Why did the Manjo convert to Protestant? 
Social Discrimination and Coexistence in Kafa, Southwest Ethiopia

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This article examines the implications of Conversion of the Manjo to Protestant. The Manjo are socially discriminated against in everyday life by the Kafa. But after their conversion to Protestant, social relationship between the Manjo and the Kafa has become changing. This article concludes that conversion to Protestant is a strategic method exerted by the Manjo aiming at a coexistence with the Kafa in the Kafa society.

1. Introduction

This article is about the Manjo living in the Kafa zone of Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples' Regional State (SNNPRS)\(^2\). The Manjo reside in all ten wärädas which make up the Kafa zone. The population of the Manjo living there is estimated to be about 10,000 to 12,000 people\(^3\). The majority living in Kafa is the Kafa, whose language, Kafi-noono (Kafa language) is also used by the Manjo.

The history and the society of the Kafa have been studied intensively. Bieber (1920) conducted extensive research on their culture at the beginning of the 20th century. Huntingford (1955) laid out a comprehensive structure of the society that formed the framework of the traditional Kafa Kingdom. Orent (1969, 1970a, b) conducted research on the kinship system and religion of the Kafa society in the 1960s. And Lange (1982) wrote a detailed history of the Kafa based on field research and written material.

Based on research done before the Derg regime, these studies generally presume the existence of a social hierarchy similar to the caste system. At the top of this hierarchy were the Kafa, followed by occupational groups including blacksmiths (Qemmo), weavers (Shammano), bards (Shatto), potters\(^4\), and tanners (Manno). In this hierarchy, the Manjo were commonly referred to as hunters, given the lowest status equal only to slaves\(^5\).

However, after the remnants of the hierarchical structure sustaining the Kafa Kingdom were totally wiped out under the Derg regime, anthropologists have sought new perspectives to understand how the Kafa and the Manjo are coping with the rapid socio-economical and religious change. Recently, Gezahegn (2003) published a groundbreaking article on the current situation of the Manjo, based on fieldwork

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\(^{2}\) The Manjo also live in Sheka zone, Bench Maji zone, Dawro zone, Konta special wäräda of SNNPRS, as well as in some parts of Oromiya and Gambella.

\(^{3}\) This estimation was given to me by the Head Administrator of the Kafa zone. By percentage this amounts to 1.1–1.4% of the whole population of Kafa zone (estimated 858,600 in 2007). This seems to be more appropriate than an estimate mentioned by Freeman and Pankhurst (2003: 76). Quoting data from van Halteren (1996: 4), they estimated that the Manjo account for 5 to 10 per cent of the entire population in Kafa zone and Sheka zone.

\(^{4}\) Pottery is customarily made by women of the Manno and the Manjo.

\(^{5}\) According to Lange, the Manjo should be distinguished from slaves (Lange 1982: 267). The Manjo have their own clans that is different from that of the Kafa. One of my Manjo informants told me, ‘The Manjo and the Kafa are not the same. The first king of the Kafa Kingdom was a Manjo, the Kafa are newcomers and they usurped the throne.’ Lange also refers to a similar story (Lange 1982: 181).
conducted among the Manjo living near Bonga. Gezahegn’s main focus was social and economical changes undergone by the Manjo since the Derg regime. Whereas previous researchers have treated the Manjo as hunters, Gezahegn demonstrated that the Manjo is changing its way of life from hunting and gathering to farming. However, Gezahegn’s perspective is limited by the fact that his research was conducted in only two villages. Gezahegn (2003: 91) mentioned that the Manjo receive little income from agriculture and described them as ‘poor farmer’. However, this image is far from the reality of the Manjo living in Bita wäräda and Gesha wäräda where I did my research. The people in these areas earn their income mostly from agriculture, cultivating various crops and plowing more land than Kafa farmers. The Manjo living in Bita wäräda are not only well-known for their economic success in coffee cultivation, but also for their fearlessness after the 2002 incident.

This article aims to give a contrasting image of the Manjo, not as victims of inhumane discrimination but as agents living on their own accord selecting their own religious identity. In doing so, I examine the implications of the conversion of the Manjo to Protestant. Conversion to Christianity should have eliminated the social discrimination. However, the initial attempt to convert the Manjo to Ethiopian Orthodox Christianity under the Derg regime failed to bring about the assimilation of the Manjo to the Kafa society. Under the current policies of decentralization and ‘self-determination’ the Manjo people began converting to Protestant. By doing this, they were able to retain their identity as the Manjo.

Map 1. Kafa Zone and location of wärädas mentioned in the article.

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6 This article is based on information and data collected in my research which was funded by the Grants-in-Aid for Scientific Research (Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology). The research was conducted under the project entitled “Historiographical Investigation of Ethnic Conflict in Northeast Africa” (Project Leader, Prof. Katsuyoshi Fukui, Kyoto University). IES granted me support for my research. Fieldwork in Kafa zone was conducted in three phases for a total of one year. The first phase was conducted for three months from January to March 2005 in Bita wäräda. The second phase of the research was conducted from August 2005 to February 2006 in Bita wäräda, Gesha wäräda, Addia wäräda, and Decha wäräda. The 3rd phase was conducted from August 2006 to October in Gesha wäräda.


8 In Ethiopia, while many people can and do distinguish between varieties of Protestantism, particularly the mainstream Lutheran type and Pentecostalism, many others call all Protestant Christians simply pent’e in distinction from Ethiopian Orthodox and Catholic Christians. In this article, I call the ‘pent’e’ Protestants.
2. Stereotyped images of the Manjo

In Ethiopia, any person who speaks *Kafi-noono* is called Kafa. But inside the Kafa society, people identify themselves as being either Gomoro\(^9\), Manno\(^10\), and Manjo. The *Kafi-noono* speakers not belonging to occupational groups are called Gomoro (hereafter referred to as Kafa) in the Kafa society and this is the way they call themselves, too. The Kafa distinguish themselves from the Manjo, not including the latter in their own category of *asho* (‘people’), and sometimes regard the Manjo as sub-human\(^11\).

The Kafa explain this ‘sub-humanness’ of the Manjo by pointing out certain features and characteristics which the Manjo people are supposed to have. For example:

1. **Eating habits:** The Manjo eat ‘unclean’ and ‘filthy’ food. This includes the meat of religiously prohibited animals such as savanna monkey, baboon, colobus, wild boar, dead animals and also ‘dirty’ food\(^12\).
2. **Physical appearance:** The Manjo are short in height and their hair strongly curled. Their noses are low and wide. The Manjo do not care about their hygiene. The Manjo do not wash their bodies and clothes, and so, give off an unpleasant smell, in some cases caused by a skin disease.
3. **Characteristics:** The Manjo are wicked and are liars. The Manjo are not interested in education, and are ignorant and lazy. The Manjo are extravagant and thief-like. And the Manjo do not have a sense of morality.

Interestingly, this stereotyped image of the Manjo is shared not only among the Kafa but also by the Amhara people\(^13\). A Manjo explained this, ‘the Amhara people accustomed to habits of the Kafa’. Moreover, similar idioms and logic referring to eating habits, physical appearance and characteristics are used among Ethiopians in general in describing certain groups held in contempt.

On the part of the Manjo, they are well aware of these stereotyped images by the Kafa. One of my Manjo informants told me that some Kafa people say, ‘The Manjo have nails divided into two. Men have tails at the back of their heads, and women have tails on their foreheads’. The Manjo regard the Kafa as liars, ready to deceive the Manjo. And the Manjo also consider the Kafa as cowards and extremely suspicious, whereas the Manjo are brave and honest.

The Manjo and the Kafa abuse each other, using all sorts of foul language. However, when I stayed in the house of both the Kafa and the Manjo, it was difficult to point out differences in life style of the Kafa and the Manjo. Today, the Manjo gave up hunting and cultivate the fields as well as the Kafa, and the Manjo stopped their habits, such as

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\(^9\) Although the origin of the denomination, Gomoro, is not clear, it is generally understood that it derives from the fact that the Kafa used to hunt, and eat hippopotamus (*gumare* in Amharic) in the Gojeb river (Orent 1969: 47).

\(^10\) The Manno are tanners and also discriminated against by the Kafa, similarly as the Manjo in everyday life. The Kafa and the Manjo claim the Manno eat the meat remaining on the hide, when the Manno process the hide into leather. This is the main reason why the former discriminates against the latter. However, some of the clans belonging to the Kafa can be found among the Manno, the two clans originally considered to be one clan, coming from the same region.

\(^11\) The Kafa consider the Manjo as ‘*gondo ashi yero*’ (‘people of the bad clans’). Mengistu also pointed out that the Manjo live in Sheka zone is not considered as human (Mengistu 2003: 101).

\(^12\) One of my Manjo informants told me that the Manjo eat colobus, but never eat baboon and savanna monkey.

\(^13\) The immigration of the Amhara from northern Ethiopia to the Kafa zone occurred in three major phases. Initial groups followed Menelik’s conquest of the area in 1897. The second influx took place during the Italian occupation; the third resulted from the resettlement policy of the Derg regime (Vaughan 2006: 194).
eating wild animals, considered one of the reasons of discrimination. The Manjo are increasingly gaining means of accumulating wealth and are becoming able to buy clothes and shoes sold in boutiques making them indistinguishable in terms of appearance. However, even after the Manjo approached the economic level of the Kafa, the Manjo are still subjected to social discrimination in the Kafa society.

3. Discrimination and Social Relationship

The Manjo are socially discriminated against in everyday life by the Kafa. Social discrimination is especially noticeable on occasions in the social life of the Manjo and the Kafa, such as at greetings, at mealtime, in communal labor, in the choice of spouses, the location of burial grounds, etc. Similar situations of social discrimination have been reported by the Fuga, the Wayto and the Waata, as well as various occupational groups scattered all over Ethiopia (e.g. Pankhurst 1999, Gamst 1979).

Before the Derg period, the Kafa discrimination against the Manjo was far more brazen. According to both Manjo and Kafa informants who lived at that time, when a Manjo happened to come across a Kafa, it was not uncommon for the Manjo to be beaten by the Kafa. When a Manjo happened to wear the same clothes and shoes that a Kafa wore, the Manjo was, more often than not, beaten and forced to take them off. Moreover, when a Manjo encountered a Kafa on a roadside, the Manjo was expected to humiliate himself, stepping aside, bowing and greeting the Kafa with the phrase ‘showocchi qebona’ literally meaning, ‘let me die for you’.

Even today, some Kafa refuse to allow a Manjo to enter their house. In many cases, the Manjo are requested to sit on an ensete leaf or a beehive box placed outside. Even if, by chance, a Manjo is permitted to enter the house of a Kafa, his or her seat will be near the entrance. Of course, the Kafa never enter the Manjo’s house. Rather, if they are neighbors, the Kafa only looked inside the Manjo’s house from the doorway.

Complaining to me about this kind of behavior, one of my informants said ‘Why can’t a Manjo enter the house of a Kafa, when a dog is allowed to do so?’ It is not only in the house of an individual that the Kafa forbids the Manjo to enter. It is quite common for a Manjo to be prohibited to enter to local restaurants. However, outright refusal of admitting entrance of a Manjo is avoided. The owner of the restaurant (mostly Kafa) merely tells the Manjo that the food is sold out, which suggests that he/she is an uninvited guest. In few cases, where the Manjo are permitted to enter and have a drink, owners have bottles and glasses only used by the Manjo.

The Kafa people try not to have meals together with the Manjo or to use the same tableware. This is because cooking utensils used by the Manjo are considered ‘unclean’. The contrasting attitude of the Kafa towards honey and t’äjj (mead) may be a good example showing how the Kafa regard the cooking utensils ‘unclean’. The Kafa people eat honey that the Manjo gathered for the Kafa, whereas drinking t’äjj made by the Manjo was abhorred.

Recently, there are some Manjo who attempt to resist this type of discrimination. These Manjo, mostly young and educated men14, try and sometimes succeed in persuading the Kafa to treat the Manjo in a human way. But such amicable relationships are usually limited to individual relationships and never extend to the Manjo as a whole. Because many Manjo tend to hold back and also the Manjo are a minority, such individual attempts against discrimination are intentionally neglected by the Kafa.

14 Before the Derg period, the Manjo was turned out of school, and, most of the Manjo were deprived of the opportunity of education.
I have attempted to understand the discrimination imposed on the Manjo by the Kafa based on their own ways of explanation. However, the Manjo social position and way of life have changed drastically today. Change in the Manjo subsistence economy and their conversion to Christianity have had significant influences on their economic and social status of the Manjo vis-a-vis the Kafa.

Plate 1. A campaign poster made by an NGO criticizing discrimination against the Manjo. (At the center of this poster is a Manjo family without umbrellas in the rain, the Kafa restaurant owner denying them permission to enter.)

4. The Changing Life style
Before the Derg era, the Manjo had no right to own land and moved around to hunt and gather food (Gezahegn 2003: 90). According to one of my informants, who remembered those days said ‘Until the 1980s, the population was lower than today and there still was a lot of forest left. There was plenty of prey for hunting and I used to eat meat almost every day!’

One of my Manjo informants told me that, in those days, they used to start working on their lands at daybreak and when the sun is at its height, they set out for hunting walking tens of kilometers every day, and came home with wild animals at sunset. Today, the Manjo recall those days with nostalgia and pride. Elder Manjo who are known for their hunting and fishing skills are reverentially called "aaddoo" (hunter).

Animals which the Manjo hunted were wild boar, antelope, porcupine, colobus, buffalo, leopard, elephant and so on. These animals were targeted mainly for food. But there were other animals captured for other reasons. For example, civet cats were captured alive by traps to be sold to Kafa Muslims (Huntingford 1955: 106; Ishihara 2003). Porcupines and other animals were, and are still considered as panacea: For example, the meat of porcupines is considered medicine for cold, some kinds of skin disease, etc. And the Manjo captured porcupines by request from Kafa individuals. The hide and fur of certain animals were used as materials for clothes and hats, especially that of leopards and lions. Elephant tusks used to provide significant income.

Today, the living environment of the Manjo has changed greatly, and hunting is rare. One of the reasons given by the Manjo themselves is that restrictions on hunting have
become severe (Gezahegn 2003: 90). However, despite this claim, the Manjo continued hunting using dogs, guns, trapping nets, etc. Hunting seems to have declined only where wild and big animals have decreased. Therefore it has increasingly become difficult to hunt big animals unless the Manjo travel a long distance. Nowadays, the Manjo buy meat at the market. But there are Manjo men who sometimes go fishing in the river.

The Manjo women used to make earthenware at home while the Manjo men went out for hunting. Women made plates, pans, pots and water-jugs, and sold them at local markets. Nowadays many Manjo women have stopped producing earthenware for cash income, making them only for their own use at home. There are some young Manjo women who do not even know how to make earthenware. One of the reasons for this is because kitchen utensils made from aluminum and plastic are coming into wide use and the demand for earthenware is decreasing. Another reason is that the Manjo believe their practice of making earthenware is one of the reasons the Kafa discriminated against them.

Apiculture is one of the sources of cash income of the Manjo. Apiculture is most active in Gesha wäräda and Saylem wäräda, northwest part of Kafa. Because generally the Kafa are not as familiar with the skill and knowledge of apiculture as the Manjo, the Kafa buy honey from the Manjo. Though the Kafa make t’äjj and barz from the honey purchased from the Manjo, the Kafa never sell these drinks to the Manjo. The Manjo raised objection to this situation and claim the right to buy and drink t’äjj and barz. And, this situation is changing, as aspects of discrimination is undergoing change.

Today, most Manjo engage in farming. The life style of the Manjo is not different from that of the Kafa farmers cultivating staple food, including maize, sorghum, wheat, barley, t’ef, ensete, beans, etc. In addition to these crops, daily used vegetables, such as onion, garlic, ginger, cabbage, sweet potato, sugar cane or fruits such as banana, mango, and papaya are planted in the backyard garden. Some Manjo grow coffee and get cash incomes more than the Kafa. The Manjo have cows, bulls, goats, sheep, fowls, horses, etc. as well as the Kafa, and eat meat and dairy products. Therefore, in this respect, the Manjo are far from being ‘hunters’, or ‘poor farmers.’

When I asked some of my Manjo informants why they gave up hunting and became farmers, they told me that ‘It is because we converted to Protestant’.

5. Religion in Kafa

Christianity in Kafa is reported that Orthodox Christianity was introduced in the Kafa area in a relatively early period in the 17th century (Lange 1982: 299). But my informants told me, Orthodox Christianity was brought into Kafa in two phases. The first phase is in the early 16th century, when seven churches were built in Kafa. But at this initial phase, Orthodox Christianity was accepted only by a limited number of Kafa individuals. The second phase is after conquest by the Ethiopian Empire under Menelik’s reign. When Ras Wolde Giorgis came to Kafa, he built many churches in Kafa and many Kafa converted to Orthodox Christianity. Nowadays, the Kafa majority are Orthodox Christians and the rest are either Muslim or pagan. The Manjo people
largely remained pagan until the Derg period and were under the strong influence of the *alamo*, or diviner.

However, the influence of the *alamo* is not limited to the Manjo and the Christian Kafa also depend on them. There were not only Kafa *alamos* but also Manjo *alamos* in Kafa and both *alamos* were respected from the local populace. But, access to the Kafa *alamo* was strictly limited to the Kafa and the Manjo were never allowed to enter the house of the Kafa *alamo*. On the other hand, the Kafa never entered the house of the Manjo *alamo* even if he/she was allowed to do so.

During the Derg period, many prominent *alamos* were executed and their residences burnt down. In this process, in 1974 and 1975, the government forced the Manjo people to convert to Orthodox Christianity. The Derg officers said to the Manjo, ‘if you convert to Orthodox Christianity, the Kafa will treat the Manjo as an equal.’

However, not all of the Manjo were converted to Orthodox Christianity. The Manjo living in the northwest part of Kafa, for example Gesha wäräda, mainly joined the Orthodox Church, while the Manjo living in the western part of Kafa, for example Bita wäräda, remained pagan following the instruction of the *alamo*, until they joined the Protestant churches after the collapse of the Derg. And also, some Manjo living near Bonga professed Catholicism before the Derg period.

Although a large number of the Manjo were converted to Orthodox Christianity in 1974 in Gesha wäräda, they were already being driven out from the churches by 1975. The Christian Kafa people were opposed to the conversion of the Manjo and the Kafa refused to sit on places where the Manjo sat and, moreover, refused to sit side-by-side with the Manjo in churches. The Kafa complained that the Manjo were converted to Christianity only because they wanted to marry Kafa women and some Manjo were even attacked by the Kafa on their way back home from churches.

However, for the Manjo, conversion was not necessarily the most favorable choice. The Orthodox Church imposed too many restrictions regarding food habits (e.g. prohibiting the eating of wild animals and the custom of fasting), which were uncompromisable to their way of living, and there were many Manjo that became Christian only because they were ordered to do so. The Kafa also resented the official policies of allowing the Manjo to convert to Christianity. The priests, mainly Kafa, were not ready for such liberalization, and churches were located in residential areas of the Kafa. Those Manjo who only reluctantly became Christians used to escape the ceremonial services, spending the time in the forest, only coming back when services ended.

The attempt to convert the Manjo to Orthodox Christianity was an externally initiated attempt to incorporate them into the Kafa society. This attempt failed because both the Manjo and the Kafa did not ready to mingle with each other. For the Manjo, conversion to Orthodox Christianity meant ‘melting’ into the Kafa society, which, they knew would not be accepted by the Kafa themselves.

### 6. Conversion to Protestant

The first Protestant missionary, Qalä Haywät Church, came to Kafa in 1950/1951, and they began missionary activities. At the beginning, priests and their family stayed in Bonga. The missionary staff included nurses who offered medical services around

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17 Some *alamos* are Ethiopian Orthodox Christians.
18 Catholic missions had stations near Bonga, for example, Gimbo wäräda and Decha wäräda in mid-nineteenth century (Orent 1969: 175; Lange 1982: 306-308; Abba Antonios, 1998: 70).
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Bonga. In 1961/1962, when yellow fever epidemic broke out in Kafa zone, they offered medical treatment to patients living in remote areas by using helicopter and plane. After 1967/1968, they began using planes for their church activities. Under such situation, believers gradually increased in Bonga and in 1971/1972, the church succeeded in converting some Manjo to Protestant. But under the Derg regime, foreign missionaries were deported and their activities halted. After the collapse of the regime, Qalâ Haywät Church resumed their missionary activities again and also another Protestant Churches entered Kafa. Today, there are many Protestant Churches in one k’êbele in central, western and northwestern part of Kafa zone. In the eastern and the southern part of Kafa, Protestant Churches began their proselytizing activities only after 2000.

The Protestant Churches treated the Manjo and the Kafa equally. The preachers of the churches accused the social discrimination between the Kafa and the Manjo. This approach against discrimination attracted many Manjo people who started to join the Protestant Churches.

One of my Manjo informants told me that those who wanted to join the Orthodox Church were asked to pay 500 birr to the priest, for merely being a Manjo. That was why this man chose to convert to Protestant. Conversion to Orthodox Christianity did not effect a suppression of discrimination against the Manjo.

Most frequently raised reasons that led the Manjo to turn to Christianity were sickness. Before conversion, a Manjo who had a sick child consulted a local alamo for remedies. When the alamo failed to provide a solution to his client’s problem, a Manjo convert came along and advised him to join one of the conferences of the Protestant churches. Moved by the enthusiastic atmosphere of the conference, he was converted to Christianity. As soon as the person converted to Protestant, child regained his health. These episodes were gradually transmitted orally contributing to the spread of Protestant among the Manjo. Priests criticized the alamo degrading them as sorcerers preaching the ways of the satan.

Quoting the words from the Bible, the priests taught the Manjo converts to stop eating the savanna monkey, the baboon, colobus, etc. The Manjo supposedly followed these instructions and stopped hunting as well as eating wild animals.

Even outside the churches, the Kafa followers of the Protestant Churches abandoned and criticized their previous ways of discriminating against the Manjo. This equal treatment by the Kafa towards the Manjo promoted the spread of Protestant among the Manjo.

After conversion to Protestant, many things have changed in the daily life of the Manjo. Firstly, for example, Gesha wârâda and Bita wârâda, the way of greeting has changed. Today, the Manjo converts greet each other ‘Yeri gacchabe (God bless you)’. Secondly, the formalities of ceremonies have changed and ceremonial songs chanted in social gatherings such as, weddings, funerals, and communal work are substituted by hymns. Thirdly, they quit visiting the alamo to consult about their problems. Fourthly the Manjo gave up eating wild animals such as colobus and wild boar, and instead began eating mutton and cabbage which were previously tabooed food under the alamo.

19 Protestant Churches that came to Kafa zone after 1991 are; Ethiopian Evangelical Christianity Mekane Yesus, Mulu Wongel Church, Mäsärätä Krâstos Church, Misgana Church, Haywät Berhan Church, Genet Church, Hawaryat Church and so on.
20 There are alamos who converted to Protestant. Some of them told me the reason to convert, ‘Eqo, my spirit, commanded me to convert’, or ‘I was ill at that time.’
21 Interestingly, even some of alamo who have not converted yet greet each other in this way in Gesha wârâda.
Fifthly, those Kafa and Manjo who converted to Protestant began to visit each other’s houses and share their meals. In addition, I was told that some Manjo recently chose Kafa Protestants to become God-parents for their children.

7. Conclusion
Because conversion to Protestant caused drastic changes in the life style of the Manjo, even changes not directly related to the conversion have been associated with it in a cause-and-effect relationship. The Manjo tend to explain these changes, especially the decline of hunting by referring to their conversion to Protestant. However, hunting had already been on the decline before Protestant churches even entered the area. As mentioned above the Manjo were gradually shifting to agriculture after the Land Reform in 1975, and gave up hunting under official pressures against it under the Derg regime.

Thus, I propose here that the logic the Manjo use here is a strategic way of seeking coexistence with the Kafa. The reason why they resort to such logic is closely related to their religious situation in the Kafa zone. Now, most of the Kafa are Orthodox Christians. Some of the Manjo were converted to Orthodox Christianity under the Derg regime, but joining the Orthodox Church meant being assimilated to the Kafa society, and this was inconceivable for both the Kafa and the Manjo.

However, the proselytizing activities launched by the Protestant Churches in this area were not only a new phenomenon for the Kafa but also for the Manjo. Even today, the Orthodox Christians and Muslims of Kafa regard Protestant as a ‘newcomers’ religion. Becoming Protestants meant possessing a new identity, alien to the residents of Kafa.

Since 1991, conversion of the Manjo to Protestant proceeded rapidly. In Ethiopia, Protestant Churches characteristically focused their missionary activities in societies where missionary church activities were scant. In southern Ethiopia, Ethiopian Orthodox Christianity is connected with the image of the Amhara and not accepted by the local people (Masuda 2001: 183). Alexander, who conducted research on the conversion of the Ari people to Protestant, noted that among the converts there are a bulk of people belonging to occupational groups, for example, potter, tanner and blacksmith. Protestant Churches succeeded in attracting believers by promoting equality and by extending community services. Ethiopian Orthodox Christianity did not solve the problem of ethnic and cultural inequality and hierarchy, and conversion to Orthodox Christianity meant assimilation to ‘Ethiopian’ (Alexander 2005: 145-150).

Qalä Haywät Church, which was first Protestant missionary in Kafa zone, conducted missionary activities since the 1950s and began their activities by extended medical, educational, and other welfare services to the local people. A similar way of initiating missionary activity is reported by many anthropologists conducting research in southern Ethiopia (e.g. Donham 1999, Sato 2002). In Kafa zone, Protestant Churches provided social welfare services and the opportunity for both the Kafa and the Manjo to approach one another. It was an attempt for coexistence in a religious society. In other words, conversion to Protestant was a strategic method exerted by the Manjo aiming at a coexistence with the Kafa.

But this is only one side of the coin. In order to understand the conversion of the Manjo to Protestant, we need to take the aims of the Protestant Churches in consideration. One of Kafa informants told me, ‘I don’t know why, but Protestant Churches and NGOs are fond of the Manjo.’ Some Protestant Churches even attempt to survey the living situation of the Manjo. This indicates that the Manjo are becoming the
target of proselytization by the Protestant Churches. Conversion of the Manjo is not only selected by the Manjo for their own interests, but also effected by the situation of the Kafa society, where Orthodox Christianity was deeply rooted, and the proselytizing strategy of Protestant Churches.

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