

SCHOOL OF MISSION AND THEOLOGY

THE MINISTRY OF NORWEGIAN
MISSIONARY SOCIETY (Within
EECMY) AMONG THE GUMUZ
TRIBE OF WESTERN ETHIOPIA.



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Among the Gumuz Tribe of Western Ethiopia.

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small tribes around the Oromo territories who still do not accept Christianity. It was for the same reason that the Oromo did not put much effort in reaching them with the Gospel until resent. There are tribes such as the Mao, Berta, Komo, and other smaller groups like the Bake and Fakosho. These are believed to be the indigenous tribes who lived there even before the Oromo people. Because of the similar attitude towards them like that of the Gumuz tribe many of them are not converted to Christian Religion. The reason why some of the tribes or people did not accept the Christian religion is not because they are unable to understand the mysteries Christian religion. They did not experience a living witness of Christian life as they were mistreated and misused by their neighboring Christian people. It proved more fruitful with the works of trans-cultural missionaries because it is easier for people to accept new ideas from new people than from people with whom they stood in a tense relationship before. In the Ethiopian history of Christianity this was true for all non-Semitic peoples and tribes. They had problem to accept the Orthodox Church because of the fact that it was part and parcel of the monarchial system of imperial Ethiopia. As a result the southern parts of Ethiopia were not Christianized until the missionaries from Europe and America arrived by the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century. The primary aim to call NMS to EECMY was for the evangelization of the Gumuz tribe. This was mentioned by both leaders of EECMY, the late EECMY General Secretary Rev. Gudina Tumsa and H.E. Mr. Emmanuel Abraham. Both leaders were aware of the reality that the historical relation of the people from the highland with the Gumuz tribe had created hindrances for the propagation of the Gospel to the Gumuz tribe. In the past the political situation and a lack of awareness from the Gumuz tribe had contributed to the difficulties of implementation. Now-a-days there are Gumuz pastors, evangelists and volunteer lay preachers, both women and men, who are aware of all the past realities that caused obstacles to the work. They regret for the past partial involvements of the Gumuz people in the created problems. Within the ministry of thirty-five years, a long way was gone, and work was done for the Gumuz tribe by others. In the future the work will be done by the Gumuz tribe themselves, but the need of financial and professional supports are still inevitable.

Even though I have worked with the Gumuz tribe for some years and know some history of them, I have learned more of it during my research. I am indebted to acknowledge all those who took part in the process and helped me directly and indirectly. I would like to acknowledge Wendy James and Juan Maria Schuver for their books which revealed the factual history of the Gumuz tribe in connection to the other peoples of Ethiopia. The books

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1. The People.

1.1 Introduction.

The Gumuz Tribe is among the first inhabitants of the African continent. Historians give different opinions about their original placements in the today's regions of Ethiopia. The problem is that the historians used different sources from different sides. Many of them wrote their history depending on secondary or even tertiary sources. Had the Gumuz people themselves had been exposed to modern education, they would have written their own history from a different perspectives. The historical facts of the writers are also very different in their concept, depending on their personal contacts and the ethnological outlooks they had for the Gumuz tribe. Some of the European writers used different written sources about the history of the Gumuz, while the indigenous writers did not have much interest in Gumuz people. They mentioned them as a subordinate subject to their primary interest of their writings. The name given to the tribe even seems not corresponding to the tribe. The name "Gumuz" was given to them by other neighboring tribes or peoples. Wendy James in her book titled *Kwanim Pa:- The Making of the Uduk people* states as follows:

Those who compile general accounts are therefore muddled by the proliferation of outsiders' terms for the border peoples; Burun, Gumuz, and Hamaji are derogatory Sudanese names,...Shangalla is an Amharic term merely meaning, according to one highland Ethiopian friend of mine, 'one who is black and one who is sold';...¹

The Ethiopian highlanders for many years called them "Shankilla/shanqilla" while the others called them Gumuz. Still others called them "Gunza". When I was doing my field research some of them refer to this name "Gunza". Even if they do not give any typical name of the tribe which can represent the whole family of the Gumuz, they are not quite certain whether the word Gumuz represents the whole tribe. But the word Shankilla/shanqilla is a more derogatory word used by the highlanders to refer to all the dark colored tribes. I will in this thesis refer to source materials accessible to me and also oral information from my informants.

¹Wendy James, *Kwanim Pa: The making of the Uduk people*. 1979:8.

1.2 The History of the Gumuz Tribe.

One of the early Ethiopian history writers, Aleqa Tayye Gabre Maryam, in his book *History of the People of Ethiopia* connects the Gumuz tribe, according to the biblical genealogy of mankind, to the tribe line of Canaan/Ham/ son of Noah. Even though the accuracy of this can be questioned, it is a good start to have a clue as the Gumuz Tribe has long been living in this part of Africa. Gabre Maryam states as follows:

During the period of the rule of the tribe of Kusa three tribes entered Ethiopia at different times. These were the tribe of Shanqilla, the tribe of Qimant, and the tribe of Wäyt'o. The ancestors of these tribes are Sini, Arwadi, and Samri. With their brother Hamati these are the sons of Canaan.... Sini was the ancestor of the Shanqilla, Arwadi of the Qimant, Samri of the Wäyt'o, and Hamati of the Shännash.²

But Gabre Maryam's statement lacks proper historical ground, because he also mentions that there was already other Gumuz tribe that was in Africa prior to the arrival of the tribe of Sini. He writes as follows:

While they lived in Asia the physical appearance of the descendants of Sini was like that of the people of Asia. However, from mixing by intermarriage with the Shanqillas who had migrated to Africa earlier, and because of the climate of the country, they became as black as the Shanqillas. Earlier they had been living in lower Ethiopia, the Sudan, and Nubia. Later they went up into highland Ethiopia.³

He did not make clear whether those already settled Gumuz/Shanqilla/ tribes also were belonging to the tribe line of the Sini or when they did arrive, and if they were black even before crossing to Africa. But one important point which agrees with other history writers about the Gumuz people is that the Gumuz tribes were living in low lands of Ethiopia, the Sudan and Nubia, which indicates the very North of Ethiopia. He also mentions that they lived on the highlands of Ethiopia for more than four centuries under the rule of the tribe of Kusa but were later pushed into the lowlands of Ethiopia by the later arrivals of other people. He mentions how they were pushed by those later arrivals and ended up in the lowlands of Ethiopia as follows:

They lived with their cattle searching for grassy places, camping, feeding, and wandering; they paid tribute to the rulers of the time, the tribe of Kusa. However when the yoke became heavy upon them they resisted strongly, went to war, and fought hard battles. Although they sometimes won, sometimes lost, made truces and rebelled, paid tribute and (sometimes) refused to do so, finally the predecessors of all the later people

²Tayye Gebre Mariyam, *The History of Ethiopia*, translated. 1987:7.

³Tayye Gebre Mariyam, 1987:7

of Ethiopia, the tribes of Sem, Yoqt'an and the Ag'azyān, evicted the Shanqillas and the tribe of Kusa and drove them into the lowland deserts of Ethiopia. The Shanqillas lived in highland Ethiopia for 440 years. See the Kibrā Nāgäst, pp 114-116.⁴

In the book called *The Southern Marches of Imperial Ethiopia*, Wendy James is also sharing the same idea by mentioning the view of other sources, referring to James Bruce and states as following:

My opening motif is drawn from James Bruce's description of the southern hinterland of Gonder in the early 1770's. This region, now central and south-western Gojjam, was the home of a substantial Gumuz-speaking population, ancestors to many of the present-day Gumuz of the Blue Nile valley in Wellega, on whom this chapter focuses....⁵

Wendy's statement that refers to James Bruce could be more reliable because, James Bruce is one of the few Europeans to be referred to, with a background of personal voyages in Africa. Wendy continues and gives more evidences of other historians that the Gumuz Tribe was pushed down to the present place by the imperial powers of Ethiopia:

We know from Bruce, Salt, Beke and others that Gumuz lived in the higher country of what is now central and southern Gojjam in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, although they were exposed to intermittent slave raids and were already beginning to retreat down into the lowlands.⁶

Robert L. Hess in his book titled *Ethiopia: - The Modernization of Autocracy* also describes that the whole Nilotic tribe which stretch from the far North in lowlands of Eritrea down to the Beni Shangul regions were a prey for political and economic interest of some strong tribes in the neighboring countries and borderline areas. He writes:

Along the western marches of modern Ethiopia are located a number of Negroid peoples, who comprise 3 to 5 per cent of the total population of Ethiopia. They are among the last peoples to have been added to the empire of the Amhara and Tigreans. In the nineteenth century they were enslaved in large numbers by the Amhara, as well as by the Sudanese Arabs and the Beja. The largest of these tribes are the Baria and Kunama of Eritrea, who together number about 45,000;...The Amhara-Tigrean prejudice against Negroid peoples is shared by the Somali and Agaw and to a lesser extent by all the other Cushitic peoples. The Amhara refer collectively to all these Negroid peoples as barya, which quite literally means "slave," or Shankalla, a pejorative name derived from the Beni Shangul, a Negroid people of Dar Fung in the Sudan; they have figured in the chronicles of Ethiopia since the fifteenth century.⁷

⁴Tayye Gebre Mariyam, 1987:9.

⁵Donald Donham, *The Southern Marches of Imperial Ethiopia*. 1986:119.

⁶Donald Donham. 1986:121.

⁷Robert L. Hess, "*ETHIOPIA*": *The Modernization of Autocracy*. 1970:13.

My informants Mr. Ayale Jirata, Mr. Lolasa Asheka and Rev. Abera Negeri all of them from the Gumuz tribe confirm the above statements. They told me that their ancestors came from north of Blue Nile and having crossed the Blue Nile they went to the highland to the Oromo. With secured protection from the Oromo landlords they settled in the valley. They took the names of clans of those Oromo landlords who secured them protection.

Mr. Ayele Jirata from the Blue Nile valley, who, could not tell me his age but which I guess, might be in his fifties says that his father came to the Southern side of Blue Nile, when Ayele was quite young. Ayele says his father came there because of the heavy taxation from the highlands of Northern Ethiopia. He says that they left in darkness and crossed over the Abbay/Blue Nile/ and came to Sirba with their cows and sheep.⁸

Mr. Lolasa Asheka who is more than sixty years of age also said that his grandfather came to the present area called Gombo Kamashi. He confirms that his father was born in the present area and guesses that this took place a century ago.⁹ Rev. Abera Negeri who is in his forties also said, that his ancestors came from Gubba, and there are others of his clan who still live at Gubba.¹⁰ They are now called by the clan name of the Oromo under whose protection they settled. The clan name of Mr. Lolasa Asheka is Dutsenia but now known as Gombo and Rev. Abera Negeri's is Ebanja but now known as Agalo. They told me that the landlords of Northern Ethiopia followed their ancestors and came to take them back by force, but the Gumuz were already armed and ready to fight so that the Northern highlanders were afraid and retreated.

1.3 Language.

The Gumuz Tribes uses their own language even though they have different dialectics due to the influences from their neighboring peoples and tribes. According to the statements from *Global Recording.net*, the Gumuz language has ten dialects, namely:-*Dekoka, Dewiha, Disoha, Ganza, Gombo, Jemhwa, Kukwaya, Modea, Sai, and Sese*.¹¹ But all of them understand the dialects of each other.

⁸Mr. Ayale Jirata, *Interview*, dated 10. 7. 2010.

⁹Mr. Lolasa Asheka, *Interview*, dated, 21. 7. 2010.

¹⁰Rev. Abera Negeri, *Interview*, dated, 21. 7. 2010.

¹¹Global Recording net. (globalrecording.net/en/language/3132).

...the Gumuz speak several different dialects (Bender 1779), identify themselves with different ethnic names (Ganza, S'es'e, etc), and are organized as clans which have conducted feuds traditionally – even today inter-clan relations are far from peaceful.¹²

As they are influenced by their neighboring people, they also have some words from Oromo, Amharic and Arabic languages. Some Nilotic tribes have completely forgotten their languages and speak the languages of the tribe with which they were mixed or being assimilated by force.

Two of my informants, Rev. Nemera Chala and Rev. Gemetchu Denu, both age more than ninety, said that Western Wollega was inhabited by a Nilotic tribe called Ganqa before the arrival of the Oromo.

Rev. Nemerra Challa says:

The first Oromo arrivals to this area were thirty families. They went from place to place studying the area without showing themselves but when they finished their food, they decided to go to Abba Bisqano to get food. Abba Bisqano had a yearly festival called 'Yaro Ganqa'. When they went to him to get food from the big festival, his people told to Abba Bisqano that some people came to the feast begging for food. Abba Bisqano sent his messengers to investigate why they came to his country. He also gave them instruction saying; "if they say; 'Time has brought us here', you give them food. But after they have eaten and drunk and fallen asleep kill them, because, they will take our land making the 'Time' a reason. If they say 'we came because we are hungry', then give them food and send them." The messengers went and asked them and the Oromo said; "Time has brought us here". So they gave them food and drink, and when Oromo ate and drunk and fell asleep, they killed them. However, out of the thirty men two escaped and taking the families of the dead went back to Gibe where the Oromo were settled. A year later the Oromo came back for revenge at the same time of the year when the Ganqa had their annual festival known as "Yaro Ganqa". They attacked them and killed all the men and their king Abba Bisqano, and took the land. Abba Bisqano was the king of all the Nilotic tribe living in that area. So the people were taken as captive for the Oromo and absorbed within the Oromo. But they speak Afaan Oromo and have no other language as they are now part of Oromo.¹³

As of the Gumuz Tribe, they still have their language and culture. Most of the women and children do not speak other language than the Gumuz. But the adult men do speak the language of the neighboring peoples or tribes. The Gumuz of Wollega, south of Abbay, speak Afaan Oromo as well. Wendy James writes:

The people of Aba Bulcho, like the majority of Gumuz on the south bank of the Blue Nile, claim that they or their immediate forebears arrived from across the river in Gojjam, and they also entertain the idea of returning there eventually. All now speak

¹²*Exhibiting Cultures of Contact: -A Museum for benishangul-Gumuz, Ethiopia.*P.12.

¹³Rev. Nemera Chala-Interview, dated 19.7.2010.

afan Oromo as a lingua franca, and at the time of my field work accepted 'Shankalla' as a general self-designation. Gumuz is a term not well known among them, though it is generally used on the Sudan side.¹⁴

Women and children speak little of the Afaan Oromo, but they can hear and understand simple words for communication.

1.4 Religion.

Most Gumuz Tribes are still holding on to their traditional religion that is animism. They hold the belief that there is a higher god "Raba", but what they mostly revere is what they call "Musa". *Musa* is the spirit, which they believe, dwells in almost everything. They believe that "Musa" is aggressive and can attack immediately if someone does wrong according to what they believe is wrong. SIM (Serving in Mission) in Joshua Project-Gumuz of Ethiopia Ethnic People Profile states the beliefs of the Gumuz tribe as follows:

The Gumuz are animistic, which means they worship the 'spirits' of certain rocks, trees, and animals for good health, good crops, good luck, and protection. *Rebba* is their 'supreme god who knows all'¹⁵

The Gumuz also believe in witches that men or women are possessed by the spirit of the witch. The Gumuz of the Western Wollega region are influenced by Orthodox Christianity, from the North of Abbay before they migrated to the South or under the influences of the Oromo feudal landlords under whose protection they settled after crossing Abbay to the South. Most adult Gumuz men are baptized and nominal Christians. Those on the Sudan border are influenced by Islam because of being forced to accept it, but are not devotees of its practice. Juan Maria Schuver writes as follows:

...those who remain among the local indigenous chiefs of the Berta in the tributary regions, profess Mohammedanism, but without conviction. They have no aversion to amulets, copy the Arabs in the frequency of their pious ejaculations and submit themselves to circumcision; but they refuse to see any merit in the tiresome fast of Ramadan, are very negligent in their devotional exercises and show clearly that they are made to obey under pressure. As far as the people are concerned, whether the Berta or the Gumuz, you could say that 40 years of government, by fanatical Arab sheikhs, and 40 years of residence among them by a whole flock of Muslim theologians, have passed without making the least impression on them.¹⁶

Conversion to Islam or Orthodox Christianity has two reasons. It is either by force or by individual motives to acquire a higher status in the local society. The Arab invaders or the

¹⁴Donald Donham, *The Southern Marches of Imperial Ethiopia*. 1986:139.

¹⁵Internet, *Serving in Mission/Home/Gumuz*.

¹⁶Juan Maria Schuver, *Travels in North East Africa*. 1996:61-62.

Abyssinian colonization force their subdued territory to accept their royal religion. The people invaded should show loyalty by accepting the religion of the colonizers.

...the Gumuz are divided in their religious beliefs. Most of them practice traditional religions (Wolde-Silassie Abbute 2005, 72-76). Some are Muslim and a few Christian worshippers, although their beliefs are deeply rooted in traditional practices. Muslims cluster around the Sudanese frontier and Christians (Orthodox, Protestants and Catholics) live in the south and east. The adoption of Islam and Orthodox Christianity is the result of contact with neighboring Sudanese and Highland Amharas. To a certain degree, as we have been able to find out conversion plays a strategic role, allowing individuals to acquire a higher status in the local society.¹⁷

Though there were some nominal Christians; Orthodox, Catholics or Protestants before the arrival of Norwegian Mission Society in the 1970, there was no established churches among the Gumuz Tribe of Western Wollega.

1.5 Culture.

Despite their being surrounded by oppressors and those hunting them for slavery, the Gumuz Tribe kept its culture and language. People give different opinions why they managed to keep their culture. Some say it was because the Gumuz tribe did not live in peace with any people or tribe long and close enough to get acquainted to any outside influence. Others say that all those who tried to get hold of them did not consider them as people, but wanted to have them as individual slaves not recognizing them as people or as a tribe. The Northern highlanders, Tigray or Amhara used the “*gebbar*” system /serfdom/ by taking the land but allow the tribe to live on it as serf for them. But the Gumuz tribes left the land and moved into the desert leaving the fertile land for the highlanders. Wendy James states as following:

The account goes on to give a graphic description of the system of enserfment to an occupying peasant army, commonly known as the *gebbar* system, as it obtained in these regions at the time. Here a very sharp social barrier reinforced the subjugation of the local populace, and intermarriage was rare. Whole families from the highlands were ‘billeted’ on the Gumuz.¹⁸

The interest of Northern Ethiopia highlanders was to extend their territory and keep the Gumuz tribes as their own serfs. They disregarded the people and did not want to embrace them into their own community so that they could change their social status. James continues quoting Schuver and writes:

¹⁷Internet, *Stanford Journal of Archaeology*, P.13.

¹⁸Donald Donham, *The Southern Marches of Imperial Ethiopia*, 1986:129.

'They interfere little with the blacks, most seldom intermarry with what they consider a heathen and inferior race, and feel no necessity of propagating Christianity.'¹⁹

After they moved to the south of Abbai also the Oromo feudal lords wanted them to be subjected to them as a tribe and did not want to interfere into their daily lives. In both cases there was ignorance of the people and not having anything to do with them except to get a benefit from them. Wendy James continues and writes:

Evidence from the south bank of the Blue Nile suggests that there has been a small Gumuz population there at least since the early nineteenth century. In the early period, relations with the Oromo highlanders seem to have been quite good, with tribute being paid by at least some groups and the Oromo providing refuge in time of famine.²⁰

The Gumuz Tribe also did not trust the highland people whether they are from the north of Abbai or south of it, because what they saw from them was enmity. So the tribes kept their own culture of food, drink, marriage, and social status without being changed.

Their daily food is porridge made of millet, sorghum or maize. They use jelly soup made of green vegetable or leaf from trees mixed with salt, spices and pepper with porridge. They use cabbage or fresh shoots of bamboos as well. Meat and sesame is also what they use as soup with porridge. They use to drink their local beer called *keya*, thick and brown or yellowish colored made of millet or sorghum or maize. They use to hunt animals and fishing. Hunting wild animals is for adult men whereas fishing is done by women and children too. They use a variety of food from green plants and different species of animals. They collect honey from caves, trees and from holes in-ground. Their only cash crop is cotton, but they also sometimes sale wild honey to get cash. Depending on years of good harvest they also sale food crops. They grow cotton but do not weave it and make clothes, they buy clothes from highlanders.

Goats and hens are their most domestic animals, while they keep few sheep and cows. They use donkeys for transport. Their donkeys often are attacked by a tropical disease called *gandi*, and often die. As the result the women are those who carry when they have to bring their things for sale to the market on the highland.

The Gumz tribes live in villages houses built very close to one another according to their kinship. Their villages almost look like small towns. Their farm is used to be far from their villages up to more than half an hour walk. They do store the crops there after harvest. The

¹⁹Donald Donham, *The Southern Marches of Imperial Ethiopia*. 1986:129.

²⁰Donald Donham, 1986:129.

women bring the crops from there every time to cook food for the family. That is additional workload to the Gumuz women. Men are only to be seen from above as protectors looking for farm fields and preparing it for planting. Women start with the planting and continue the work until the crop is ready for food or carrying to the market, even to highland for days, until it is changed into cash money.

The marriage system is traditional and arranged, and built on exchange between families. A Gumuz man cannot marry only because of his reaches or by coming from well to do family. Donald Donham mentions as follows:

No Gumuz could marry just because of his wealth; he had to have a 'sister' in order to exchange for a wife. This prevented a build-up of power such as was occurring in Gubba, and it played an important role in reconstituting Gumuz society as different sections of the people fled across the Abbay into present day Wellegga.²¹

He should have a sister of his own or donation of a girl from a relative to get married. That has even impacts on the girls. Sometimes a very young girl will be given in exchange and she will be taken care of in the house of the parents of her future husband. That can expose the girl for very early marriage which sometimes ends up with early pregnancy which in turn can result in difficult labor during child bearing. Wendy James says that sometimes young girls can be forced to marry and they face problems to accept the marriage. James writes:

It is true that young people, especially girls, are sometimes married off without having much option and may run away and try to return home; indeed this seems to be expected of them.²²

The other side effect of this system is also that, if the family does not have equal number of boys and girls, the girl cannot marry. Sometimes the father is obligated to marry a second or third wife only because his own daughter should get married. The new wife exchanged by his daughter then serves the mother of the exchanged, the first wife, with respect as though she is her mother. The Gumuz tribes of Western Wollega had their own Gumuz chief, who ruled under protectorate of the Oromo feudal lords of the highland. An individual Gumuz man can have an Oromo friend or '*michu*' but for legal matters should go through his own chief. They have a strong tradition of discussing matters with all members of the community. All members regardless of age or sex take part in discussions about matters of the community. When matters are presented to them from the highland authorities, they use to say "ok, but we will discuss with the children and come back." The word "Children" does not necessarily

²¹Donald Donham, *The Southern Marches of Imperial Ethiopia*. 1986:43-44.

²²Donald Donham,, 1986:137.

means children, but “women” - who are the most important decision makers, those left at home. They come the next day if they think not harming them, but may not appear at all if they think that the outcome may not be healthy. Even though they lived closer to the Oromo they did not feel free because the Oromo also used to steal and sell them to slavery. Mr. Lolasa Asheka said that they did not trust the Oromo at all, because the Oromo also, when they got a chance took their children and sold them to slavery. Wendy James also mentions what one of her informant from Sirba Abbay area said concerning the threats on the Gumuz tribe as follows:

After this fighting, probably not long after 1882, part of the Dukunzilla under the leadership of Gulbak, a son of Bidad, moved to the hill of Beri and settled there for a long period. During this time Banja (Hamdan) succeeded his father in Gubba (we can date this to 1898). During his rule, the Dukunzilla would live peacefully for a period. Then when they were quarrelling among themselves, *‘just like the Oromo who rule us today and are our friends but can suddenly turn and fire on us’*, [emphasized] Banja came in by force with bazugum (Gubba chiefs) and ‘began to shoot the Dukunzilla, *ruk, ruk, ruk, ruk, ruk,*’ (this could have been the raiding following Hamadan’s accession mentioned above). In this war some people were killed and others were taken as slaves, while some remained alive and stayed in the area.²³

The Gumuz tribe kept themselves alienated from any closer contact of other Semitic or Cushitic tribes because of the actions these tribes could suddenly take over them at any time. That made the Gumuz tribe strong in keeping their culture and social status without their language and culture being changed.

2. The Gumuz Tribe under the threats of political, Economic and Religious interests.

2.1 The Expansion of the Abyssinians from the North.

It is good to consider the statements of Tayye Gebre Maryam as a starting point to see how the Gumuz Tribe was oppressed by people from the Northern highlands of Ethiopia.

...finally the predecessors of all the later people of Ethiopia, the tribes of Sem, Yoqt’an, and the Ag’azyen, evicted the Shanqillas and the tribe of Kusa and drove them into the lowland deserts of Ethiopia. The Shanqillas lived in highland Ethiopia for 440 years.²⁴

Mr. Emmanuel Abraham, emeritus president of the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus, in his book *Reminiscences of My Life*, also refers to the Gumuz tribe as the oldest inhabitants of the land of Ethiopia and writes:

²³Donald Donham, *The Southern Marches of Imperial Ethiopia*. 1986:139.

²⁴Tayye Gebre Maryam, *The History Of Ethiopia (English translation.)*1987:9.

The community which is believed to be the oldest of all the inhabitants of Ethiopia and which now lives in the valleys of the Didessa, the Abbai (Blue Nile) and the Dabus Rivers and known as 'Sanqalla' to the Oromos and 'Shanqella' to the Amharas is one section of our people which had never heard the Gospel.²⁵

Though they were the oldest inhabitants of Ethiopia the Gumuz were oppressed by other tribes or people who came to the land much later than them. The 19th century expansion of the Abyssinians has affected the Gumuz tribe more than any other smaller tribes. After evicting them from the highlands of Ethiopia they did not stop exploiting them, but followed them to the lowlands as well and forced them into enslavement by taking their lands. Wendy James is referring to Schuver's statement and writes:

Schuver saw evidence of pressure on the 'independent Gumuz' from four sources. First was the new presence of imperial Ethiopian control and settlement in this region. He and a companion travelled (without permission) to the Kierien mountains, 45 miles east of Gubba, across a wide and almost uninhabited plain, finding only a few 'independent Gumuz' who had moved from Gubba. He wished to visit the nearest 'Schangalla', whom, significantly, he defined as 'negroes under Abyssinian rule'.²⁶

James continues and explains that the reason for why a vast area was not inhabited was due to the recent war of the Abyssinians during the visit of Schuver.

He considered that the reason for this lack of population in the plains between Gubba, Kierien, the Blue Nile, and the Dabus was that it was border territory recently devastated by war. At the very time he was making his way to Kierien, in June 1882, Ethiopian soldiers were plundering Wambera and Beri Hill to his south.²⁷

Wendy James continues and also quotes what Oscar T. Crosby witnessed:

'Perhaps nothing could better indicate the desolation of the country than the fact that for seven or eight days no hyenas were heard around the camp, and further, that the dead bodies of some black fellows, killed in a fight with the Abyssinian garrison at Wombera, were found, three days after the fight, only partially consumed, and that by vultures, not by hyenas, and only one vulture to the body, as far as I could note.'²⁸

This indicates that the armed Abyssinian troops killed the innocent Gumuz mercilessly and left the land empty. In these wars, men were killed and women and children were taken into slavery and properties confiscated. Those who could escape would hide in bushes and went further into the lowlands where the highlanders did not dare to follow in fear of the climate and tropical diseases. James also mentions Douglas H. Johnson:

²⁵Emmanuel Abraham, *Reminiscences of My Life*. 1995:267.

²⁶Donald Donham, *The Southern Marches of Imperial Ethiopia*. 1986:123.

²⁷Donald Donham.1986:123.

²⁸Donald Donham.1986:127.

Historians are in general agreement with Sir Edward Evans-Pritchard's assertions that the Sudanese Nilotes of the border region were protected from Ethiopia either by a 'corridor of death' – malaria in the swamp and tsetse in the highlands – or by the absence, on the Ethiopian side, of any systematic 'civilized' administration.²⁹

The Abyssinian rulers did not have any interest in the people as a people. They wanted to have them as individual property to work for their chieftains and only were looking to extend their territory. They took the fertile land and put pressure on Gumuz tribe so that they work for them as slaves but the Gumuz tribe left the land and went further into the bush.³⁰

2.2 Slave Trade Routes of the Arabs from the West.

From the west side of the Gumuz Tribe is the Sudan which was already a Muslim country. Those of Gubba area shared the culture of the Muslims and were implementing the Islamic law on certain areas of their daily life. Schuver states the execution of a woman that took place at Dasifi and writes:-

I was quietly informed that the execution had just taken place of one of the Sheikh's women, who had been caught that morning in the very act of adultery. The lover had been condemned to be sold as a slave, but the female had had her throat cut on the very spot where the mound was raised and her body had been thrown into the river.' An empty *angareb* carried by four men returning from the Nile bore witness to the severe justice of the Gumuz.³¹

This kind of punishing women caught on adultery was not of the Gumuz culture, but adopted from its neighbors from the Islamic law. Wendy James mentions as the chief appointed by Gubba, that means where the Islam laws were already implemented, adopted the system of government in a similar way:-

It would appear that in the vassal communities shaykhs appointed by and dependent upon Gubba were themselves building up status and power by similar means. Their marriages, by bride wealth, or other unilaterally-imposed liaisons, offered no protection against harsh treatment of a woman, and allowed no continuing claims over her children. Quite apart from the execution of the women, the selling of her lover into slavery reflects the extension of Gubba's power into this peripheral community. The very existence of the external demand for slaves (something that was to increase phenomenally) was restructuring relations of power and authority in Dasifi, and was making it easier for petty tyrants to set themselves up in such villages.³²

The appointed rulers of Dasifi could not grant protection for the Gumuz tribe. But in contrast, in order to safeguard their own power over the Gumuz tribe, they let their own people into

²⁹Donald Donham, *The Southern Marches of Imperial Ethiopia*. 1986:219.

³⁰Juan Maria Schuvers *Travel's in East Africa*. 1996:200.

³¹Juan Maria Schuver's *Travel in North East Africa*. 1996:193-4.

³²Donald Donham, *The Southern Marches of Imperial Ethiopia*. 1986:126.

slavery. The ruler appointed over Dasifi used his own people as slaves for paying taxes to the rulers of Gubba in order to be in peace with them. The Gumuz tribe's children and women were being kidnapped and sold to slavery. James mentions the statement from one of her informants:-

My oldest informant was Bulti, who was about eighty years old in 1975. He and his father had been born in Wellegga. But he claimed that the Dukunzilla used to live in Gubba, together with the 'Ngaba'. ... This according to Bulti was the first place where the Dukunzilla fought the Ngaba. He said that when the people used to live with the Ngaba, the chiefs of those Ngaba used to catch children from the Shankalla and sell them. So the Shankalla had a meeting, and said to one another, 'Why do these people sell us like this?' And so they fought the Ngaba. At this time, the chief of the Ngaba was Abu Shok (i.e. Aghib). 'Banja', his son, according to Bulti, was just a little boy.³³

Juan Maria Schuver during his travels in North East Africa also states that Gubba was a prey for three states, namely the Sudan who then was in control and Abyssinia who also in turn used to attack to annex new land to its state. As the result of Khartoum's failure to help the governors of Gubba, they sometimes looked for support from Egypt.³⁴ Rulers of Khartoum also in order to get more benefit ordered raids upon Gubba and take them to slavery. Schuver continues and says:-

Secondly some governors showed the ingenious trick of while quietly cashing the tribute with one hand, denouncing with the other the unfortunate vassal as an obstinate rebel, who refused to pay his contribution. Whereupon Khartoum used to order a raid upon Gubba itself or such of its villages as were easily accessible. Whereupon the Mamur used to sally forth from Famaka with both regulars & irregulars and after the fashion of Egyptian warfare in those days plunder some villages and drag the inhabitants to Famaka, to be sold or kept as slaves.³⁵

It was this exploitation and oppression that forced them to move to the South-East into the two rivers' valleys (Blue Nile & Diddesa) where they dwell at present.

2.3 The Interest of the Oromo Landlords.

Since the Nineteenth century, the Oromo people were in a healthy relationship with the Gumuz and used to go for trade to Gubba for the reason that Famaka was in control of the Egyptian troops. Schuver writes:-

Gubba, though so much neglected by the Turks, is at least as important, as regards its position as Famaka. If the latter command the road to Beni Shangul & Fadasi, Gubba is or rather ought to be the market for a much more extensive region. Here indeed the

³³Donald Donham, *The Southern Marches of Imperial Ethiopia*. 1986:139.

³⁴Juan Maria Schuver's *Travel in North East Africa*. 1996:174

³⁵Juan Maria Schuver's *Travel in North East Africa*. 174

Gallas from Walegga and between Yabus and Didessa are forced to buy their salt, which comes from Abyssinia by way of Dongur.³⁶

As the Oromo used to fight against the Abyssinian dynasty for almost a century, they used to buy salt from Gubba which came from Abyssinia through Dangur. Schuver mentions as one of the reasons why the Abyssinian rulers could not control Gubba as early as possible was because of the fight they had with the Oromo.³⁷ Because of the relationship with the semi-independent state of the Wellega Oromo, the Gumuz tribe migrated to the south-west to be protected by them, when the Abyssinia government put hard levies on them. The Oromo in Wollega were independent until Moroda Bakare, the successor of Bakare Godana the ruler of Leka Nekemt, extended his rule to the west of Diddessa. Alessandro Triulzi mentions:-

In the past the name Wellegga was applied only to the Sibuh-inhabited territory lying west of the Diddessa, while the region situated to the east was called Leka.³⁸

Triulzi continues and writes that the territory beyond Diddessa to the west was annexed to the Nekemte administrative by Moroda the son of Bakare Godana.

Moroda expanded his father's domains by a blend of diplomacy and conquest until the late 1870s, when he claimed supremacy over vast stretches of territory west of the Diddessa, well beyond the traditional boundary of the Leka.³⁹

On the other hand Wendy James describes that the Gumuz tribe were in the south bank of the Blue Nile already in the beginning of the nineteenth Century.

Evidence from the south bank of the Blue Nile suggests that there has been a small Gumuz population there at least since the early nineteenth century. In the early period, relations with the Oromo highlanders seem to have been quite good, with tribute being paid by at least some groups and the Oromo providing refuge in time of famine.⁴⁰

The interest of the Oromo landlords was then to keep certain families of the Gumuz tribe under their own protection and collect tribute from them. They also named them after the name of their own clans and were boasting of having them as serfs. That is what one of my informants, Rev. Tesso Daba, said when I asked why the Oromo did not impose their language and culture on them. He said that the Oromo landlords owned them as their property and keeping them for their own benefits. He added that they did not want to push much on them.⁴¹ This reality broke out with strong resistance and oppositions by the Oromo

³⁶ Juan Maria Schuver's *Travel in North East Africa*.1996:186.

³⁷ Juan Maria Schuver's *Travel in North East Africa*. 1996:186.

³⁸ Donald Donham, *Southern Marches of Imperial Ethiopia*. 1986:52.

³⁹ Donald Donham.1986:52.

⁴⁰ Donald Donham.1986:126.

⁴¹ Rev. Tesso Daba, *Interviews*, dated 23.7.2010.

landlords, when the Western Synod of the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus started evangelism work among the Gumz tribe.

Rev. Gmatchu Denu, served in Western Synod in different positions including being vice-president of the synod for many years and also acting president for four years during the difficult period of persecution under the Marxist government of Ethiopia. He said that in the year 1973, he was accused by a group of five Oromo landlords of misleading the Gumuz people and making them revolt against the government. When he was brought before the governor of the Wollega region, he took that advantage and brought with him the elders of the Gumuz people as witnesses and also that they appeal before the governor. When the governor saw the Gumuz leaders clothed well and explaining their problems in a disciplined, that they were oppressed by the landlords for many years, he was very much astonished in seeing them in contrary to what the landlords were saying. He did not see them before at the government court. To their dismay he appreciated the Church work and confessed that the Church is doing a good job in training the Gumuz people enabling them appear before the government court which the landlords themselves failed to do for many years. He even encouraged the work of the Church more and let free Rev. Gamachu and the Gumuz elders.⁴² At that time the Oromo landlords never let the Gumuz people appear before government court. They kept them away from government in the name of protecting them. They spoke on their behalf saying that they were poor and savage who kill each other and also other people. On the other hand they also cheated them saying that they protected them from the central government so that the government did not put hard levies upon them.

2.4 The Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus.

The Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus has come up from the grass root or middle class people. Though first arriving in the palace of the governor of Western Wollega, it did not continue with the landlords. The school opened by the evangelical pioneers combined both theory and practice. The landlords did not want their children to be involved in practical works, so they prohibited their children from continuing in the school. Gustav Aren writes:-

Ato Abraham Tato (b.c. 1886), one of the first believers, recalls that Dibaba admonished his officials and the local notables to send their sons to Gebre-Ewostateos to learn reading and writing and to study the Scriptures in Oromo. The first group comprised sixteen boys, who were supposed to study for twelve months. After a while some parents discovered that their sons were required to do menial work like cleaning the

⁴² Rev. Gemetchu Danu, *Interviews*, dated 29.7.2010.

stable. Annoyed, they withdrew them from the school. Only three students completed the course.⁴³

Those who attended the school those days took part in hand craft trainings as well which by that time was the works of the so called law class society. Aren continues mentions:

Special days were set aside for farming and training in crafts. Both boys and girls were given instruction in spinning and weaving in order to enable the landless to earn their own living.⁴⁴

These practices by no means would be accepted by the landlords, but only by those who came from lower class society or landless community.

The other reason behind the landlords' not to sending their children to the school of the pioneers was the agitation of the Orthodox Church priests. The Orthodox Church feared that if the children of the landlords went to that school they would accept the evangelical views. Gustav Aren writes in his book *Envoys of the Gospel in Ethiopia*, how some of the later leaders of the Evangelical Church got opportunity to hear the gospel. He mentions the case one of the Church leader in the W/Synod as follows:

Some of the youths who went to school at Najo developed into spiritual leaders. One of these was Jallata Wase (1916-1997). He was the son of Grazmach Wase 'Abba Solan', a gentleman at Boji Karkarro, and Woizero Chawaqe Kunno. His parents did not permit him to attend the school that the evangelists from Eritrea had established at Boji. They regarded them as heretics (tseré Mariam) and appointed a priest to teach their son the alphabet in their home. Jallata read his 'Dawit' (The Psalms) in Ge'ez for four years without grasping what he was reading.⁴⁵

Aren continues and writes that Jallata was later allowed to study at the evangelical school because he ran away to Addis Ababa in search of modern education. In order not to miss him they sent him to the school of the pioneers.

At the age of sixteen the lad ran away to Addis Abeba to seek general education but was found by a relative who brought him back to his parents. These sent him to Bushan Siba's school at Boji lest he ran away a second time.⁴⁶

On the other hand, the landlords kept their loyalty to the Ethiopian Orthodox Church as it was the religion of the state. The Oromo landlords though not very much convinced with the practices and rituals of the Orthodox Church were respected by the priests only because of their power over the people. In order to keep them loyal to the Orthodox Church, each

⁴³Gustav Aren, *The Evangelical Pioneers in Ethiopia*. 1978:402.

⁴⁴Gustav Aren, 1978: 406.

⁴⁵Gustav Aren, 1978:333.

⁴⁶Gustav Aren, 1978: 334.

landlord was given a *tabot*, a copy of the ark of covenant, to build the Orthodox Church which they belong to. Aren explains why the Orthodox Church was accepted by common people.

Orthodox Christianity gradually expanded in Sibu country. Churches were built at one place after another. Every Sunday several persons were baptized but the meaning of the ceremony was little known. The acceptance of baptism was not necessarily a proof of conversion to Christ. More than often it was primarily a public show of loyalty to the authorities and hardly anything beyond that, since no instruction was given in the Christian faith. The priests charged each baptismal candidate an *amole chaw* (bar of salt) and derived considerable profit from the performance.⁴⁷

The Oromo landlords themselves did not understand the meaning of Christianity and did not see the necessity to preach to their Gumuz subjects. They did not want that the Gumuz tribe be exposed to any outsiders except themselves. They even did not see the necessity that the Gumuz needed Christianity.

In fact the landlords were using the Gumuz tribes as soldiers to fight each other by agitating them to kill the subjects of one another both Oromo and Gumuz. Mr. Lolasa Asheka said that the notable war of 1953 between the Gumuz tribe and the Oromo was the result of this fact.

The Gumuz tribe of Gombo Kamashi had a market where the Oromo from the highland used to trade with the Gumuz. The other Oromo landlords did not like that their subjects went to the market at Gombo. They agitated their own subjects to kill the Oromo traders. They also advised them to shout their boasting calling the names of the Gumuz of Gombo Kamashi. That was to put the guilt on the Gumuz of Gombo Kamashi. Three Oromo traders were killed. There was a woman with them who went back and reported what happened. She told the names she heard shouted in boasting. That aroused the Oromo to take revenge on the Gombo Gumuz tribe. Before the war community leaders from the tribe were taken to Awuraja court. They were asked to handover those did the crime and they agreed and signed. But upon their arrival they did not know who have done and did not respond. That brought the war that was known the “War of Abba Tone.” Abba Tone was a tribe leader of the Gumuz tribe of Gombo Kamashi. As the result of the war many Gumuz people were killed by troops sent by the Central Government.⁴⁸ Wendy James mentions that some children who were taken as hostages during the war were somehow benefited in getting the chances of education.

The case of my own assistant, Gali Sambato, is a modern example of the capacity of the Gumuz in Wellegga to reabsorb their own. He and some other young children had been

⁴⁷Gustav Aren, *The Evangelical Pioneers in Ethiopia*, 1978:65.

⁴⁸Lolasa Asheka, *Interviews*, dated 21.7.2010.

taken away virtually as hostages for the good behavior of the Shankalla, following hostilities between them and the Oromo in the Gombo area in 1953. He was educated in Addis Abeba, and after leaving school, instead of taking up such an option as the army, he decided to retrace his origin back in the Blue Nile Valley. He managed to find his relatives and settled down to learn the Gumuz language, having grown up using Amharic. A 'sister' was found for him to exchange, and he was thus able to marry.⁴⁹

The evangelical church had already started to work among them the Gumuz tribe prior to the war. Before the Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus was registered as national church, congregations in the western part, which after the registration were called "Western Wollega Synod", had formed an office which was called "Board of Evangelical Congregations of Ghimbi District". This Board had considered the matters of the Gumuz tribe many times during its meetings. In its 2nd meeting held at a place called Chaliya Yekka on October 5, 1951, the Board discussed matters on the agenda brought to its attention by the Mendi congregation and tabled it for its next meeting.

On the agenda No.9th in case other urgent matters from participants, to be discussed was considered and the question of help from Mendi Parish to preach Gospel to the Gumuz /Shanqillas/ and to help five of their children in regular school was postponed to be discussed in the next meeting, and decided that until that, Mendi Congregation, as it is near to them, has big responsibility to support.[translation from Amharic]⁵⁰

The agenda was considered again in its meeting held at Mendi on April 23, 1952 and decided that the office of the Board ask Addis Ababa Mekane Yesus Church for help for the education of the Gumuz children.

Agenda No. 8th the matter concerning what was written, for education of the Gumuz /Shanqillas/ is decided; that the Office of the Board shall ask the Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus in Addis Ababa for assistance.[translation]⁵¹

The application had been in the attention of the Executive Board of the Church almost for two decades before it has got final answer.

3. The Call of Norwegian Missionary Society.

3.1 Reason for EECMY Leaders Concern for the gumuz tribe.

The Swedish Evangelical Mission which was founded on 7 May 1856 as Society for promoting the Gospel in Sweden (Evangeliska Fosterlands-Stiftelsen)⁵² decided to have a

⁴⁹Donald Donham, *Southern Marches of Imperial Ethiopia*. 1986:144.

⁵⁰*Ghimbi Awuraja Evangelical Church Board meeting*, at Chalia, reso, no.9

⁵¹*Gimbi Awuraja Evangelical Church Board meeting*, at Mendi, resol.No.8.

⁵²Gustav Aren, *Evangelical Pioneers in Ethiopia*. 1978:119

foreign mission department on 18 June 1861. They started to look for possibilities of open doors to go out for mission work. Aren writes:

The search for a mission field continued for four years. Praying for clear guidance, the Board carefully investigated possibilities in North and South America, China and India, South and West Africa, Madagascar and Mauritius. None of these appeared to be God's answer.⁵³

Aren writes how answer came through the Bishop Gobat, who was then in Jerusalem, about at the end of August 1863 in response to the question of Dr. Waldemar Rudin, the then secretary of the mission, about mission to the Oromo:

Gobat wrote that he had always taken a lively interest in the Oromo. 'From what I know of their character I have the conviction that if a mission could be established among them it would prove eminently successful,' he declared.⁵⁴

But later Gobat, in fear of the political unrest in the country, advised the Swedes not to start new mission in Ethiopia. But the mission consulted Rev. Johann Ludwig Krapf, who having been sent by CMS had been among the Shoa Oromo from 1839 -1842,⁵⁵and he encouraged them and advised them to bypass the Abyssinians and go to the Oromo land South of Abbai.⁵⁶

When the mission asked for conformation of Krapf because of Luis Harmis' advice to the Mission to start outreach from Zanzibar, Krapf reiterated his earlier proposal and advised the mission with other possible routes. Aren writes:

Krapf reiterated his earlier proposal. Expecting a quick end to Teodros's rule, he recommended that a chain of mission stations should initially be established among the Nilotic tribes along the northern border of Ethiopia to provide connection with the Oromo south of the Abbai.⁵⁷

With these words of Krapf the mission decided on 8 June 1865 to start mission among the Oromo. Aren states:

The SEM Board favoured Krapf's idea and resolved to 'explore the countries of the Nile and the Red Sea coast' with a view to penetrating to the Oromo.⁵⁸

The SEM could only penetrate into the inland country up to Kunama land, which is in the northern lowlands of Ethiopia. But because it was a disputable borderline for Egypt, Ethiopia

⁵³Gustav Aren, *The Evangelical Pioneers in Ethiopia*. 1978:121.

⁵⁴Gustav Aren, 1978:121.

⁵⁵Gustav Aren, 1978: 71-81

⁵⁶Gustav Aren, 1978:121.

⁵⁷Gustav Aren, 1978:122.

⁵⁸Gustav Aren, 1978:122.

and the Sudan, they were pushed out and withdrawn from there to the Red Sea Coast. Aren states as following:

It was Muslim zeal and Egyptian colonial politics that had thwarted the plan of reaching the Oromo with the Gospel by way of the Sudan. As the result, the northern circuitous route proposed by Krapf and recommended by Münzinger had to be abandoned.⁵⁹

Aren continues and writes that the mission decided to wait at the Red Sea coast while searching for any available possibilities as follows:

In the meantime, while probing into the possibilities and waiting on events, the mission established itself on the coast and concentrated on training indigenous evangelists. This interim activity would lead to unexpected results.⁶⁰

Here it seems the right place for the right persons at the right time. The missionaries sent to preach the Gospel of freedom. Young boys and girls from the Oromo people, who were in slavery, were in need freedom. It was a solitary place not under the reach of the Abyssinian rule. The missionaries were trying to reach the Oromo and the Oromo men and women met them at the point where the missionaries had no much to do. There at a solitary place, they had ample time for teachings and instructions both parties giving and receiving from one another. Gustav Aren states:

Nesib (c. 1856-1931), the first student, became a source of much joy to his teacher. Born at Uramu in Illubabor in western Ethiopia he was originally named Hika, an Oromo word significantly meaning 'translator'. At four years of age he lost his father. Shortly afterwards raiding tribesmen stole him from his mother and enslaved him. Renamed Nesib, he had been stolen twice and sold four times before Münzinger liberated him and entrusted him to Ahlborg as a servant in October 1870. Lager became his first teacher but Lundahl took over in December of the same year. After some months Nesib desired to be baptized. Finding him sincere Lundahl granted his request on 31 March 1872, which was Easter day. Onesimos was the new name chosen for him as a Christian.⁶¹

Another convert was Hamed, a Muslim boy, who was named Amanuel on his baptism on 19 May 1872 which was on Pentecost day.⁶² Aren continues and writes:-

By their mere presence at Massawa and Ailet, Onesimos and Amanuel were a constant reminder to the Swedish missionaries that they were committed to evangelize the Oromo. The prospects of a successful enterprise were, however, not very bright in the early 1870's as we have seen. Lundahl thought that he and his colleagues had better

⁵⁹Gustav Aren, *The Evangelical Pioneers in Ethiopia*. 1978:148.

⁶⁰Gustav Aren, 1978:148.

⁶¹Gustav Aren, 1978:165-6.

⁶²Gustav Aren, 1978:166.

bide their time and await reinforcements. In the meantime the best preparation would be to train liberated slaves for a future commission as evangelists.⁶³

The missionaries wanted to open school for girls as well but they were not quite successful to get enough girls as they wanted. But in the year 1876 they started with few students. Aren says:

The newly-weds were commissioned to open a school for girls and young women but the unsettled political situation delayed the project. A small beginning was made in January 1876 when an Oromo girl, named Ayantu, was entrusted to their care. In the next few months they took in some refugees from Hamasen.⁶⁴

These were the first Oromo converts at the Red Sea coast who were granted freedom by the missionaries. They, having been sent by the missionaries from Massawa, became the first missionaries to reach the Oromo land in the western part of Ethiopia. They are the origin of the Ethiopian Evangelical Churches. Being freed by the Gospel they preached about freedom and practiced it by buying the slaves and let them free. The SEM missionaries continued their concern for the slaves also when they arrived in Wollega in the beginnings of the 20th century. Aren mentions as the Rev. Karl Cederqvist showed his concern for the slaves when he saw the empty places between the big and small towns on his road to the west, and writes:

Cederqvist, who visited Wollaga in the autumn of 1904, observed that large areas had been laid waste between the fertile Gibe valley and Naqamte and between that town and Gimbi, whereas there were populous districts around Naqamte, Gimbi, Karkarro and Najo. Cederqvist laid the blame for the devastation on the slave-trade, though the military campaigns during the Shoan conquest of the south-west no doubt much contributed to depopulation.⁶⁵

Qes Gebre-Ewostateos was one of the students of the Swedish Evangelical Mission (SEM) at the Red Sea coast. Though he himself was not enslaved, he studied together with the freed slaves such as Onesimos and Amanuel, at the Red Sea coast. Gebre-Ewostateos came out with the belief that slaves should be freed not only spiritually but also physically through being bought and set free. He took this duty as part of the total salvation. Aren writes what he was told about Qes Gebre-Ewotateos as follows:

Like Niguse in Jimma, Gebre-Ewostateos felt a deep concern for the victims of the slave-trade. His daughter narrated that he used his savings for releasing slaves. He rejoiced when he managed to liberate whole families and thus prevented husband and wife, mother and child being separated from one another. As slaves were generally sold naked, he marked their restored human dignity by buying them clothes before taking

⁶³Gustav Aren, *Evangelical Pioneers in Ethiopia*, 1978:201-2.

⁶⁴Gustav Aren, 1978:217.

⁶⁵Gustav Aren, 1978:407.

them home to Boji, where he gave them a hut to live in and a plot to cultivate and began to teach them about Christ. Quite a number of people found an entirely new existence in this way, Wolete-Hiywet maintained.⁶⁶

These experiences of life exhorted the Evangelicals Christians to think about the Gumuz tribe. They believed that Gospel sets free those who are under human and natural oppressions. Niguse in Jimma and Gebre-Ewostateos in Boji were preaching the Gospel of total freedom and practicing it by setting the slaves free by buying them with their own money. As landlords did not want to send their children to the school of the evangelical pioneers, it was the lower class society or the poor and landless community who sent their children to the school. They became the later leaders of the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus. Abraham Tato whom I mentioned earlier, was one of the informants of Gustav Aren. He was father of Emmanuel Abraham who later became president of the EECMY for twenty-two years. The leaders of the EECMY were educated with the background and conviction of the freedom of the totality of a person. They took the initiative to reach the Gumuz tribe with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Their concern was that the Gumuz tribe also would get the Gospel that sets them free from physical and spiritual powers that kept them in slavery for centuries.

The evangelism work among the Gumuz tribe started in the 1950's by the evangelical believers of the Ghimbi Board. But the new and unorganized congregations could not satisfactorily carry out the work of preaching the Gospel due to shortage of financial and human resources. As they knew that the Gospel preaching could not fully be practical without education, the Board was concerned not only in preaching the Gospel but also in educating the Gumuz children. The Ghimbi Evangelical Board forwarded the matter to the new church which was in the process of being organized as a national church. But it took some years before the Church could get proper response for the application. Emmanuel Abraham confirms this attempt done by the W/Synod and writes:

The Western Synod of the EECMY had had a very strong desire to carry the message of the Gospel and elementary schooling to another section of this nomadic community in the Didessa and Abbai valleys which had been utterly neglected, and had started to work among them but, finding itself unable to continue, had brought the matter to the attention of the Executive Committee and requested it on several occasions to find a way of obtaining assistance. We, who were working in the Central Office, also realized the importance of the matter and inquired of the Co-operating Missions whether they were willing and able to help. We then conceived the idea of inviting other foreign Missions and made inquiries as to which Missionary Society would be suitable.⁶⁷

⁶⁶Gustav Aren, *Evangelical Pioneers in Ethiopia*.1978:408.

⁶⁷Emmanuel Abraham, *Reminiscences of my Life*.1995:268.

The time was when the young National Church faced challenges from different angles. The evangelization work which was started by the Sudan Interior Mission (SIM) was also facing problem and was appealing for help. Due to some rules and regulations laid by the SIM Missionaries, the converts did not want to continue with them. Emmanuel Abraham says:-

In course of time, the Mission laid down certain rules in opposition to the traditions and customs of the population and a section of the believers who were unwilling to accept the rules withdrew and wanted to join the Mekane Yesus Church. They sent representatives to the Capital to solicit the Addis Ababa Mekane Yesus Congregation to receive them. They importuned the Congregation for 12 years. People were sent from Addis Ababa to try and compose the differences but were unsuccessful.⁶⁸

The new established Mekane Yesus church received them into membership on its 2nd General Assembly held in January 1961, which in turn contributed to the delay of considering the application of the Western Synod (then Western Wallaga Synod) concerning the reaching of the Gumuz tribe. Rev. Gamatchu Danu says that negotiation was started with the Finish Missionary Society (FMS) to come to the Western Synod to help in the work among the Gumuz tribe. But the Executive Board of the Church had given priority to the work in Kambata, the call was diverted that area. It is also indicated in the report of the survey team, consisting of five members, done from April 23-26, 1968 as follows:

In 1965 the Synod President, Rev. Daffa Jammo, in his report to the 4th General Assembly of the EEC-MY pointed out the fact that these two areas [i.e. Beghi & Gumuz] were a challenge which the Synod so far not had been able to take up. He also requested the Church in January the same year to explore the possibilities of calling the Finnish Missionary Society which had indicated interest to take up new work, to come and assist the Synod.⁶⁹

But it seems that the Church has given more priority to the work in Kambata. In the long letter of H.E. Emmanuel Abraham to Rev. J. Skauge, dated October 12, 1968, this was mentioned as follows:

Let me also tell you why the EEC-MY had given priority to the work in Kambata District. Before the formation of the EEC-MY in its present administrative structure, a group of people from Kambata had been appealing to one of our congregations in Addis Ababa for assistance. When we realized in 1961 that the Lutheran Missions, supporting the EEC-MY, were not able to assist in Kambata, we turned to the Lutheran World Federation and our work in Kambata has since been carried out through an annual grant from the LWF/CWM. Trusting that the Finnish Missionary Society would come out to

⁶⁸Emmanuel Abraham, *Reminiscences of my Life*.1995:270.

⁶⁹*Report of Survey committee*, dated April 30, 1968:1

our assistance in the work that we have undertaken in Kambata, we began exploring possibilities of aid for the evangelization of the Shanqellas.⁷⁰

EECMY leaders realized the past historical situation of the Gumuz tribes, that they were badly treated by people around them including the Oromo who seemed granting them protection. The Siburo Oromo, west of Diddesa, also in the later days of the slave trade involved into the market by looting their own Oromo tribe or those called Negros around them. Schuver writes:

By far the majority of slaves on the Berta markets, however, whether Galla or negro, are brought there by Galla and Amam themselves. These have either raided them or bought them from neighbouring tribes, or else they may be widows and orphans left without male kin in their own Galla or negro tribe.⁷¹

The leaders of EECMY then felt indebted on behalf of their own people and wanted to compensate by bringing the message of the Good News and education to the Gumuz tribe, so that they also could get freedom from the oppression of the Oromo landlords and their allies. But the Gumuz tribes were suspicious of the highlanders and never trusted them. Mr. Emmanuel Abraham is also mentioning that the past history of the two peoples has hindered to reach the Gumuz tribe with the Gospel. He states:

It was no easy task to approach and draw the Shanqella population due to the fact that for many generations the Shanqella who lived in the Didessa Valley and the Oromo who lived on the highlands had been mutual enemies and slaughtered one another.⁷²

Mr. Lolasa Asheka also confirmed this reality during my interview with him and when I asked why the Gumuz tribe did not receive Christianity from the Oromo around them. He said the Oromo and the Gumuz though lived together never trusted one another.⁷³

The reality of his background as an Oromo made Rev. Gudina Tumsa to emptying himself, when he was addressing the Board of NMS on August 31, 1968 to come out and help the Church in evangelism work among the Gumuz tribe.

I would prefer standing while presenting this matter. In my country if a man is serious, he should be standing when he presents his case. What counts is the treatment the case presented receives. Here I am standing as your poor brother, begging you to come out and help us in our evangelistic outreach. You know that no one prides himself in begging; however, I am not ashamed of it because I know that I am appealing to my brothers. Believing in Jesus Christ, we are taken into His church and are members of

⁷⁰Emmanuel Abraham to Johannes Skaug, October 12, 1968.

⁷¹Juan Maria Schuver *Travel in North East Africa*.1996:318.

⁷²Emmanuel Abraham, *Reminiscence of my Life*.1995:267.

⁷³Lolasa Asheka, Interviews, dated 21.7.2010.

His Body. As members of that body, we work for the same cause, striving to reach the same goal – to make our Lord Jesus Christ known to the world. My appeal may be emotional, but I cannot help it, because I feel that this is the chance given to me to discharge my responsibility.⁷⁴

Rev. Gudina Tumsa had double responsibility, as an Oromo coming from the west and as the Church leader responsible for propagation of the Gospel for salvation of all humankind. He confessed that he was emotional. He believed that the Gospel preaching to the Gumuz was important. He knew as it was not possible to reach by the Oromo because of the ill relationship between them. So he discharged his responsibility at the right time in the right place.

3.2 The Outreach plan of Swedish Evangelical Mission.

The report from the survey group indicates that the matter of reaching the Gumuz tribe with the Gospel was considered by the SEM board as early as in 1946. It is stated as follows:

Already in 1946 the missionary conference of the Swedish Evangelical Mission requested funds from its Home Board to make a survey in the Blue Nile Gorge with a view to open work among the Shanqella people who live there. Three years later the Begi area, west of the Dabus river, was discussed and a request to start work there was made by the same conference. Due to limitation of personnel and funds and due to the expansion of the work elsewhere none of these two areas could be reached.⁷⁵

The report also indicates that the mission and indigenous evangelists made visits to the area and the work started with opening of few schools for the Gumuz tribe.

Sporadic visits by missionaries and evangelists have also been made during the past 20 years and lately a few schools have been opened in the Blue Nile Area.⁷⁶

The study survey report continues and indicates that four schools were already started at different places by the West Wollega Synod which in fact would not have been possible without the support of SEM.

The Western Wellega Synod has opened a few elementary schools in the last few years. In 1963 the schools in Gombo and Korka started. In 1967 the Sirba School was opened and this year [1968] a small school at a place called Dagazana has been opened.⁷⁷

⁷⁴*Witness and Discipleship*, 2007:141-2

⁷⁵*Report of Survey committee*, dated April 30, 1968:1.

⁷⁶*Report of Survey committee*, dated April 30, 1968:1.

⁷⁷*Report of Survey committee*, dated April 30, 1968:6

It was mentioned by the survey group that transport was one of the difficulties to reach the valleys (Abbai & Diddesa). It was not possible unless by mule or on foot. The survey group report mentions that there are already three airstrips.⁷⁸

Richard Snailham also in the book *The Blue Nile Revealed* mentions that there was a school and an airstrip in Sirba in the year 1968. He writes what he observed during his travels:

...Sirba very much larger and more regularly planned. No roads reached any of them, and the nearest town with school, hospital and dry-weather road, was Mendi, about forty miles away to the south. It was a day's march away for the villagers, or two days with donkeys. Sirba had its airstrip and was visited for two or three days twice annually by a Swedish mission with medical supplies. Two young men, Tadesse and Balo, stay behind and teach, but were on holiday when we arrived.⁷⁹

Mr. Ayyale Jirata, one of my informants, an evangelist in Sirba also says that he went to school in 1967. His statement also confirms the above as he says that the teachers were then Tadase Korsa from Oromo and Rare Tsenawe from Gumuz. It could be that Balo Damu joined later. Both Rare and Balo are Gumuz from Sirba area. Both of them went to school in Mendi and later also involved in teachings at Sirba.

Mr. Lolasa Asheka from Gombo Kamashi also confirms that the work was started by the Swedish Evangelical Mission. He himself went school at Nejo in 1963 and after completing Junior Secondary school (8th grade) went back to Kamashi and became teacher in 1971. He says that the school in Gombo Kamashi started by SEM earlier and a man called Margo Karayyu was a teacher. There was another man called Gilo Abraham and he was an evangelist. He added that a nurse by name Lidya used to visit occasionally and gave treatment and in the evenings, when people gather around fire in the middle of the village, she used to preach about Christ.⁸⁰

3.3 The Arrival of the Norwegian Missionary Society.

Having seen that the work was too vast to be included into the former mission working field, the Swedish Evangelical Mission acknowledged that another mission should be approached for the work among the Gumuz tribe. By its statements of 26.10.1967, the Board of Swedish Evangelical Mission made clear that it could not take any further responsibilities than the duties it had already been involved in. It is stated as follows:

⁷⁸Report of Survey committee, dated April 30, 1968:6.

⁷⁹Richard Snailham, *The Blue Nile Revealed*.1971:105.

⁸⁰Lolasa Asheka, Interviews, dated 21.7.2010.

...in the present situation the Board can neither promise any considerable increase nor predict any future reduction of its contribution in finances and personnel to the work in Western Wollega. The Board fully agrees with the points put forward by the Western Wollega Synod that a speedy increase of the missionary efforts is of utmost importance if the present possibilities for mission work in Western Wollega should not be forfeited.⁸¹

The Board of the mission continued and recommended to the EECMY that the application of the Synod would be considered by the decision making body of the Church in searching for means to overcome the need of the Synod and says:

Thus, the Board warmly recommends that the EEC-MY without awaiting further statements from the SEM Board seek contact with any other Lutheran mission that might be willing to take up work in close co-operation with the missions already within the Synod, viz. the Hermannsburg Mission and the SEM.⁸²

Prior to this statement in the same year, May 1967, glimmer of hope for an open door was seen when Rev. Guddina Tumsa got a chance to visit Norway. This was mentioned in his paper of addressee to Board of NMS on August 31, 1968. He says:

In connection with the 19th Annual meeting of the LWF/CWM at Baden near Vienna, Austria, 1967, I was offered a study tour to Norway by the Secretariat for Stewardship and Evangelism of the LWF. During my stay in Stavanger I got in touch with Rev. G. Gjelsten whom I had known in Ethiopia when he was working at the RVOG. Rev. Jelsten [sic] told me that if I wish I should take up the matter with the leaders of the Mission who are directly involved.⁸³

This opportunity of a study tour opened the way for the official contacts and communication between the offices of NMS in Stavanger, Norway and EECMY in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. In the same year on 13 November 1967, the Rev. Johannes Skauge, general secretary of NMS, on his way back from Madagascar visited the EECMY office in Addis Ababa and had time to discuss the matter with Mr. Emmanuel Abraham the then president of the EECMY. After this official discussion of the two leaders, the mutual contacts and exchanges of ideas and consulting other mission organizations already involved in mission work in Ethiopia continued.

After the long heartwarming addressee of Rev. Gudina Tumsa, the Board of NMS discussed the matter and unanimously resolved to accept the call and recommended it to the General Assembly of the Mission. In the letter from J. Skauge to His Excellency Emmanuel Abraham president of EECMY dated 19.9.1968, it is noted as follows:

⁸¹SEM Home Board *statements*, dated 26.10.1967.

⁸²SEM Home Board *statements*, dated 26.10.1967.

⁸³Gudina Tumsa, *Addressee* to NMS Executive Board meeting, 1968:1.

It is a pleasure for me to inform you that the NMS Board in its meeting on August 31 agreed to give the call for help to Western Wollega due consideration and to present the matter for final decision to the General Assembly of our society on June 1969.⁸⁴

Mr. Emmanuel Abraham, the president of EECMY was invited on the General Assembly of the Mission held at Drammen near Oslo and gave more information. After hearing him, the Assembly took long hours of discussion and voted by 333 for and 15 against. So, The General Assembly accepted the call on 30 June 1969.⁸⁵ Soon in the same autumn missionaries were sent to Ethiopia. Emmanuel Abraham says:

The leaders of the Missionary Society accepted my recommendation and quickly appointed workers and sent out two pastors with their families and two nurses in the Autumn of 1969. The Missionaries went to language school in Addis Ababa from January to December 1970 and proceeded to Wollega to begin evangelistic, medical and educational work in the Abbai Valley and at Beghi.⁸⁶

The work of the Norwegian Missionary Society in Ethiopia started with the arrival of two pastors with their families, Nurse Gunvor & Rev. Olav Kongsvik, and Nurse Rannveig & Rev. Tor Dag Kjosavik, and two other nurses Ingrid Sørensen and Kari Årslund on the 11th January 1969. The Rev. Tor Dag with his family and Nurse Ingrid Sørensen were the first to be assigned for the work among the Gumuz tribes, in the Blue Nile & Diddesa Valleys, while the others were assigned for the work in Beghi-Gidami among the Oromo and Berta people on the Sudan borders.

4. Ministry of NMS in Western Synod among the Gumuz tribe. (1971-1977)

4.1 The place of Residence.

Even if Gospel preaching was started by the Swedish Evangelical Mission, there was no permanent station among the Gumuz tribe. SEM had two stations on the highland one at Nedjo and the other at Mendi in about 75 km distance from one another and both stations are more than 40km away from the Gumuz people down to the valley from both sides. Since the work at Bodji was already started by indigenous evangelists from Tsezega, in Eritrea (1898) before the arrival of SEM to the Western Wallaga (1927), there was no station for missionaries at Bodji until the 1970's after the W/Synod office was established there. But a clinic was opened by SEM to help the people, and nurses paid visits to it and had a small residence there.

⁸⁴Johannes Skauge *Letter to The President of the EEC-MY*, H:E. Emmanuel Abraham. 19.9.1968.

⁸⁵Emmanuel Abraham, *Reminiscence of My Life*. 1995:269.

⁸⁶Emmanuel Abraham, 1995:270.

The Norwegian Missionary Society did not waste time before sending missionaries as the answer to the EECMY's call to help with the work among the Gumuz tribe. Though it was a call from organized Church they did not put the preparation of residences for the missionaries as pre-condition. The NMS General Assembly decided in June 1969 and missionaries left for Ethiopia in January 1970. While the missionaries were in language school in Addis Ababa, a process for building residence for the mission was under taken. For the first missionaries assigned to the Blue Nile and Diddesa among the Gumuz tribe, residences were built in the compound of SEM at Mendi. Rev. Tor Dag Kjosavik took over the work started by SEM in the Blue Nile and Diddesa valleys and continued preaching the Good News and also made assessments for the site selection for establishing stations and prepared all preconditions for the work. Nurse Ingrid Sørensen took over the medical work that was started by the Swedish missionary nurse, Lydia Larson's sporadic visit. Kjosavik strengthened the schools started by SEM and sent some students for further education to the highland to train the future Gumuz church leaders.

Ayyale Jirata from the Sirba area went to school started by SEM at Sirba. He says that he was sent, by Kjosavik, to the Mendi School together with four other Gumuz youngsters in 1970. Rev. Abera Negeri also says that Rev. Kjosavik used to occasionally visit the villages at Agalo and was preaching the Good News while studying the environment for establishing a station. He also says that the site for the station of Agalo was chosen by Rev. Kjosavik and Mr. Trygve Mundal. According Rev. Abera Negeri's saying, the school at Agalo Meti was also started by SEM and was taken over by NMS in 1970. The school was moved to an area near to the new site selected for the mission station. Rev. Abera Negeri says that during the visit of Kjosavik and others from Nedjo all people came and listen to the gospel and attendance was taken and names were called to know who was there or not. In the Norwegian Mission history, (*I troogtjeneste*) Tor Dag Kjosavik says that the Gumuz tribe in the villages of Agalo under the leadership of their community leader decided to accept Christianity as their religion.⁸⁷ The Gumuz tribes live in villages according to their clans. In Agalo, Meti village, two important leaders of the tribe, Mr. Wayessa Dino and Gameda Negeri, accepted Christianity and all members of the village also accepted following them. They both had two wives and each left one wife and confirmed together with one wife until decision of the EECMY General Assembly of 1975, which allowed those who had more than one wives before conversion to Evangelical Christianity not separate. It was not by force, it was their

⁸⁷Torstein Jorgensen, Editor, *I tro og tjeneste*(Vol.II), 1992:137.

culture to follow their leader and obey what they tell them to do. That was what made Agalo Meti to be center for the work of evangelism among the Gumuz.

The Gumuz tribes are living along the valleys of Diddesa and Blue Nile Rivers. The work started by the SEM was organized from the two stations, namely Nedjo and Mendi on the highland. The area reached by the mission from one site to the other, along the valleys takes more than two days walk on foot. So it was not possible for NMS to reach from the one center which was established at Mendi. In 1972 another station was established at Nedjo to take up the work among the Gumuz tribe in the Diddesa valley area while that of Mendi continued with the work among the Gumuz tribe in the Blue Nile valley. Later NMS established two more stations among the Gumuz tribe down in the valleys, one at Agalo Meti and the other at Dalati. Rev. Abera Negeri says that station at Agalo Meti was started in the autumn 1974 and completed in 1975. Rev. Jan Ulvseth, with his family, and Nurse Ingrid Sørensen were the first to live there. As the valley stretches following the course of the two big rivers Abbai (Blue Nile) and Diddesa, it was inaccessible from one center. When the work was started by the W/Synod, responsibility was given to three of its districts namely the Bodji, Nedjo and Mendi districts. When NMS arrived and took over the work, the work continued as before in order to keep them in the structure of the Synod. The areas covered by the Nedjo and Bodji districts were merged under the Agalo station for the mission work, while their administrative structure left for the districts (Nedjo and Bodji) as before while Abbai Valley remained under the leadership of the Mendi district. The three districts continued to be responsible in recruiting teachers and evangelists to work with the missionaries. Schools were opened and together with school also preaching places, where few people were coming together for Sunday services. Keeping the administrative structure with the Synod districts has helped the work to continue in the absence of the NMS, missionaries during the difficult years.

When I took over the work, four years after the evacuation of the missionaries, there were still three stable congregations and six outreach places where people gathered for worship when there was someone to lead the service.

The station at Dalati, which meant for Abbai site, built within the Berta tribe because of its being strategic place and good site for reaching the Gumuz tribes of the area, was destroyed during the war between the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) and the then ruling regime, the Socialist government of Ethiopia. After the downfall of the

Marxist rule of Ethiopia, the station was moved to a new site and moved further into the village of the Gumuz tribe called Boka Sirba. These two stations built in the valley have contributed a lot to the growth of evangelism work among the Gumuz tribe. Both Ayale Jirata and Rev. Abera Negeri mentioned this as a main factor for the reason of Gumuz people's accepting the Gospel. They say that the Oromo people tried to bring the Gospel to the Gumuz but they did not trust the Gumuz and the Gumuz did not trust them, so they did not heartily accept the gospel that was preached by the Oromo. But the missionaries came and lived with the Gumuz people eating with them and shared their problem by helping them. The Gumuz people saw practically what was preached to them. That was why Emmanuel Abraham revealed the reality that hindered the gospel when he writes:

It was no easy task to approach and to draw the Shanqella population due to the fact that for many generations the Shanqellas who lived in the Didessa Valley and the Oromo who lived on the highlands had been mutual enemies and slaughtered one another.⁸⁸

The Oromo people being neighbor with Gumuz people, most of the time were complaining about the food and hot weather and did not want to live in the valley. For the Gumuz people also it was very difficult to adopt themselves to the Oromo food and the climate on the highland. As a result many times the young boys, rarely girls, when they got a chance to attend school on the highland could not continue but withdrew and went back to the valley. This was the challenge I first faced on two occasions in 1981. The first challenge was when eight students assigned to the Nedjo hostel (i.e. project for orphans by KNH-Germany) withdrew and came back with complaints saying that they were mistreated by the hostel warden and their fellow Oromo hostel students. The problem was created when the Gumuz boys complained during taking part in practical works. Carrying logs and cutting fire wood, fetching water from the river, when there was no water in the pipe were part of boy's tasks. Cleaning their rooms and dining hall was also their daily task. Girls help in making the dough and cooking food. But for the Gumuz boys those type of work were regarded as female's task. The second incident was the evangelist who had been assigned to the area before me continued to travel back and forth as they used to do. After missionaries left from the area there was no one to be responsible to control them. They went only for Sunday service and the rest of the week they stayed with their family on the highland. As the parish did not have a cashier in the valley, they also took their salary from the district cashier. The Agalo Meti parish meeting decided that workers should stay at the place where they were assigned. But

⁸⁸Emmanuel Abraham, *Reminiscences of My Life*.1995:267.

the evangelists found it difficult for their families to live in the area, and that they also should be with their family whenever necessary and did not adhere to the decision. When the parish council made a regulation that the parish leader should approve salary payments they went to the labor union of the workers party and accused the parish leader and the district cashier was forced to pay their salaries. The church was accused of defiling the clean minds of the Gumuz people with the western ideology. The parish pastor was prohibited to continue living in Agalo. Evangelists and pastor were forced to evacuate from the area by the Nedjo Wareda administration in April 1983. It was hard even to pay a visit to the congregations there until one year later in 1984. But when missionary pastor, Rev. Atle Moe came back from Norway, we started with the road project and eventually able to visit them as development workers, the missionary as an engineer and the Ethiopians as the helper and translator.

4.2 The problem of infrastructure.

Means of communications was one of the big challenges for the missionaries' work among the Gumuz tribe. There was no road for vehicles, and the only means was to use the then available Mission Aviation Fellowship planes. That was only possible only during dry seasons. During the rainy season, from June to November, it was not possible to use even MAF because of mud and high grasses. From July to September the land is very muddy and it is even difficult to walk on foot as the soil is clay in nature. In the months of July to January the grasses grow more than two meters high and it is not easy even to travel on foot. The only suitable times were mostly from January to the end of May or middle of June depending on the season of rain. There was no access of communication with their families when they went out to sub-stations for days. Missionaries used to walk on foot seven to eight hours from one to the other village for fulfilling their tasks. Sometimes they even used to walk on foot, a whole day in the hot temperature of average over 40 °C from the valley to come up to the highland. They got the seasonally available communication, such as telephone contactor drive on the rough road to the capital city. After the MAF plan evacuated in fear of the Marxist government of Ethiopia, there was no possible transport for several years. That was what forced the MNS to call home its missionaries from the field in 1977. In the letter dated 13.6.1977, the following is stated:

The fact that the Missionary Aviation Fellowship decided to terminate their services in Ethiopia will have a great affect [sic] on the work. Being stationed in remoted areas partly without connection to the road systems in the Blue Nile Valley in Mendi Worreda and in Beghi/Gidami, the missionaries will have great difficulties in getting necessary

supplies for their day to day work and will find themselves trapped in a case of emergency.... As a result of their considerations the NMS, being responsible for the safety and well-being of its missionaries, have decided to withdraw its personnel living in Daletti and in Beghi/Gidami.⁸⁹

The fact that the Agalo Meti area was not included indicates that already that area was evacuated due to the problem created by teachers. In resisting the deduction of desert allowance they accused the missionary, Per Arnar Håland, and forced him to walk on foot 43km. He was taken prisoner and stayed overnight at Nedjo wored police station. There was no means of transportation but only MAF plane but he was not allowed to use it. As this happened after the allowed radio communication time (from 07:00-08:00 am) and there was no other means of communication. The Synod leaders heard the case a day later when the MAF plane was called to pick his family to the highland. It was decided that, he should either pay the allowance or leave the country. He could not pay the demanded allowance, as it was the synod policy decision, so his option was to leave the country.

Later in the beginning of the 1980's a very difficult and rough road was opened through the steep hills and was only possible to drive during the dry season, from December to May/June. On my first trip to Agalo Meti on 5th December 1980, to take up my assignment as parish pastor, six persons in a small Suzuki car, meant for four people, the 43 km took us six hours drive to reach Agalo Meti. We almost walked on foot half the way and were also working hard to prepare the road that was destroyed by erosion during the rainy season.

Another example of the problem of infrastructure to be noted was the time when a new missionary couple Guri and Atle Moe assigned in July 1981. After language studies they took over their position in 1982. But soon after, the wife went home to Norway for delivery case. One day, while we were far from the station of Agalo Meti, eight hours walk on foot, at a place called KorkaMeti, he heard over his transistor shortwave radio the message that was sent to Nedjo station by the communication radio. The message was that his wife safely arrived in Norway and she was in the hospital and she was quite well. The church had radio communication in few stations. There was one in Agalo and another in Dalati for the Blue Nile and Diddesa work but not at Korka. The next morning we took our journey back eight hours on foot to Agalo, and the same day he had to leave for the high land in order to proceed to Addis Ababa and then Norway. As it was during the dry season, there was possibility to use only the small Suzuki car on the rough and narrow road through the hills. He Walked

⁸⁹ NMS *Letter* to EECMY-W/Synod dated 13.6.1977.

eight hours on foot and the next day drove on the rough and steeply hills for hours and stayed overnight at Nedjo. The following day he drove to Ghimbi and started processing for visa, which was quite hard under the then Ethiopia communist rule. If Margit and Svein Olav Volden were not at Ghimbi where they knew some people he couldn't manage to come out easily from the Awuraja (District) office.⁹⁰ Had he would not follow the message from the radio communication on his transistor radio and it was also not during the dry season one can imagine how difficult it would have been for the young missionary couple. His being able to follow the message on his transistor radio and the dry season that made possible to drive helped him. Otherwise it would have been hard for him to be far away during his wife's hardship when she was expecting him to be with her.

4.3 The Language policy of the Country.

Language is the best means of communication to bring the Good News to any culture. It is not easy to win souls for Christ where one does not understand the language of the people. The reason why the Gospel could find ground among the Oromo people was because of the New Testament Bible translation of the Afaan Oromo that arrived in 1898, and the whole Bible translation in Afaan Oromo was completed in 1899 and followed later. It was with this possibility that Gebre-Ewostateos won the favor of Fitawurary Dibaba Bekere, governor of Western Wollega. Gustav Aren says:

The priest introduced him to Fitawrari Dibaba, who happened to be at Naqamte and was looking for more priests for his church at Boji Karkarro in central Wollaga. Gebre-Ewostateos now produced his books in Oromo, read some portions from the New Testament and sang some hymns, for he had a beautiful voice. Dibaba marveled. He had never imagined that it would be possible to use his own native language for sacred scriptures and Christian poetry. Excited, he offered the priest from Hamasen instant employment.⁹¹

Gebre-Ewostateos who himself was not Oromo could speak Afaan Oromo very well because he had learnt it from Onesimos. Aren continues:-

Gebre-Ewostateos undertook extensive journeys to preach the gospel in villages and market places where nobody had heard it before. He had learnt Oromo from Onesimos and had learnt it so well that he could use it for teaching the Christian faith, though he made it a rule to speak Amarinya in church for the sake of his colleagues from Gojam, while Daniel interpreted in Oromo for the benefit of the people.⁹²

⁹⁰Atle Moe, *e-mail*, dated March 11, 2011.

⁹¹Gustav Aren, *Evangelical Pioneers in Ethiopia*.1978:395-6.

⁹²Gustav Aren, 1978:398.

In the past, one of the challenges for missionaries coming to Ethiopia was the diversity of languages spoken in the different areas, especially in the south and south-west. So when the missionaries first came to the western part of Ethiopia to the Oromo people, it was a must that they should know Amharic for reading and writing and also for contact with government officials while for communication with the local people they should know the language of the people Afaan Oromo as the illiterates do not speak Amharic. That was the reality which the Norwegian missionaries faced when they came to Western Wollega. It was even rather complicated for them as they should be oriented in three languages, Amharic the official language, the Oromo which is language for communication with the people and the Gumuz language to a certain extent, to know the culture of the people. The language of communication with the Gumuz tribe in the work area of the Western Synod was Afaan Oromo because among the Gumuz tribe there were not many who could understand either Amharic or English. Wendy James when referring to the Gumuz in the south of Blue Nile says as follows:

The people of Aba Bulcho, like the majority of the Gumuz on the south bank of the Blue Nile, claim that they or their immediate forebears arrived from across the river in Gojjam, and they also entertain the idea of returning there eventually. All now speak *afan Oromo* as a *lingua franca*, and at the time of my field work accepted 'Shankalla' as a general self-designation.⁹³

The reality is what Tor Dag Kjosavik mentions in his article in the NMS history from 1842-1992, that alongside the mountains which are nearer to the Oromo most of the Gumuz tribe understand Afaan Oromo, while down on the rivers banks only the grown up boys and men can understand.⁹⁴ Though some of the Oromo speak little Gumuz language, none of them could speak the Gumuz language perfect that they could help to translate. There were Gumuz boys who got chances to study on the highland, but it was not possible to utilize them as helpers for the missionaries due to the cultural problem, that male are not accustomed to hard work such as carrying bags and other things when necessary. Richard Snailham says:

Tigre Bishoura, himself a Shankilla, said, 'These people on this side of the river are a little bit lazy.' In fact, it is no part of the life of a Shankilla to lift heavy things. He may occasionally work in the fields, but the carrying of bundles of kindling wood or of gourds of water is essentially women's work. Men spend the day sitting in the shade under the eaves of their *tukuls*, arguing, spitting taking snuff, whilst the women suckle the children, make string, or, kneeling on the floor, grind millet between two stones, their pendulous breasts swinging to and fro. It was said that when the Swedes arrive by

⁹³Donald Donham, *Southern Marches of Imperial Ethiopia*.1986:138-9.

⁹⁴Torstein Jørgensen editor, *I tro og tjeneste*, Vol. II, 1992:137.

plane twice a year, the local people refuse to carry their medical stores to the Mission House.⁹⁵

The missionaries did not have the access to learn the Gumuz language as there was no means for it. Earlier there was an attempt by SEM to translate the New Testament portion into the Gumuz language in Amharic letters which was titled “Mahul chogu Yesus” – literally meaning ‘to follow Jesus.’⁹⁶ But that far there was no attempt to teach the language of the Gumuz tribe, as it is done now a days. Sometimes three languages could be in use in order to convey the message to the people correctly. Missionaries speak in English and the Oromo translate into Afaan Oromo and then the Gumuz into Gumuz language. So it was a complicated and time consuming task. When I asked how he managed with languages, Rev. Jan Ulveseth said:

Language has always been difficult for me. Amharic I never learned and I understood just a little. Afaan Oromo I learned to a level that I was able to speak about daily things and to understand the most. Gumuz language I never learned. So generally speaking my language in Ethiopia was Afaan Oromo, together with English.⁹⁷

It is obvious that Jan Ulveseth was from the second group NMS missionaries to Ethiopia, and had the possibility to learn Afaan Oromo. Then there was a language school for missionaries where Amharic and Afaan Oromo were taught in Addis Ababa. Kjosavik says that the first six missionaries took one year to study Amharic, but when they arrived in Western Wollega they could speak only to 10% of the people who had gone to school. As the language school started with Afaan Oromo in 1971, those arrived after had the opportunity to get instruction in Afaan Oromo.⁹⁸

These days it is possible to have a Gumuz person who can understand English, or even get instruction in Gumuz language at the spot. But the culture problem is still not solved as long as the educated men are not willing to be helper for the sake of keeping their status in the society. Some of the later missionaries learned the Gumuz language and even helped the Oromo people in translating into the Gumuz language while most of the Oromo did not show interest to learn the Gumuz language. Overcoming all these challenges the work had a good start until conditions forced the missionaries to leave the country.

⁹⁵Rechard Snailham, *The Blue Nile Revealed*.1971:106.

⁹⁶Rev. Abera Negeri, *Welcome addressee on Gumuz NT Bible dedication*. Feb.15, 2004.

⁹⁷Jan Ulveseth, *e-mailed letter* dated Feb.3, 2011.

⁹⁸Torstein Jorgensen, Editor, *I tro og tjeneste Vol II*.1992:133-4.

5. The Challenges for the Mission.

5.1 Misunderstandings by the Church structures and other Missionary Societies.

The first challenge for the missionaries was the administrative system of the work of the EECMY, in which the synods were autonomous and had their own constitutions and by-laws to administer their own congregations. The initiation to call a mission to work among the Gumuz tribe came from the Western Synod of EECMY, and when the missionaries arrived they wanted to administer them as their staff. That caused some confusion with the missionaries and the Mission Board in Stavanger as well. The mission was not certain as to where the missionaries would be assigned. Rev. Tor Dag Kjosavik refers to the confusion and mentions that it was finally solved in discussion with the EECMY Central Office.⁹⁹ EECMY signed an agreement with the Mission (1970?) and the W/Synod in turn signed an agreement with the Church on January 21, 1971 in order to treat the expatriate according to the agreement signed between the Church and NMS. Then each individual missionary also signed a work agreement with the W/Synod administration to work in accordance with the by-laws and policy decisions of the Synod. Kjosavik also mentions that once on a meeting of the Synod, the president revealed his doubt by asking whether the missionaries were there with the aim to establish a new synod or to work with the established synod.¹⁰⁰

Other misunderstanding with the Synod pertained to the personnel recruitments for the mission field. NMS used its long adopted policy while the Synod wanted to call missionaries according to its need of personnel. Rev. Kjosavik in his letter to the Synod president dated Nov. 13, 1973, wrote as follows:

I am writing to you to try to provide some clarification in a long existing problem between the NMS Home-Board and the Western Synod. The NMS has according to long tradition called, educated and sent personnel to Mission Fields, while the WS wants to call and assign personnel for service within its own area. I can very well understand that The WS reacted negatively to the current practice of our Home-Board because it is stated clearly in all agreements that the Synod, through the EECMY, shall call and assign expatriate personnel for work in the Synod.¹⁰¹

With the same letter, Kjosavik promised that in the future it would be in agreement with the Synod but at that time already one single and three couple missionaries were ready to leave

⁹⁹Torstein Jorgensen, Editor, *I tro og tjeneste Vol II*.1992:134.

¹⁰⁰Torstein Jorgensen, Editor, *I tro og tjeneste Vol II*.1992:139.

¹⁰¹Tor Dag Kjosavik, *letter to W/Synod president*, dated Nov. 13, 1973.

for Ethiopia and would arrive in August 1974. He mentioned them by name and qualification backgrounds as well.

In addition to that, the relation with the mission societies already present in the country before the arrival of NMS, also involved some misunderstandings. The Norwegian Lutheran Mission (NLM) which was then working in the southern part of Ethiopia did not find it easy for them, because of their fear that sources of income would be shared and that in turn would create a financial shortage as both belonged to the Church of Norway. Emmanuel Abraham the then EECMY president, dealt with the matter in his two long letters. To the NLM representative in Ethiopia Mr. Magnar Mageroy dated December 3, 1968, and another long letter to Rev. Johannes Skauge, NMS General Secretary, dated October 12, 1968. In his letters he stated that he was sorry for the misunderstanding created, but dealt in details mentioning the different decisions and letters sent to all partner Evangelical Missionary Societies working in the Church (including NLM) asking to extend their service to the Gumuz tribe. He emphasized that none of them responded positively. But Mageroy, NLM's, field representative and also member of the Church Officers of EECMY complained that this specific question did not reach NLM, for which the Church got negative answer. Mageroy in his letter to the president of the Church dated October 28, 1968, emphasized the negative implication the letter had on NLM and mentioned the following:

When the call to NMS was announced in the Norwegian newspaper, it was made in a way which,- according to my understanding -, was apt to create distrust to our Mission. By reference to Ethiopian authorities it was indicated that because NLM had failed to react positively to repeated calls from EEC-MY to start work in Wollega, NMS had to hurry to the rescue of the Church.... It is regrettable, therefore, that the call to NMS, - according to the announcements, should be based on the failure of NLM to react positively and sympathetically to repeated calls from EEC-MY to work in Wollega.¹⁰²

The president made clear that NLM was approached in different times to extend its service to neighboring tribes in its nearby areas in the south. He mentioned as the mission responded negatively reasoning shortage of budget. The Mission did not make clear why it was not interested to work among those neighboring tribes in south or why interested to go to Wollega.¹⁰³ But Kjosavik suggests as they did not want to take over the work in Kambata in

¹⁰²Magnar Mageroy, *letter to EECMY president*, dated October 28, 1968.

¹⁰³Torstein Jorgensen, Editor, *I tro og tjeneste Vol II*, 1992:128

respect of ecumenism with SIM. Both NLM and SIM were working in Sidamo in mutual respect to one another and SIM was already in Kambata at that time.¹⁰⁴

The other misunderstanding that was not very clearly mentioned was that the Swedish Evangelical Mission also wanted NMS to take over some of the activities that SEM had been carrying out in the synod among the Oromo people.¹⁰⁵

5.2 The problem of unification of the Gumuz tribes.

One of the major problems to reach the Gumuz with the Gospel was the lack of unity among the Gumuz tribes themselves. They are divided based on their family lines and have problems within their own tribes. One of their major conflicts comes as a result of exchange marriage. The problem that arises due to marriage in itself had different reasons. Exchange marriage in most cases goes according to the interests of the male. The exchanged sister should respect her marriage in a way that it should not disturb the family of her brother or any relative for whose case she went on exchange. The brother also should follow the situation of his sister with whom he has changed his wife and can return back his wife for the sake of the good of his sister. If the balance is not kept in the manner that both parties benefited from the marriage bond, it can even turn to enmity between the two tribes. Wendy James writes as follows:

In the ideally balanced contractual relationship, if all goes well on both sides, if the husbands cultivate and support their wives handsomely, if the wives work hard and bear healthy children, the initial pledge can become a strong and integrating bond – a divinely-sanctioned bond, the Gumuz say, of peace and love.¹⁰⁶

James continues and states that this, fragile in its behavior, contractual marriage can be broken depending on the fact that one party fails to fulfill the expectation.

But as in any contract, if one side or the other fails to live up to expectation, the relationship is easily damaged. Exchange marriage in this light is a more fragile bond than bridewealth marriage, since the rights and obligations on either side are supposedly exactly balanced, and defaulting on one side can mean tit-for-tat retaliation.¹⁰⁷

War between the Gumuz tribes can be created because of the broken marriage between two individuals. The women cannot refuse to come back home to her relatives even if life is good for her with her husband. The other problem is that they cannot claim for the child born by

¹⁰⁴Torstein Jorgensen, Editor, *I tro og tjeneste Vol II*, 1992:131

¹⁰⁵Torstein Jorgensen, Editor, *I tro og tjeneste Vol II*, 1992:132.

¹⁰⁶Donald Donham, *Southern Marches of Imperial Ethiopia*, 1986:133.

¹⁰⁷Donald Donham, 1986:134.

the wife. The child is always belonging to the husband and the wife has no right on it. If she takes the child with her and her relatives refuse to give back, then it is the matter of the tribe not the two individuals. The other side of the marriage conflict comes when one has stolen a girl and has no sister to give in exchange. Among the Gumuz tribes there is no forced marriage or kidnap. But a young boy can love a girl and she may be willing to go with him if he does not have sister for exchange. But negotiation has to follow by his relatives by paying a certain compensation for the duty she failed to fulfill at the time, for instance, if she has been out to fetch water or fire wood, or sent to bring corn from the store but disappeared when she was expected to prepare food for the family. After compensation is paid the relative will make agreement to give a girl in return as soon as possible. If the expected exchange is small, she would be seen elders and return to her family until an appointed future. Failure to do so can cause war between the tribes. If the man knows that he cannot meet this demand in the near future, he will take the bride and disappear to a far place where they may not be discovered until they are sure to get a child to pay back. If he is lucky enough to get a daughter as a first born, it is a blessing for him that he can boldly come back to his relatives with the promise to give her in exchange of the mother. James states the seriousness of the case as follows:

Occasionally a woman is kidnapped 'by force', and Gumuz distinguish this from marriage by 'stealing' or voluntary elopement. After a kidnapping, angry demands will be made for the girl's return, and unless the parties live so far apart that the kidnapers get away with it, the rhetoric of outrage may lead to armed conflict.¹⁰⁸

Rev. Tor Dag Kjoavik also mentioned that there were special years of war from 1971-73 when schools were closed because of the tensed war among the Gumuz tribes.¹⁰⁹ That was the difficult time that the missionaries faced just at the beginning of their work among the Gumuz tribe in the Diddesa River Valley. This kind of war was not targeted on other people or tribes outside the Gumuz themselves, but could possibly be dangerous for the Oromo working with the missionaries especially if they belonged to the Oromo clan that has relation with their adversary Gumuz tribe. This kind of war between clans has suddenly been erupting from time to time as a dormant volcano even as late as the year 1984.

There had been also, problem between the Gumuz tribe that got protection under the Oromo landlords in south of Abbai and the Gumuz tribe who remained in territories north of Abbai.

¹⁰⁸Donald Donham, *Southern Marches of Imperial Ethiopia*, 1986:133.

¹⁰⁹Torstein Jorgensen, Editor, *I tro og tjeneste Vol II*, 1992:138.

But those remained behind also later followed those in the south of Abbai. James mentions their differences and their problems of not fully integrated:

Such instability, and even hostility, seems to have obtained between the older, long-established settlers of the Wellegga side of the Blue Nile and the various incoming groups, at first, but to have given way to more settled relationships, signalled by the orderly making of 'proper exchanges', at later date.¹¹⁰

The Gumuz tribes who came under the territory of the Oromo of Wollega categorize those Gumuz tribe following later the '*dina*' Gumuz. [*i.e in Oromo means enemy*]. James continues and says:

In collecting general information about other sections and groups in the region, I noticed that distinctions were frequently made, at either level, between 'Oromo', that is those who came earlier to Wellegga, and 'Dina', those who followed after.¹¹¹

The other factor is due to the competition among the Oromo landlords those claimed to give them protection. They used them as fighters to attack one another in a way that they made them kill the subjects belonging to one another, both Oromo and Gumuz people. The notable war between Oromo and Gumuz known as the war of '*Abba Tone*' 1953, which I mentioned in a previous chapter, was the outcome of these events.

Rev. Tesso Daba also mentions that one of the reasons why the Oromo could not feel free to move among the Gumuz tribe to preach the Gospel was due to the fear that they could be attacked suddenly by any the Gumuz tribes. He also said that it was a big problem to bring the Gumuz tribes into one Work Area and to conduct meetings or trainings. He said as he has reconciled four tribes in two groups by using preaching of the Gospel to them and involving the tribal leaders, those who have been rivals for many years.

5.3 The Ethiopian Revolution.

The 1974 Ethiopian Revolution brought the monarchical regime of Ethiopia to an end. The military took over the rule on the 12, September 1974 and in November the same year, proclaimed that it would follow the socialist ideology. That made the Church leaders, such as the Rev. Gudina Tumsa the late General Secretary of EECMY, who foreknew its final goal to suspect the course of the Revolution. The soon establishing of the labor union of Ethiopia created an unprecedented problem to the church work. At first all church workers including the pastors and evangelists were included into the union. Later when Marxism and Leninism

¹¹⁰Donald Donham, *Southern Marches of Imperial Ethiopia*, 1986:140.

¹¹¹Donald Donham, 1986:141.

as ideology was strongly enforced to be the motto of the revolution, the faithful pastors and evangelists were alienated and were considered anti-revolutionists. The Church was regarded as a private company and Church leaders as company owners. Church employees were agitated to struggle against Church work and to challenge all its leaders because of their alleged oppression of workers with the capitalist ideology. The Mekane Yesus Church had a project for literacy program which included the schools in the Blue Nile and Diddesa valley to a certain extent. In order to attract teachers, certain privileges were given to those who worked in the valley. They were given desert allowance and were transported by the MAF plane. In addition, since the work was run by the administration from the highland, contract agreements with the teachers were also made at the highland. The eve of problem started to blow over the work among the Gumuz tribe as early as 1975 by the Gumuz students whose scholarships were terminated because of their repeated failure in their study. The students came home and agitated their parents to revolt against missionaries saying that the missionaries should open schools and establish all developmental works equal to that of which other missionaries did on the highland for the Oromo people. They took the MAF plane and its pilot as hostage and demanded that all their claims be fulfilled. But with the involvement of the EECMY, Western Synod, and the Awuraja and woreda government leaders they were advised and promises were given. Then, the MAF plane and people taken hostage were released. James mentions the initiatives behind taking MAF plane as hostage as follows:

This was proceeding apace in 1975, with the Shankalla often pushing initiatives and putting great pressure on the organization for even development, especially of schools, throughout the valley. At one point a number of armed Gumuz briefly took hostage a Mission Aviation Fellowship pilot and others, to press home a demand about schools. There was a sense of euphoria which fed also on the revolutionary fervours of 1974.¹¹²

The second and rather rash step taken by the initiations of Ethiopian Revolution was when teachers revolted for their benefit but which was beyond the capacity of the Mission. After being organized in a workers union they started to claim all benefits due for permanent workers such as pension and health insurances. Though they knew that the missionaries did not own the school, they knew that the school was supported by fund from NMS, so they started to press on the missionaries to grant them all the benefits. The Synod had two types of schools, one regular with permanent teachers and another literacy campaign project with contract teachers. The later, wanted to be granted permanent jobs. The hardship allowance

¹¹²Donald Donham, *Southern Marches of Imperial Ethiopia*, 1986:146.

was also deducted by 10%, from 30% to 20%, and added more pressure to their demands. That made the newly assigned missionary to be mistreated by being forced to walk on foot a whole day to come up to the highland where he stayed overnight at a police station. All these events resulted in the missionaries leaving Agalo Meti in 1977.

The rather hard situation created by the Ethiopian revolution was that the MAF (Missionary Aviation Fellowship) decided to withdraw from the country. In the beginning of March 1977, the so called Socialist Government of the military council '*derge*' of Ethiopia, which was rather communist in its ideology, confiscated the Radio Voice of the Gospel (RVG) which was owned by the Lutheran World Federation (LWF). Missionaries and other foreigners, except those from Russia, China or Cuba, were suspected to be CIA agents and The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and Presbyterian Churches of America,¹¹³ (ELCA and PCA) were told to leave from their mission stations in the countryside. Indigenous evangelical church workers were also put in category of the counter revolutionists and put under restriction and close watch of the Marxist cadres. After all these incidents, MAF decided to leave the country in fear of a sudden confiscation.

In addition to the teachers' strike in Agalo Meti, and Sirba Abai, Valleys, decision of the MAF also made the Missionary Society in Norway, to worry about its staff at the mission field in Ethiopia, and decided to call them home. That was a big blow on the new shining light of Gospel among the Gumuz tribe. Some of the Gumuz people still remember it as the big scar on the developments of the Gumuz people. That has affected the growth of the Gumuz tribe socially and economically, and gave them a serious set-back. They blame the Oromo teachers that they did it for benefit of their own and affected the Gumuz people badly. Though funding of the work continued for more than two years, there was no possibility for NMS to have direct contact with Gumuz tribe.

6. The Transitional Period (1978-1995).

6.1 Evangelism Work.

Due to the problem that faced the family Haaland the mission board in Stavanger took a drastic and spontaneous decision to call home its staff from field in Ethiopia in 1977. It was a shock for both the NMS missionaries in the field and for the EECMY, Western Synod. The Mission was called by the Synod through the Church (EECMY), and neither the Church

¹¹³Torstein Jorgensen, Editor, *I tro og tjeneste Vol II.1992:143.*

leaders nor the Synod was consulted on the matter before taking action. The Ethiopian revolution was just at its beginning where all things were in a chaos. Different groups were trying to be organized in political parties and there were power struggles within the so called revolutionary institutions. Everything was in a mess and there was no clear order before any actions were taken. The years 1977-1980 were a bloody period of the Ethiopian revolution. Especially two of those calling themselves outstanding revolutionary parties, the 'Ethiopian Peoples' Revolutionary Party' and the 'All Ethiopians Socialist Movement' were killing each other at any instances. Once in 1979 after being released from a short time imprisonments, some of us MYS' students and teachers visited Rev. Gudina Tumsa at his home in the EECMY's building. When we were to leave from his home he said, that some Christians are afraid of the word 'political party' but he continued pleading with us and said, please pray that a 'political party' be established for our country, so that things get order. Later after I started work, I realized the concern of Rev. Gudina Tumsa and I really wished to see the end of all the struggles between the small groups calling themselves parties. It was during that uncertainty that the new NMS missionary, Rev. Per Arnar Haaland, was victimized by those newly organized workers union who claimed they struggle for the rights of the exploited teachers. The movement was started before Haaland took over the work from the preceding missionary. The association of the workers started to provoke the leaders as early as the November 3, 1974 in their application to the Nedjo District of Western Synod with copies to the Synod and different government offices. Their application contained thirteen demands of which, for reason unmentioned, one was that Rev. Jan Ulveseth would continue the work in the valley and if their demands not positively answered they would stop work. In fact Rev. Jan Ulveseth was very influential and beloved among both the Oromo and Gumuz people. During my interview many are still remembering him with his tireless and friendly behavior and remember the time with deep thought and say it won't come again. The matter of the teachers' revolt then did not have much to do with the missionary as foreigners or not even much with the ideology which later came as one important agenda of the government policy.

His Excellency Emmanuel Abraham, the then EECMY president, during the 10th General Assembly held in Addis Ababa at the Mekane Yesus Seminary compounds from January 24-31, 1978, said that the Ethiopians were not anti-foreigners and did not push out the missionaries. Kjosavik quotes the statements of H.E. Emmanuel Abraham as follows:-

'I see no reason why foreigners should be afraid of Ethiopia today. There is no antforeigner attitude in the country. The people are not against anyone. I cannot

understand why the missionaries left. It is possible to make the decision up or review! There is no guarantee of safety. Please be so kind to let the missionaries who will to come, to get permission to do that.'[translation]¹¹⁴

He surprised the Assembly by calling upon Dr. Hanne Larsen, who was the only NMS missionary volunteer to stay back, to stand up and the Assembly thanked her for her being a faithful friend during the difficulty. These initiatives seem to have changed the attitudes of NMS that after the General Assembly, discussion went on to plan for the future work of NMS in the Western Synod of EECMY. Due to the problem of communication and transport, it was decided that the missionaries can be on the highlands nearby and follow the work in the valleys. Kjosavik mentions that when the missionaries who left Ethiopia were asked if there is anyone willing to go back, in case NMS finds means, out the 26 personnel, the majority gave immediate response by saying yes.¹¹⁵In the summer 1978 a group of six people got permission and returned to Ethiopia. Åse and Hans Birger Neegård, Åshild Nygard, Bodil Rettedal and Ingrid Sørensen were sent to Wollega while Gunnhild Glømmen was assigned to the Women work in the EECMY-Central Office.¹¹⁶

After the missionaries left from the valley the work among the Gumuz suffered a great loses. Some of the Gumuz militia who helped the teachers and took the Rev. Per Arne Haaland on foot to the highland later regretted and said that once again the Oromo maliciously attacked the Gumuz tribe and that they were also cheated by them. After the missionaries left, indigenous evangelists continued the work under the supervision of the three highland districts (namely Nedjo, Mendi and Bodji) as before the arrival of NMS. By the end of 1980 three pastors were assigned to the work in the valley from the three districts. Those of the Nedjo and Mendi districts went to the area and took over the work while that of the Bodji made follow-up of the work being on the highland. When I started the work in the valley under the Nedjo district on the 7th December 1980, there were three established congregations and six preaching places. There were four permanently employed evangelists. As the evangelists did not have their permanent dwellings among the people, they most of the time lived on the highland. In the Blue Nile valley which was under the Mendi district, there were no established congregations of the Gumuz people, but some preaching places and migrated Oromo had congregations near the Gumuz villages where some Gumuz tribes were also worshiping with them. From the Kamashi area which then was under the Bodji districts it

¹¹⁴Torstein Jorgensen, Editor, *I tro og tjeneste Vol II.1992:147.*

¹¹⁵Torstein Jorgensen, Editor, *I tro og tjeneste Vol II.1992:147.*

¹¹⁶Torstein Jorgensen, Editor, *I tro og tjeneste Vol II.1992:147.*

was the Oromo those moved into the Gumuz territory who established congregations and some Gumuz believers were also worshipped with them.

By the year 1981 the condition of the work had been changed. At Dalati, Abbai valley, and Agalo, Diddesa valley, where there were clinics there was possibility of assigning missionary nurses. Bodil Rettdal and Ingrid Sørensen were among those who returned in the summer 1978. They stayed at Mendi and worked in Mendi clinic while supervising the works in Blue Nile and Abbai valleys and Begh Gidami until in 1981 they took over the works of the Dalati and Agalo clinics consecutively. The purpose of their moving to the valleys was not only for the health work but to strengthening the evangelism work with the indigenous staffs those who were there. In the discussion conducted with the vice president of W/Synod Rev. Olana Lemu in Stavanger Norway, on July 2, 1981, special attention was given to the works of Bodil Rettdal that she should be free from clinic works for congregational work.¹¹⁷ Tor Dag Kjosavik mentions that the nurses assigned to the place had also contributed to the evangelism work.

The two Oromo priests who were placed in the two areas, has traveled around the small villages. In Dalatti the priest has been preoccupied with the Oromo community and has shown little concern for either Shankallas. The Norwegian nurses, however, has made a major effort to improve people's health, but also presented a Christian witness through devotions and personal conversation. [translation]¹¹⁸

By the year 1982, the Nurse Guri and Rev. Atle Moe arrived in the Western Synod and resided at Nedjo. Atle Moe joined the work in Diddesa valley under the Nedjo District together with the indigenous evangelists and pastor who were already there. It was just a good start when the Moe family had to go back for the delivery case in the summer. When they returned in 1984 all churches in the Western Synod were under ban and it was not possible to continue with the congregational work. As Rev. Moe has other skills as well, we started with planning a road project and soon started to move on it so that we were able to visit the Gumuz tribe in the Diddesa valley.

6.2 Developmental Works.

6.2.1 Schools.

Schools were one of the important factors to reach the Gumuz people. Even though the cause of the problem for the missionaries to leave from the valley was due to the action taken by the

¹¹⁷Tore Huseby, *Verbals from points of common discussion*, point II.1.

¹¹⁸Torstein Jorgensen, Editor, *I tro og tjeneste Vol II.1992:156.*

school teachers, NMS did not stop the financial support for the schools. Some of the schools were taken over by the farmer associations and had some financial supports from NMS through the Synod. Few schools soon started to be seconded by supplies of teachers from the government. Those schools were upgraded to regular schools levels of junior and junior secondary school. Many youngsters got the chance of literacy education but could not continue further as they did not have the financial capacity to follow in other places since there was no high school in the valleys. There was scholarship funding for few students to educating them at the highland regular schools which did not continue later as the financial support did not continue from NMS. But a few students got the chance of being supported through KNH (Kindernothilfe) of Germany and could continue at the highland. Out of those who got the chance of education through KNH, only few succeeded since most of them could not cope with the life situation on the highland. They could not cope with the education system, the food and the climate and many were dropped out. During the years 1984-6 only three Gumuz students from Diddesa valley were supported by NMS for further education, one to the MYS (Mekane Yesus Seminar) for diploma and one to ONS (Onesimos Nesib Seminary) for certificate in theology and the third to the Aira Health Assistant School for health assistant education. That contributed much to the revival of the work in the valley. The one then sent to MYS is now the vice president of the Western Synod. Out of those educated in the valley and supported by KNH and continued high school, one has become an ambassador of Ethiopia in one of the African countries.

6.2.2 Medical Works.

The Gumuz tribes were among those people very much affected by the malaria epidemic. The report of the survey group which was presented for the 5th General Assembly of EECMY states the health situation of the valley as follows:

Malaria is the great problem, the majority of the people is infected by it. No medical facilities are available in the whole area.¹¹⁹

The report continues and states the high death rate of children and indicates as the cause was nothing but malaria:

Child mortality was found to be about 50% (of children under five years) and many different kinds of infections were discovered by the team. The nutritional status was, however, found good. They had a greater variety of foodstuff than the people in most parts of Ethiopia. Out of 200 examined 187 were found to be nutritionally normal. No

¹¹⁹*Report from Survey team, July 30, 1968:5.*

vitamin deficiencies were noticed. No evidence of sleeping sickness was found throughout the survey.¹²⁰

Rev. Gudina Tumsa also, in his addressee paper, confirms the above statement when he mentions the health situation of the Gumuz people.

Fifty percent of the Shanqellas under 25 of age die of malaria. They are in need of spiritual and physical help. We are concerned for them because they die without the opportunity of hearing the saving Gospel.¹²¹

When missionaries left the country, the clinics, Dalati and Agalo, continued to function by the indigenous staff, health assistants being in the lead. But the public health work stopped. Not many Gumuz could go to the clinics, and the death of children continued. There were sub-stations where the missionary nurses used to visit people at their village. After the return of the missionaries, Bodil Rettedal to Dalati and Ingrid Sørensen to Agalo, the work revived again and the visiting of the sub-stations continued. Most of the people are attacked by skin diseases such as leprosy and others. They followed monthly treatment by tablets where if not visited they just dropped it and got worse. It was through those medical services that the Gumuz tribe understood the real love and fellowship of Christianity. Rev. Abera Negeri says that NMS did not only preach the Gospel but gave holistic services in both physical and spiritual aspects. Rev. Tesso Daba also says that services of the NMS for the total humanity. He says that the service was not only at the Agalo clinic but when serious incident happened or for complicated delivery cases the MAF plane was called and transported the patient to the Aira hospital on the highland.

6.2.3 Diakonal Works.

This part of the service includes all aspects of Christianity that easily change the life of an individual. It has a spiritual, physical and emotional concern for the person for whom the service is rendered. One of the most difficult but important parts of the work was that of those women who were fistula victimized. These are women affected during delivery and cannot control urine or feces or both. They cannot come close to anyone because of the bad smell. In most cases their husbands send them to their parents and they stay indoors at their parents' home. In Western Synod, it was NMS who started with the treatments of such women both in the valley and Beghi areas where they were working. The total expense and transportation to the hospital and back home was covered by NMS. They were taken care of

¹²⁰ *Report from Survey team, July 30, 1968:6.*

¹²¹ *Gudina Tumsa, Addressee to NMS Executive Board 1969:3.*

until they were back at home to their family or parents. It is very recently that the Western Synod acknowledged it into its service and many women now get service in the project funded by NMS-NORAD (Project funded by Norwegian government Development through NMS). Most of those who got treatment by the project regained their full health and reestablished their family life.

The other disgusting work but needs love and care to treat was those affected by the leprosy. It is not easy to touch those whose fingers and toes were lost and sore wound could be seen. But the nurses treated them with love and concern and even made follow up at their homes when they did not appear to continue their monthly treatments. Ingrid Sørensen is still remembered among the Gumuz tribe of the Diddesa valley for her care and support. She is also still in the memory of many as the iron lady for her strong conviction. Sometimes she rebukes the parents or families for their ignorance of not bringing their children or any members in the family to the clinic for treatments. Both Rev. Tesso Daba and Rev. Abera Negeri mentioned that NMS missionaries lived with the Gumuz people and solely absorbed with their services that they could win the favor of the Gumuz tribe for the Gospel. These services continued even when there was no possibility of preaching the Gospel. When the possibility of road was available cars were used, after MAF plane stopped, to take those seriously sick to hospitals. A big agricultural project was also planned by the Norwegian Free Church in the 1980's. But it was not fully implemented due to the political situation. A portion of it was used for the bilharzia eradication in the valley where the nurses in the Dalati and Agalo were carrying out the work and Dr. Gundersen was in charge of it.¹²² That also strengthened the medical work of the Blue Nile and Diddesa valleys during the difficult years of Ethiopian communist regime.

Throughout all the difficulties, setbacks and recoveries, the work was done that it brought change in the life of Gumuz people. Emmanuel Abraham acknowledges the endurances of the NMS during the hard years and states:

Although the work has repeatedly been disrupted in the course of the Revolution both in the Abbai Valley and at Beghi, the Missionaries, in conjunction with their Ethiopian co-workers, had been able to surmount the trials and troubles with confidence and patience. They are still (in 1993) rendering commendable service to the Shanqella community and the Oromo population living in and around Beghi town in evangelistic, educational, health care and community development work. They have helped many to attain faith

¹²²Torstein Jorgensen, Editor, *I tro og tjeneste Vol II*.1992:152.

in the Lord Jesus Christ, and for all this we are deeply thankful to the Lord of the Church.¹²³

When the socialist government of Ethiopia was overthrown by the EPRDF (Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front), there were young women and men who were educated to certain extent who took part in the new government. It was really pleasing to see many women and men of the Church among the leaders of the present structure of Bene Shangul-Gumuz Regional states of Ethiopia. During all those days, of difficult years, work was done that we see its fruits in our days.

7. Strengthening of the Work among the Gumuz Tribe (1995-2005).

7.1 The Right time to act has come.

The original aim of the EECMY leaders' calling for new mission for the Gumuz tribe was not only to reach them with the Gospel, but also to help them in education and agricultural developments. Both H.E. Emmanuel Abraham and Rev. Gudina Tumsa were much concerned to bring changes to the lives of the Gumuz tribes. Emmanuel Abraham mentions in his book:

I also expressed the hope that it would be of considerable benefit not only to the local community but to the country as well if they would designate an agricultural expert to help settle the Shanqellas in one or two localities to induce them to abandon their nomadic life and be instructed in farming skills. After listening to my recommendations, the General Secretary said that, since the Assembly's decision had opened the way, they would do everything possible and officially inform me what they intended to do.¹²⁴

Rev. Gudina Tumsa in his addressee paper to the Executive Board of NMS on August 31, 1968, mentioned the plan to bring the Gumuz tribe into settlements as one priority together with the propagation of the Gospel:

Secondly, your assistance will enable us to work out a resettlement project for the Shanqellas. For such a project the EEC-MY [sic] will also approach the LWF for assistance.¹²⁵

NMS also answered by sending out a civil agronomist Trygve Mundal in 1972.¹²⁶ A project for three years, the total amount of \$130,970 was planned by the Church out of which \$ 43,650

¹²³Emmanuel Abraham, *Reminiscence of My Life*, 1995:270.

¹²⁴Emmanuel Abraham, 1995:269-70.

¹²⁵Gudina Tumsa, *Addressee to NMS Executive Board*, 1969:3.

¹²⁶Torstein Jorgensen, *I tro og tjensete*, 1992:138.

was secured in July 1976. In a letter from LWF- DWS to Mr. James E. Haldeman, Acting Director of EECMY Development Department, dated July 13, 1976, it was written:

We are extremely happy to inform you that the donor agency Lutherhjälpen in Sweden has already made available an amount of US\$ 43,650:- in favour of the above project. In addition, we have good hopes to also raise the remaining balance required for the implementation of the Blue Nile Development program.¹²⁷

The good intension of the Church leaders moved some steps forward but encountered problem with the revolution of Ethiopia before its implementation. Even the partial allocation was not utilized due to the time factor as the month July in Ethiopia means season of heavy rain. When it was a right time to start, possibly in the beginning of 1977, the problem with teachers also started. But Mundal contributed a lot in assessments and especially in sketching the map for the works in the valley. In a letter written by the then W/Synod vice president Rev. Yadesa Daba, dated July 10, 1973 to Rev. Gudina Tumsa, General Secretary of the EECMY, Mundal's work was acknowledged and the Central Office was requested for cooperation that he would be permitted to complete the work he had started.¹²⁸

During the transitional periods (1978-1995) when NMS missionaries were assigned to different works of the Church while waiting for opportunities to go back to the Gumuz tribe, another attempt was also done to do development works among the Gumuz people. The Norwegian Free Church joined with NMS to work in the Western Synod in 1979. They were placed at the Synod office and at Mendi clinic. A project for more than a million of Birr was planned by the Norwegian Free Church from Action Hope funds for the Blue Nile and Diddesa valleys.¹²⁹ Due to the political situation in which the socialist government was suspecting everything that was connected with Western countries, it was not fully implemented. But the public health program, that was carried out by Dr. Svein Gunnar Gundersen, in cooperation with the Addis Ababa University, pathobiology department and ALERT (*All African Leprosy Rehabilitation and Training center*) hospital for eradication of bilharzia and leprosy control and rehabilitation was came into effect accordingly. Dr. Svein G. Gundersen in his evaluation report of dated Feb. 25, 1987, states as follows:

Blue Nile Public Health Project was planned and started by the undersigned in 1982-83. It is a primary health care project with special focus on 7 health problems typical for this lowland area, namely schistosomiasis, malaria, leprosy, tuberculosis, onchocerciasis, malnutrition and eye diseases. The planned project period was from 1983 to 1985, and

¹²⁷Christa Held, *letter to James E. Haldeman, EECMY, Act. Direct.* dated July 13, 1976.

¹²⁸Rev. Yadesa Daba *Letter to Rev. Gudina Tumsa EECMY, G/Secretary* dated July 10, 1973.

¹²⁹Torstein Jorgensen, *I tro og tjensete*, 1992:152.

it has been financed [sic] by money from the Norwegian television campaign "Action Hope" through the Lutheran Free Church of Norway (LFCN), the sending agency of the undersigned and the project manager from 1983 to 86, Dr. H.P. Torvik.¹³⁰

The downfall of the socialist government of Ethiopia in May 1991 brought the right time to restart the work in the valleys. Until 1994 the political situation of the country was not stable. The inside turmoil did not permit peaceful movements especially in Blue Nile and Diddesa valleys. Rev. Abera Negeri, who was a fresh graduate in theology from MYS diploma program in June 1991, though he was from the Gumuz tribe, for the sake of safety did not start work in the valley immediately. He was assigned to one of the congregations in Nedjo town and waited until 1994 when he moved to Agalo Meti to be the parish pastor and leader.

Nurse Hilde Masvie from NMS, who was then working in Dabbaso Clinic in the Western Synod, also moved to Agalo Metti to take over the work of the clinic. When the political condition permitted evangelization, the financial situation became a challenge to start the work as needed. In reply to a letter written from Mr. Tor B. Jorgensen, NMS General Secretary, the Rev. Yadesa Daba, who was then president of the EECMY, wrote the following in a letter dated November 29, 1995:

Thank you very much for your letter dated October 17, 1995 in which you have informed us regarding policy changes you are working with at present. I thank you again for sharing with us all your difficulties which you are struggling with. I understand from your letter that you are facing a greater reduction in the general income to your work. This has contributed greatly to the Board of your Mission to forsee an enormous decrease in the income over a period of three years and this will, in turn, affect your work at home and abroad.¹³¹

NMS took action to use the opportunity to implement the long planned agricultural project. An integrated rural development project called "Agalo-Sirba Community Development Project" (ASCDP) was urgently designed by the end of 1995 and implementation started in 1996. It was so urgently planned and forwarded to the donor agency that proper feasibility study and assessment survey was not done. Hilde Masvie in her letter to the Western Synod, to the then medical secretary of the Synod Dr. Getahun Alemu and to the development director Obbo Markos Kitila, dated 22.7.1995 states the urgency as follows:

We thought that the project proposal for the health work in the valley could be forwarded next year. But yesterday, with MAF, we got fax-letter from Mrs. Anne Karin Kristensen, urging us in writing it this year, in order to get the funds from NORAD for 1996. To me that seems to fast, but I have worked on my notes and send them to you, in

¹³⁰Svein G. Gundersen, *evaluation report*, Feb. 25, 1987:1

¹³¹Yadesa Daba, *letter to* Tor B. Jorgensen, November 29, 1995.

order that you may use them for your proposal. So I urge also you to work quickly with the project proposal, in order that it may reach **Jan Sandsmark, NMS, Po. Box 226, 4001 Stavanger, NORWAY**, at the end of July. We know that the proposal must be forwarded through the development department of EECMY head office, but we ask you to send a copy of that letter **directly** to Mr. Sandsmark. I know that this will bring you much work, as it did to me, but this is because of the strict deadlines with NORAD and that we were late informed from Norway due to communication problems.¹³²

As a result a project for a period of five years (1996-2000) with the total amount of NOK 2,039,700 was designed and work was started in 1996. The project was later commented for not having been properly planned, but it had contributed a lot for the work among the Gumuz tribe. The evaluation report states as follows:

The initial planning process was not conducted in a way that the plan developed could serve as a proper guide for implementation. The plan does not provide sufficient basis for evaluation of effectiveness and achievement, strictly understood. This may be used as a lesson learnt – and the continuation should be based on a thorough planning exercise in the year to come. However, the project objectives and intended strategies are in general relevant to needs, to the development and sector specific policies of the country as well as to Norwegian policies and priorities for development cooperation.¹³³

With the implementation of the project the re-placement of missionaries at Agalo Metti and Sirba Abbai became possible. In 1995 Ragnhild and Steinar Floberg, both theologians, joined nurse Hild Masvie in Agalo Metti while Gudrun and Johannes Austgulen both nurses, and Ståle Storaas, theologian, restarted the work in Sirba Abbai in 1996. From 1998 to 2003 was the time when NMS missionaries were fully staffed for the work among the Gumuz tribe. In addition to the nurses and theologians agriculturalists and economists were also assigned. Elin Bøe agriculturalist in 1998 and Lillian E. Razafimandimby Våje and Per Ivar Våje in 2002 economist and agriculturalist and Benedicte Svendsen nurse in 1999 and the family Norlys Nilsen Grimsby and Oddvar Grimsby builder in 2000 were among those worked with different capacities for long and short times at Blue Nile and Diddesa valleys. The last two young nurses Mirjam Syltebø and Ann Gjertrud Moe learnt the Gumuz language and even helped in interpreting for the Oromo pastors who paid visit from the Synod office. The experienced missionary female pastor, Gunvor Hofseth, also took a leading part in the assessment and survey of the expansion of the Gospel outreach program that has helped in strengthening the evangelism work among the Gumuz tribe.

¹³²Hilde Masvie, *letter to W/Synod*, 22.7.1995.

¹³³Marianne Skjortness, *evaluation report of ASCDP*, 2000-1:6.

7.2 The Demand was more than expected.

With the downfall of the socialist government of Ethiopia, most of the tribes got their regional state government, including the Gumuz tribe with the other Nylotic tribes, such as the Berta, Komo, Shinasha and Mao. They constituted the Bene Shangul-Gumuz regional state in the Federal Republic state government of Ethiopian.¹³⁴ Though politically structured, the Bene Shangul-Gumuz regional state was way behind the demands of the federal government's requirement in financial income and human resource capacity. At first it was just started with the human resource capacity they had in the region. Most of those in the Gumuz regional zone were from those educated at elementary or junior secondary schools that were run by the Church. With the return of the NMS to the valley the local leaders in the Gumuz zone expected a lot to be done in the fields of infrastructure, education and building. They sought it from the missionaries and from the Agalo-Sirba Integrated rural development project. In the final project report of the second phase (2000 – 2005) from the W/Synod Development office, this was indicated as follows:

The steering committee had too much power until 2004. The midterm evaluation discovered this, and steps were taken to change it. The damage this made is especially the shift of plans and budgets. The consequence was to shift budget to the two bridges – Sirba Boka and Meti which forced us to scale down other activities. The Sirba Boka bridge was planned but at a very small scale as a pedestrian bridge. But the steering committee decided to make a vehicle bridge. The Meti bridge was not even in the original plan.¹³⁵

It was also revealed in the evaluation report of SIK (Centre for Intercultural Communication) as follows:

Discussions with Woreda authorities reveal dissatisfaction in the way the project leadership and staff involved have communicated. Authorities at zone level express their satisfaction with the information achieved as well as the DPSLAB head unit responsible for external relations at regional level. However, the Regional Health Bureau expressed dissatisfaction with the way the project had adhered to the national requirements (license etc.).¹³⁶

There was a difference of understanding between the government leaders at the woreda level and at the zonal level. Those at the woreda level did not have enough education but were assigned because of being from the Gumuz tribe, while those at zonal level had better education and most of them except the political leader were assigned from other tribes

¹³⁴Marianne Skjortness, *Evaluation Report of ASCDP*, 2000-1:21.

¹³⁵W/Synod Development Department *Annual Report from 2002-2006*:12.

¹³⁶Marianne Kjørtness, *Evaluation Report of ASCDP*, 2000-1:8.

depending upon the requirements of skills for different line departments. Secondly those at the woreda level were from the area who knew about the church work. They expected a lot from missionaries even as early as in the 1975, when they took hostage the MAF plane in order to push the NMS to build high grade schools and infrastructure similar to those at highland. Those at zonal level most of them came from other places with attitudes of nationwide outlooks. Another problem was also that the national staffs of the project, who were from the Oromo people, lived on the highland and were using their project cars for going up and down the hills for transportation. That also could be read between the lines of the report of the SIK evaluation team as follows:

The intention is that the project should have an integrated approach as the name indicates. However, the project leader is located at the Synod office, which is far away from both sites [Agalo Metti and Sirba Abbai]. This creates a distance to the daily running of the project and he does not take an active part in the implementation of the activities in the field, which deprives him from hands-on feeling with the project. It does not promote integrated planning and monitoring with participation of staff involved in the different components.¹³⁷

Few members of the project staff were from the Gumuz tribe who were assigned as assistant development agent for the different communities to enable the project to reach the Gumuz people. They did not have enough education to take positions in leading any part of the project components. It was not possible to even employ some of the few educated, to certain level, because the regional government wanted them and employed them into different positions in the political system with a high pay. At one time the Agalo Meti clinic became empty of indigenous staff because the auxiliary health assistant and the primary health assistant, both of them from the Gumuz tribe, left at the same time and were employed in the zonal health bureau with a three-fold salary of what they earned from the Church. In the mid-term evaluation report of June 2004 the following was noted:

Even though it was planned to consider members of the Gumuz during staff recruitment, it was not effected accordingly due to absence of trained members of the community and the fact that the available ones prefer to work in government offices where pays are better. It is also learned that remunerations and working and living conditions of the local staff of the project are not reasonable to attract and keep competent professionals.¹³⁸

In the evaluation report of SIK, also it was mentioned that there was a gap between the project and the beneficiaries due to lack of good contact. The following was suggested:

¹³⁷Marianne Kjortness, *Evaluation Report of ASCDP*, 2000-1:31.

¹³⁸Getachew Olana, *Mid-Term Evaluation Report of ASCDP*, 2004:2.

The relevance of EECMY involvement in community development would be enhanced if the project had found good ways of involving and communicating with the community in all activities, and if the relationship and communication with local authorities were better.¹³⁹

The demands from the community and local authorities were very high and the project could not satisfy their need according to their expectations. They were more interested in the development of infrastructures than the agricultural components. For every action a pay was demanded from the project that it was not possible to involve the community into the practical demonstration fields of the agricultural elements. During its first phase, building the capacity of the people was done and education and health care was successfully implemented. Even with education, it did not fulfill the needs that the people were expected. So in the evaluation report of SIK, the following is stated: “The wish was expressed by the community that ‘orphans are in need, but the project selects the students only according to the marks’”.¹⁴⁰ A few competent youngsters were given scholarship chances not according to the need but according to the capacity for education.

7.3 The challenge from the New Regional State structures.

As I mentioned in the previous chapter there were different attitudes between the political leaders working at different administrative levels of the Bene Shangul-Gumuz, towards the Church work and the Integrated Rural Development Project. At the zonal and regional level the political leaders had positive attitudes to a certain extent, while at the woreda levels leaders were not satisfied with what the Church or the Project was doing. They wanted a nice road and bridges over the rivers, and nice church buildings like those of the highlands among the Oromo. They complained that the missionaries did not bring much change. The project had a Steering Committee where two representatives from the woreda office of the government and two from community and two from the parish of the project totally six from the area were members. The mid-term evaluation report mentions:

Similar to the first phase, the second phase of the project was designed in a way that it will be managed by a Steering Committee (SC) that existed during the first phase. The Committee was designed in a way it consists of the following members: the project leaders (2); representatives of administration of the two woredas (2); representative of NMS (1); WS Development Director (1); Representative of the community (2); WS Medical Director (1); representatives of parishes (2) and expatriate advisors.¹⁴¹

¹³⁹Marianne Kjørtnes, *Evaluation Report of ASCDP*, 2000-1:31.

¹⁴⁰Marianne Kjørtnes, *Evaluation Report of ASCDP*, 2000-1:8.

¹⁴¹Getachew Olana, *Mid-Term Evaluation of ASCDP*, 2004:22.

The mid-term evaluation team also commented that the SC which met quarterly for not more than a day was managing the project.¹⁴² The SC had opened a loophole for the woreda administration offices of the two sites to have control over the project work to push it wherever they wanted and later ended up in untimely phase-out of the project. It is also good to refer to the SIK evaluation report how the woreda leaders had influence in diverting the project plans.

We would also question the relevance of constructing a new water pump only a few meters from the village water pump in Konsho instead of in a village in Sirba Abaye. The project leader indicated that the site was changed due to pressure from the Woreda Authorities.¹⁴³

The local leaders demanded from the project free transport whenever and wherever they wanted. A car to be provided free of mileage including all the expenses of fuel and driver even when they went to higher meetings and stayed for a week. In 2004 and 2005 at least they kept the project cars under their control and hindered their movements for two to three weeks again and again in accusation of mismanagements of the project leaders. Their points of arguments were that the project leaders did not reside at the project sites and used the cars to go up and down the hills. They also complained that the more national staffs were added, who were from Oromo, was the more missionaries were leaving from the stations. That was correct and undeniable, because the project leaders did not live at the project sites and also used the project cars to go to the highland and stay with their family for a week or more and went back to the site. After the evaluation of the first phase, the missionary staff number was also reduced and replaced by national staffs. The Synod tried to force the project staffs to abide at the project site, but it was so difficult that they also demanded many things that the Synod could not fulfill. They could not cope with the woreda leaders as they could not supply them with the need of cars when they asked for.

The regional structure of the government had all professionals at all levels but did not make available a budget for running the departments. For that reason all those personnel at the woreda level wanted to use the project for their own running costs which created clashes of ideas and created misunderstandings which the SIK evaluation team themselves did not notice but states:

Although there is considerable staff in the woreda line offices, there are still many vacant positions. The capacity to support or cooperate with the project may actually be

¹⁴²Getachew Olana, *Mid-Term Evaluation of ASCDP*, 2004:2.

¹⁴³Marianne Kjortnes, *Evaluation Report of ASCDP*, 2000-1:51.

limited. Sirba Abye Woreda is better staffed than Agalo Meti woreda at the moment. However, one has to bear in mind that the project areas are also their working areas and that many times the most limiting factor for performance, is not lack of qualified personnel, but funds to follow-up plans and activities.¹⁴⁴

The meetings of the Steering Committee were held quarterly at different places, at Agalo Meti or Sirba Abbai or at Bodji the Synod Centre. To go from Agalo Meti to Sirba Abbai or the vice versa took more than 200 km. When the meetings were held at any of the Woreda per diem was paid in addition to transporting them by cars. Even at their center the local leaders were demanding per dimes and it was in effect. The mid-term evaluation report mentions:

In accordance with the plan, the committee had met quarterly at Agalo Meti, Sirba Abay and Boji in turn. Attendance of the members, that were usually paid per dimes [sic] whenever the meeting is held out of their center, was high.¹⁴⁵

It was a project that was planned for the Gumuz people and participation of the leaders was very crucial, but the risk was not considered that there were differences of attitudes between the leaders of the community and of the project. The Steering committee that consisted of two each, from woreda office, local community, and parish (meaning church members), total of six was a challenge for the project implementation. In its first phase of the project also the Synod was somehow reluctant. For two reasons the work was just left to the responsibilities of the missionaries. As the Western Synod was not yet restructured in to four units (In 2001 it was restructured into four units*) there was shortage of manpower to closely follow the work in the Valleys. Secondly the trust that missionaries can do better for the Gumuz tribe than the Oromo employees was also behind the curtain from the Gumuz people themselves, from some individual missionaries and from some church leaders as well. But it made it difficult for the new missionaries to deal with the urgent social and economic needs of the Gumuz people. This was noted in comments of the SIK evaluation team as follows:

There is a high dependency on missionaries and NMS has not been able to provide the continuity expected which demonstrates that this is a particularly vulnerable way of working.¹⁴⁶

These triple attitudes from in and outside (from the Synod, the Gumuz and missionaries) has opened a loop hole for the local authorities to push on the work that they could be able to twist it to their political interest that later contributed to the failure of the project plan. (* On March 30, 2001 it was restructured into four units/synods namely Western Synod, Birbir Dilla Synod, Ghimbi JorgoSynod and Beghi-Gidami Area Work.)

¹⁴⁴ Marianne Kjortnes, *Evaluation Report of ASCDP*, 2000-1:49.

¹⁴⁵ Getachew Olana, *Mid-Term evaluation Report of ASCDP*, 2004:23.

¹⁴⁶ Marianne Kjortnes, *Evaluation Report of ASCDP*, 2000-1:7.

Because of its urgency, the project which was longed for many years did not have enough preparation and planning before its implementation. That was because of the time factor and human resources. Secondly, time for action was at hand for NMS to move into the mission field, while the financial capacity of the mission did not permit it. So the project had made possible for the mission to start the work at the right time.

The project is designed as an integrated rural development project with a health, agricultural and educational component along with the mainstream evangelization work of the church.¹⁴⁷

Though the demands from the government side were not fully met, the church plan was fulfilled by sustaining the health care and restarting the evangelization work. Also as one of the problems of the Blue Nile and Diddesa valley's work was the lack of trained human resources, education was also given priority and considerable numbers of female and male students got education and are today leaders in church and government offices.

7.4 The Work is done.

The downfall of the military regime of Ethiopian government brought an end to the persecution of the Church. Evangelical churches were renewed and flourished. But a problem occurred regarding the managements of those coming back to the church from different backgrounds. Some were new converts while others were old members coming back with different practices of worship adopted from other church denominations during the underground church period. For the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus, the charismatic movement with a basically Pentecostal view was a big challenge. People came to the Church with spiritual and social questions and requiring answers. Some left the Mekane Yesus Church saying they did not get satisfactory answer to their spiritual and social questions. Others expected help from the Church for their need and when their expectation was not met left the Church and joined other denominational Churches. Many ex-soldiers of the military regime of Ethiopia became evangelists and even pastors of some of the denominational churches. When government structure was stretched to the Blue Nile and Diddesa valleys, by the Bene Shangul-Gumuz regional state, many job opportunities were opened and people moved to the region from different parts of Ethiopia with their different religions and beliefs. The majority of those who moved to the area were government employees who had the rights to have their own church or mosque. So, the challenge did not

¹⁴⁷Marianne Kjortnes, Evaluation Report of ASCDP,2000-1:6.

limit itself only to the highland but also moved to the valley with the different government employees: teachers, development agents, public health workers and woreda and zonal office workers on different levels. The coming back of NMS to the Blue Nile and Diddesa valleys was seen as the right time for the evangelism work among the Gumuz people. By being physically present and giving financial support, the missionaries contributed a lot in the evangelism and health works. The integrated rural development project known as the Agalo-Sirba Community Development Project (ASCDP) had done a lot in enabling the Church to meet some of the needs in the Blue Nile and Diddesa valleys among the Gumuz. Constructions of the two bridges on Wawu and Metti rivers were completed in the year 2003 and 2004 consecutively. That helped the Church to win the favor of the zonal and regional political leaders and of the community at large. It was also a great help for Rev. Abera Negeri's ministry as a parish leader. Even the missionaries who were involved in the ASCDP work contributed a lot to the evangelism work. Rev. Abera Negeri says that they had a fellowship program with the students helped under the scholarship program of the ASCDP. When schools were closed they conducted seminars for the students for a week and trained them in environmental cares and the Church works. And the aim was that when they return to their congregation they would help their community and the Church. After the seminar they got tools: a bucket, a shovel, a hoe and rope and constructed latrines for their houses and their church. They were also given seedlings of different fruits and plants to grow them around their homes and follow-up was done to control they have done it properly. The project funded for their stay and the missionaries took part in the teaching. That helped the youngsters to use their vacation on important duties and also kept them active in Church work.¹⁴⁸

The year 2004 had also another historical event for the evangelism work among the Gumuz tribe. The New Testament Bible translation of the Gumuz language was completed and dedicated on February 15, 2004. It was started in the 1980's by the German missionary Henning Uzar and a Gumuz man called Senbato Keno. Senbeto Keno quitted the work and two other Gumuz men, Mr. Ijigu Dirqasa and Mr. Gindaba Senbata and assisted Uzar up to its completion. On its dedication Rev. Abera Negari in his welcoming speech noted the day as the day of the rebirth of the Gumuz people. He said:

Today the written book in Gumuz language is at hand praise the Lord God Almighty who gave us the opportunity to have written book in Gumuz language. God has done a great thing for the people in the valley. I dare to say that it is the second birth day of the

¹⁴⁸Rev. Abera Negeri, *Interview*, dated 21.7. 2010.

Gumuz people. For many years the Gumuz people has been waiting for the New Testament on [sic] their language. The church is growing in this area. The kingdom of God is spreading among the people and the need of the word of God is great. We believe that God is at work in the valley and in the world. The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light.¹⁴⁹

On the occasion, important guests, national and international from religious and political leaders, were present. Rev. Kjetil Aano, NMS General Secretary and Mette Ravn, Norwegian ambassador in Ethiopia and Thor Bjarne Bore chairman of the Norwegian Church Board were notable international guests. Rev. Itefa Gobena EECMY-president, one representative from the Ethiopian Bible Society and leaders of Bene Shangul-Gumuz regional state and Kamashi zone offices and NMS missionaries in Ethiopia and many members from EECMY church were present. It was really a special day in the life of the Gumuz tribe. NMS bought more than 50,000 copies and covered most of the printing cost and it was sold to the people for less than half a price of the actual cost. Rev. Abera Negeri continued in his welcome speech and explained the vast growing evangelism work in the valley:

In the area we have 24 congregations and 13 preaching places. Mainly we work in Kamashi zonal administration and in Matakal zone we have one preaching place called Dura. There are pastors, evangelists and voluntary preachers in the area. I would like to say that [sic] congratulation for Gumuz people and the people gathering [sic] here today. The Lord has done great things for us, we are glad. Ps. 126:3.¹⁵⁰

In 2005 another historical event was done for the Church in the Blue Nile and Diddesa valley. Two pastors, one male Gumuz and one female Oromo both of them called and trained by the Blue Nile and Diddesa congregations, were ordained on February 13, 2005. Rev. Dinka Ganno was the second Gumuz pastor, (the first being Rev. Abera Negeri ordained in January 1993 on the highland) and Rev. Elizabeth Fekadu the second female pastor in the Western Synod, (the first being Rev. Bekure Daba ordained in 2000) were ordained at Kamashi Congregation, Rev. Megersa Guta General, Secretary of the EECMY, was one among those conducted the ceremony.

The Western Synod did not have enough personnel and financial capacity to fully cope with the fast growing evangelization works of the Bule Nile and Diddesa valleys. As mentioned in Rev. Abera Negeri's welcome speech evangelism work had already started north of Blue Nile River. Besides the Integrated Rural Development project, ASCDP, small scale projects for the evangelism out reaches in Agalo Metti and Sirba Abbai were designed, and NMS secured

¹⁴⁹Rev. Abera Negeri, *Welcome Speech*, Feb.15, 2004:3.

¹⁵⁰Rev. Abera Negeri, *Welcome Speech*, Feb. 15, 2004:3.

the funds which enabled the Synod to employ contract workers to the evangelism outreach with the aim that the preaching places gradually could take over the managements of the salaries of the contract workers. It really showed encouraging pace in the way that most of the contract workers were employed later and the expansion of the evangelism work has shown tremendous change from year to year. When the work restarted, there were only two pastors and no permanent evangelists. Sirba Abbai had one contract employed evangelist, Tadese Korsaa. At Agalo Meti Rev. Abera Negeri and at Kamashi Rev. Tesso Daba both were permanent employed workers. The work area was organized into three parishes, namely Agalo Meti, Sirba Abbai and Kamashi parishes. The need to assign a pastor and an evangelist to Sirba Abbai and two evangelists for the Agalo Meti and Kamashi parishes became inevitable. The Rev. Tolina Nado was called from one of the parishes on the highland and was sent to Sirba Abbai to be the parish leader and two other evangelists were employed on contract base for both Agalo Meti and Kamashi parishes. For further needs NMS also allocated some training funds that enabled the sustainability of the evangelization in the parishes among the Gumuz tribe. For the years 2003 and 2004 the fund for an education program was ETB 30,000 and for the pastor and evangelists ETB 20,000 and 12,000 for Sirba Abbai and for the evangelist in Agalo Meti and Kamashi parishes 16,000 each year.* In Agalo Meti and Kamashi it was less because contributions from the congregations were better than in Sirba Abbai. As the work extended more than expected it went out of the management of the three established parishes. Evangelical Christians from the north east of Diddesa River and few scattered evangelical Christians north of the Abbai (Blue Nile) River also asked the parishes to cross over the rivers and help them. The parishes occasionally paid visits and served them, but the demand grew bigger and bigger. The small scale evangelism outreach project was not enough to extend the work to reach those who were in need. In the year 2004, assessment survey was done and a project plan for more financial support was developed. A five years project was designed for ETB 1,275,735.32 and forwarded to NMS through the EECMY Gospel Ministry Department. To overcome the transportation problem over Blue Nile River, a plan to buy motor boats was also included in the project but was not accepted. The need for the extension of the project for the areas beyond the Abbai (Blue Nile) River was also accepted in 2005 which is still on its implementation.

The challenges from the local rulers were very high but attempts were made to meet some of their demands.

*NMS Working budget sheet 2003 & 2004.

The ASCDP renovated and extended the clinic building at Agalo Meti to improve the condition there. In Sirba Abbai, at Boka a new building was constructed for the clinic to move it from Dalati to Boka into the Gumuz village. Residences for missionaries were also built with local materials. In Agalo Meti, at the parish center, in Sirba Abbai parish, at Koncho town and in Kamashi parish, at Kamashi town, low cost church buildings were also funded for which local congregation took care of their full construction. At Agalo in Agalo Meti and at Koncho in Sirba Abbai, parish pastors' residences were also built. In addition to that at Koncho in Sirba Abbai a youth center was also planned in 2004 for which the budget was made available in 2006. Within the budget year of 2006 ETB 372,000 was granted and the work was completed in 2008. Work was done but it was just a start for the vast areas which still remained unreached.

CONCLUSION.

The primary plan of calling NMS to the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus was for the evangelization of the Gumuz in the western part of Ethiopia. However the work came to suffer from repeated retreats due to political and social difficulties. But the work still remained unquenched and kept going on and resulted in a good growth. The political and social problems did not create a convenient atmosphere for the NMS to freely work in the Abbai and Diddesa valleys preventing them throughout their thirty-five years of services from doing more than what they actually achieved. During the difficult times the Mission kept its contact with EECMY by staying on the highland among the Oromo where there was at least social awareness among the community and took care for missionaries. The Gumuz people were not aware of the fact that what the communist government of Ethiopia was doing would affect them. The lack of communication also contributed to the absence of the missionaries from the valleys during the hard years. Mules and donkeys were the only means of transportation to take food staff and fuels (for light, refrigerator and cooking) to the Valleys.

Though the work continued by the indigenous pastors and evangelists they could not meet the social and psychological need of the Gumuz people. As H.E. Emmanuel Abraham mentions in his book, the Oromo people and the Gumuz tribe had a long enmity and mutual suspicion among the people that they could not feel free to receive each other. The problem of attitudes was one of the factors that affected the expansion of the Gospel. Rev. Tesso Daba mentions this fact and says that the Gumuz did not trust the Oromo and neither the Oromo the Gumuz. The other case was their social need which the Oromo pastors and evangelists could not meet. The missionaries had accesses to financial resources and helped the Gumuz when they were

in need. They supported some students at schools, gave free treatment when the people were sick and had no money. They helped them with transportation to higher hospitals when it was needed. They served the total person, both physically and spiritually. That wholistic approach opened their heart for the Gospel. The Oromo were there only with the Gospel, as my informants have stated, but had no financial resources to help them when the people were in need of financial support. When the NMS missionaries returned, there was another problem because of concept differences. The Gumuz people, due to their past experiences, were suspicious of much involvement of the Oromo people. The missionaries learned the Gumuz language and started to communicate with the Gumuz people better than the Oromo. The motive that there was no need of involvement by mediators was reflected and the Oromo started to retreat from the lead. Knowing only the language cannot make someone capable of performing the work within a different culture. The gradual withdrawal of the Oromo opened a possibility for some subtle motives of people who wanted to perform their own personal agenda. Some people, including those contract workers in ASCDP, in order to win the favor of loyalty from the higher authorities went against the plan of the project and against the Church policy. Uncontrolled financial mismanagement and disobeying those who were in the system were revealed. When the NMS missionaries who had experience in the field were back, to work in the Synod, reconsideration was made. The Church (Western Synod), which was the initiator of the work among the Gumuz tribe, continued to be responsible for the running of the work and NMS continued with the personnel and financial support. The work started to bear fruits and all the past experience was reconsidered and the mistakes were corrected. But another problem faced the work in the valley, because of the mistakes in the past, shortage of financial support for the agricultural development works (ASCDP) occurred.

When compared to the other works of the NMS in other places or even within EECMY, among the Oromo people the pace of the work among the Gumuz tribe was too slow due to a lack of awareness among the people. One could see a big difference between the work among the Gumuz tribe and that of among the Oromo where NMS has been always active. There were some factors which contributed to the slow progress. First, NMS joined the EECMY as supportive staff and was not implementing its own mission strategy to carry out the work. As mentioned earlier, that was reflected in the letter of Tor Dag Kjosavik to the president of Western Synod. As a result NMS also sent its mission strategy plan to confirm the problem. The second was that there was a power struggle within the Church, between the EECMY Central Office and the Synod and within the Synod itself, because of the north - south

motives, where the north region of the Synod belonged to SEM (Swedish Evangelical Mission) field and the south to GHM (German Hermannsburg Mission) and the Synod leaders were from the south region of the Synod. There was a suspicion that there should not be a financial flow unknown to the Synod's standing committees. This inner power struggle, within the Synod, contributed to the restructuring of the Synod into three synods and one Area Work in the year 2001. There was not only a sharing of finance but also of manpower, that forced also NMS to distribute its personnel into different institutions of the Synod. Due to this, the work among the Gumuz tribe came to suffer. The Gumuz tribes were not ready to struggle to have their share of the finance and manpower that used to come from NMS, in the same way as other parties of the Church. Throughout all these difficulties it was possible to train personnel for the work in the Blue Nile and Diddesa valleys, that there are now Gumuz pastors, evangelists and both male and female volunteer preachers. Many women and men from NMS had toiled a lot and contributed to the work area. NMS missionaries, twice, left with disappointments because of the problems they had faced from the Oromo or the Gumuz tribe themselves. The first time, because of the problem created by the Oromo teachers and in the second, because of the problem created by the local governments of the Gumuz region itself. But the work of the Kingdom of God has born all the difficulties and stood through the problems and showed vivid growth.

The high expectations from the local authorities forced NMS to reduce its rural development activities among the Gumuz people to very small scale components. The local leaders wanted to have all the privileges and disregarded the activities of the ASCDP and forced its untimely phasing out. They thought that by doing so they would fulfill their responsibility and be favored by the Gumuz people. They aborted the good vision of NMS and the Church and tried to reach their short sighted goal. From 2004/5 onwards missionaries withdrew from the stations in the Gumuz areas. No more missionary remained at the area, but the work continued by close supervision of the representatives residing in the capital. But the evangelism work continued and flourished and challenged the Church by needs more than it was able to meet. The continued financial support from NMS made it possible to carry out the work. Rev. Abera Negeri says:

Now NMS is not with us physically. But financially they made us able to do the work through many small scale projects. So even if they are not with us physically they are with us with the financial help.¹⁵¹

¹⁵¹Rev. Abera Negeri, *Interviews*, dated 21.7.2010.

The work among the Gumuz tribe is still not a self-supporting, to be run by the indigenous employees alone. It is still way behind in financial self-support and personnel capacity. It needs financial and personnel support from outside the area. The aim is; however, clear, that the parishes may have their own personnel who can take over all spiritual and developmental works that are needed for the Gumuz people. Now days, there is no much need of other parties to represent them as it was done in the past. They are aware of their needs and are asking helps for themselves.

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8. Tesso Daba (Rev.) 23.7.2010. Amuma Henna/ Bodji, , Ethiopia

Abbreviations.

ALERT	All African Leprosy Rehabilitation and Training center.
ASCDP	Agalo-Sirba Community Development Project.
CMS	Church Missionary Society.
DASSC	Development and Social Service Commission.
EECMY/EEC-MY	Ethiopian Evangelical Church MekaneYesus.
ELCA	Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.
EPRDF	Ethiopian People Revolutionary Democratic Front.
ETB	Ethiopian Birr, national currency.
FIM	Faith In Mission
FMS	Finish Missionary Society
H.E.	His Excellency. (title of honor.)
GHM	German Hermannsburg Mission
KNH	Kindernothilfe, (German Orphans support fund project.)
LFCN	Lutheran Free Church of Norway
LWF/DWS	Lutheran World Federation/Department for World Service.
LWF/CWM	Lutheran World Federation/Commission for World Mission.
MAF	Missions Aviation Fellowship.
MHS	Mission High School.
MYS	MekaneYesus Seminary.
NLM	Norwegian Lutheran Mission.
NMS	Norwegian Missionary Society.
NOK	Norwegian currency, (Krone)
NORAD	Norwegian Government Development Agency.
ONS	Onesimos Nesib Seminary.

PCA	Presbyterian Churches of America.
RVOG	Radio Voice of the Gospel.
SC	Steering Committee.
SEM	Swedish Evangelical Mission.
SIK	Center for Intercultural Communication.
SIM	Sudan Interior Mission.
WS, W/Synod	Western Synod.

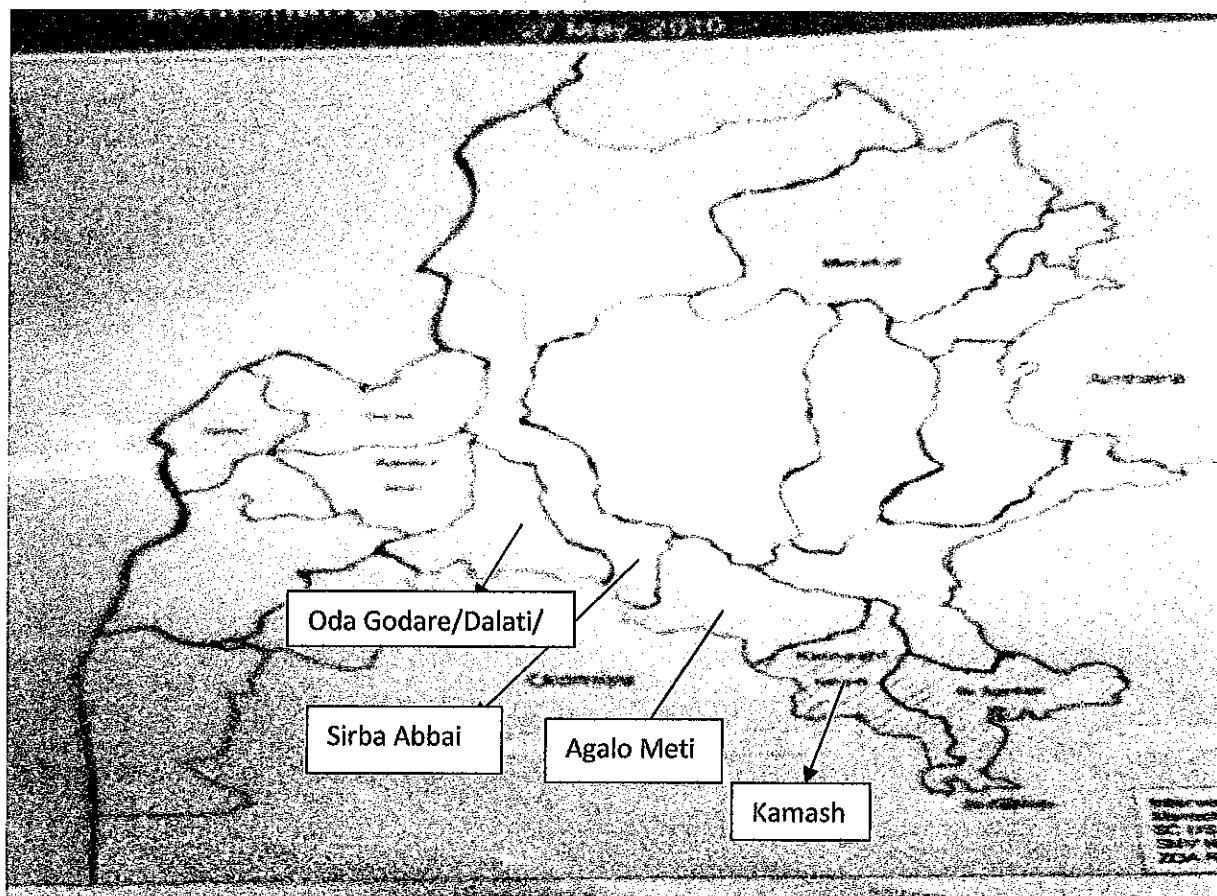
Words

Abba /Oromo/	Father.
Ato /Amharic/	Mr.
Awuraja /Amharic/	District administrative region of the Government.
Dina /Oromo/	Enemy.
Fitawurari /Amharic/	High Rank in Feudal System, front warrior
Obbo /Oromo/	Mr.
Michu /Oromo/	Mutual Friend.
Musa /Gumuz/	gods or spirits
Qes /Amharic/	Pastor, Rev.
Raba /Gumuz/	God
Tabot /Amharic/	Arch of Covenant.
Woreda /Amharic/	Sub-district, in government administrative of region

Appendixes:-

MAPS.

B. Regional map of Benishangul Gumuz Administrative Region state.



B. Regional Administrative map of Ethiopia.



3. Pictures from Gumuz NT Bible translation dedication ceremony.

(Photo:- Ann Gjertrud Moe)



Rev. Itafa Gobena addressing the guests and also congratulating the Gumuz people on their getting NT Bible in their language.



Rev. Henning Uzar, translator of, the Gumuz NT Bible, speaking to the crowd and Ijigu Dirqasa is interpreting.



Rev. Kjetil Aano, NMS General Secretary, addressing the crowd and Rev. Abera Negeri is interpreting.



Mette Ravn, Norwegian Ambassador in Ethiopia, congratulating the crowd and Rev. Abera Negeri interpreting.



Rev. Taressa Qanno, EECMY-Western Synod president congratulating Mr. Ijigu Dirqasa for the success in their work in getting Gumuz NT Bible at hand.