, ill-treatment, insults, and beatings, destruction of believers’ properties, imprisonment and constant threatening were the order of the day” (Solomon, 2009). So, the feudal also attempted to limit the activities of the recruits. Some recruits such as Evangelist Murtti Obese, one of the earliest converts to expand the ‘Good News’ to the Gedeo, south of Dilla town, lost his life in 1970, when on duty in the remote areas of Hagere Mariam *Woreda* and Evangelist Tesfaye Argaw was killed when he was on a similar mission in the lowlands (Tadesse, 2002)

Thus, the good pace of spread of Protestant Christianity in the 1960s and early 1970s faced a serious challenge during the military regime of the Derg (1974-1991). The Socialist government in violation of its initial policy of secularization as the basis of justice and equality considered Protestant Christianity as ‘foreign religions’. Particularly, during the early five years of the Derg (1974-1979), many Protestants were severely persecuted throughout the country (Dena, 2013; Awoke, 2016). Throughout the Gedeo, more than 200 churches were closed, believers were beaten and many were imprisoned, church properties including church schools were confiscated, leaders and ministers of many evangelical churches were imprisoned. The logic behind the Socialist government was that it was suspecting the Protestants as instruments and propagators of imperialism ideology (Getachew, 2019). This resulted in conflict between the natives and the regime in many localities of the Gedeo. For instance, when the Derg closed down the Protestant churches of Michille area, the Chebicha locality rebelled and with this, their church leaders’ such as Jobo Dama, Abraham Bali, Berhanu Gobena, Bedhasi Kore and others were imprisoned. Qarsu area church and its leaders also faced a similar action (Solomon, 2009)

With the coming of a new regime, Ethiopian People’s Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) in 1991, Protestant Christianity has again revived and expanded rapidly. The 1991 government change has multifaceted impacts. The first major change was the new regime lift of limitation on religious institutions. This enabled the Protestants to increase their international interaction and networks which strengthened their position. Due to this, about thirty Protestant oriented denominations came to Ethiopia. With this, between 1994 and 2007, the percentage of Protestant Christianity in Gedeo increased by 69.3 percent, while the percentage of Orthodox Christianity reduced by 51.7 percent. Moreover, the followers of indigenous religion reduced dramatically by 67.6 percent. This indicates that the followers of indigenous religion, who were the majority in the 1950s, in Gedeo had become a minority by 2007 census (Getachew, 2019)

II. MATERIALS AND METHODS

2.1. Description of the Study Area

The study was conducted in Gedeo Zone, which is one of the Zones of Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples Regional State in the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (Getachew, 2019). The capital of the Zone is Dilla, locating 359 kilometers to the south on the Ethio-Kenya Highway. Gedeo land is located between 5 and 7 degrees North latitude and 38 and 40 degrees East longitude in the escarpment of the southeastern Ethiopian highlands overlooking the Rift Valley, in the narrow strip of land running from North, Sidama Zone to South, Oromia Region (Tadesse, 2002). The total area of the Zone is 1353 square kilometers (Fekadu and Haweltie, 2019) and it has six *Woredas* namely Bulle, Dilla Zuria, Gedeb, Kochere, Wonago and Yirga Cheffe and two towns’ administrations, Dilla and Yirga Cheffe (Eshettu, 2011). According to the 2019 projection, the Gedeo had a total population of 1,205,632 (Desalegn, 2019), the majority of which around 81.5 percent were living in rural areas, with only 18.5 percent living in urban areas (Sophia and Elias, (ed.), 2007). Gedeo is one of the most densely populated areas of the country with 853 persons per square kilometer and population growth rate of 2.9 percent (Fekadu and Haweltie, 2019). Agro-ecologically, the Gedeo land is classified into three Zones of highland, covering 37, midland, covering 62 percent and lowland

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(Dagne, 2013) covering only 1 percent. The annual rainfall the area receives range between 800-1800 mm, while the mean annual temperature varies from 12.5 to 28°C (Fekadu and Haweltie, 2019). The Gedeo people practice mixed agriculture. These include raising of crops and rearing of animals. However, the Gedeo agricultural economy is mainly based on the cultivation of two crops, namely, coffee and enset (Eshettu, 2011)

2.2. Sources and Methods of Data Collection and Analysis

The researcher employed qualitative paradigm where data were gathered from both primary and secondary sources. The instruments used to gather primary data were formal and informal interview, document analysis, and the use of oral tradition. Written primary sources like BA and MA Thesis and Dissertations were also used. A Focus Group Discussion (FGD) was also conducted to clarify and cross-check issues that were not sufficiently addressed by the respondents. The researcher conducted 2 Focus Group Discussions constituting 6 individuals in each group with members who have in-depth knowledge of Protestant Christianity in the study area. A total of fifteen key informants were interviewed on matters pertinent to Protestant Christianity in Gedeo. Secondary sources were also synthesized from reports, journals and electronics media. Finally, the collected sources were cross-checked and analyzed by using content narrating and descriptive method.

III. INDIGENOUS RELIGION OF GEDEO

Before their conversion to universalistic religions, the Gedeo believe in *Maganno*, which literally mean the 'Sky God', the one and only one Supreme Being. They also believe that *Maganno* manifests himself in his work of creation (Mebrat, 2017; Desalegn, 2019). The Gedeo believe that *Maganno* is the creator of everything on the earth, the sun, the moon and stars. He is the origin and sustenance of all things. He also created such 'bad things' as illness and death. Although *Maganno* is considered to be 'good', because he guides and protects the people from enemies and bad fortunes, he can also punish people if they do not obey his instruction (Dagne, 2013). Therefore, the Gedeo people have high respect for the nature in general. Moreover, the people also recognize the role of intermediaries between *Maganno* and their creator (Tadesse, 2002). These intermediaries were an elderly men and women. Ancestral spirits are considered as the legitimate intermediaries between *Maganno* and the people. There are few people among the Gedeo who are considered as Saints (*Wabeeko*), and are believed to be able to forecast future happenings and acquainted with deep understanding of present situations. People worried about their relationship with *Maganno* consult the *Wabeeko*, who give advice on their respective cases (Tadesse, 2002; Tsegaye, 2015). The *Wabeekos* also tell the fate of individuals and the environment as a whole (Desalegn, 2019). The Gedeo believe in life after death. There are certain natural objects and geographical features such as riversides, hillsides or big trees where individuals present their petitions to *Maganno*; together with '*Xeero*', gifts presented to *Maganno*. These include a piece of food, honey and others sprayed over the area. In doing so, the Gedeo always call to the *Maganno* who created the sacred places, i.e., riversides, hills and trees. However, it is not these objects, themselves that are worshiped, but the spirits of the *Maganno* which is believed to reside in them. The objects only act as churches of the Christians or Mosques of the Muslims under which prayers and offerings are presented for God or Allah respectively (Dagne, 2013). Each Gedeo villages have their own place for mass prayers, *Qeexala* (Tadesse, 2002; Tsegaye, 2015)

IV. MENILEK'S WARS OF EXPANSION AND THE INTRODUCTION OF ORTHODOX CHRISTIANITY AMONG THE GEDEO

Many literatures contend that the first historical incident which exposed the Gedeo to world religion came in 1896, when Orthodox Christianity was introduced following the incorporation of the Gedeoland by the Shoan Kingdom under Emperor Menelik II (Sophia and Elias, (ed.), 2017). A number of churches were built in Gedeo following incorporation. Some of the churches grew to prominence, the most famous being Bulle *Sellase*, the first Orthodox Church erected in Gedeoland in 1896 (Eshettu, 2011) and Chichu *Gebriel*, locating on the southeastern parts of Dilla town (Berhanu, 2009). However, the spread of Orthodox Christianity was sluggish, despite the fact that the central government officially supported the conversion process (Getachew, 2019). For instance, before 1920; there were only three Orthodox Churches in Gedeo land. Two of the churches were in Bule *Woreda* and one is in Fisseha Gennet. In the 1920s, only six Orthodox churches were built in Gedeo and eight more churches in the 1930s (Solomon, 2009). The basic reason for the sluggish expansion of the Orthodox Christianity was the preaching languages used by the church, Ge'ez and Amharic which were difficult for the Gedeo to understand. Until the early 1930s, only in 21 percent of the Gedeo land that Orthodox Churches were erected and there was no single *Gedam* (Monastery) in the area, the usual indicator of success and firm establishment of Orthodox Christianity until the late 1970s (McClellan, 1978). Although the church sponsored mass baptism in Gedeo in the post 1941 periods; this was not followed by strong religious instruction and guidance. Thus, the Gedeo continued to practice their traditional belief (Solomon, 2009). Orthodox influence, therefore, remained minimal and had not yet reached the grass root level in

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Gedeo until Protestant Christianity introduced in the 1940s and expanded in the 1950s and 1960s.

V. CHANGED ASPECTS OF THE GEDEO TRADITIONS BECAUSE OF EXPANSION OF PROTESTANTISM

Asebe argued that, the indigenous religious practices of the Gedeo was highly affected and harmed by two opposing historical incidents which had implications in transforming the society within a short decade. These processes were Orthodox and Protestant Christianity (Asebe, 2007)

The Protestants established primary schools and clinics at most of their missionary stations to bring education and medical facilities to an area that had had none prior to their arrival and affected the Gedeo positively. The introduction of education by the Protestants influenced a modest rise in the status of women and in combination with the influence of the country's law, encouraged Gedeo to share property among heirs of both sexes (McClellan, 1978; Getachew, 2005). Nmah (2010) argued that Missionaries increased the political consciousness of the people through education to oppose foreign rule and domination (Nmah). The Protestant movement itself and education for people in Gedeo had impacted people self-awareness and respect for their own identity. The preaching of the Gospel and education enlightened their worldview regarding human rights and self-understanding. A significant sense of human rights and liberation from any and all oppression began to grow (Etana, ND)

In fact, before the arrival of the Protestants, there was virtually, no formal education in most parts of Gedeo. The available government schools were in the major urban centers such as Dilla, Yirga Cheffe, Wonago and others, for which most of the Gedeo were bared. The Missionaries soon understood this gap and seized it to their advantage, as a spring board for their evangelical work. They opened an elementary school named Koffe SIM School from grade one to four in rural areas and grade five at Dilla in the early 1950s. The Missionaries quickly established Bible and elementary schools, which created a good opportunity to attract the attention of the Gedeo. The people were so eager to learn how to read, and write, that children schools had to provide evening classes for the adults, in the light of kerosene lamps. These schools not only taught religious cadres, but also cadres of change and reform. Later some of the children, completing church school began to walk a distance of 10 to 20 kilometers a day attending public schools in urban centers (Tadesse, 2002). According to informants, as the church development increases in number, as well as the organizations were widely expanded in districts; the important consequence of this development was that, they spread this religion to other unreached places by preaching the Gospel. The first Gedeo Gospel teachers who played crucial role by preaching to the Gedeo districts were Murtti Obese, Tesfaye Argaw, Worassa Wonge, Daka Seri, Kurse Gocha, Shente Gocha, Shiferaw Wako, Atara Gameda and Berasso Shurdi.

Informants explained that, some of those educated in such schools later became prominent leaders of the church and state institutions. Good cases in point in this regard were Dr. Bekele Bengessa, Cadre of the *Derg* regime and Assistant Ambassador at Rome until 1991, Mr. Bekele Gedecho, Administrator of Gedeo *Awrajja* between 1976 and 1978, Mr. Mammo Wojega, ex-dean, Faculty of Business and Economics of Addis Ababa University and later Chief of Gedeo *Awrajja* between 1989-1991 and Dr. Tadesse Kippie, the ex-president of Dilla University (2007-2010). In this respect, the method of church expansion through education played a significant role in the Gedeo people response to the Gospel as well as in the rise, growth and development of the Protestant church.

Besides, informants forwarded that, among the Gedeo; Protestants have been quickly realized through donation. Donation played a crucial role in the arrival and expansion of Protestantism in Gedeo. Donation and conversion have a hand and glove relationship. At Koffe medical service that resulted in the erection of some of the first modern health institutions in Gedeo land started. The medical services in Gedeo paved the way for the Missionaries to begin their Mission.

The Protestants helped the people by giving medical services. Until that the majority of the societies used traditional medicines which they believed that cure the patients in their culture. The poor persons who were unable to pay were to get free services. Then, the opening of the medical center in the area was so important for the Gedeo and its surrounding people. One of these importance was that the people got opportunity to use modern medicine and avoiding the traditional medicines which were advised and ordered by the traditionalists which have sometimes an adverse effect on patients. Among the many hospitals in Ethiopia, Dilla was founded by the Protestants named as Reagent Mekonnen Memorial Hospital in 1957 and was the property of the church until it was nationalized by the military regime in 1976. With regard to medical services, the Protestant missions greatly contributed to life saving service among the Gedeo.

Here one could well understand the converts' low economic and social status forced them to follow the missionaries to accept their interests by becoming convinced through the donations. According to informants, many pioneer converts such as Tugo Ereba, Tilahun Wotiye, Feyissa Kotollo, Worassa Hokote, Banata Heyessa, Obese Beraqo, Worassa Dumaro, Woqayehu Miradu, Gindo Gelgelu, Morkati Mito, Kebele Gelgelu, Petros Gole, Tadesse Hessa and Mengesha Golja were people with low economic status.

However, this does not mean that all the early local converts' were people with low economic and social status. Rather, the

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donation, especially the medical services and the school attracted the attention of other members of the society who also have a good social status, because, whoever they are, they did not have any other options to teach their children and to attend medication. Therefore, they were clearly attracted to go to the station where the Missionaries preach and teach the Bible (McClellan, 1978)

Prayers and Bible studies accompanied the medical and school services in their daily activities. A Sunday service also was held in the hospital and school. As such evangelism became a part of medical and school services, which later contributed to the rise of 'Koffe Evangelical Church'. Those who taught the Bible in the hospital and school and Sunday services began to go out to other parts of the Gedeo for preaching Gospel. Many preaching centers were established outside Dilla in different parts of the Gedeo. Generally, the convincing pressure of donation paved the way for the growth and expansion of Protestantism in Gedeo

Protestantism has been admired for using *Gede'uffa* as a worshipping language. In fact, this has been a source of attribution for many Gedeo to embrace Protestantism. The pioneer evangelists had been using the languages of the community they were evangelizing in the religious and social services. This helped to preserve the language and culture of the Gedeo (Getachew, 2019)

Eller (2007) in his work argued that religious change is a species of cultural change in general, the process by which the existing order of a society, that is its social, spiritual and material civilization is transformed from one type to another. Those changes in religion holistically related to changes in other aspects of culture (Eller). It is obvious that, regardless of their origin, religions are sources of ethical and moral values. The indigenous religion of Gedeo is of course a base of ethical and moral values which affected the routine activities of the people and its peaceful co-existence and interaction with its neighboring peoples. As it is the people old established religion, it generally shaped the people history and culture. Its long-established moral, ethical values and principles are important screens which helped the people to live harmoniously with others culturally different people living with them and with other ethnic groups living adjacent to them. The Gedeo elders claim that, they have gradually developed ethical and moral principles along with their indigenous religion since long times. Under these principles "coveting others property, performing adultery, abusiveness, beating and prejudicing others, murder, etc" are considered as wrong and unacceptable doings by the community. Anyone who does such unacceptable activities has to be accountable by the *Songo* (Tsegaye, 2019). But, now, these ethical and moral values were replaced by Christian teachings.

Besides when people converted from one religion to the other, they leave some parts of the previous faith and accept the practices of the 'new' religion, which forms another cultural system for the society. Though the majority of the Protestants often did good works, for example, in expanding schools, medical services and providing other donations, however, the 'mission' behind these activities was always to change the society in comprehensive way. Protestants would often tend to introduce foreign beliefs into the society by 'ridiculing, condemning, or even punishing the traditionalists' (Bedilu, 2014).

The indigenous religious devotion of the Gedeo centers on their strong feelings and beliefs to be protected against calamities and misfortunes with all unpleasant situations prevented, to live in peace, good health, happiness and wealthy. So, ritual practices used to carry out in places where such super-human believed to exist (Tewodros, 2015). The Gedeo indigenous religion has two closely interrelated aspects: religious and cultural. These highly interrelated activities include ritual performances and ceremonial events. The two dominant annual ceremonial and ritual practices are *Dararo* and *Fachi'e* (Tsegaye, 2019)

Fachi'e is one of the least common festivities practiced by the Gedeo. *Fachi'e* refers to a period of confession which is accompanied by presenting praying activity. It is mainly performed during difficult situations affecting many people. The difficult situations could be explained in terms of drought, epidemic diseases, mass death, etc. The society links the happenings of misfortunes and calamities with human offence against God laws, which was followed by a punishment of *Maganno*. The Gedeo believe that their 'good deeds' are the sources of their pleasure while their 'evil deeds' are the sources of hardship times which occurred due to the blessing and angriness of *Maganno* respectively. In short, the festivity of *Fachi'e* is performed deliberately to purify sinful persons from their sin (*Ibid*)

Deraro is usually followed by *Fachi'e*. *Dararo* in *Gede'uffa* literally refers to flower. It is thanks giving festival performed just after the harvest season every year in January, accompanied by praying ceremony (Tsegaye, 2019). These and other materials were destroyed not only because of the expansion of Protestantism rather the causes vary. However, church teachings have the significant contribution in the process. For example, church never tolerates material culture with spiritual functions that are used in worshipping other gods. *Dararo* and *Fachi'e* were used in different ritual performances and prayers of Gedeo traditional religion. The church has contributed in destroying the traditional material cultures that could not fit the Protestant religious context. Thus, church devastated traditional material cultures, those which were irrelevant to church worship styles, and those which have no Biblical interpretations. In fact, *Fachi'e* and *Dararo* have their own interpretations in the traditional Gedeo religion. Their

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interpretations in the traditional religion are irrelevant to Bible teachings. Thus, there was a belief that animal should be slaughtered for their need blood. Thus, since such materials, with its significance and interpretations are inappropriate in Christian context, they are not tolerated. *Dararo* and *Fachi'e* festivals became outdated mainly as a result of the teachings of Protestantism (Getachew, 2019)

Qeexala, a ritual and dance performed for various ecological crises, like a shortage of rain, outbreak of locusts and others. Again this ritual is practiced less often today mainly because of the teachings of Protestant Christianity. Most people began to perform church prayers for such ecological crisis, so the number of people who participate in the traditional *qeexala* ritual has reduced dramatically (*Ibid*)

Gondoro is a term literally implies announcing or concluding something or an event not to happen again. The tradition has complex ritual procedures and powerful symbolic representation of purification of the 'curse' and reconciliation of conflicting individuals or groups. The tradition is performed both as a means of purifying the 'curse' from the guilty and a method of conflict resolution. Through the ritual processes, the guilty and his clans would be reconciled with the member of the family and clan of the offended. The tradition works not only in resolving of interpersonal, but also inter-group conflicts (Asebe, 2007). Still the practice of this tradition declined mainly with the teachings of Protestant Christianity.

Informants asserted that church planting has weakened the *Baallee* tradition which shapes Gedeo social, cultural, religious, economic and political functions and expresses their worldview in all aspects of their life. A ritual ceremony was performed by the *Baallee* leaders on public occasions and during the transfer of *Baallee* leadership. Firstly, like the Orthodox Church, it appears that the Protestant planting has not encouraged the *Baallee* system and its ritual ceremonies which the Gedeo people greatly value and the traditions including blessings from the *Abba Gada* (*Baallee* Leader) during the various public meetings and significant occasions. Apart from upholding and administrating the *Baallee* laws, the *Abba Gada* in power sometimes conducts rituals for the people well-being such as the fertility of peoples and animals, good harvests and mutual peace. At every assembly and wherever an occasions call for it, the *Abba Gada* performs these ritual prayers in which Gedeo politics and religious rituals intersect and overlap one in influencing and the other determining the duty of the other office for the well-being of the community. Such a performance of the Gedeo *Baallee* and religious rituals are considered to be materially and spiritually productive for the people without which natural disaster may follow. However, the Gedeo *Baallee* system began to erode during the imperial period due to political pressure from the central government, which considers it as a competitor to governmental power and mainly as a result of the expansion of Protestant Christianity, which rejects any rituals and sacrifices related to the *Baallee* system.

However, it should be noted that, despite their conversion, change and adoption either into Orthodox or Protestant Christianity, many Gedeo people did not completely abandon the practices of indigenous-traditional religion, *Maganno*, *Dararo*, *Fachi'e* and *Qeexala* rituals, *Gondoro* tradition and others (Tsegaye, 2019). Most of rituals have been declined to be practiced due to the activities of Protestant Christianity, because Protestant Christianity associates most rituals with 'evil spirit'. The decline of rituals has an adverse effect on some of the Gedeo's significant cultural values. For instance, traditionally, rituals were performed with the leadership of elders. Today, youths who can read the Bible became religious teachers and leaders. In this way, modern education and knowledge have become substitutes for seniority, experience and indigenous knowledge. The change has adverse implications for the leadership role of elders and transfer of indigenous knowledge to the future generation (Getachew, 2019). In short, it is possible to say that no social and cultural activities were remained untouched by the teaching of Protestant Christianity.

In the post 1991, a number of ethnic groups tried to revive some of their traditional practices in a modified way that harmonized with the present situation. The Gedeo tried to revive some of their traditional practices, but not the grading system, and most Gedeo do not want to participate in the rituals and sacrifices that relate to grade transfer (Getachew, 2019)

VI. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This study dealt with the introduction, expansion and impacts of Protestant Christianity on the socio-economic and cultural life of the Gedeo. As one of the many nations in southern Ethiopia, the people of Gedeo have their own history, culture and tradition. Their indigenous traditional religion is based on worshiping one Supreme God, *Maganno*. Protestantism arrived in Gedeo, the study area, in 1949 by the work of Missionaries. Though the majority of the Protestants often did good works, for example, in expanding schools, medical services and providing other donations, however, the 'mission' behind these activities was always to change the society in comprehensive way. Protestantism influenced the plausibility structure of Gedeo indigenous religion. It has affected the production, reproduction and distribution of the indigenous knowledge of the society by destroying the Gedeo institutions and culture. Thus, I argued that the cultural change among the Gedeo is fundamentally related to the expansion of Protestantism that has been breaking

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down the system of the knowledge transmission.

The impacts of the conversion of the Gedeo to Protestantism are multi-dimensional. These are all encompassing changes and effects happened to the people because of conversion. The mass conversion obviously increased profound changes and significant impacts within social, political, and economic life ways of the nation. The conversion of the Gedeo brought significant influences on the traditional cultures of the people. In today's Gedeo community in general, the indigenous cultural practices such as Gedeo indigenous religion, *Maganno*, *Fachi'e* and *Dararo* rituals and *Gondoro* tradition and the *Baallee* system are mainly overflowed by the practices of Protestantism.

Thus, the study and reconstruction of the destroyed Gedeo cultural traditions, in the present day Gedeo reality, is part of the problem that needs attention and careful handling in order to be aware of the current and to far see the future.

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Declaration

I, the researcher declare that this paper is my original work, has not been studied by anyone and that all sources of materials used for the paper have been dully acknowledged.

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