

***Ye'kolo-temari: Children's Perspectives on Education, Mobility,  
Social Life and Livelihood in the Ethiopian Orthodox Church  
(EOC) Traditional School in Dangila***

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## Abstract

The goal of this study was to explore *Yek'olo-temari* children's perspective on education, mobility, livelihood and social life in the Ethiopian Orthodox Church (EOC) traditional school. It was conducted based on two months ethnographic fieldwork in Dangila, Ethiopia. Data were collected using interview, participant observation, focus group discussions and field notes from children who are at the age of 15 and below in addition to the lead teacher.

The role of the traditional/religious beliefs of their parents and the children themselves had significant contribution for children to enroll in the traditional school of EOC. All of *Yek'olo-temari* children were migrated from the neighboring rural areas of Dangila. The children migrate to Dangila to evade from domestic works which interfere with their study. Moreover, there is less access to the traditional than the modern schools. *Yek'olo-temari* children have limited contact with their parents because they believe it will interrupt with their daily rehearsal (which is the major learning mechanisms in the school) if they went back to visit them frequently by engaging in different social and domestic work activities.

The major livelihood strategies of *Yek'olo-temari* children were a combination of begging with small poultry entrepreneurship. Beyond subsistence, begging has a traditionally transmitted belief that the children's understanding will be escalated if they beg. Begging food is seen as an activity that instills religious discipline and spiritual development.

The daily life of *Yek'olo-temari* children is dominated by educational activity. The children and the lead teacher, believed that play is less important than education which is considered as a childish activity and a reflection of less maturity. *Yek'olo-temari* children's social relationships were found out to be horizontal, vertical and institutional social relationships. In the horizontal (peer) relationship, sharing and cooperation characterized their friendship after it is initiated by social networking. In the vertical relationships, interdependence was manifested in the children's social relationships with the older students and *Yeneta* (lead teacher). *Yeneta* has the role of social fatherhood beyond the teacher-student relationships. In the institutional relationships, while the church/school offered free education, the children gave different services for the church/school at least once a week. Moreover, their role in perpetuating the tradition for the next generation made the church/school significantly dependent on the children. In this way, the study revealed that *Yek'olo-temari* children and the church/school were socially interdependent and their lives contrast the dominant model of childhood as work-free, playful phase of life course.

## Contents

Acknowledgments.....	i
Abstract.....	ii
Contents.....	iii
List of Figures.....	iv
Acronyms.....	v
Chapter I.....	1
Introduction.....	1
Statements of the problem.....	2
Objectives of the study.....	2
General Objective:.....	2
Specific Objectives:.....	3
Research questions.....	3
Significances of the study.....	3
Structure of the thesis.....	4
Chapter II.....	5
Backgrounds of the study.....	5
The study area.....	5
Dangila district: demography and livelihood.....	5
The school.....	6
Education in Ethiopia.....	7
Chapter III.....	12
Concepts, Theoretical Perspective and Review of Literature.....	12
Concepts and theoretical perspectives.....	12
Child and childhood.....	12
Theoretical Perspective: Social studies of childhood.....	13
Competence, dependence and interdependence.....	18
Peer culture and friendship.....	21
Review of related literatures.....	23
Introduction.....	23
The African social parenthood.....	23
Educational foster: form of child migration in Africa.....	25
Begging, religion and poverty in Ethiopia.....	31

Chapter IV .....	33
Research Methods .....	33
Choosing the field site .....	33
Initial preparations .....	34
Being in the field .....	34
Gate Keepers .....	34
Informed consent .....	35
Purposive Sampling .....	37
Method of data collection .....	38
Data analysis and interpretations .....	45
Ethical and social dilemma.....	46
Chapter V .....	48
Contributing Factors, Migration and Livelihood .....	48
Contributing factors.....	48
Migration .....	53
Migration factors.....	54
Contact with family.....	55
Livelihood strategies.....	57
Introduction.....	57
Begging .....	58
Poultry business .....	64
Traditional Medicine.....	66
Chapter VI.....	68
Social Relationships and Daily Life of <i>Yek'olo-temaris</i> .....	68
A typical <i>yek'olo-temari</i> daily life.....	68
Social relationships.....	71
Horizontal (peer) relationship: Friendship, sharing and cooperation .....	71
Vertical social relationship .....	75
Relationship with the school/church.....	79
Free education .....	79
Service for the school and church .....	79
Chapter VII.....	85
Discussions of Findings .....	85

Chapter VIII .....	97
Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations .....	97
Summary and Conclusions .....	97
Recommendations .....	99
References .....	100
Appendices .....	105

### **List of Figures**

Figure 1 map of the study area .....	5
Figur 2 The school surrounding the church .....	57
Figur 3 cooking time .....	63
Figur 4 children coming from market in front of their room .....	64
Figur 5 <i>Yek'olo-temari</i> child along with his hen inside his room while studying .....	66
Figur 6 <i>Yek'olo-temari</i> child riding bicycle .....	71
Figur 7 <i>Yek'olo-temari</i> children in the school with their friends .....	74
Figur 8 A higher level student scaffolding the lower level student .....	75
Figur 9 <i>Yek'olo-temari</i> child reading on his bed made by older student from local wood....	77
Figur 10 Children taking mud to fix to the house .....	81
Figur 11 A child fixing a mud during the construction, and the nearly finished house built by the students.....	81

### **Acronyms**

EOC	Ethiopian Orthodox Church
EPRDF	Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front
CSA	Central Statistics Agency
MOE	Ministry of Education
UNICEF	United Nation's Children's Funds
UNCRC	United Nations Convention of Children's Rights





# Chapter I

## Introduction

“Tradition” and “modernity” are two social constructs which are open to different interpretations. Arce and Norman (1999) asserted that it is not possible to talk about modernity without tradition. They defined modernity as feeling of being the part of the present with awareness of the past. Bourdieu (1979 [1963]) argues that *modernity is an orientation to a rationally planned future whereas tradition is encased by repetition of the same patterns* (in Burawoy and Von Holdt, 2012, p. 82).

The concept of tradition and modernity express themselves in different social phenomena. Education is one arena in which these constructs have strong implication in children’s lives. Mara (2006) argues that African traditional education is intended to teach cultural modes of thoughts, values and heritages to the young. It is aimed to transfer the tradition from generation to generation. Historian Pankhurst (1992), who is known by his extensive study of Ethiopian history, revealed that the Ethiopian Orthodox Church (EOC) offered a traditional education since the medieval period. EOC was the only provider of education in the country until the western style modern education (which the participants call it locally *Yaskola temihirt*) was introduced in 1908. Although the church education has declined through time with the introduction of the modern school and social change (Habte Sellassie and Tamerat, 1970), it is still practiced in the northern part of Ethiopia (Abebe, 2008).

There are a number of students in the jungles, parish and monasteries to study the traditional church education (Chaillot, 2009). These students are locally called “*Yek’olo-temari*” (Abebe, 2008). In the local terms, the school has different names such as *Yekes temehirt*, *Ye’abinet timihirt*, *yebetehinet temeherit*. The students (*Yek’olo-temaris*) and the society in Dangila, Gojjam area of North Ethiopia call the leading teacher *Yeneta* or *Mergeta*. While *Yek’olo-temari*, and *Yeneta* are used to describe the students and the leading teacher respectively, in the research; I will describe the traditional education by its English term, “traditional education/school,” for convenience.

In the study, *Yek’olo-temari* children are treated as a special group of children because of different (I intended to address in the research), social, cultural, religious/traditional and educational factors which makes them different from other children in Ethiopia. They have their own life style, livelihood strategy, social life and religious commitment which might not

be observed in the majority of other same age children in the country. Therefore, this study focused on the life children who attend the traditional school in Ethiopia in order to contribute knowledge on debates around childhood socialization and education.

### **Statements of the problem**

Various studies have been conducted in the Ethiopian Orthodox Church (EOC) traditional education. Most of the studies focused on the educational system (Alemayehu, 1971(73), Andualem, 2001; Hable Sellassie and Tamerat, 1970) and its tradition as Ethiopian heritage. The uniqueness of the tradition and its influence in the current trend of Ethiopian literature and art (such as music, and painting) were also the other focus of the studies (Johnson, 2011). However, the children (*Yek'olo-temaris*) who are studying the traditional education are given little attention. Scholars who are interested in the tradition of EOC, like Chaillot (2009), argued that the perpetuation of the tradition for future generation is challenged because of the youth's declined interest in the traditional education. While most of the studies are concerned about the continuation of the tradition for the future generation and uncovering the educational practice, I have not found any empirical research that focused on the lives of these children (*Yek'olo-temaris*) who are enrolled in the traditional education.

In this thesis I argue that these children are worthy to be studied by their own right. Therefore, to partially fill this gap, this study is conducted with special emphasis to *Yek'olo-temari* children's life worlds who are studying the traditional education of EOC from their own perspective. First, it addressed the major contributing factors which made children *Yek'olo-temari*. The main migration factors are also the other focus of the study. Following these major background factors of why children become *Yek'olo-temari* and they migrate, the hub of the study is the current lives of *Yek'olo-temari* children in the thematic category of livelihood strategy, social relationships among themselves and with *Yeneta*(the leading teacher), and their typical daily lives.

### **Objectives of the study**

#### **General Objective:**

The general goal of this research is to explore *Yek'olo-temari* children's perspectives on the education, mobility, social life and livelihood strategy in Ethiopia.

### **Specific Objectives:**

This research is intended to address the following specific objectives:

1. To explore the underlining individual, familial, cultural, traditional/religious factors that contributes children to study the traditional education of EOC.
2. To assess *Yek'olo-temari* children's social relationships with their peer.
3. To identify the type of social relationships *Yek'olo-temari* children have with *Yeneta*.
4. To examine *Yek'olo-temari* children's livelihood strategies in EOC's traditional school in Ethiopia.
5. To link the findings related with different dimensions of *Yek'olo-temari* children's life with the global conceptualization of childhood and other empirical studies.

### **Research questions**

The study is conducted to answer the following specific questions:

1. Why do children became *Yek'olo-temari*?
2. Why do *Yek'olo-temari* children migrate and to what extent they have contact with their parents/family?
3. What are the livelihood strategies of *Yek'olo-temari* children in Dangila and what are their traditional/religious implications?
4. What are the daily lives of *Yek'olo-temari* children in the traditional school of EOC?
5. What type of peer relationship (horizontal and vertical) do *Yek'olo-temari* children have in the traditional school of EOC Dangila?
6. What kind of relationship do *Yek'olo-temari* children have with the church/school?

### **Significances of the study**

*Yek'olo-temaris* are special group of children in the context of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church traditional schools. This study will uncover different arenas of their lives ranging from the major reasons why they prefer to study the traditional education to their day to day activities, social relationships, and livelihood and migration factors from their own perspective. The knowledge produced by this study with special emphasis of their voice can be valuable information for policy makers and social service providers in Ethiopia. The *Yek'olo-temaris'*

narrative about their own childhood experience in the dimensions of social relationships, daily life, livelihood and migration experience will be an important asset to the world of knowledge about children and childhood. The study revealed the other dimensions of children and childhood in the context of the global south; there by, it will have its own role in the construction process of childhood. Finally, the research can serve as a reference and a basis for other researchers who are interested to conduct related studies.

### **Structure of the thesis**

The thesis is organized in to eight chapters. The first chapter is the introduction of the study. In the second chapter, backgrounds of the study, relevant information about the study area and the educational system of the traditional schools of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church are discussed. The major concepts used, the theoretical frame work of the study, and related literatures are categorized in the third chapter. The fourth chapter is about the research methods used in the study. The fifth and the sixth chapter are the results of the data analysis. The fifth chapter is about contributing factors, migration and livelihood. The typical daily life of *Yek'olo-temari* children, social and institutional relationships are focused in sixth chapter. The major findings of the study are discussed with other theoretical and empirical literatures in the eighth chapter of the thesis. Finally, recommendations are suggested after drawing concluding remarks in the last chapter.

## Chapter II

### Backgrounds of the study

#### The study area

##### Dangila district: demography and livelihood

Dangila district is under the administration of Awi zone in Amhara region, Ethiopia. The capital of the district is Dangila town which is divided into five administrative *kebeles* (the lowest administrative unit). Geographically, it is located on an elevation of 2200m above the sea level and it is 485km from the capital city, Addis Ababa. On the south Faggeta Lekoma, on the southwest Guangua, on the northwest Jawi, and on the northeast Mirab Gojjam Zone border Dangila district. With Woina Dega (temperature) climate, the annual average rainfall and temperature amount is 1576mm and 17°C, respectively (Fenta, 2002). Dangila is historically known as a center of slave trade. The British Consulate Office was opened in 1926 which is associated with the foundation of the capital of the district, Dangila (Cheesman, 1936; Seltene, 1980; cited in Chane, 2007).

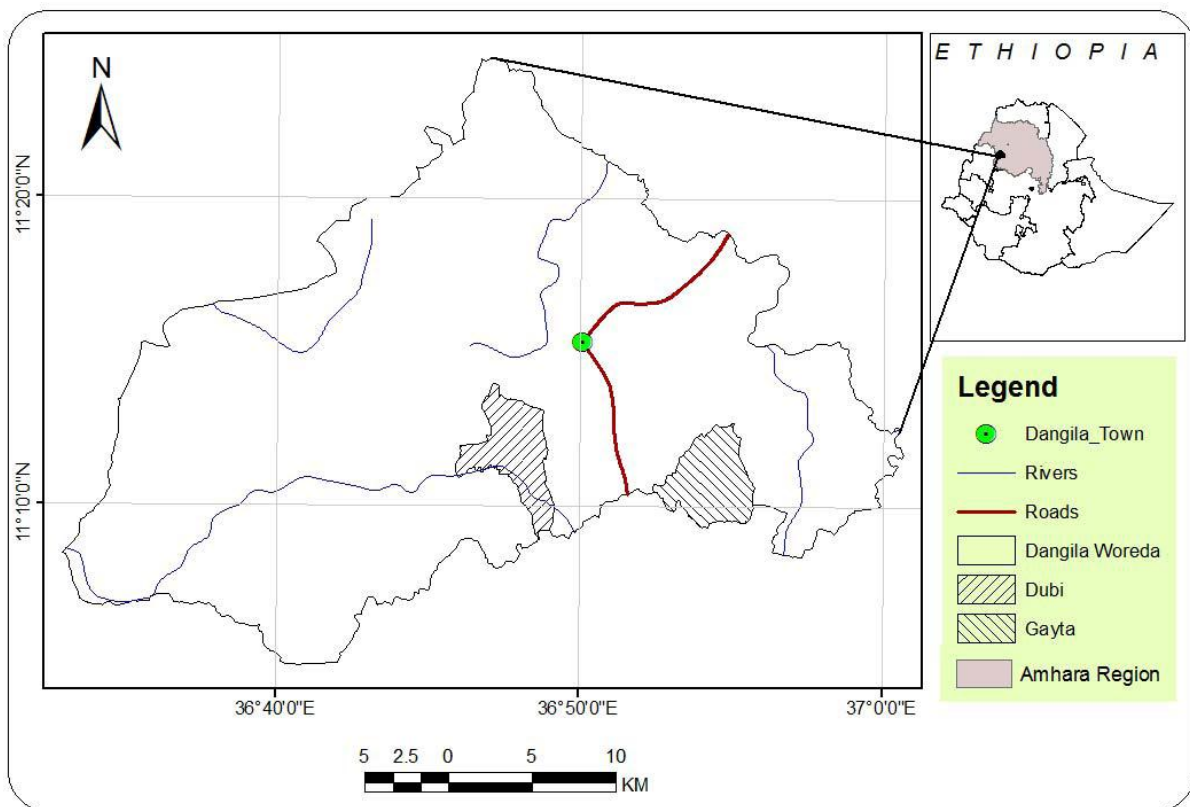


Figure 1 map of the study area

The national census by the Central Statistical agency of Ethiopia (CSA) (2007) yields that Dangila district (*woreda*) has total population of 158, 688(80, 235 men and 78, 453 women). In the district, Dangila town is populated of 27, 001(13, 387 men and 13, 614 female). The statistical figures of the 2007 census show that children constitute the largest section of the population in the district. The proportion of children less than fifteen years of age in Dangila district is 44.48 % ( 70578). The percentages of children below the age of fifteen are higher in the rural area (48.31%) than in Dangila town (44.48%).The people are followers of Orthodox Christianity, 97.9%. While Islam accounts 1.9% and the rest are Protestants.

According to Famine Early Warning System Network (FEWS NET) report (2007), Dangila district is classified as one of the historically food secure area in Amhara region. No history of relief assistance is accounted in this area where surplus crop production ensures food self sufficiency and generates relatively higher cash income. The district is classified under the zone, South West Maize, Finger Millet and Teff Productive (SWM). Dangila is located in woina dega agro-ecology.

The topography of this area is plane with some hills. This region has fertile red soil with high potential for production. The rainy season (*keremt*) lasts from May to October which is relatively long. In the rural part of Dangila *woreda*, with heavy accent on crop production (such as Maize, teff, millet, nug seed and other cash crops), the farmers practice mixed farming with livestock production(such as goat, cow's milk, chicken and egg sales). While a mixed farming is the livelihood strategy of the rural area, in the Dangila town the majority of the people's livelihood depends mainly on petty trade (Chane, 2007). The vegetations predominated in this area are scattered indigenous tree species like *Cardia Africana* and *wildfig* as well as planted eucalyptus trees around homesteads and on communally owned land (FEWS NET, 2007).

### **The school**

The traditional school which is studied for this thesis is located socially and physically in St. Marry church in Dangila town. As most church and monasteries are characterized in Ethiopia, the school is surrounded by big and green trees. The school is centered on grave houses (cemetery). In Dangila, deceased people are buried inside the compound of churches. The

families of the deceased person built a house above the burial place. In these houses, destitute elderly and monks commonly live. In this case, students are residing in the grave houses. There are only two electric lights in the school, one for the teachers (*yeneta*) home and for the classroom. But, students use their own small kerosene light (which is known as *Kuraz* in the local language). There is no water facility, but the students buy outside the town for drink and they fetch water from the small river for sanitations.

The leading teacher of the school told me that there are around 80 students in the school. All of the students came from the neighboring rural areas. All of the students are boys. As the leading teacher (*yeneta*) informed me, the gender issue is related with the religion. A woman cannot be a priest and give evangelical service in front of the people in the religion of Orthodox Christianity in Ethiopia. These might discourage girls to attend the traditional education. According to him, however, they can study in the traditional school for their knowledge or as a preparation for modern education. In my view, this might be the combined effect/cause of the societies' attitude towards females. But, I will not go in detail with the gender issue because the focus of the study is the life of children who are already in the school.

## **Education in Ethiopia**

### ***Historic overview***

Historians (such as Pankhurst) discussed that Ethiopia is one of the oldest nations in the world with rich tradition. Pankhurst (1986) noted that the development of education in Ethiopia can be seen from two different perspectives, “traditional” and “western” systems. Until the expansion of western educational idea in Ethiopia in early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Ethiopian educational system was characterized by traditional approach. This traditional system is deeply rooted in the Ethiopian Orthodox church and is recognized as one of the oldest educational system in the world.

Hable Sellassie and Tamerat (1970) asserted that the church was the only provider of schools for centuries. These traditional schools served as a guardian of the traditions and its contribution for the continuity of the tradition for the future generation that has lasted to the present is immense. Pankhurst (1992) added, when children reach around the age of 4, they began attending church services during the medieval period. At this time, they began their first stage formal education. At this stage of education, the curriculum consisted of primarily

of drill and practice of the alphabet. Followed by the mastery of the mastery of alphabet, mastery of religious texts began with the psalms of David.

Ethiopia has a long story of didactic education provided almost exclusive to male children. By the end of nineteenth century, a few changes emerged in the formal education. The emperor of Ethiopia, MenelikII(1889-1913), realized that more advanced education would be needed for the development of modern Ethiopia. In order to fulfill this aspiration, Menelik established the first public school in 1908 (Pankhurst, 1992). The modern education in Ethiopia has been the subject of modification with change of regimes in the country. There were different educational policies and curriculum in the country during each regimes, monarchy, and socialist and, the current, Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia. Currently, the Ethiopia has educational structure of kindergarten, primary school (eight years education), secondary education (four years) and higher education (Ministry of Education, 1994). According to UNICEF report, the primary school (modern) net enrollment ratio in Ethiopia is 84% from 2007-2009 ([http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/ethiopia\\_statistics.html](http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/ethiopia_statistics.html))

### ***The traditional education of EOC: Forms, modes of learning and structure***

The traditional education of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church (EOC) has its forms, modes of learning and structures passed from generation to generation. There are different branches in each levels of the study. The teaching method differs accordingly with the level and form of the education. But, learning by heart characterizes commonly in all forms of the instruction. In this section, I will discuss only the learning process at the beginning stages of the school as the participants of the study are in this level. Furthermore, it will not be possible to discuss all the learning process in this brief introduction of the teaching system as a background of the current study. I discussed the branches of the education by dividing in two major levels, *Nebab bet* (reading school) and Higher schools. The reading school is the beginning to pursue different branches of the traditional education at higher schools. Students in each branches of the education at the higher level must pass through the *Nebab Bet* (reading school) where the basics of the study are offered.

**1) Nebab Bet (Reading school):** is the first stage of the traditional education that focused on primary instruction. There are three stages in this division of the traditional education namely,

a) Fidel (Alphabets) Instruction



- b) Drill in the reading of various religious texts
- c) Reading of the Psalm of David (Hable Sellassie and Tamerat, 1970).

Fidel (alphabet) instruction is the first stage in the traditional education in which children learn the set of Ge'ez letters called *Fidel*. The child learn these letters, by pointing on the letters kept in order using a straw from left to right, the child name and say it loudly. The child does this repeatedly so that he will not forget the large number of characters (33 in 7 orders). This oral method of teaching in the first level of the education is called *Qutir* method (which means learning by counting) (Hable Sellassie and Tamerat, 1970).

Reading text follows when the child identifies each letters, and first epistle of St. John is used as text book. Including *Qutir*, there are four methods to teach reading texts. *Ge'ez* is a drilling method the students start reading by simply putting letters together in a chanting form and read them as a word. When the teacher believes that the student has mastered this stage, *Wurdnebab* follows. In this method, the student masters the accents, the pauses and the soft or hard pronunciations of the syllables. The final stage is known as *Qum Nebab* children should be able to read without mistake at a surface level. In the four steps of the drilling method, the child spends months till he memorizes the characters, words and reading of the texts (Hable Sellassie and Tamerat, 1970).

After the students have identified each characters of the alphabet he will pass to the next level of the education, reading lessons from religious books such as epistles of St. Paul, St. James, and St. Peter, Gospel of St. John, praises of St. *Tamara Mariam* (the miracles and wonder of St.Mary), and Tamara Iyasus (the miracles of Jesus; the Acts of the Apostles). The children are expected to properly read these entire holy books even if they may not fully understand the meanings of the books. These books are used in the church service. The learning methods mentioned above are also used in this stage (Hable Sellassie and Tamerat, 1970).

When students are able to read the texts, they will learn to memorize daily prayers in the educational program of *yemata timihirt* (which means evening lesson). In the *yemata timihirt*, children went to the house of the teacher and learn by orally. The teacher or an advanced student cite and recite line by line what has to be memorized by the student. While the advanced student recites the standard prayer verse-by-verse, the pupil should repeat what has been recited until he is able to say it correctly. This practice is done for months until the teacher believed that the child has mastered the daily prayers by heart (Hable Sellassie and Tamerat, 1970).

If the child has accomplished this stage, he will be allowed to read Psalms which is the last stage of *Nebab bet*. By *Wurdnebab* and *Qum Nebab* reading methods discussed above, the child learns to read a psalm which is the most devotional book in Ethiopian Orthodox. Reading the psalm is practiced for several months because it is prerequisite to continue to the higher schools. A test is not required for the next level rather the teacher checks the students' progress in a daily basis and he decided when he thinks the child has mastered reading psalm. This stage is highly festive by the students and they can give service in the church if priests are not around and they have got the social elite status (Hable Sellassie and Tamerat, 1970).

**2) Higher Schools:** As Chaillot (2009) summarized it, after a student has finished and mastered reading the psalm, he can study in the higher education of the traditional schools. The higher school of the traditional education of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church has three branches, *Zema Bet* (Music school), *Quene Bet* (Poetry school), and *Metsehaf Bet* (Literature school). The music school (*Zema Bet*) has its own sub-divisions,

... the study of the chant book (*degwa*) which has five branches (*yohannes, meraf, tsoma degwa* for Lent, *astemero* and *fasiku*) ; hymns sung after communion (*zemmare*) and prayers for the dead (*mawasit*) ; 'the way of standing' or 'moving' (*aqwaqwam*) for monthly and annual festivals accompanied by sistra, prayer sticks and drums executed by the choir while singing (*mahelet*). The liturgy (*qedasse*) and the prayers of the Hours (*se'atat*) are studied separately (Chaillot, 2009, p. 528).

The present school at Dangila, where this study is conducted, focus on *degwa*(chant book). But the first level of the education (*nebab bet*) is also offered because it is a prerequisite before students studied the advanced level, *degwa*(chant book).

The *Quene Bet* (Poetry school) teach students about the composition of poetry (*Qene*) sung during church ceremonials and testimonies. As Chailote (2009) stated:

In order to compose a *qene*, the student must comment on passages of the Bible in *aqene* for the feast of the day; or on the lives of saints for the feast of saints; he may also introduce moral precepts and even contemporary events. The main aim is to give a double meaning to words and sentences, with symbolism and allusion, as in parables (p. 528)

Gold and wax (*semena work*) model is the most famous model of poetry in the traditional school. It involves a literature skill to find a double meaning of poems or verses. The society expresses their feelings, sorrows, and complains in politics or governance in these kind proverbs that encompasses double meanings (Hable Sellassie and Tamerat, 1970). *Qene Bets* (poetry schools) are prevalent in Gojjam( such as Washera, Tselalo, amd gonj), Gondar, and Wollo (Chaillot, 2009).

The last branch in the higher school is *Metshaf bet* (Literature school). It is the school of commentaries containing of four sub- branches. *Beluy* is one of the sub-branch in which students studied and commented upon 46 books of the Old Testament. *Liqawent* is the second branch in which students studied various writings of the church fathers (such as Saint John Chrysostom) and commented about them. The Canon law (*Feteha Negest*) is the third sub-branch in which the calendar calculation (*Bahre Hasab*) is studied. Ethiopia has its own different calendar system which is different from the rest of the world and that comes out of this branch of literature school (*metsehaf bet*). *Menekosat* is the last branch which focused on the monastic literature (Hable Sellassie and Tamerat, 1970).

## Chapter III

### Concepts, Theoretical Perspective and Review of Literature

This chapter discusses the main conceptual and theoretical frameworks as well as the related literature reviews. The first section of the chapter focuses on the major conceptual and theoretical frameworks used in the research. In the last section of the chapter, related empirical literatures conducted in the Ethiopian, African and global context are reviewed.

#### Concepts and theoretical perspectives

In this section of the chapter, the major concepts and theoretical perspectives that shaped and guided this study are discussed. By beginning with what child and childhood mean in this study, different branches in the social studies of childhood are discussed. After I give brief discussion of each branches of the social studies of childhood, I attempted to discuss the role of each branches in the context of *Yek'olo-temari* children eclectically.

#### Child and childhood

Childhood is understood in varied ways in different societies and time. The western middle class ideal and the paradigm in the developmental psychology base the global model of childhood as the dominant model (Ansell, 2005). According to UN convention on the right of the child (1989), a child is every human being below the age of eighteen. In the global model, childhood is considered as a time to be cared for by others, free for learning and leisure, without responsibility (Bourdillon, 2006). It also tends to view the third world childhood as abnormal experience without considering the broader social, cultural and economical context. The global model situates children to be cared and brought up in biological family (Ansell, 2005). Children in the global south are considered as having abnormal childhood by situating them in the context of the western idea of associating children with play and school. Children in the this part of the world work and go to school more often than being dedicated to play and school unlike the western practice where childhood is reserved for play and learning (Punch, 2003).

Stegman(2004) argued that childhood practice in the global north, in which children are to be cared and protected from the adult world of work, is admitted as a global model in which all the societies in the global south should strive to attain (in Bordillon, 2006, p.1205). By taking

the idea of O Connell Davidson, Bordillon(2006) asserted that the dualistic categorization of child and adult could oversimplified the complex nature of children's life at different age. According to Bordillon, there is continuity between the children's and the adult world. People who work closely with children find it difficult to draw a border line between the two states and how individuals transit from one state to the other (Ibid). The variability of childhood in different parts of the world is respected in the social studies of childhood. In the next section, I will discuss the social studies of childhood which is the major theoretical framework of the study.

### **Theoretical Perspective: Social studies of childhood**

The theoretical frame work while doing research with children and childhood determines how children are conceptualized in the study. This conceptualization, in turn, determines how methods are designed in the research process. This study is conducted drawing on concepts from the new paradigm social studies of childhood (sociology of childhood). The sociology of childhood is a paradigm that brought different explanation and methodological approach from social sciences in the study of child and childhood. The conceptualization of children as passive recipient of the adult in socialization theory and the universalized and stage wise developmental psychology were highly criticized in 1980s and 1990s by the new paradigm the sociology of childhood. This was the time the sociology of childhood grew rapidly. Childhood was placed in the sociological agenda (Prout, 2005). One of the major criticisms of these mainstream theories was silence of children's voice. James and Prout (1990) reviewed Hardman's (1973) idea that children might be considered as "muted groups" in the same way as women were muted historically. 'Muteness' is a concept used to explain children's silence and absence of interest by social science. Hardman proposed children to be heard, and studied in their own right (Ibid).

Hardman's work was one of earlier contribution for emergence of the new paradigm, social studies of childhood (sociology of childhood). However, the concept of childhood as a social construction begins with the historian Philip Aries's (1962) idea that childhood didn't exist in medieval society. According to Aries, children were considered as miniature of adults. Starting from 15<sup>th</sup> century, however, children begun to appear as a children because of the society's new attitude towards their special nature and formal education. Later on, different works of scholars have contributed for the development of the new paradigm the social studies of childhood.

James and Prout(1990) point out key features of what they call the ‘emergent paradigm’. Childhood is conceptualized as a social construction which is different from universalized biological maturity. Rather it is understood as one of particular structural and cultural constitute of many societies. The other characteristics of the new paradigm is that variability of childhood that there are different childhoods rather than single and universal phenomenon. It is a phenomenon which cannot be seen detached from other social variables such as class, gender or ethnicity. They also noted that children’s social relationships and cultures have the right to be studied free from the influence of adults view and concerns. The use of ethnographic approach while doing research with children to grasp their day to day activities is one of the key features discussed by James and Prout. This study is conducted using ethnography in Ethiopia. I will discuss about this research approach in detail in the method chapter.

Within the social studies of childhood, there are different approaches. For instance, Alanen (2001) reviewed the three sub-fields in sociology of childhood: (de)constructive sociology of childhood, sociologies of children and structural sociology of childhood. These fields have a lot of commonalities such as the value of the socio-cultural factors in the construction of child and childhood. The difference is the matter of emphasis. Deconstructive sociology of childhood considers childhood as a result of discourses in a society through which ideas, images and knowledge are formed. These discursive ideas influences practices related with childhood in a society. The sociologies of children focused on children’s activities and perspectives in their own local context while they are acting. The structural sociology of childhood on the other hand consider childhood as a social structure and macro-level factors are given due attention In this study, each of the branches of the social studies of childhood has their own input in theorizing the research context and guiding the whole research process. After I give a brief discussion on each branch of the social studies of childhood, I will discuss the combined application of each branch in this study.

### ***(De) constructive sociology of childhood***

(De)constructive sociology of childhood is often engaged in deconstructing assumptions taken for granted by mainstream theories. For instance, it deconstructs the naturalization and universalization of childhood (Jenks, 1996). As Cunningham (1991) argued *the construction of childhood is of course a continuing process: ‘childhood’ is never fixed and constant* (p.7). Jenks (1996) emphasized *the positive side of this deconstruction of the child experience into*

*an assembly of signifying discourses is to explore certain possibilities within the social character of that encoding* (p.2). The explanation of children's aspects from the biological perspective predominantly by giving less emphasis on the role of the socio-cultural aspects has been highly criticized by constructivists. Childhood is conceptualized as a social construction which is a variable across different contexts.

Generally speaking, this sub-branches of the social studies of childhood focus on the deconstructions of ideas, beliefs, and assumptions and there by reconstructing childhood across different cultural contexts. Alanen (2001) summarized that proponents of this branch argue the discourses of childhood impacts their practice and it is worth to deconstruct and reconstruct them.

### ***Sociologies of children***

Growth of interpretive perspective (particularly phenomenology and symbolic interaction) has significantly contributed in the change of direction regarding childhood. These perspectives promoted children to be seen as social actors and childhood as a particular kind of social reality. For instance, the focus of interactions sociology on everyday activities of social life initiate questioning what has been taken as for granted by the process of detailed and critical reflection. In the interpretive perspective, social reality is not fixed, constant or unitary. Instead, it is always created by the social actors living in a particular society. Sociologists in this perspective advocate that explanation of social life needs to understand participants meaning of life in its specific occurrence (James and Prout, 1990).

Researchers in this approach emphasize the importance of studying children from their own perspective in their own right. They study children's life situations, activities, relationships, knowledge's and experiences directly. Children in this research approach are considered as active participant in the construction of their own childhood as such they are taken as a social actor in this process (Alanen, 2001). Children are understood as social actors in the sociologies of children. James and Prout (1990) pointed out that children are not passive recipient of the social structure and process rather they are an active participant in the construction of their own lives as well as the lives of others surrounding them.

### ***Structural sociology of childhood***

As the name itself explains the structural component of childhood in a society is the focus of proponents of these approaches. Qvortrups (2002) noted, the central pillar of understanding the sociology of childhood is consideration of childhood as a distinct form of social structure like gender, ethnicity, class ...etc. Even though childhood is a temporary phenomenon for individual children, it is a permanent structure in social life. Children's everyday activity in their own particular construction of childhood is not the main focus of structuralism. Rather it focuses on the construction and reconstruction of childhood in the continuous interplay with other social structure (Alanen, 2001).

Qvortrups (1993) hypothesized that *childhood is in principle exposed to the same societal forces as adulthood, but in particular ways*. He emphasizes the importance of looking influence from the macro-social parameters not only from their particular lives. He challenged the idea that children live in special world as society is a common terrain that influences all social structures. It is not possible to avoid common macro level social events that happen outside their microcosms like economics forces, environmental events, physical planning, and political decisions. These have an impact on children's lives and no how childhood is formed (Qvortrups, 2002).

Qvortrup explained societal forces influence childhood in a particular way in a sense that their impact is either indirect or their immediate impact may not be easily recognizable. He also added the fact that in most of the times children and not considered in legislations are made. In order to sociologically understand childhood those factors that are common to all childhood and that make them different from other social groups (such as adulthood) need to be identified. The importance of comparing childhood among other groups in a society, across different nations, and different historical context are given attention.

Generation analysis, according to Alanen (2001), is one the major focus of structural sociology of childhood. Children are categorized as one social group distinguished from adulthood. Based on her argument, the structural aspect of generation is not often used in studying childhood. As social phenomenon of childhood included the structural as well as relational complex of generation, it needed investigation focusing on children and childhood.



### ***Combined approach***

In 1960 and 1970, there were two competing sociology, one focusing on “agency” and the other focusing on “structure”. Interpretive sociologists focused creative activity, purpose and negotiating social relationships among social actors. Structuralisms focus on the determination of the system of social relationship (mode of production, power and domination, belief system, ideology) in a society (James and Prout, 1990). Approaches that emphasize on agency of children referred to as sociology of children and on the other hand, approaches that look children as feature of social structure, structural sociology of childhood.

Prout(2005) believed that the new sociology of childhood is troubled theoretically that the analytical categories that childhood sociologists uses are widely dichotomous. He argued that the concepts are mutual exclusion while childhood is becoming more ambiguous and divers in contrary. According to Prout, in overcoming the division of structure and agency, although the deconstructive sociologies of Gidden, Elias and Bourdieu succeed, in practice and output of childhood sociologists the dualism reappears over and over again.

Giddens (1979) tried to unify the concept of both structure and agency. In his theory of “structuration”, he argued that *every act which contribute to the reproduction of the structure is also an act of production and as such it initiate change by altering the structure at the same time as it produces it* (1979, p 69, cited in James and Prout, 1990). Giden’s stracturation have significant theoretical implication in this study. *Yek’olo-temari* children (participants of this study) are theoretically conceptualized in this sense of structuration. The participants are theorized as social agents with in the possibilities and constraints of the social structure (church/religion/tradition). By grounding on this main premise, combined approach of the three branches of the social studies of childhood will serve as the main theoretical frame work of this study.

From the sociologies of children (Actor-oriented) perspective, the participant’s view on their daily life, education, mobility, and social life is explored based on ethnographic research method. The role of the social structure (belief system, religion and tradition) on the participants life is also given due attention in understanding the research problem even though children’s perspective was the major emphasis in the data collection process. By taking children’s perspective on their childhood experience in the traditional education of EOC, the study attempt to (de)construct the global view of childhood by giving grounded empirical evidence in the context of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church traditional schools. These are the

major justifications for choosing a combined approach of the three main branches within the social studies of childhood. I found it difficult to theoretically understand the participants' view from a single branch of the social studies of childhood. The combined approach helped me to see *Yek'olo-temari* children's life holistically.

### **Competence, dependence and interdependence**

The new paradigm in the social studies of childhood criticizes the assumptions of pre-sociological perspectives on children and childhood that constructed them as vulnerable and dependent beings by putting children in a developmental paradigm. It conceived children, primarily, in need of care (Kjørholt, 2004). The dominant pairs of socialization and development represented child and childhood as natural, passive, incompetent and incomplete (James and Prout, 1990). On the other hand, in the social studies of childhood, children are understood as an active agent in the construction and determination of their own social lives, persons around them and the society in which they live at large (Ibid). In this paradigm children are often taken as "being" rather than "becoming". Lee (2001) reviewed Qvortrup's (1994) idea on the concepts of beings and becoming in the following paragraph:

"The human being is, or should be, stable, complete, self possessed and self-controlling. The human being is, or should be, capable of independent thought and action, an independence that merits respect. The human becoming, on the other hand, is changeable and incomplete and lacks the self-possession and self-control that would allow it the independence of thought and action that merits respect. The division between beings and becoming is that between the complete and independent and the incomplete and dependent" (in Lee, 2001, p. 7)

Putting children and adults on the two opposite sides is not only reflected in academic discourses. It is also prevalently observed in the UN convention on the Rights of the Child. There is a strong tendency to see adults and children as fundamentally different types of humans (Lee, 2001). Categorizing children between the two dichotomies is a focus of controversy. Kjørholt (2004) argued that it is essential to be reserved from putting children in dichotomous constructions of subjectivity as either dependent or independent, either mature or immature, either vulnerable or competent, either equal or different. *All people are active agents and constantly in the state of dependency* (Kesby, 2006, P.199; cited in Abebe, 2008b, p.33).

Lee (2001) also strongly argued the problematic nature of the concept of dependence which is widely tagged for children. He said that there are different forms of dependence that varies in degree. It can differ from partial and specific form to total and general forms. One might need assistance to complete a given task independently. In general terms, both adults and children have dependencies (Lee, 2001). The people whom they are with; the type of activity and where they are doing it determines children's experiences of agency (Abebe, 2012).

Alanen(2001) has articulated the interdependence of childhood and adulthood the following way:

'Construction' involves agency (of children and adults); it is best understood as a practical and even material process, and needs to be studied as practice or a set of practices. It is through such practices that the two generational categories of children and adults are recurrently produced and therefore they stand in relations of connection and interaction, of interdependence: neither of them can exist without the other, what each of them is (a child, and adult) is dependent on inter relation to the other, and change in one is tied to change in the other (2001, p.21).

Evidence from the rural Ethiopia indicates the interdependent nature of children's life with the family and the broader socio-cultural and economical contexts. Abebe (2012) studied how working children negotiate their rights interdependently with the wider social networks of the extended family system in Gedeo, Ethiopia. Interdependency in Ethiopian rural children create conducive condition for children to practice different levels of individual autonomy while they negotiate the dynamics in which the collective interest. Inter and intra-generational relationships are the characteristic of many children in the rural Ethiopia. While they contribute for the household livelihood strategy, they receive assistance or inheritance to enable them to acquire more independency. Children in the rural Ethiopia *are neither independent citizens nor autonomous individuals with separate right but interdependent beings whose daily livelihoods are intricately entwined with and are inseparable from that of the family collective* (Abebe 2012, p.2).

After looking at the dominance of the collective strategies in shaping children's ability to contribute to the daily and generational reproduction in the rural Ethiopia, Abebe further argued that children's right should be placed within the wider socio-cultural and politico-

economic context of their livelihoods and that the hub of the analysis should include the interrelatedness of rights, duties and obligations rather than limiting on the role of children with in the households and/or families.

The extent to which working children exercise agency depends on the interaction between personal agency and complex social, economic and political structures that shape livelihood opportunities and constraints. These constitute family contexts, institutions, traditions, rules and norms, as well as interpersonal relationship with other social actors in material context (Abebe, 2012, p. 7).

This thesis draws on the above understandings in social studies of childhood to explain the agency, and interdependent social lives and strategies of children who attend traditional education in rural Ethiopian context. The research process in qualitative study is characterized as going back and forth between the empirical data and theory (literature). In the following paragraphs, I will discuss the lives of *Yek'olo-temari* children (participants), which come out form this study, by situating them in the continuum of agency and structure and this may give substantial idea about the interdependent character of their experience.

### ***Situating Yek'olo-temari children on the continuum of agency and structure***

In this study, *Yek'olo-temari* children's life in the traditional education of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church schools seems to be the result of negotiation between their agency and the structure. The role of the structure (the religious belief system) cannot be given less emphasis. The structure has its own influence on the reason why children became *Yek'olo-temari*; migration factors; their social relationships and daily life. *Yek'olo-temari* show their agency by negotiating with in the social structure of the religious/'traditional beliefs and intergenerational relationships. The social studies of childhood perceived children as independent and competent (James and Prout, 1990).

In this study, *Yek'olo-temari* children are sometimes dependent in other instances they are independent. They are capable of living independently far from their parents but they are temporally dependent (Lee, 2001) on the older students' in terms of education and daily life skills. The church is also to some extent dependent on these children in terms of the existence of the tradition and the like, and vice versa. In short, *Yek'olo-temari* children are active social

agents within the social structure, and this relationship is best explained by interdependence rather than polarization.

### **Peer culture and friendship**

In children's lives, peer relationship is largely studied by psychologists and this is promoted as a universal phenomenon in these studies. However, researches in different parts of the world evidenced its diversity (Montgomery, 2009). Although the underlying assumption on children's peer interactions is universal in studies in developmental psychology, in sociology and anthropology, the assumption of children both affect and are affected by the society and culture is recognized. Corsaro (1985, 2003) has done extensive research on children's peer culture in different cultures by ethnographic methods. He defined peer culture as *a stable set of activities or routines, artifacts, values and concerns that children produce and share in the interaction with peers* (1992, p.162 in Montgomery, 2009). Corsaro (2006) emphasized:

Although some aspects of children's peer relations and cultures may be universal, the way these aspects are developed and manifested, and other features of children's cultures, are clearly affected by the larger cultural context in which they develop" (p.96)

Not only Corsaro who argued that children's peer interaction should be contextualized in the cultural frame they are living but also other sociological and anthropological studies have given due attention to the importance of culture to understand children's peer interaction:

Cultural beliefs and values are likely reflected at each level of children's peer relationships, including interactions, friendships, social networks, and acceptance and rejection within the larger peer group. At the *interactional* level, cultural norms and values may affect how sociable or active children are with peers (*Chen and French and Schneider 2006: p.7*)

Corsaro (2006) concluded, even if there are wider ranges of peer culture identified, control and share are two central themes consistently appear. According to him, *children make a persistent attempt to gain control of their lives and to share that control with each other* (p. 103). Children make friends within their peers even though the basis of making friends may be different across cultural and social variables. At this point it is important to quote

Corsaro's summary of his study conducted in White- middle class Americans, Afro-Americans and Italians on children friendship to show the role of culture in peer interaction:

I found that Italian and African American preschool children often forge and develop friendship ties through debates and teasing. Neither these children nor their teachers were overly sensitive to conflict and disagreements. In fact, it was clear that disagreements, debates, and teasing were valued in peer relations and were often the basis of friendship and group bonds, whereas White middle-class American preschool children were highly sensitive to conflict and quickly became upset when it occurred, often going to teachers for aid in settling their dispute (Corsaro, 2006, p.105).

This implies that children's social interaction is not universal. Rather, cultural norms and values have their own contribution in the way children's social behavior is manifested in their interaction with their peers. As it has been documented in Corsaro's study, while conflict is a basis for the solidarity of the group in some culture, it has also the opposite reaction in other culture.

To sum up, the underlining conceptual and theoretical perspectives of the social studies of childhood discussed so far have wider implication in various stages of this study. First and foremost, the theoretical assumptions of considering children as a sole source of data about their life has shaped this study to take *Yek'olo-temari* children's perspective as a primary source of the empirical data. As the social studies of childhood promotes the diversity of childhood across different parts of the world, the religious and cultural setting of *Yek'olo-temari* children has grounded the study which is responsible for the difference observed in the social phenomena called *childhood*. This theoretical discussion has been reflected in the methodology used in the study. The selection of the ethnographic approach emanates from this social constructivist theoretical perspective. Generally, this theoretical perspectives and concepts have, either implicit or explicit. role from the conception to the final process of the study.

## **Review of related literatures**

### **Introduction**

Bass (2004) asserted, in sub-Saharan Africa, children move between rural and urban settings because of multiple factors. According to Goody (1982), child foster is one form of cultural practice which makes children from place to place in Africa. She explained that there are different types of foster in Africa. Educational/apprentice foster is a type of delegate parenting which emphasis on educational parental role. For instance, evidences in west and central Africa shows that children live far from their parents to study Quranic education. These children are usually boys and they are called *Talibes* in the local terms. *Talibes* are under the full custody of their teachers called *marabouts*. These schools are locally named *Daaras* or *Makarantar* which are found Islamic traditionalism and master-disciple (Bass, 2004; Thorsen, 2012).

Dominantly, in the northern part of Ethiopia, *Yek'olo-temaris* are children enrolled in the traditional education of Ethiopian Orthodox Church traditional schools. They live apart of form their parents to engage in the traditional education (Abebe, 2008). In this section of the chapter, I will discuss about empirical literatures focusing on children migrated in the context of traditional/religious education in Africa and Ethiopia. First, I will discuss the social and cultural meanings of parenthood in Africa beyond the conventional (biological) definition to discuss the relationship between *Yek'olo-temar* children and their lead teacher. Next, I will focus on the *talibe* (children enrolled in Quranic education/educational foster in sahel religion) children. This is because the *talibe* children have similarities with *Yek'olo-temaris* even if they are in two different religions (Islam and Orthodox Christianity). Then, I will discuss about *Yek'olo-temar* children in Ethiopia from few literatures I found. Here, I want to note that I was not able to find empirical research on the lives of *Yek'olo-temari* children. Finally, I will review child begging in Ethiopia which is the major livelihood strategy of the participants. I focused on begging because the findings of the research indicated that begging has cultural meaning beyond the livelihood strategy.

### **The African social parenthood**

Children can move from rural to urban and the reverse because of different reasons. The phenomenon of foster parentage in Africa is prevalent. The placement of children away from their parents to pursue education is practiced in different parts of Africa. They are given

custody of a teacher to be trained and reared (Thorsen, 2012; Bass, 2004). In this section of the related literatures, I will discuss children's mobility as a result of the practice of educational or religious foster in Africa. Before moving to the foster practice, I will discuss some of the issues in the meaning and practice of parenthood in Africa.

Goody (1982) has done extensive research in parenthood and social reproduction in West Africa. She has contributed in giving the African perspective in parenthood beyond the conventional parenthood system of the west. When she elucidates the diversity of parental roles, she said:

...real parenthood may be linked different combination of parental roles in different societies. Very often it is defined in physiological terms. But in many societies the 'real' parents are seen as those through whom civil/kinship status is transmitted...(p.17)

According to Goody, in some societies, relationship defines what it means a parent beyond the biological attachment between the adult and the child. She come to conclusion, *in every society 'real' parents are defined as the adults through whom a new member of the society receives social identity, social placement* (p.17). Goody recognized that there are different kinds of parenthood- physiological, jural, and educational. Based on her argument, different societies give different emphasis for these three types of parenthood. She stressed that the emphasis given for the physiological, jural or educational parenthood is not arbitrary rather it is a response to balance cultural and institutional features in a given social system.

In Ethiopia, biology may not necessarily describe parenthood or kinship. Based on the hagiographies of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, Kaplan (1997) mentioned the concept of "spiritual kinship" to discuss about the parent-child relationship during the medieval period in Ethiopia:

The parent-child connection, or more specifically that of father to son, was commonly used to describe the relationship between abbots and their monks. The language of "spiritual kinship," with its father children, sons, etc., is so common that it goes almost unnoticed in most discussions. It should, however, be noted that believers and disciples were frequently referred to as daqiqa ( children of) or walda (sons of) a particularly religious leader. The son-father relationship also served as a model for correct behavior (P.522).



The *relational* concept of parenthood in Ethiopia explains the situation of relationships between *Yek'olo-temari* and *yeneta* in EOC. In the following sections, I will discuss about children who are in educational foster by living away from their parents. This kind of foster or migration for education is also widely practiced in Quranic schools, in Sahel region of Africa. Therefore, I will focus on the lives of these children as they have some relationship with the focus of the study.

### **Educational foster: form of child migration in Africa**

#### ***The case of Talibe children***

Child foster is a delegate parenting which can be done on different grounds in African context. The level of care and education given depends on the underpinning reason for foster, cultural, religious and economic factors. Here, I will start the discussion by taking some of the points of Goody (1982) regarding fosterage in African context. Goody defined fosterage as *institutionalized delegation of the nurturance and/or educational elements of the parental role* (P.23). She distinguished two general types of fostering: crisis fostering and voluntary fostering. The former is initiated by necessity in which the natal family is not able to rear child because of different reasons such as illness, death... etc.

According to Goody, beyond the basic needs of food and care, the primary task of the foster-parent in the older age is training in adult role skills and the value of the society. Educational or apprentice is the term she used to define in the type of foster which gives emphasis on educational parental role. The connection between the child and the delegate parent is one of the focuses of Goody, *...the ties which link foster-parent and foster-child to be essentially affective and moral in character based as they are on the reciprocities of rearing* (p.23). For the purpose of this study, I will focus reviewing study material on educational foster in Africa.

In sub-Saharan Africa, children move between rural and urban settings because of multiple factors. During the post-colonial era, children are sent to the extended family in urban settings to learn religious or secular education, learn trade, or to assist the extended family in the urban (Bass, 2004). The social relationship within the kin network has role in creating opportunities for the movement of children from rural to urban regions. Those who have with few social networks send their children to be fostered in *pseudokin and nonkin* (p.88) in the urban settings (Ibid).

Evidences in west and central Africa shows that children live far from their parents for Quranic education (Bass, 2004; Thorsen, 2012). These children are usually boys and they are called *Talibes* in the local terms. *Talibes* are under the full custody of their teachers called *marabouts*. These schools are locally named *Daaras* or *Makarantar* which are found Islamic traditionalism and master-disciple pedagogy. *Talibes* are from African countries where Islam is the dominant religions such as Mauritania, Niger, the Gambia, Senegal, Mali and Gunea (Ibid). Even though these children are under the Islamic traditional educational system, I prefer to discuss about them because their distant life from their parents and begging practice have relationship with the focus of the research, children in the traditional education of Ethiopian Orthodox church.

Bass (2004) asserted that one of the major profiles of these children is that begging is a practice which is part of the curriculum. They are expected to allocate their time for begging and studying Quran. They commonly give what they beg for the teacher. The teacher has the role of both teaching and looking after them. Begging is way of fulfilling one of the religious practices of Muslims in which Muslims have had the responsibility in *zakat* or almsgiving, one of the five pillars of Islam. Alms givers believe that they will be beneficiary by securing place in paradise in the future. The combination between the earlier and the current view of the practice explain why begging is socially acceptable activity and important today. Therefore, almsgiving is a form of worshiping in which believers express their thank Allah for the material deed offered them. Furthermore, *Begging is believed to instill a sense of humility and discipline in the child* (Ibid, P.26).

*Talibes* stand at Mosque, restaurants, cross roads... etc for begging to get alms by walking long distance. *Talibes* beg from 2-10 hours per a day. Quotas are set for the children to bring (such as sugar, rice, or money) by begging. The amounts earned by children are much more less than the *Marabouts*. On Thursday and Friday the quota set by *Marabouts* is much greater (up to 40%) than other days. In city like Dakar, children beg up to 16 hours (Thorsen, 2012).

Thorsen(2012) further explained that there are different interrelated reasons for being *talibe* in the region. One reason is to minimize house hole expenses, poor parents send their children to distant Quranic schools. This economic decision is done in the context of parent's social alliance and their view of the importance of the religious education is also reasons for enrolling children. Even though parents report poverty as justification for sending children to Quranic school, it is not the only reason. Perception about the pedagogical practices, religious

moral values, and social inequalities are combined factors for sending their children to the Quranic schools. The parent's personal experience has its own contribution for the enrollment of the religious education (Ibid).

Parent's religious beliefs that they will be given a reward for sacrificing the advantage of maintain children for the perpetuation of the religious practice. The local communities have also contribution in children's choice of study. Parents view that *Talibes* learn life skill and they become near to Allah motivated them to enroll them to Quranic Schools. Those advanced in Islamic studies lead prayer, writ charms and make protective amulets. This gives them social value by gaining social respect and social wealth. Poor parents make children follow different types of education by sending one to the formal education, the other to the Quranic School and the rest to work for the family or the relatives (Delap, 2009).

Illiteracy and low level of income characterizes parents of the majority of these children. So, a mix of economic and religious reasons make poor families sent their to the Quranic schools to live with the *Marabouts* (Bass, 2004). When parents send their children to the Quranic School, the potential of the child to cope with the hardship and the marabout's (teacher) ability are considered. The socio-economic context of Sahel region played central role at the macro level. Especially, in the rural regions there is less access to public services. Parents send their children in the formal education or to the Quranic schools depending on the availability and quality of education options (Thorsen, 2012).

Students cannot easily get paid employment after completing basic education. In addition, appeal of public school is declining because of neo-liberal economic policies of spending cuts and privatization (Umar, 2004). Children engage in the Islamic education to fulfill their parent's interest. West African students increased prospect for future travel in Islamic colleges in universities such as in Morocco may increase children's motivation to study in the Quranic schools (Thorsen, 2012).

The proportion of the amount of time allocated for begging and studying dependence on the *marabouts*. In recent studied, it is found out that some of the children spend twice as much as the time spent on studying. Generally, children spend two to six hour for their study which determined by the practice of the marabout. Some of the marabouts give lesson for less time in order to ensure that the *Talib* has more time for profitable begging. *Marabouts* have from 10 to 100 talibes in one school (Bass, 2004).

Thorsen (2012) also argued that some *Marabouts* are considered as exploiting children by making children beg by force to increase their income by recruiting more *Talibes*. For more than a decade, in Senegal and Nigeria, evidence of spending more time by begging than on education is documented. This kind of mistreatment is partly attributed to absence of regulation in religious education. She also added that the level of time given to for study and for begging is one of the criteria weather the *Marabout* is genuine or he is interested to the money children collect by begging. If the child spend more time in the study and beg around meal time, it will not be considered as a forced begging as it is inconsistent with the tradition.

The migration of *Talibes* to the urban areas and the neighboring countries make them seen as the victim of child trafficking mainly because of their begging activity. The *marabouts* use corporal punishment (Thorsen, 2012). Bass (2004) strongly argued:

*Talibe* labor should be included among the most exploitative forms of child labor, because a substantial number of these children are offered very little education and are exploited for their money making potential by *marabouts* (P. 27).

She reviewed studies that *Talibes* have less education than other street children. Except in West Africa, no children like *Talibes* exist in other Islamic countries. As a result, many people in western Africa see the life of religious beggars as unfair. The *Talib* children seems to have similarity with *Yek'olo-temari* children in a sense both of them live under the custody of religious teachers in the context of traditional/religious schools though the religion differs (Islam and Christianity). In the following section, I will discuss about *Yek'olo-temari* children who are students enrolled in the traditional schools of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church (EOC) by giving some introductory points on children's mobility in Ethiopia.

### ***The case of Yek'olo-temari children in Ethiopia***

Internal and domestic migration is one of a social phenomenon in Ethiopia. Several factors, both economical and non-economical, can be responsible in the people's movement from rural to urban settings. Ezra and Kiros (2001) sum up the major push factors in rural-urban migration in Ethiopia as overpopulation, famine, poverty, land scarcity, governmental agricultural policies, and a lack of agricultural resources, all factors. Many households, however, also participate in seasonal labor activities, leading to temporary rural-urban migration. In addition to these push factors; many rural civilians were pulled to Ethiopian urban areas because of the economic and social development in the urban settings. Because of

the disproportional urban-rural developments, urban settings are an important political and political center which pulls the rural people to move to the towns and cities in Ethiopia.

Like other social groups, children migrate (accompanied and independent) from rural to urban setting in Ethiopia. For instance, many of children in the streets of Addis Ababa are migrated from different regions of the country (Neda, 2007). Children migrate from different ethnic, religious and geographical background. However, most of them move from distances mainly from the Northern part of Ethiopia. Now days, migrated Gojjamie children (children who came from the northern western part of Ethiopia called Gojjam) have changed the dominance trend of the Gurage's in the previous times in the street of Addis Ababa. (Adugna, 2009)

When Abebe (2009c) studied the survival strategies of child beggars in Addis Ababa, he said, *unfulfilled expectations following migration due to rural poverty are one of the features that characterize some of the children's living conditions* (p.1036). According to Abebe, poverty is the primary reason to push children to work (beg) on streets. Family related problems (such as abuse and negligence), and livelihood disruption because of drought, famine and war are other reasons for begging. Traditional harmful practices are also additional grounds for begging. Children engage in begging to contribute their share to their poor family. By doing this so, they avoid their dependency solely to their family. This supporting role of child beggars in their everyday life has meaning full moral value.

Adugna (2009) asserted that children in the street of Addis Ababa came from different part of the rural areas because of multiple and related factors. According to him, children migrate to the city, to contribute for the livelihood strategies of their family which is deteriorated by scarcity of land, inability to afford agricultural inputs, environmental degradation, famine and drought. Adugna added that children can make autonomous decision to migrate to the cities. However, the initiation and decision of migration in most of the cases is done by the individual child in consensus with their family.

Neda (2007) has studied on children's mobility in the Gurage society of Ethiopia. Children from this ethnicity migrate to the cities primarily because of economical reasons. She argued that children migrate to the urban setting pushed by poverty in their rural regions and pulled by economic opportunity in the urban settings. She said that distorted information about the urban life, social networks between migrant and non-migrant family has contribution for child-out migration.

All these studies conducted on rural-urban migration of children focused on the economic imperatives of child mobility. Students of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, locally known as *yek'olo-temari*, migrate to the distant parishes, churches and monasteries to be fostered by studying the traditional education (Abebe, 2008; Chailot2009; Hable Sellassie and Tamerat, 1970).

Kaplan (1997) has studied Ethiopian childhood in the medieval period by analyzing the hagiographies of the church. He argues that historically not all children learn by living with their parents in the traditional education of Ethiopian Orthodox church. Some are sent to the monasteries to study about the traditional education. After they started the traditional education in the churches, children have the right to leave the study.

Currently, according to Chailot (2009), there are thousands of students in the large monasteries and Parshis in Ethiopia. Abebe(2008) briefly discussed the existence of whom he call them in the local language, *Yek'olo-temar*. According to him, in the orthodox Christianity of Ethiopia, children who are enrolled in the traditional schools called *Yek'olo-temars* still existed in the northern part of Ethiopia. *Yek'olo-temaris* are students of religious education which encompasses literacy and computational skills. These children are expected to fulfill their own subsistence and stationary materials by begging in the neighborhood, market places and churches (Abebe, 2008).

Migration, begging and hardship characterizes these children in the few historical literatures I found which focuses on the tradition of Ethiopian Orthodox Churches. However, these literatures do not focus on the lives of these children. They mention them briefly when they discuss about the educational system. For instance, Chailote (2009) has presented on “Traditional Teaching in the Ethiopian Orthodox Church: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow” in the international conference of Ethiopian Studies, Trondheim (Norway). She briefly described the life of *Yek'olo-temar* children in the traditional school in the following paragraph:

It is a fact that the life of students of the traditional teaching is hard and demanding for contemporary boys. For example, they leave their family; they beg for their food among families of the neighborhood but also sometimes far away; and their daily life as students of the Church tradition is most of the time poor and very demanding.

Studying in the church and begging, which were done by earlier students was seen as spiritual ways of life and with a Biblical understanding (p.530).

As I have discussed it earlier, I have not yet found in-depth study which focuses on the lives of *Yek'olo-temari* children by taking their voice. However, in the following sections I will discuss empirical researches conducted in the Ethiopian children begging activity because it has some relationship with the begging activity of *Yek'olo-temar* children in the traditional schools of Ethiopian Orthodox Church.

### **Begging, religion and poverty in Ethiopia**

There is no documented written material when begging activity has started in Ethiopia. Nevertheless, it is orally known that it existed for centuries in rural areas and temples. During the past times, there were three types of begging, “begging by the destitute related to religious almsgiving; begging by religious students and a caste related to traditional belief; and begging as a ritual service for the church (MOLSA, 1992; cited in Minaye, 2003,p. 11).

Abebe (2009) discussed that the practice of begging has connection with religious beliefs in Ethiopia. The Orthodox Christianity supports the practice of alms-giving which is an ordinary activity in many parts of the country. In contrast, in the west, Protestantism considers begging as a morally unacceptable practice. In Addis Ababa, church is one of the common places for begging. Similarly, in the principle of Zakat, it is described that handing alms to the poor is the major principle of Islam. Consequently, children uncovered that their family begged on Friday in Mosque no matter what they are not the follower of the religion (Ibid).

Abebe (2008) expanded his discussion on the role of religion, arguing how alms giving is a common practice in Orthodox Christianity and Islam in Ethiopia. The education of both religions in Ethiopia is entirely dependent on begging which included, food, clothing's and materials for education. Although literatures connected the historical practice of begging with religion, it is not the only factor which led children beg. A recent study conducted on the street children of Addis Ababa by (Abebe 2008; 2009) indicated that multiple factors are accountable for children's participation in begging activity.

Children's need to experience their autonomy, have fun and socialize is also justification for begging according to their view. Abebe's study shows begging may not be the only means of

income rather children do other informal works along with begging. For instance, while boys engage in casual labor, shoe shining, woodwork, girls do petty trading, selling local liquors or food and employ as servant. While begging is a temporary activity which does not perpetuate after some time, it is way of life for others. Depending factors in the responsibility vested on children, some positively see begging activity while others felt shameful for doing it so and need to avoid it (Abebe, 2009).

Begging as a way of life is in the state of flux when they experience their environment along with the physical and social maturity. A steady withdrawal of begging is shaped by social maturity and access to alternative work. Negative reactions from the public also shape children's engagement especially when they grow up. Embarrassing feeling is paramount for older children to stand up in front of alms givers in the context of the idle and dangerous perception of the public towards them which is different from the vulnerable child which make the society pity of them. The underlying reason for begging in the street of Addis Ababa is poverty in the context of multiple factors such as social exclusion, sustained inequality, and generational contract between children and their parents (Abebe, 2009).

In Dangila and Norther parts of Ethiopia, religious students (*Yek'olo-temari*) in the Ethiopian Orthodox Church (EOC) traditional schools practice begging activity. Even though, literatures indicated its prevalence, I did not find empirical research conducted on the underlying reasons of begging (especially as it relates to obtaining education); how they beg; where they beg and other dynamics related with the begging practice by *Yek'olo-temari* children. This is one of the research gap the currently study is intended to fill.



## **Chapter IV**

### **Research Methods**

The study focuses on *Yek'olo-temari* children's life in Ethiopian Orthodox Church (EOC) traditional schooling. It primarily focuses on contributing factors for children's engagement in the traditional education, migration, peer interaction, daily life, and means of subsistence while receiving such an education. To address these issues, I have conducted two months of ethnographic field work in Ethiopia. In this chapter, I will describe and discuss the methods used in the study by beginning with choosing the field site. After explaining the methodological activities done being in the field, the chapter wrap up with the data analysis process and, ethical and social dilemmas' in doing research with *Yek'olo-temari* children.

#### **Choosing the field site**

The research is conducted mainly based on qualitative research methods. I conducted ethnographic field work in Dangila town from June 15 to August 14, 2011. Dangila town is under Awi administrative Zone of Amhara Regional state. In the town, I have selected one Ethiopian Orthodox Church (EOC) traditional school. I have two basic reasons for choosing the field work in Dangila Town. The first reason is that the Ethiopian Orthodox Church traditional education is prevalent and still practiced in the Northern part of Ethiopia (Abebe, 2008) such as Gondar and Gojjam. Dangila is located in the western part of Gojjam in Awi zone administration.

The second reason is related with my personal background. I was born and grown up in Dangila town. As a result, I had long term opportunity to observe children who are learning the religious education in Dangila town since my childhood. My memories about these children while they came to our house and beg for food are still fresh in my mind. While playing on the play ground around the church in my childhood, I remember rural children of the traditional school who came from different part of Ethiopia studying and rehearsing loudly in group. In short, I have prior knowledge about the existence of the traditional religious education in Dangila town because I was born and raised there. As it is explained in the later part of this chapter, my research areas is one of the sensitive issue in the country. Authorities and believers of the church are not entirely open to share about the church's activity for persons who have different religious and cultural background. Therefore, being born and

grown up in Dangila town helped me a lot to break gate keepers and develop more trust from my participants which cannot be attained otherwise if I was not from outside the town.

Furthermore, when I start different courses in Childhood Studies at Norwegian Center for Child Research (NOSEB), the lives of those children who were different from my own experiences pop up to my mind. This is to explain how my personal, cultural and academic background influenced me in choosing the topic and field site.

### **Initial preparations**

Initially, I made preparations which helped me to conduct the field work effectively. I outlined of a research design of qualitative research which encompasses the traditional ethnographic approach mixed with the contemporary participatory child friendly data collecting mechanisms. However, the research design was revised after encountering the field work context (I will discuss the process and whys of the revision of the research design later on).

Following the approval of the research project, I registered the project at Data Protection Official for Research (NSD) which is a mandatory ethical procedure for students in Norwegian universities who need to collect any information that identifies particular individuals. In addition, I have prepared the necessary field work materials before heading to Dangila. I applied permission for the church to conduct the study in the traditional school by presenting the supportive letter from the Norwegian Center for Child Research (NOSEB) has provided me. After meeting the administrative requirement, I contextualize myself with new environment before conducting the field work.

### **Being in the field**

#### **Gate Keepers**

Even if the dialect differs(rural dialect), language was not the barrier between me and the participants as they speak my mother tongue langue, Amharic. But, accessing the field work was not as easy as I expected because of the sensitive nature of the research context. The first challenge faced during field work was accessing the data. Before I went to the school I have fulfilled all official formalities. I have explained for the leader and teacher of the school about my research purpose. I have also explained about my religious background that I have same

religion. *Yeneta* was voluntary and promised me to cooperate. Next to this I have introduced for children about myself including the purpose of my research. However, when I went to the school in the second day, most children run away from me at a distance when they saw me. I was shocked when this happened.

Finally, the teacher and older children explained me that the reason was that they felt they did not have guarantee if my religion is different from theirs as such I might have other vested intentions. They told me that they experienced some persons who came as a researcher had tried to change the religion of children in to Protestantism by offering some incentives. Generally, they have suspected my background though I did my best to explain about myself alone. Polluha(2004) has reported similar incidence in this area which showed how the society in Dangila is deeply attached to the religion and they are suspicious of the outsiders. She said that peasants living in the rural part of Dangila were very firm in their Orthodox beliefs, though. One of the peasants associations had voted against agricultural aid offered by a Protestant NGO, because they did not want any interference in their religion. This indicates that how the people in the area are suspicious of outsider in terms of religion.

One of the merits of qualitative research (such as ethnography) is that it is open to reflexivity for possible emerging events (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007). Guided by this principle of qualitative research, I have used sponsored access to the field. In other words, I went to the school with a woman who knows me from childhood as primary school teacher in the town. She is also well known religious person in the church and school. We went to the school together and she explained about my background and the purpose of the research to children and the teacher. After this time, I got relatively better trust on children and the teacher.

### **Informed consent**

I have followed several procedures to get permission for the field work from different authorities. These procedures appear to be hierarchical reflecting patterns of social relationship in Northern Ethiopia. Before having a direct contact to the school at the church, I asked permission to authoritative at the Dangila town city administration. Having a letter from the city administration that confirms a permission to conduct the field work, I went to leader of the church to get consent for the field work as well. After detail presentation of the purpose of the research, and my religious background, I got permission to do my fieldwork with some cautions (not to discuss and challenge their religious beliefs though it was not my intention).

The teacher of the school was also requested to give permission for the fieldwork because he is responsible for children in the school.

In the field work parental (biological) consent was not possible because almost all of the participants migrated from the rural part of Dangila. Most of the children did communication with their parents twice or once per a year. This made it difficult to get parental consent. It was not possible to have parental consent by other means of communication because the infrastructure is not prevalent in the rural areas where children came from. This is a striking experience because I was prepared to seek parental consent but instead I sought consent from their religious teachers with whom children have significant relationships.

It is important to point out that *Yeneta* is not only serving as a teacher in the school. He acts as a father (religious or social) for children in the traditional school. During interview children in the school confirmed this role of the teacher that they considered him as if he is their father even if they are not biological children from him. This kind of social kinship is prevalent in Africa in which fatherhood is defined socially in different way apart from the hegemonic nuclear family system (Goody, 1982). Spiritual kinship is strong in explaining child-father relationship in Ethiopian Orthodox church followers (Kaplan, 1997). Therefore, *Yeneta*'s role in the school is educational as well as parental. He has extended role in the children's life in the school which might challenge the western notion of parenthood. There will be detail discussion in the analysis section of the paper later on. Therefore, I asked the teacher to get consent to make children the part of the research during interview and other process of the data collection.

Despite the fact that I had consent with *Yeneta*, it was not paper based written consent rather it was oral. This was done because of the oral tradition in the church as well as in the school. The educational system in school is transmitted orally in the Ethiopian Orthodox Church (EOC) traditional education. In addition to the oral tradition, requesting the teacher to sign a paper could be offensive. Religious leaders and teachers are respected and trusted in the country, particularly in Gojjam area of Dangila. This could create negative impression in my relationship with him and the school if I did not take his verbal consent for granted. The challenge of written consent in the rural Ethiopia is documented in southern part of the country that it creates suspicious behavior in addition to the illiteracy of individuals (Abebe, 2009b). I will discuss in-depth about this in the ethical and social dilemma section.

In addition to consent from their religious father, all of the participants were told about the purpose of the research in a way they could understand. I was so careful while explaining the purpose of the research for the children as well as for *Yeneta* because they were suspicious about my presence in the school. I told them that I am interested about their life and I want to write about them so that their way of life will be known by the world. They posed different questions that centered on whether I have another mission form other religion or not.

As I have explained in earlier, in order to break the gate keepers, my presentation about the purpose of the research for the teacher and the children was not enough. I did not get enough trust by my direct explanation alone. After I recognized that I didn't get strong trust, I have explained the purpose of the research for a woman (who was my primary school teacher and who is well known and respected in the church) and she participated to explained about my religious background and the purpose of the research in a way the school community understand it very well. This sponsored way of accessing to the field was the remedy for having good communication and trust with the school community. All this incidents have shaped my relationship with the field and the research design. I was careful and reserved from being judgmental and critical related with the education and their life.

### **Purposive Sampling**

Even though the observation is not limited to specific number of participants and it encompasses the holistic environment of the research context, 14 boys were selected for in-depth interview purposively. Boys were selected because there are no girls who are enrolled in traditional school of EOC where the field work is conducted. This gender bias has its own religious and cultural factors which needs further investigation. The leading teacher informed me that females cannot be a priest in the EOC, which is one of the prospects of studying this education. This might have connection with historical and cultural explanation for gender issues in the country. But, I will not discuss this issue in detail as the focus of this study is on children who are already enrolled to the traditional school.

Observation and informal dialogs with specific informants were not strictly structured and preplanned during the field work. These conversations and observations were the basis for the selection of participants for in-depth interview. I selected those children who have different stories. Age was the other criteria for the sampling even if *Yek'olo-temari* children, like any

other children in the rural Ethiopia, do not have birth certificate rather they have approximate/relative age told by their parents (Abebe, 2009b). I have included those children who reported that they are 15 years of age and less. I did not pick a student suddenly for the interview but it was a continuation of informal dialogs and observations.

Purposive sampling method is selected to make the data collection authentic as it happens and flexible in the ethnography. With some of the participants, I had repeated interview depending on the type and the depth of information gathered and the mood of the child. The purposive sampling method was favorable to select the participants according to their interest. Children have diverse interest while some children may like to talk others may not (Clark, 2005). Therefore, this helped me to select the child participants depending on their interest in a flexible way. As Corsaro(2006) stated flexibility is one of the pillars of ethnography and this guided the sampling procedure. In short, the theoretical framework guided the sampling method as it does on the whole research process.

## **Method of data collection**

### ***Ethnographic approach***

Ethnography is an excellent method for studying young children because many features of their interactions and peer cultures are produced and shared in the present and cannot easily be obtained by way of surveys, or experiments (Corsaro, 2006, p. 97).

Recent evidences indicated that qualitative research (ethnography) is a conducive method that can help the researcher to find the children's experience from their own perspective as it happens which is one of the pillars of social studies of childhood (James and Prout, 1990). According to Greig and Taylor (1999), ethnography is a type of qualitative research that gives emphasis on the interpretation of practices and the context it happens. Hamersley and Atkinson (2007) explained how ethnography is applicable to grasp children's day to day experiences using multiple methods of data collection. The major issues of this research, social relationships, livelihood strategies, and daily routines are complex social phenomenon of *Yek'olo-temari* children that need to be studied flexibly on daily accounts. Substantial amounts of empirical research that focuses on peer relationship has involved ethnography, with researcher entering in to and becoming the part of the children's world in different cultural contest by way of acceptance as an adult friend (Corsaro, 2006).

In addition to the emphasis given on the daily accounts of children's activity, ethnography also give due attention for the socio-cultural context of the research. The researcher conducts a study in to different aspects of children's lived experience in varying cultural and social setting for some time (Greig and Taylor, 1999). As a result, *Yek'olo-temari* children's cultural and religious setting was the major input for the study. Having in mind this research flavor of ethnography, I spend two months in one of the traditional schools of at Dangila town collecting data regarding different aspects of children's life as it happens in their natural setting. I had interviews, informal talks, and participant observation about their social life, daily activities, and livelihoods. I have conducted focus group discussions as well.

Inspired by the Mosaic approach (Clark, 2005), initially, I planned to mix the traditional ethnographic approach with contemporary participatory data collecting tools such as drawing, puppet, writing essay, drama, etc. However, this was not easy to apply when I encounter the field. In the later part of the chapter, I will reflect the major reasons for changing my initial research design and sticking to participant observation, interview and focus group discussion in order to obtain empirical data.

One of the major reasons was the educational system in the school and children's unfamiliarity with paper and pencil. I did not feel applicable to use those participatory methods that need paper and pencil (such as drawing, writing essay) because they are not familiar with these tools as children in the school learn orally by heart. Two month was also too short time to train children to use written and drawing methods. On the other hand, I found *Yek'olo-temari* children easy to express themselves orally because they are experienced in verbal expression in their educational activity. In the school children are required to memorize every part of religious books in order to pass to the next level of education. As a result, I felt they would be able to express about themselves by navigating back and forth to their past and present life verbally.

The other challenge to apply some of participatory data collecting instrument was the church/school atmosphere. Even though there are no written rules, children in the school are governed by some rules. The school is located inside church and they are learning religious education. Therefore, children and others in the compound are expected to behave in certain way that is respectful and matured way. As Abebe(2009) noted *tihitina* (honesty, politeness,

respectfulness and good manners) (p.459) is an important form of social competence for children in the rural Ethiopia. *Yek'olo-temari* children do not go here and there, run and play. Children are expected to act relatively in calm way which is admitted as a matured social competence in the school. In addition to the calm atmosphere of the research context, children are encouraged to focus on their education and religious activity.

Therefore, participatory activities (like puppet, drama, and drawing) might be considered as non-religious worldly and childish activity. As result, I might be considered as introducing and pushing children to participate in inappropriate and nonreligious activities. In addition to the caution I was given at the beginning by the teacher, they had suspicion of my presence there because of the factors I explained earlier. Therefore, I feared that this might shade the relation I already established.

Generally speaking, every activity I did was an object of attention by the children, the teacher, and the school community. Therefore, the combination of the oral tradition they have in the educational system, the strict atmosphere of the school, and some degree of the mistrust they had on my presence push me to decide to focus on interview, informal dialogs, participant observation, and focus group discussion. This experience has great methodological implication beyond this paper. The current participatory approaches proposed by the new social studies of childhood may not be applicable in all research contexts and topics. Before, applying these methods I recognized that it advisable to see their possible outcomes. Because using these tools may have result in the other way out come. Here, it should be noted that every research methods have their own merits and demerits and in different research contexts.

At this point, I practically realized the advantages of doing qualitative (ethnography) with children. Corsaro(2006) stated precisely, *the three central features of ethnography with children are that it be sustained and engaged, microscopic and holistic, and flexible and self corrective* (p.97). Ethnography has allowed me to correct and revise my research design in a flexible way. If I was conducting the field work in a structured positivistic tradition, I would have stacked when the preplanned research design failed.

### ***Participant Observation and informal dialogs***

Participant observation and informal conversation are the most common methods of data collection in ethnographic research (Hamersley and Atkinson, 2007). Participant observation is a type of data collecting technique that the researcher becomes friend with the participants



and interacts with them in most trusted way. It involves an observation which is an interactive and open. Observers recall what was seen and felt by both their participants and themselves (Greig and Taylor, 1999). Participant observation as a data collection tool that involves personal and intense contact between the subject who studies and the subject who is studied in a prolonged interaction.

Indeed, it is the researcher's involvement (participation) in the situation under investigation that constitutes the distinctive element. The researcher not only observes the life of the subjects being studied, but also participates in it. According to Corbetta(2003), this approach therefore has two underlying principles: (a) that a full social awareness can be achieved only through understanding the participants' point of view, through a process of identification with their lives; and (b) that this identification is attainable only through complete participation in their daily lives, by interacting continuously and directly with the subjects being studied (Ibid).

In this research I used participant observation as the main data gathering tool. As Hamersley and Atkinson (2007) explained, *where participant observation is involved, the researcher must find some role in the field being studied, and this will usually have to be done at least through implicit, and probably also through explicit, negotiation with people in that field* (p.4). In the field work, I had a role of an adult friend who likes to know more about the life of *Yek'olo-temari* children.

I have different level of participation in different contexts of the field work. In some part of children's activities I fully participate and in other situation I simply observe children's activities without participation. For instance, I participate in different social activities such as during dinner times. I myself went together to the river for cleaning. I also participate while children work for the church. It is common to participate in working activities for the church in my childhood as well. Churches are built by the community in Ethiopian Orthodox Church. Therefore, my participation by helping children while they work for the church is not strange rather considered as blessing by the community. By engaging in this kind activity, I got good opportunity to observe children's interaction and working activity, and to have informal dialogs related with my research questions.

However, I had relatively less participation if children in the church school are in educational activities like studying or rehearsing. Because interrupting children while they study is not

appropriate behavior and my presence may create discomfort by the children as well as by *Yeneta*.

Initially, participant observation helped me to decide on how I should approach the fieldwork. It also gave me practical information to filter and to decide which themes to focus. In addition to these initial important roles of participant observation, I have gathered valuable data about different aspects of children life in Ethiopian Orthodox Church traditional school in Dangila. In the school, most of the day to day activities of children are related with educational tasks in one way or another. Children spend a lot of time rehearsing each other if they are not in the formal educational activities. As a result, participant observation helped me to balance my field work activities and their educational tasks. It reduced my level of interruption in the field work process.

I have been the part of social interaction of *Yek'olo-temari* children among themselves and *Yeneta*. I observed the whole atmosphere and day to day activities of the children in the school. I observed them when they work for the school and the church. Luckily, during the period of my field work at Dangila, *Yek'olo-temari* children in the school were building a house for *Yeneta*( the lead teacher) and I have observed the dynamic of their interaction and children's participation while they offer such kinds of service for the church/school. I also observe *Yek'olo-temari* children's part of the daily activity such as while cleaning their cloths.

I spent most of my time of the field work inside the school at the church. The school is located inside the church compound. Most of the activities of children were inside the compound. They live as well as learn in the same compound. Therefore, I have observed children's life inside their home. I had the opportunity to observe the grave houses they live and the equipments they used for their subsistence. Inside their rooms, I have seen how they live together and interact each other. *Yek'olo-temari* children cook their food inside their rooms and they offered me to participate in their meal. Most of the activities of the children were observed with their peers and there are the times with the older students while they help them in their study. All these incidents which I have observed with different levels of participation, inside their room, school and community might have an impact in the data analysis of the study either implicitly or explicitly.

In general, participant observation had a lot of input during the data collection process. Apart from the data collected by this method, it had significant contribution to pick up issues to be elaborated more during interview. To record observed behavior, I used field notes and video

camera. The use of these tools depends on the type of activity I observed. For instance, when I felt recording by video camera might destruct the participants' activity, I simply observe and wrote down on my field note later on. On other situation which involves the use of video camera, at the beginning it attracted their attention and it impacts their behavior. But, when they get used with it, they tend to forget the camera and they focused on their activity. Therefore, it was possible to catch their authentic behavior when the camera is given less attention.

### ***In-depth interview***

According to Gudmundsdottir(1996), interview is one of the key data collecting instruments in qualitative research such as in ethnographic and phenomenological research. Interview is a type of conversation. While one asks a question the other person gives response for the question. Gudmundsdottir further elaborated that an interview in research is a form of conversation which is transformed in to research tool. In order to make such a conversation more scientific, it is guided by a theoretical framework. The theoretical frame work in social studies of childhood which considers children as active agents (James and Prout, 1990) with in their social structure (Alanen, 2001; Qvortrups, 2002) through negotiation guided the interview process.

The researcher and the informant by cooperating together, they produce meaningful whole by combining pieces together (Gudmundsdottir, 1996) and knowledge is produced by the interviewer and interviewee (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009). In the field work, participant observation was used in combination with in-depth interview of 14 children by using an interview guide (Appendix I). The interview was used in two major ways. It was used to get more information on issues recognized during participant observation that they need more elaboration. Mainly, by using the interview, knowledge was produced related with the major the themes of the study; factors that contributed the children to be *Yek'olo-temari* rather than studying the modern school; the factors that makes the participants to migrate from their home villages to Dangila town.; their livelihood strategies and cultural implications; their daily lives and social relationships among themselves, the teacher and church/school. In addition to the children, *Yeneta*(the lead teacher) was interviewed, primarily, to get background information about the teaching method and the school using interview guide (Appendix II).

The research focused on the past and present orientation of children in Ethiopian Orthodox church traditional school. In the past, *Yek'olo-temari* children were given the opportunity to express their feelings and ideas regarding the major contributing factors to engage in the traditional education rather than modern education during interview. Most of the participants came far from their home. All of the participants migrated from the rural part of Ethiopia to the school mostly alone. As a result, during interview, they were given the chance to express their experiences and challenges while they came from their home to the traditional school.

I have interviewed children also on their current lives. Detail interview and informal conversation was conducted on their different lives guided by the research questions. In addition to the participant observation, I have interviewed children on their peer interaction, day to day activities and their means of subsistence's in the school.

As I explained earlier, the participant observations and informal dialogue was the basis for the selection of the interviewee. I set an appointment with a participant after having some informal dialogue. The appointment time was not strictly fixed on a specific time rather we set an appointment to meet either in the morning (*tewat*) or afternoon (*kese'at*). This is to make the time more flexible for them. I conducted the interview in the surround of the church rather than inside the school. I did this in order to minimize the level of interruption by others. I will discuss more about the issue of privacy, which is challenging to attain it the Ethiopian context (Abebe, 2009b), in the ethical and social dilemma section of the paper.

I was active listener during interview. I was careful in my conversations related with their religion because I was not recommended to have an argument related with their faith from the beginning by the school. I used types of word which I think they are respectful because, if I am judged as disrespectful, I may not have good relationship with the participants and the school at large. For instance, in the community and the church/school, people use plural forms of some verbs in order to show respect for other person who is older or higher in social status. Standing up and offering the chair if someone come and join is common in the school and the community of Dangila. This is called locally, *antuta*. Therefore, I have tried to use their accent, words, and ways of expression during the interview. I was not critical and judgmental about their actions and activities rather I strived to get their point of view as much as possible.

To sum up, during the data collection process, the interview and participant observation has two way relations. Actions that caught my attention during observation were taken to interview for further and detail analysis. In the same way, children's expression on certain

issues related with their life in the traditional school during interview push me to focus and get more data during next time in participant observation.

### ***Focus group discussion***

In ethnographic research, focus group discussion can be used with two or more participants (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007). Focus group method is good for giving confidence to individuals within the group and allowing the children to set part of the agenda (Greig and Taylor, 2008). Focus group discussion involves social interaction of children among themselves. As a result, the data collected during focus group discussion may be qualitatively different from one to one interaction between the researcher and children during interview. Therefore, it is one of the mechanisms to get more complex data.

In this study, I conducted a focus group discussion that contain of eight children in one group. The duration of the focus group discussion was one hour. The focus group discussion was held on Sunday in the afternoon. I organized the focus group discussion on Sunday because the participants are free in the afternoon after the Sunday prayer. I had a mediating role by facilitating the discussion process.

In the focus group discussion, the presence of other children can have both positive and negative consequences. For instance the presence of other could trigger complex dialog by creating social environment. However, shy participants could be overshadowed by others who are not. In order to minimize negative consequences such as dominance, I have tried to make children in the same age during focus group discussion. We also set some ground rules of discussion like trying to avoid interruption while someone talks. Generally, the focus group discussion creates the social environment they used to have in their real life and children were able to express their views using this opportunity. Like the interview, the focus group discussion was conducted by categorizing basic questions (Appendix III) to be addressed during the discussion.

## **Data analysis and interpretations**

In Ethnographic research,

*Analysis of data involves interpretation of the meanings, functions, and consequences of human actions and institutional practices, and how these are implicated in local,*

*and perhaps also wider, contexts. What are produced, for the most part, are verbal descriptions, explanations, and theories* (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007: p.3).

Indeed, the data analysis begun during the fieldwork, at least implicitly. Since I encountered the field work, I had been analyzing and revising the research design, concepts and issues in every interactions and observations I had in the school. But, I started the formal data analysis by transcribing the interview in to the original language. Then I translate the transcription in to English language. By organizing similar narrations of the participants, I coded them in to the research themes. Then I started to interpret the meaning of their narrations by making connections within and among the themes discussed. During the data analysis I had been navigating forth and back between the literature and empirical data (Nilsen, 2005). The research questions shaped the empirical data, and vice-versa. I make relationship between different types of data (interview, observation, pictures, and focus group discussions).

### **Ethical and social dilemma**

Fraser et al (2004) pointed out three main way of thinking that make research ethical; principle of respect and justice; right based research on the grounds of the “3 Ps” of UNCRC; and outcomes based ethic which avoids children harm. The study was conducted based on the ethical issues mentioned by Fraser et al. However, the applications of ethical issues were not as easy as I expected before I went to Ethiopia for the field work. Doing research with *Yek’olo-temari* children has its own ethical and social dilemma. Most of the ethical issues have been discussed in different part of the methodology. But, I prefer to point out the major issues for clarity. Informed consent was the first issue. In the study, I was not able to get informed consent from their biological parents. Rather, *Yeneta* has a social fatherhood role(one of the key findings of the study) who has social/religious mandate to do the on the behalf of them. This social kinship is prevalent in other parts of Africa (Goody, 1982). Even with the teacher, written consent was not possible which has negative reactions in the context of rural Ethiopia (Abebe, 2009b) that it may be associated with mistrusting the most trusted and high status person in the school.

The second issue is privacy; in order to protect children’s privacy and from possible consequences, anonymous names are used throughout the thesis. However, it was challenge to have private conversation during interview. Anyone could join during the interview and protecting from other interruption may have other suspicious consequence and it is socially

awkward in the context of the rural Ethiopia (Ibid). Participation is the third social dilemma. I was not able to use other participatory tools (such as puppet, drawing, play... etc) because these activities are not welcomed by the church and school. These activities may be considered as childish activity in which religious student should show the socially competent behavior of being descent and respectful. Therefore, I was supposed to balance between making children participate and my relationship with the school/participants. My negotiation lead me to use methods in consistent with the social environment of the research context.

Finally, whether or not to give money is one of moral and ethical dilemma which requires making decision during field the work (Ibid). Giving reciprocity of some money for children during field work is reinforcement for their time and labor and this might initiate the participation of children in the research (Langevang, 2007; cited in Abebe, 2009b). Giving money had contrary effect in this study. In the beginning of the field work, I gave some money for the participants for the time they spend with me and to encourage others participation. However, *Yeneta* told me a story that Protestants try to change the religion of these children by giving money. One student also told me the rumor that my activity of giving money is associated with those who manipulate the children to change their religion by money. I stopped giving money and this made my relationship genuine and friendly. From this, it is possible to say that the application of reciprocity for child participants depends on the research context.

## Chapter V

### Contributing Factors, Migration and Livelihood

Education in Ethiopia is historically rooted in the traditional educational practice of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church (EOC). As I noted in the introduction, the society name the traditional education in different local terms; these are, *Yekes temehirt*, *Ye'abinet timihirt*, *yebetekihinet temeherit*. Students who are studying in the traditional education are commonly called *yek'olo-temari*. Students in the traditional education call their teachers *Yeneta* or *Mergeta*. In this research I will use the English term “traditional education” to describe the education offered in the Ethiopian Orthodox church for convenience. On the other hand, I will use the local term *yek'olo-temari* to describe children who are enrolled in the traditional education. Similarly, I will use the local term *yeneta* to describe the teacher.

*Yek'olo temari* are special group of children in Ethiopia who are enrolled in the traditional education of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church (EOC). They have their own social, cultural, religious and educational characters that make them different from other children in the country. Among different factors that make *yek'olo temari* children typical, this chapter focuses on contributing factors for being *yek'olo temari* (choosing the traditional education over the modern) and migration, social life and livelihood strategies.

#### Contributing factors

By contributing factors, I mean the various interrelated reasons children became *yek'olo-temari*. In other words, I will analyze *yek'olo-temari* children's view on the major contributing factors that push or pull them to study the traditional education of EOC. *yek'olo-temaris* who participated in this research have explained different reasons for choosing to go to traditional EOC schools over the modern schools. Most of the students reported that there are modern schools (*Yaskola temihirt*) around their villages. The modern school in this study is used to describe the secular education based on the national curriculum of the country in consistent with the universal primary education. On the other hand, the traditional education is a religious education practiced by the Ethiopian Orthodox Church exclusively. The difference between the two types of education is discussed in the background part of the paper.



If there is modern school in their village, capturing the participants view on the major contributing factors for choosing the traditional church education was the focus of the interview before proceeding to address their reflection on livelihood strategies, daily life and social issues. Children's reflection on this issue shows that the contributing factors are interwoven. It is not possible to claim that a single factor is responsible. Generally, the contributing factors can be categorized in a broader theme, push factor from the modern education and traditional/religious beliefs and practices. I will begin with the push factor in the modern education.

One key reason linked to preference for church education is the way children are evaluated of their performance and competence. Frustration of failing in the modern school was the major pushing reasons mentioned by participants for choosing the traditional over the modern education. Kebede's (boy, 13) explanation when he was asked about why he chooses the traditional education during interview exemplified this:

The traditional church education is good because there is no pass and fail like the modern school. But in the modern education if we fail we feel that we will be farmer. For instance, one of my older brothers was in Grade eight studying modern education. He is now stressed because he failed. In this education, I can finish my study no matter how the time it might take. If I can, it is possible to finish it early, if not, I can take longer time to finish it.

The role of traditional/religious beliefs and practices in the church seems to have significant contribution. The traditional/religious beliefs are reflected on their parents, significant others, and children themselves. The religious practice of parents has huge contributing role for choosing the traditional education. For example, parents religious practice of *silet* (which synonymous to pledge) is a contributing factor repeatedly mention by the children. In the Ethiopian Orthodox Church(EOC), *silet*(pledge) is a religious contract between an individual and a church or *Tabot* that if something happen for the individual, she/he pledge to do or give something for the church or *Tabot* as reciprocity. It is religious payment for something has done to the believer based on the promise. For instance, Zenebe(boy, 11) is the youngest participant in this study. The religious pledge done by his parents during his early childhood was the main reason that makes him *yek'olo- temari*:

I used to be sick when I was a child, and my parents promised for God that they will enroll me in the traditional church education if He cured me from my sickness. If I stopped I fear that I might feel sick.

I have asked Zenebe if he ever stopped the traditional church education and what happen to him. He said that he had stopped once and started studying modern school and he reflected that he felt sick. However, according to him, he recovered when he started again the traditional education. Belief is a key issue in attending in EOC education. This implies that the tradition in the religious practice has significant influence on the lives of children. During the focus group discussion all of the participants agreed that the promises done through *Silet* must not be broke because it hurts God.

Belay (boy, 15) also has related story regarding his choice of study. He explained how he was cured from sickness during childhood and his parents enroll him in the traditional church education:

My parents want me to study a church education and serve the church after finishing the study.... because my parents pledged to the church that they will enroll me to study church education after being cured from chronic sickness by holy water...

I asked Belay to elaborate more whether he believes this is his own or his parents' interest. He said:

... yes it is my interest also. They did right, if they did not took me to the holy water, I would not have been cured from my sickness. They promised God that they will enroll me to study the traditional education and serve the church if I am cured. Therefore, they have to keep their promise. If I stop studying this education, I will fall sick.

The above quote indicated that the religious or cultural practice of *silet* (pledge) has also influenced the child's mind. Once it is practiced by his parents and the society at large, it is also reflected on his way of belief. He is convinced by the religious belief and practice. The influence of the religious practice of pledge (*silet*), even though first the contract is done between their parents and the church or *tabot*, it has profound influence in the children's thought and action, currently. The quote below strengthens this argument.

While I was a child I was sick for long time. Then my parents pledged to the St. Michael church that they will deliver me to serve the church if the angle cures me.

Therefore, when I grew up they wanted to enroll me to the church education but I refused and start studying the modern school. But I was not able to continue in the modern school more than a year. I felt that I have to go to church education as I was pledged to it. This way I started this education. (Girma, boy, 13)

Participants has also give divine attribution for being *yek'olo-temari*. They said it is God's will who made them *yek'olo-temari*. They believe that it is their God's will to study the traditional church education. If they are against their God's will, it is their faith that they may get health problem. This divine attribution has dominated the focus group discussion. In addition, participants reflected this justification during interview. In connection to this, the response of Dereje (boy, 12) can be quoted below:

... it is God's will that I am studying this education. God want me to study about my religion. I used to study modern school for one year. But, I drop out because I always feel headache in the classroom. My parents were worried about this. When they discuss about my health problem with our priest, he told them that it may not be God's will to study the modern school. He advised them to enroll me in the church education. It is now two year since I start studying this education, I am healthy.

In addition to influence of the religious practice in the form of pledge, and fear of being sick if they are studying different from what God want them to study, being attracted to the spiritual value of the education was the other reason from children's view. They focus on the spiritual benefit they may get after death because of studying the church education. Abebe (boy, 13), give the reason why he and his parents choose the traditional education:

In this education, we learn various things about our religion. After we finish we will teach others about our religion. When we do these activities, God will bless our soul. We pray and practice religious activities day and night. These will help us to open the door of the kingdom of heaven after we die.

It is possible to link Abebe's narrative with the concept of being and becoming. While children are viewed as becoming, these children's believed that an adult is not completed creature either. There is life task believed to be done after death. The narrative is consistent with all humans are becoming and beings together. We are in the state of change and development, at least spiritually.

Even though children's engagements to the traditional church education have interrelated factors in the wider cultural and religious factors, children expressed and exercised their agency within these broader social values and practices. Some of the children have shifted from the modern to the traditional education by their choice. An interview with Yibeltal (13) witnessed this phenomenon:

I studied modern school up to grade two before I started this education. I decided to drop modern school and study the religious school first. After I finish the religious education I may study the modern school.

Yibeltal further explained why he wanted to drop out from the modern school and prioritize the traditional education. These reasons relate to familial choices or preferences, and the fact that children's decisions are shaped by their everyday life exposure

There are a lot of priests in my village including my grandfather, uncle and neighbors... they have advised me to study this education. My observation of the priest's life in the church has influenced me. In addition, the church is near to my house and when I hear *qdase*(devine liturgy) it took my attention because I like it very much. I want to build my spiritual life first. If I study this first, it will be good for my soul and the modern education will not be difficult for me. If I studied both, my demand for job will be good.

The influence of family members, relatives, other persons, and peers in their village seems to have contribution for choosing traditional church education. Hailu is 12 years boy whose father has studied this education up to the level of Mergeta. When he was asked about motivating factors to study the traditional education, He revealed:

I want to be *Yeneta* like my father. He has a lot of knowledge about our religion. He taught many students and they are giving service in churches in different places. The society respects him. By doing teaching students to give service for the children, he will be blessed. He told us the importance of the traditional church education since I was little. I want to make him happy by following his way.

The contributing factors that lead children to be *yek'olo-temari* is interrelated. It is generally categorized in two major themes, push factor from the modern schools and pull factors from the traditional or religious beliefs. The traditional/religious belief is reflected at the societal, familial, and individual levels. The parents enrolled their children to the traditional school of

EOC because they pledged once in the earlier time if their child is cured from sickness. This belief system also influenced the children themselves. From the individual level, children preferred to be *yek'olo- temari* because of the spiritual benefit they might get after death. This idea may be linked with the assumption all humans are beings and becoming. Being an adult is not a sense of completed self. Rather, they are looking for their opportunity in life after death. Whether it is reflected at the societal, familial or individual level, the role of cultural and traditional/religious practice is profound for being *yek'olo temari* in this study.

### **Migration**

In the traditional school of Agunta St. Marry church, Dangila, almost all of the students came from the rural part of Gojjam. They live in grave houses inside the church compound. As it is witnessed in the participant observation and interview, it is relatively their permanent residence until they finish their study. They visited their family seldom. Most the children reported they come from the rural part of Gojjam by walk. There is no transport service from the rural part of Gojjam to Dangila town. There were students who said they migrate from their villages unaccompanied and faced some challenges. For instance, when Girma (13) disclose his experience while migrating from Dukuli (six hour walk from Dangila):

I come alone from Dukuli on foot. I spend one night at traditional school half way (called Agaga). I was going to study there, but students told me that the teacher made students work a lot. Therefore, I decided to come to here.

I asked him if he faced any special circumstance when he came here all the way alone and he said, *in my way to Dangila, I encountered one poisonous snake while I was walking. I was barefooted. I hit on the head by a stick. Then, the snake immediately died.* I was eager to listen more on this experience because I am afraid of snake. I was surprised how he manage to do this alone. But it was normal for him. He told me that he was not afraid because it is common to experience this kind of events in rural areas. This may be relevant example that shows children's knowledge of their local environment, and that, they are capable of handling challenging circumstances like this.

Girma's story is a good case on how children might face challenges while they migrate from their village. But, I will not go in detail about their migration experience as the focus of the study is more on their life at the school. But before proceeding to children's life in the school, I will provide background information on why children migrate to the traditional school in

Dangila town from their own perspective. In this section of the paper, children's reason and their experience related to migration will be discussed.

### **Migration factors**

Participants did not give one reason about the reasons why they study by living far from their parents. Generally, children's justifications for migration can be grouped in, push and pull factors. First I will discuss the push factors in their home village. While children were reporting about their justification for migration, most of them were strikingly pointing out one common push factor. They said, they preferred to come to study at Dangila because they want to live far from their parents so that they will not be accessible for them for work in their home villages. Kebede (Boy, 13) described his parents live in Washa (rural area without access to transportation) which is four hour walk from Danglila. He said:

I used to study in a traditional church school in my village. The church was near to my home. As a result, my parents can easily access me if they want me to support them in the farming and cattle. As a result, I cannot fully concentrate on my study. Therefore, I come here with my friend... now my younger brother has grown up and he can help them in the farming.

Kebede told me that both modern and traditional schools existed in his village. The major reason for his migration and choice of Dangila to attend traditional school was that there is too much work when he lives with his parents and that interfered with his study. Almost all of the children participated in this study share this idea. Dereje (boy, 12) who came from neighboring rural part called Wodafta described why he migrated:

Being far from parents is good. If it is far, you will not go to your home frequently. If you are near, you feel shame about not helping while your parents are working. Therefore, it helps you to focus in your education if you are far from your parents...

Yibeltal's (boy, 13) idea also goes in line with the above two participants. He came from rural place near to Kosober. He gives his preference as to which one is good, living with parent or in distance from parent ...*it is better to be far from home. If a school is near, it pushes you to go to home. It is difficult to concentrate if your attention is at home...*

Access to the traditional school was also one of the push factors for migration. Based on the data gathered during interview, there are cases children used to live where there was little

access in the traditional education than the modern school. Abebe (boy, 13) came from out skirt of Dilamo. He lived in the school for three years. He said that he is studying in the school because there is no access to traditional church education in his village.

On other contexts, the reason for moving from their rural villages to the urban Dangila is the need to experience new urban environment. Alemu (boy, 10) said:

I wanted to come to Dangila because I want to experience and see Dangila ... the town is a new place for me. It is different from my village. I saw car two times in my life before I came here. But here, you can see them everywhere.

At the beginning, it was indicated that children commonly expressed that they migrated to evade from parents work. In the interview it is also found out that children migrate not only to escape parents work, but also from a teacher in the traditional school located at their village. A quote from Zenebe (boy, 11) narrative can be discussed in relation to this:

I used to study in a traditional church education in my village. But I came here because the teacher in the school make us work in the farming a lot. Here we don't work that much. We only work every Friday.

*Yek'olo-temaris* are known by migrated life far from their parent's home. Participants revealed that they migrate to escape from work which is resulted by living with their parents. Less access to the traditional is one of the push factors according to their view. They said that modern schools are more accessible than traditional school in their home villages. Furthermore, the focus group discussion revealed that migration can be the way children put themselves in hardship by leaving their parents home. This sense of hardship can be considered as way of spiritual development by ignoring the worldly life to get place in heaven after death.

### **Contact with family**

Children in the traditional school live and study in grave houses located surrounding the church. Participants were interviewed regarding their contact with their parents. Responses indicated that children in the school have less contact (in some case with no contact for three years) with their parents. Children have different justifications for having less contact with their parents. Dereje (13) told me that he visited his parents rarely. These rare visits are related with helping parents. He expressed, ...*this year I went to my parents two times. One, I*

went to help my parents because they were burdened with farming. The other day was for the holiday at the end of fasting time for Easter holiday. He believes that if he went to visit his parents, he will forget what he studied because he will not be able to rehearse his study as a result of work. Rehearsal is a key method of learning in traditional schools. Children learn different levels of scripts from bible by heart, by saying them out loud. In my observation, I recognized most students act like talking alone because they are rehearsing by revising previously studied. A strange person could be surprised by this self talk behavior. Actually, the elderly and the priest have similar behavior. Therefore, every second have a significant meaning for *yek'olo-temari* to print the holly books in their mind and finish the study as fast as possible.

Belay (15) has consistent idea with Dereje. Belay's family live relatively in near location (two hour walk from Dangila) but he did not have frequent contact with his parents. He said, *If I went to there, I will be far from my studies because they will make me work. Our education needed to study repeatedly. If you make brake it is not good.*

As the above cases indicated, one of the major reason that students did not visit their family was fear of forgetting the study if they went there. According to them, they will not be able to study because they will be engaged to some kind of work in the farming or cattle when they went to their parent's home. Hailu 's (boy, 12) idea can strengthen this argument. According to him:

... even if I sometimes missed them, I do not want to go to my parents every day. When I visited them, I cannot resist inside letting them to do the farming alone. Therefore, I will help them either by take caring the cattle or doing some work in the farming. When I did this, I will forget what I rehearsed in my school. Our education needs hard working, studying again and again.

The above quotes might have significant implication on the issue of assuming children as dependent who seeks care from the parents. In contrast, children do not want to contact them because meeting the parents is at the expense of their study. They are not forced to leave their parents home. Their parents need them to help them in the family farming. But, the need to stay focused and not to be distracted by the work and social life by going back home is the main reason for not frequently visiting their family, according to their view. Having less contact is a matter of priority for children. If they manage to do this without their parents, how can one argue that children totally in the position of dependent and incompetent?



## Livelihood strategies



Figur 2 The school surrounding the church

### Introduction

Students at the traditional school of St. Marry church located at Dangila live in a grave houses surrounding the church compound. It is green area containing of large and small different types of trees. In the society, families built houses on the grave of a deceased person as monument. It means, a dead body of the person is buried underground of the houses. The quality of the grave houses depends on the financial and social status of the deceased person. The grave houses are mostly for elderly who prefer to live in the church. These elderly live here either they do not have their own shelter or they prefer to live in this grave houses because they want to show their commitment to their religion by living here in the last periods of their even though they might their own. Deceased persons in the Dangila and the area, sometimes, confessed before they die for their significant others to build house on the ground where they are buried and to offer for a monk or an elderly to live there. This is believed to help their soul join the kingdom of heaven after death.

Grave houses may have different social implication but I do not want to go in detail. It can be suggested for further study by other researchers. Even though grave houses are for the

individuals mentioned above culturally, *yek'olo-temari* who are participating in this study live there also. To fill the gap for this inconsistency, I asked *yeneta* (the teacher) why children live here and whether this is in line with the traditions of the church. He said,

In our tradition, students studying in traditional education of EOC, live in small huts built by the church or students by themselves. But here, it is the weakness of the *Sebeka Gubay* (assembly of the church) that students are living in grave houses. This is my fourth school since I started teaching, and in those other schools students live in small huts. In the tradition, only monks and elders who want to live the rest of their life at the church in grave houses like this.... (Male, 40)

During the focus group discussion, the participants have reached at the consensus that they prefer to live in a place other than grave houses. They said that, they are living there because they do not have any other choice. They prefer to live in small hives which are culturally common rooms in the area.

In one room, two to five students live together. Participants shared different types of livelihood strategies from begging to small business and handicrafts. This part of the data analysis covers the major livelihood strategies of these *yek'olo-temari* children who migrated from the rural parts of Gojjam to the traditional school of EOC at Dangila town.

## **Begging**

### ***General overview***

Begging is the most widely practiced activity by students of the traditional education of Ethiopian Orthodox Church. All of the children interviewed replied that they beg at least once per a day. Children beg in the town (where the school is located) and in the surrounding countryside. Students in the school beg for different purposes. It is a means of fulfilling food substances.

When we beg, people in the town give us *Injera* (a locally made bread or pancake like slim bread made from *teff*). Some persons give us left over *Injera*, others give us fresh *Injera*. If it is during holiday, some people gave me *Tela* (traditional beer) along with *Injera*. In the countryside, it is different from here. The people give different types of serials in addition to *Injera* and drinks. (Abebe, boy, 13)

Begging is traditionally and religiously accepted activity for students in the traditional church education. Begging has purposes beyond fulfilling food substances. It is a tradition excised by students of the traditional church education for long time. Students begging activity does not necessarily mean they are poor and their family are incapable.

Begging is common for students in the traditional church education. My parents are not poor. I beg for *Injera* because I am student in the church. There is no student in the traditional school who does not beg. I beg like every student does (Zenebe, boy, 11)

If two children from the same family study one in the traditional, the other in the modern, they may have different livelihood strategy because of difference in the type of education they are engaged. For students, in the traditional church education, begging is considered as usual activity. The following quote can witness how two children are treated differently because of the difference in the type of the school they are engaged:

I have one older brother who is studying in Durbete (small town 20 km from Dangila). He is studying in Durbet because we do not have high school in our village. He does not beg like me. My parents send him money as well as food. Students in the modern school do not beg.

Children's begging activity is also one way of the society to show their commitment for their religion. It is means of the believers to exercise their religious rituals through which they believe their soul will be blessed if they give alms for students in the traditional education:

...begging is good for students. We are here far from our parents to learn about our religion. When we finish our study we will serve the church. When the people give us *Injera* while we beg, they will be blessed. People give us for their soul. (Zenebe, boy, 11)

Participants said their begging activity is not limited only in Dangila town where the school is located. They also went to the surround rural areas where the people's livelihood is based on agriculture. According to children participated during interview, the level of acceptance is different between the urban and rural areas:

In the town not all the people accept us. Some persons whom their religion is not Ethiopian Orthodox refuse by saying `why do not you work rather than begging? In the countryside, they do not say like the people in the town. In the countryside, people

are more sympathetic. They may have children like us who is studying the traditional education by living far from them (Hailu, boy, 12).

In line with Hailu:

... I get more when I beg in the country side. The people in the countryside like us more. As they are farmers, they do not buy their food like the people in the town. As a result, they are more generous (Girma, boy, 13).

There is difference in the type of items given as alms between the urban and the rural areas. They said, in the rural, the society give them serials in addition to cooked *Injera*. This might be because of the livelihood strategy of the society in rural areas. Agriculture is the source of income for the people in the rural area. The perception of children on the difference in the level of acceptance between the urban and the rural area may have implication the tradition is less exercised because of modernization and religious diversity in the town. As the traditional education is practiced by the Ethiopian Orthodox church for long time, persons who have different religion may not accept the begging activity by the students in the town. In the study area, Orthodox Christianity is the only religion in the rural part of Dangila. On the other hand, in the town, even though orthodox Christianity is dominant, there are Protestants and Muslims. The statistical figures can be reviewed in the background chapter.

### ***Allocation of neighborhoods for begging***

Begging is relatively formal activity by the students in the traditional school. In most part of the town, children are not allowed to beg where ever they want to. Neighborhoods in the town are divided and allocated to the students by the criteria set by the leader of students in the school:

...we have two leaders in the school who allocate villages for students for begging. The allocation is based on educational level. Those students who are in higher level will be given priority to get permanent *atbias* (village) to beg. They can only beg to those villages. Other students are not allowed to beg. I do not have village for begging because I am in the lower level of education... I beg in the center of the town because it is free for everyone to beg. But, residential areas of the town are allocated. Sometimes, I beg in the countryside. Especially, I went to the country side during holidays (Kebede, boy, 13).

As the interview above illustrated, educational level are the major criteria to get permanent village for begging. Most of the children interviewed said that they do not have their own village. The major reason for this is that most of the children are in the lower level of education in the school. Girma(boy,13) do not have his own village. When he was asked whether this kind of allocation based on educational level is good or not, he said:

... it is good. As there are many students in the town, it is not possible to give village for everyone. We children are not ashamed of it if we move here and there for begging but the older students may feel. We children are not afraid of people's face to beg. Therefore, this is good way of distribution of possibilities for livelihood.

Zenebe is also among the students who do not have his own street for begging:

...I do not have village to beg. Only higher level students have a village to beg because there are no enough villages to distribute to all of the students. Therefore, priority is given based on seniority. But hotel and restaurants at the center of the city are free to any students to beg. Therefore, I beg in these places. In addition, I went to the nearby country sides during holidays for begging (Zenebe, boy, 11).

Residential areas are reserved for higher level students. Mostly, higher level students are older in age (mostly, above the age of 15). One might expect priority for children. However, the interview revealed that the opposite is exercised. And children are convinced by the justifications that older/higher level students are should be given priority. But, the older students are given priority because lower level children have better agency to beg here and there without shame. The society may feel petty of the small children when they beg in the hotels and restaurants. As the hotels and restaurants are business centers, they may not react the same way as people in the residential areas.

### ***Begging: beyond subsistence***

It is important to grasp participants view and attitude regarding their begging activity. Begging has meaning beyond subsistence for the participants in the traditional church school. There is a strong belief that students in this education can better understand the study if begging is source of their food subsistence:

...I don't have bad feeling for begging activity because it is common for a student like us ... even students in the school believed that students should eat by begging to

understand the study and finish the school early. If you eat fresh food prepared at home, our insight will not be opened (Hailu, boy, 12).

Begging is one way students discipline their worldly life by refraining from comfortable life in the school. It is the way they put their flesh on the challenge and give priority for the development of their soul. Begging and hard life makes children curious, thirst for soul, and strengthens their quest for new knowledge. This belief is transmitted from the past and it reproduces itself in the school from the senior to the new students:

Older students told us that we cannot easily understand the study if we are comfortable and eating fresh foods. They told us that we have to cope with the challenges so that we will be spiritually strong. When we do not give priority for our flesh God will help us in the study (Dereje, boy, 12).

Begging is beyond subsistence for *yek'olo temaris*. By begging, it means *yek'olo-temaris* are supposed to face alms givers face. By humiliating themselves by the begging activity, they show their humbleness for their God and the society. Therefore, it is the part of self discipline for *yek'olo-temaris*. Elsewhere in the bible it is written how Jesus Christ shows his humbleness by washing the priests' feet, according to a participant during the focus group discussion.

### ***Food preservation***

In this study, participants revealed that they beg not only for daily subsistence. Instead, they collect food as much as possible and save for future subsistence:

During holidays we went to the countryside for begging. During these times the farmers give us a lot of *Injera*. They also give us serials like corn and barely. The serials can stay for long time but the *Injera* will mold if it stays more than 3 days. I dry the *Injera* by sun heat so that it can stay for long time (Abebe, boy, 13).

This skill is the most popular way of preserving food for students in the school. During field work I witnessed student drying *Injera* by sun energy. During participate observation; it was common to see packed *Dirkosh* (dried *Injera*) hanged on the roof of their rooms. This dry *Injera* will not be eaten as it is. Rather it has to be cooked again (socked into stew) to make it edible:

*Dirkosh* is dry and to make it fresh I boil water, add some salt, *berberie* (red hot chili). If have money, I sometimes I add onion and oil. When you cook it like this, it became soft (Yibeltal , boy, 13).



**Figur 3** cooking time

Children's life in the school is more of communal (*yek'olo-temaris* communal social life is in detail discussed in the next chapter of the data analysis). These kinds of skill are learned from senior students (mostly older students). Yibeltal was given the opportunity to express his view how did he come to learn this kind of skill and he gives the idea which supports this argument:

Before I came here I did know about drying *Injera* and cooking like this. But, when I come here older students who are living in the same room told me that I have to dry the *Injera* I collected so that it will not be molded. I also observed them when they cook the *dirkosh* (Hailu, boy, 12).

To sum up, begging has a role of socialization and subsistence. It is a practice that socialized children to be *yek'olo temari*. It is has religious and traditional role of showing their humbleness as religious student. It has been reproduced to the generation in the traditional schools of EOC. The belief behind the begging is transmitted from the senior to junior



students and it shaped *yek'olo temaris* view and practice. In the next section, I will discuss the other livelihood strategy of *yek'olo temari*.

### **Poultry business**



**Figur 4 children coming from market in front of their room**

It is common to see chickens everywhere in the school. The poultries have significant connection with the student's livelihood in the school. Small poultry business is one of source of income for students. Alemu (Boy, 10) is one of the participants who have his own poultry business:

I had first bought one chicken by the money my family gave me when I came here. My friend gave me an advice not to spend the money for other services and to buy poultry. I sold the hen with some profit. By making this business now am capable of having five chickens.

He has his own business strategy to get profit as much as possible:

There are times the price of poultry gets low. At this time I and my friends buy and sell them when the price of poultry increases. I also buy small chicken and sell them when they grow up with profit



Alemu has two business strategies. The first strategy is that he buys the poultry when the price of the poultry is less (during fasting season when people do not eat meat and hence demand for chicken is low) and sale them when it goes high (usually during festive season, after fasting season is over). Second, buying small poultry and sale them when they grow (fattening). While Alemu retail the chickens, Yibeltal (boy, 13) focused on making and selling eggs:

I have one hen which was bought it before two months. It produced 15 eggs and I will sell it by 30 Ethiopian birr (approximately, 1.67 usd). When it stops making eggs, I will sell it to buy another one... It is because once it stops making egg it takes some time to start giving egg again. Therefore I will buy another hen which does not start making egg..... I know the behavior of female poultry which doesn't start giving egg ... I can identify by the sound and the body structure. I also ask seller whether it started to give egg or not... (Yibelta, boy, 13).

Although begging for food was the major source of food for participants in the traditional school; they also need money for stationary materials, books, soup, food items (like salt). Alemu said he will use the money he earned by the small poultry business for this kind of expenses. One of the challenges mentioned by Alemu was a place to stay the poultry.

The poultry live with us. They stay on *kot* (a ladder made from local wood). They have bad smell. They also have some insects and it sometimes transfer to our closes. If I put them separately in other places, untamed animals will eat them.

If Alemu is living with other students, I asked him whether his roommates complain about the poultry living with them or not and he replied:

All three of us have poultry so they do not complain. Rather the problem is I cannot increase the number of the poultry because if the number increases the room will not be enough for the poultry as well as for us.

Yibelta (boy, 13) also give response in consistent with Alemu:

Students who are living with me do not complain. If they want they can have their own, we are not jealousy of each other as we are religious school students we know that God is happy when we cooperate each other (Yibelta, boy, 13).



**Figur 5** *Yek'olo-temari* child along with his hen inside his room while studying

### **Traditional Medicine**

In Ethiopia, the practice of traditional medicine for human as well as for animals is prevalent. This practice is more predominant in the rural parts of the country. Students and teachers in the Ethiopian Orthodox church traditional education are known by their knowledge of traditional medicines, especially herbs. This skill has helped to cope with the challenge to tackle poultry disease. Dereje (boy, 12) retail poultry like Alemu. He said that it is not challenging business except diseases of chickens:

Chickens easily get sick. If one of them is sick, it will transmit its diseases to the rest of the poultry. Usually diseases first come from the new poultries. In some seasons poultry diseases is prevalent.... if my chicken is sick, I give it traditional medicine.

Dereje's traditional medicine skill caught my attention and I asked him about how he learns such a skill:

When I bought my first chicken, it was sick once and I was very much stressed. But, one of the older student have seen it and he give it some herb plants from the forest. I saw him where he found it and how he processed it. The next time my chicken got sick, I did the same thing and it recovered.

The above quote exemplifies children's interdependence and the reproduction of indigenous knowledge from generation to generation. It supports the idea how cohesive their life is in the school. One's life cannot be seen in isolation to the other. You have to be the member of their community to learn this skill from them.

*Yek'olo temari* are especial group of children in Ethiopia in the context of the traditional education of Ethiopian Orthodox Church. So far, I have discussed the reason why children became *yek'olo-temari*. Religious/traditional beliefs in combination with the evaluation mechanisms in the modern school were the major factors that contributed the children to be *Yek'olo-temari*. These children migrate from distance to escape from work load in their home village. Begging is their livelihood strategy and part of traditional belief that it will widen their mind to understand the secrets of the religion by confirming their humbleness for God and the society. They used drying technique to preserve the begged food. Small poultry retail is the part of their livelihood strategy in addition to begging. They used traditional medicines when their chicken gets sick. These are some of the characters which make these children typical. In the next chapter, I will discuss their social life and everyday activity.

## Chapter VI

### Social Relationships and Daily Life of *Yek'olo-temaris*

The study focuses on the life of *yek'olo-temari* children who are a special group of children in Ethiopia. It studied about children who are enrolled in the traditional education of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church (EOC). It is conducted based on Ethnographic field work in Dangila town, Ethiopia. In the previous chapter of the data analysis, contributing factors, mobility and livelihood strategies have been discussed. This chapter will focus on the analysis of data regarding their typical daily life. In addition, the horizontal and vertical social relationships of these children in the traditional education are also discussed. While the former focuses on same age peer relationship, the vertical social relationship centers on their social relationships with older students and *yeneta*. Finally, the relationship between the children and the school/church is followed.

#### A typical *yek'olo-temari* daily life

The daily lives of *yek'olo-temari* in the school seem to be different from other children in Dangila and the surrounding rural area who are not attending this kind of education. Children in the town and the rural area have different types of playing activities and daily routines in addition to their assistance in the family reproduction. However, children's life in the EOC traditional school at Dangila is predominantly associated with their educational and religious activities. Alemu(boy, 10) is the youngest participate in this study. I asked him to describe his daily routines from morning to night. He summarized his activity as follows:

*I wake up and I went to study from 4 Am to 7 Pm.*

*I pray by reading wudasie mariam (praises of St. Marry);*

*I eat something if it is not fasting season or day;*

*I start studying again from 9- 12 am;*

*I study from 7 pm to 10 pm;*

*I went to begging;*

*I cook and eat with my friends;*

*I start studying again from 10pm to 12 pm, then, I slept.*

Yibeltal (boy, 13) have similar daily life trend except looking after his chickens:

I studied in the morning, I eat, fetch water, go to market, I went back to class again, I went to begging, I look after my hen to make sure that it is at home, I cooked, I went to class and then I slept.

During interview, none of them have mentioned play activity, especially when they were asked to describe their daily activity from morning to evening. Abebe (boy, 13) said that he rarely plays ...*it is because, as I have never been playing for long time, I don't feel like playing... I spend most of my time by studying because education is better than playing*"

Play is an activity done by "other children" for Kebede (boy, 13):

*... we do not play like other kids, running or something else because it does not have use, we may hurt our legs/body nothing else use it has... but if we discuss, we can learn if we discuss and share idea about the bible.*

I asked Kebede what he meant by "other children" and he replied that he mean children who are not attending the Ethiopian Orthodox Church (EOC) traditional school. This implies how they identify themselves as different social groups.

In my observation, I have not seen children engaged in different kinds of playing that demands physical movement like football, or any other plays children do in the area. Rather, children sit and study in group or have chat. When I interviewed them whether they like to play or not, mostly they have a tendency to emphasize the importance of education. The teacher's and older students influence on children's play activity seems to be high. For instance, Abebe (boy, 13) said:

*Yeneta* advises us to focus on our education rather than playing. Before I came here, I used to play (like hide and seek, pretend-robbery and police) but here I am changed because of the older students' and *yeneta's* advise. As I matured now, I do not play like before.

According to the above quotation, play is considered as childish-act, and is associated with what is locally called known as lack of *bislet* (social maturity). Many children in traditional schools are disciplined and reserved from immediate and temporary gratification, and instead choose to spend their time in learning new skills and knowledge for future life. In my observation, the social environment in the school has calm and formal characteristics. There is

no different place for children and adults. Everyone seems to be governed by the same unwritten rules to be calm and formal in their interaction and focus on their study. Girma (boy, 12) said,

I sometimes feel like playing when I was new for the school. But how can I do that? Everyone in the school either study or chat. When you see this, you will be changed if you are newcomer.

It is possible to say that the most acceptable place for children to spend is in the school and in the church throughout the day except going to the town for begging and market. *Yeneta* do not tolerate if a child goes to the town frequently except the purposes mentioned earlier:

Going to the town do not have any use. Children can learn bad behavior from other children if they frequently go the center of the town. This place is spiritual and it does not tolerate this kind of behavior. If a child has this kind of behavior, I will give advice to stop it two or three time. If not, he will be expelled from the school (Male, 40).

During interview, children admit this controlling responsibility of *Yeneta* in the school. But, one striking incident give me an important idea that they may negotiate between what the school and the teacher demand and their interest to engage in activities. It was in the middle of the field work. I was having informal conversation with one child who was taking me to show me the small river he washes his clothes and his body. In the middle of our way, I met one of my childhood friends. It was long time since I saw him and we had warm greetings. The guy (my friend) was holding bicycle. While I was talking to my friend, I recognized that the bicycle attracted the child's attention. He was touching and manipulating parts of the cycle.

Suddenly, I stop my conversation with my friend and turn to the child by asking why he is interested in the bicycle and weather he is able to ride cycle or not. First he showed me rejecting body language for my question. This was not surprising for me because I suspected that cycling might be the types of the activity which is not acceptable in the school. Finally, my reflexive strategies were successful and he told me that he can ride cycle. We offer him the cycle if he want to go for short ride. As it is shown on Figure 6 below, he cycled freely.



**Figur 6** *Yek'olo-temari child riding bicycle*

Three major issues can magnify the child's negotiating ability. One, the child came from the rural part of Gojjam where there may not have an access even to see the bicycle. Two, children are expected to devote most of their time for the education and they are not expected to do this kind of activity outside the school. Three, the child do not have an access to the bicycle. In our informal conversation after the cycling, the child told me that he managed to learn cycling by paying 50 cents for training of five minutes in the town. He told me that, he tried his best to hide himself from other students and the teacher. In this way, he does his interest without losing his harmony staying in the school.

## **Social relationships**

### **Horizontal (peer) relationship: Friendship, sharing and cooperation**

There are different forms of social life in the school. Friendship is one of the important social elements for *yek'olo-temari* participants of the research. Social networking is one of the bases of forming friendship in the school. It was repeatedly explained by children that their friends have some kind of relationship with where they came from or with their family. While discussing the reason why they choose their friends in the school, personal qualities were not the focus of the participants regarding the initial establishment of the relationship. Rather they tend to link initiation of the friendship with social networking. Related with this, the following are some of the sample quotes:

“I have a friend. He is my relative and we were friend before I came here. I have also another friend who came from the same place...” (Abebe, boy, 13)

“I have friend. He is my relative and I knew him before I came here.” (Zenebe, boy, 13)

“...We are friends because we came from the same place...” (Dereje, boy, 12)

In social life, friends have common activities that make their relationship different from others. They have different ways of spending time together. I have asked children about the way they spend their time with their friends. Dereje(boy, 12) replied, *I and my friend study together. During our spare time, we sit and chat about different thing... we do not play by running here and there like other kids.* Similarly, Alemu (boy, 10) said that he went to begging with his friend, and chatting is the kind of play they do in their spare time.

Sharing and cooperation among peer are the major social characteristics manifested in this study. Participants give stress on sharing and cooperation as an important input of their friendship. Sharing can be from psychological to material. Abebe(boy, 13) said that he like to share his emotion to his friend if something unpleasant felt. In the school, private life does not have place.

I never eat alone. I mostly eat with my friend or roommate. If I have I share and eat together with others. If I do not have, I can eat with my friends or roommates. If you have and share it with others, God loves it and he will multiply what you have (Belay,boy, 15).

Sharing meal is the common activity among roommates or friends in the school. Rather it is strange if a person eats a meal alone in the school. Dereje(boy, 12) narrated, *We also eat food together, because we are like the same family... we are living together it is impossible to eat alone...* Sharing also may including lending money as Alemu(boy, 10) said, *... if he or I have money we buy food items like salt. If I need money, I can borrow from my friends I feel as if am living with my brothers.*

Peer relationships are source of care at the time of sickness. According to Zenebe(boy, 13), *... we help each other. For instance, if he gets sick I will take him to his parents and he does the same thing. I have nobody here except God, students, and “Yeneta” in the school...* Sharing, Helping and cooperation was the most important thing children in the school wanted to



emphasize about their peer relationships. One the impressive statement of Abebe (boy, 13) could give supportive explanation for this argument:

We are just like brothers here. If someone is sick we took him to clinic or we buy medicine for him we usually eat meals together. We study together, if I forget something in my study, my friend will help me to recall it and vice versa.

As they have said it during interview, children in the school support each other. I have observed the supportive and cooperative relationship of students in the school in one incident that happened during my field work. It was my second week since I started my field work and searching for a child who had an appointment with me for interview. Unfortunately, I saw a child (student) who was running as if he was chasing for something. It caught my interest because I have not seen this kind of behavior among the participants in the school during my stay. Suddenly, I realized that the child was running to catch a hen for morning market. First, the child was chasing the hen alone. From the other side, another student was coming and he joined the chasing reflexively when he saw the event. The child who owned the hen did not ask help from the other student but I recognized that the other student felt he has to help so that the hen is caught easily. This was one of my observations that support the cooperative peer relationship articulated by children during interview.

The level of their intimacy with their friends was not seen only in the narration of children during interview. While I was taking pictures in the school, the children like to have picture with their friends rather than alone. The moment I made ready my camera to take a picture, they tend to hag each other. They have close physical proximity as it is shown in the figure 7 below.

To summarize, friendship is one of form of children's peer relationship. *Yek'olo-temari* children's friendship is initiated and fostered through social networking. Their peer relationship is important part of their everyday life. It is a source of support for the children in the school. Sharing dominates their peer relationship as participants emphasized how they share what they have (meal, money and even challenges). Private or individual life seems to have limited places among children in the school. They eat, study, and sleep together. Participants have the predisposition to describe about everyone in the school when they are asked about something. "We" is more frequently used than "I".



**Figur 7** *Yek'olo-temari* children in the school with their friends

Children's ways of spending their time with their peer tend to be different from other children outside the school. They explained that they sit and discuss in their spare time. "Play" is not the major part of their peer relationship. From behavior point of view, there is no clear demarcation between "child" and "adult" in the school. Both the adults and the children show predominantly similar behavior of being formal and calm. The conservative nature of the religion, *Yeneta* and the school environment might have significant influence.

## **Vertical social relationship**

I categorized the relationship between the participants and the older students (vertical peer relationship) and their relationship with *yeneta* under the theme, vertical social relationships.

### ***Vertical peer relationship: Interdependence***

In the school there are students with diverse age. Participants of the study (*yek'olo- temari* children who are age of 15 and less) have social relationship with their horizontal peer as well as with older students (vertical peer relationship). In the previous section, major issues in the children's horizontal peer relation were discussed. In this part, children's reflection on their relationship with the older students (usually higher level students) is focused.

During interview, *Yeneta* said that he did not teach all of the students in the school:

...in our tradition, I do not teach all of the students in the school rather I only teach the highest level students. I will assign the higher level students to teach the lower levels. This way, all the students will learn each other (male, 40).

According to him, if he taught all of the 80 students in the school, the students would not have studied the lessons in-depth orally. When students are assigned, one higher level student can teach few lower level students. This tradition, he said, help the students study very well. As I have witnessed during field work, I saw higher level students teaching lower levels. This implies that, student-teacher, is one of the characteristics of vertical peer relationship.



**Figur 8 A higher level student scaffolding the lower level student**

Belay (boy, 15) is the oldest participant in this study who teaches some of the participants. He revealed during interview:

*Yeneta assigned me to teach five students who are in the beginning level. I teach them as much as possible. It is not difficult for me to teach them because they are in the beginning... I advise them to study very hard because most of them are new for the school... they respect me because I am their teacher and older than them. They also fetch water for me...*

The lower level students give reciprocity in different ways for their teacher (older students) as Belay quoted above. According to Yibeltal(boy, 13), *...I help them as per my capacity allowed and they can order me to do anything I can...* Alemu(boy, 10) also said, *I fetch a water for my teacher... he does not force me to do it but I feel that I have to do it because he is my teacher and older than me.* Being obedient is one way of exercising his religious commitment according to Yibeltal. He explained that did these kind activities for older student, *because the bible says respect someone who is older than you.*

In addition to formal teacher-student relationship among younger and older students, participants reported that older students give them advice and guidance in their day to day lives. For instance, Zenebe(boy, 13) explained his relationship with older students, *...we are like families. Like older brothers do, they give us an advice for instance to focus on our study rather than doing other activities.*

Most of the furniture in their room is made by the students themselves. As I have witnessed during observation and interview, some the furniture may not be easy to be done by the children. Either they require much power or need some skill. This may be more challenging for newly coming children. The older students are part of the solution for this kind of challenges faced by younger students. Alemu(boy, 10) is the youngest participant in this study. He emphasized how the older students who live in his room fix locally made bed:

*... I do not know how to made bed before. When I was with my parents, my father made one bed for me and my brothers. But here, older student who live in the same room with me has made a bed for me from local wood and rope...*





**Figur 9** *Yek'olo-temari* child reading on his bed made by older student from local wood

To sum up, even though the participants of this study are children with the age of 15 and less, the age of the students in the school is diverse. As students study and live in the school, children's social relationship with the older students is the important part of their life that deserves attention. The relationships between children and older students have different characteristics. Primarily, inter-dependence dominates the vertical peer relationship. Older students help children to adjust with the life in the school by giving guidance and support in their educational and daily life. Children also give their own reciprocity for the help and support they receive from the older students. Obedience also characterized the vertical peer relationship. This might be stemmed from the religious and cultural practices and values that encourage obedience and respect for older persons or persons with high social status.

### ***The social fatherhood: social relationships with "Yeneta"***

In the school, there is one teacher for over 80 students. The relationship between the teacher and the participants is beyond teacher-student relationship. As it is mentioned above, the teacher primarily teaches directly the higher level of the students. Children who participated in this study are taught by higher level students. However, the leading teacher (whom the children call him *yeneta* or *mergeta*) is the highest level social figure in-terms of both social power and knowledge of the study.

In Ethiopian Orthodox Church tradition, there are different types of "fatherhood". "*yekelem abat*" (academic father) is one of the forms of social fatherhood. During interview, children have frequently mentioned the term "father" when they were trying to explain their relationship with *Yeneta*:

*Yeneta* is my father even if I am not born from him. He has deep knowledge about our church. My parents give him because they have trust on him. He treated us like his children... I do not see him different from my father (Alemu, boy, 12).

Abebe (boy, 13) has also similar perception about his relationship with the teacher of the school:

*Yeneta* is my father because he has a lots of Gods words. He controlled us not disturb and to focus on our education *Yenta* gives us advice to focus on our education and behave in a good manner. He is happy about us when we study (Abebe, boy, 13).

Like the higher position fathers have in the patriarchal society of the rural part of Dangila, the teacher in the school have perhaps more position because of the religious context of the school. Children are so obedient for him:

*Yenta* has the responsibility to correct us if we do mistakes. If we do mistakes when we live with our parents, they will not let us. We will be punished. Here, *yenta* do not accept students if they spent their time in the town except for begging, buying something in the market. If students frequently go to the town and *yenta* found out, he will give advice for the first time. If a student refused to accept the advice to go to the center of the town, he will be told to leave the school (Kebede, 13).

Being obedient to the advices and orders of the teacher is the dominant pattern in their relationship with him, as Alemu's (boy, 10) response indicated below:

I cannot say no to *Yeneta*, I accept everything *yenta* said. If I do not do that, I will be expelled from the school. And also God does not want disobedience from the older and religious persons. I accept *yenta* more than my family because he knows a lot of things...

Children are socially expected to give some services for the teacher. But, it will be disused in detail the next section of this chapter under the series children offer for the school and the church.

The social relationship between *yek'olo-temari* children and *yeneta* is beyond a teacher and a student relationship. They expressed that they considered him as their father even if they were not born from him biologically. Children are obedient for *yeneta*. They believed that they should not be disobedient to him because of his level of religious figure, level of knowledge

about the religion and his age. Fathers are the most respected figure in the northern parts of Ethiopia. This patriarchal culture seems to be reflected in this study. But the teacher has more figures having the religious and social power he has being expert in the traditional education of Orthodox Church.

### **Relationship with the school/church**

So far, I have analyzed the intra and inter-generational relationship. The hub of the present section will be children-institution relationship. The basics and characters of the relationship between *yek'olo-temari* children and church/the school will be discussed.

### **Free education**

Participants of the research revealed that they do not pay tuition fee for the study. The educational service is free intended to produce young scholars to accept and perpetuate the tradition for the coming generation. It also creates employment opportunity in various churches all over Ethiopia. In the Ethiopian Orthodox church, priest, deacons, and scholars should pass through this education. It requires developing appropriate personality (such as not being engaged in polygamy). So, they have the opportunity to find job even though the payment may not be equivalent to the employers who studied secular education. The church offers shelters in spite of the fact that the quality of the rooms and the service may not be as such good. As it is discussed in the previous section, they live in the grave houses built above the deceased person's burial. If the school offers free education and shelter, the last section will focus on the services children for the school and the church.

### **Service for the school and church**

*Yek'olo-temari* children in the traditional school of EOC at Dangila participated in different tasks of the school and the church. Zenebe(boy, 11) said,

I work if there is anything I have to do for the church. For example, I participate during the construction of the church by fetching water. I also clean the church. I feel happy by doing this because my soul will get place in the heaven after death.

Giving service for the church is a common activity for the participants. Kebede (boy, 13) explains how their labor is important contribution to the church:

We work if we have something to help in different activities of the church. For instance, we work during construction of the church... It is for my soul that I work for the church ... we work for the school but it is not always. Every Friday is development day. So we do some work during this time.

In addition to participating in different types of works such as helping during construction of the church and cleaning activities, children said that they give service during *qdasie* (Divine Liturgy) which is practiced every Sunday and during religious holidays in Ethiopian Orthodox Church.

We distribute and collect *mekuamia* (a stick used during Divine Liturgy) and *Tsenatsel* (traditional musical instrument) during divine liturgy. During this time, we also play *kebero*(traditional drum). We do this activities turn by turn (Alemu, boy, 10).

Like other participants, for Alemu, doing this activity in the church is way of blessing his soul. Other task of the participants in the church according to Girma (boy, 13) are, "... *distributing holly water to the believers every Sunday and during holidays.*" According to him, the ultimate reward of this service is, *being honored by God.*

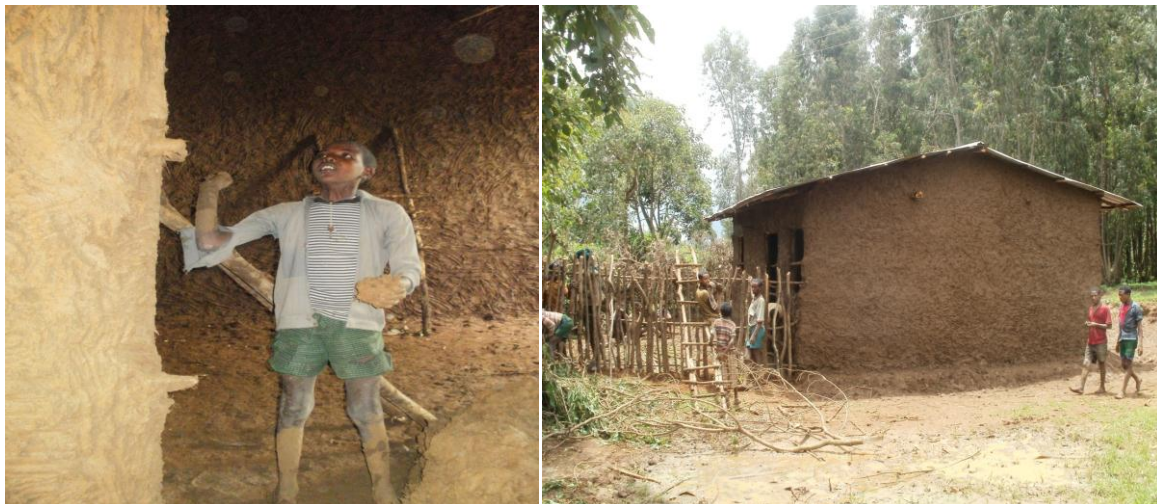
As the teacher of the school and the students informed me, Friday is *Yelemat-ken* (development day). During this day, children are engaged to development activities for the school and the church rather than education. During the field work, I have observed the students of the school building a house for their teacher in the day they call it *Yelemat-ken* (development day). *Yeneta* lived in a grave house like other students. Students were building the house from wood and mud so that he can live in better house as he was living with them in the grave house. However, the house will belong to the church even if it is built for the lead teacher. If the teacher leave and another teacher is replaced, he will live in the house built by the students.

In my observation, all the students of the school were doing by dividing tasks. Children work in mixing soil with water; carrying woods; carrying the mud from outside to construction site; fixing (gluing) the mud on the wall; and some carpentering activities.





**Figur 10 Children taking mud to fix to the house**



**Figur 11 A child fixing a mud during the construction, and the nearly finished house built by the students**

I tried to catch the participants view regarding their experience after I observed them while building the house for their teacher. Kebede (boy, 13) said:

I feel good to help while building house for *Yeneta*, one, if he was not here, we would not be able to get education. Second, we can learn a skill ... If I learn this kind of skill from my childhood it is good for my later life.

For Belay (boy, 15), the participation in the construction of the house for teacher has a purpose beyond learning skills:

*Yeneta* (the teacher) has deep knowledge about our religion and he is sharing us as much as he can. Because he has Gods words in his mind, I respect him. I also respect

him because he is the oldest person in the school. We have to take care of him so that he can stay with us. The church itself is poor so it did not offer him any house; he is living in a grave house like us. If he went to other places, he will get better life. So, it is our responsibility to do for him as per our capacity allowed...

As Belay's quotation revealed, giving service for the teacher is one way of maintaining the teacher in the school and avoided turn over. The teacher told me that he is paid only 450 Birr (which is equivalent to 25 usd) per a month. The students compensate his low paid salary by offering service for him. Girma (boy, 13) said, *I help 'yeneta' in his small garlic farming and garden. He can order me anything to do as far as I can.* I understand through the informal conversation with the students during field work that it is not easy to find a person like the teacher who is well experienced and who understand the education thoroughly.

Children's behavior during the construction of the teacher's house impressed me in a sense they were interacting and acting different from the way they do in other times. As it has been discussed before, play was not the part of activity children mentioned in their daily life. The social atmosphere in the school is formal and calm. Participants said that they prefer to spend by chatting their spare time rather than doing other play activities. But, during this day, children were running, screaming loudly, and playing hit and run by the mud which is prepared by them for the construction of the teacher's house.

I have asked Girma (boy, 13) what makes them act in different way during the construction of the house for *Yeneta* and he replied:

I feel good because I worked while building house. When we work there, there were funs along with the work. We play like hitting and running by the mud. This kind of work is done once per week every Friday. I feel relaxed as we did that at the end of the week. It is ok if we act like that while we were working. It gives us motivation and it helps us to give less attention to the tiresome feeling.

Development day is special day for Belay (boy, 15) also:

From Monday to Thursday, we have been in studying day and night. If we play like that during this time, the leader and *Yeneta* will not like it. We may disturb the school. But during development day, we are free to play in different ways.

Playing, running, screaming loudly... etc is no more childish activity. It seems acting like this while doing something (in development days) is an excuse or acceptable. Even though participants seems to express voluntary and positive impression regarding their service for the church and the school (including the teacher), there are ways to control students absence from this kind of activities. In the school, children nominate two leaders to control and monitor development (service) activities, and disciplinary issues. Kebede(boy, 13) conveyed, *we have two student leaders in the school. If a student is absent in development day, they will set penalty. The penalty is paying money from 5birr (0.25 usd) to 7birr (0.39)*. However, only one child have confirmed for being penalized for absence, *I was punished once, It was holiday (beale egziabher) and I was absent to go to church in the night time then I was punished 5birr* (Zenebe, boy, 11).

Giving service for Ethiopian Orthodox Church is part of the believer's way of showing their commitment for their religion. The community builds their own church. What makes the life of the students of the traditional church education is that its consistency and regularity. As they are students of the church's religious education, the service they give for the church is the part of the practice to discipline their soul for spiritual development. It seems more responsibility is vested on the students of the church. Participants reported that they are happy to give service for the church. The major reason they conveyed is it will help them to join the kingdom of heaven after death. They also give service for the school and the teacher. They expressed positive feeling about working for the school and the teacher. Giving service for the school and the teacher is an expression of being humble in the cultural and religious context of the religion. The development day is a special day for students to give service and spend, relatively, informal and relaxed day.

When children express positive attitude about the work they do in the school, I felt inconsistent with the reason they give for migrating from their village, which is discussed in the previous chapter of the data analysis. They said that migration was one way of escaping from their parents work load. One reason for having positive attitude might be the level of load. Service is given once per a week usually in the school. The other reason can be working for the family and the church may not be the same. Giving service for the church could have more intrinsic spiritual value than for the family.

*Yek'olo-temaris* are children who are enrolled in the traditional education of EOC. This chapter centered on their typical daily life, intra and inter-generational and institutional

relationship. Their daily life is dominated by educational practice. Friendship, cooperation and sharing describe horizontal (peer) relationship. The younger and older students (vertical peer relationship) tend to have interdependent relationship. The relationship between *Yek'olo-temari* and teacher seems to be a father-child relationship beyond the teacher-student contract. Children are so obedient respectful to the teacher in the context of his patriarchal high status in the school, age, level of knowledge and fatherhood relationship. The society in Dangila gives high value for the religious leaders and teacher. They are social counselors and mediator in social, familial, and personal problems. The relationship between *Yek'olo-temari* and *Yeneta* could be the reflection of the socio-cultural and religious view of the society at large.

## Chapter VII

### Discussions of Findings

#### Introduction

This study focuses on *Yek'olo- temari* children. The general theme of the study was to explore these children's perspective on mobility, education, livelihood, and social life. Their daily life is also the focus of the study which will express itself in the general theme mentioned above. Empirical data was collected based on two month ethnographic field work in the North West part of Ethiopia, Dangila town. In this study, *Yek'olo- temaris* are treated as a special social group of children. Inter-related, socio-cultural, traditional/religious and educational factors make them special groups who are different from the ordinary children in Ethiopia. They have their own typical way of day to day life, social relationship and livelihood strategies. In this section of the thesis, the major findings of the study are discussed with related theoretical and empirical literatures.

#### **Why children became *yek'olo-temari*?**

Children became *yek'olo-temari* because of different interwoven factors. Cultural factors in the form of traditional/religious beliefs take the lion share. In Dangila and other orthodox Christian believers, *Silet*(pledge) is a strong religious contract between the parents and the church/Tabot which parents promise to do/give something as a reciprocity if something has done for them(from God, church or Tabot). Children became *yek'olo-temari* initiated by this religious practice in most cases of the current study.

Children reported that they were sick in their earlier times and their parents made *silet* (pledged) to the church that they would enrolled them to study the religious education and serve the church if they are cured from their disease. Children also believed that they are cured from their sickness because of the pledge their parents have done. Therefore, for theses children, being *yek'olo- temari* is way of fulfilling the promise their parents has given for God (church) during those times. Some children revealed that they tried to study the modern school but they get sick and return back to normal when they return to the traditional education. This shows how *silet* is strong traditional/religious belief which has also strong influence on the children's thought. Canceling this religious contract is believed to result in negative consequence on the children's lives.

Even though the way it is reflected differs, the findings of this study have some similarity with Thorsen's (2012) argument that the parents' belief has significant influence for sending *talibe* children in distant traditional Islamic schools in West Africa. She discussed that parent's religious belief that they will be given a reward for sacrificing the advantage of maintain children for the perpetuation of the religious practice was one of the reason for being *talibe*.

The current religious belief of the children has been reflected in their view while they explain the contributing factors that make them study the traditional education. They attributed to God's will for being *yek'olo-temari*. They said they are *yek'olo temari* because God wants them to be like that. Having the strong belief on the controlling power of God in every aspect of the believers is the part of their religion in Christianity. Even if there are multiple reasons in their immediate environment, they claim that those reasons are the way God's will reveal.

The current religious belief of the children is power full while they explain their day to day lives. They reported, if they study the religious education, their thoughts and actions will be shaped in a way God want them to be. Doing this will make them join the kingdom of heaven after death according to their view. Weather it is reflected at the societal, familial or individual level, the role of cultural and traditional/religious practice is profound for being *yek'olo-temari* in this study. The influence of the family members, role models, and friends is also paramount.

Furthermore, their view of studying the modern education likelihood of being unemployed has contribution for choosing the traditional over the modern school. They reported fear of being unemployed if they studied modern education because they may fail to join university. But, in the traditional education, they can finish their studies in whatever time it might take. It may take them longer or short time depending on their performance. There is no fail in the traditional education of EOC. Some of the children have sibling who studied modern education but unemployed because of failure to join university.

This tend to be consistent with Thorsen(2012) that children became *Talibe* to study Quranic education because students cannot easily get paid employment after completing basic education. In addition, appeal of public school is declining because of neo-liberal economic policies of spending cuts and privatization. But the finding of this study is inconsistent with the economical reason justified as the main reason for being *Talibe* children by Thorsen. She

argued, to minimize house hole expenses, poor parents send their children to distant Quranic schools.

In over all, the social structure seems to be active in the contribution of children being *yek'olo-temari*. Structuralisms focus on the determination of the system of social relationship (mode of production, power and domination, belief system, ideology) in a society (James and Prout, 1990). The strongest belief systems of their parents in the form of *silet* and other thought patterns and of *yek'olo-temari* children themselves has a crucial role in this sense. Societal forces influence childhood in a particular way (Qvortrups, 2002) and children are social actors within the possibilities and constraints of these social forces (Giden, 1979, cited in James and Prout, 1990)

### **Why *yek'olo-temari* children migrate?**

Like the *Talibes* children (Bass, 2004 and Thorsen, 2012), *Yek'olo-temaris* are known by their migrated life far from their parent's home to be fostered in the traditional schools by *Yeneta*. The study revealed they migrate to escape from work which is resulted by living with their parents. Access to the traditional is one of the pull migrating factors according to their view. They said that modern schools are more accessible than traditional school in their home villages. This is different from the case of *talibe* children. In contrary, Thorsen, (2012) reviewed that children went to Quranic schools because there is less access to public school. In this study, it is found that, *Yek'olo-temari* children migrated to Dangila because there is no access to the traditional school while the prevalence of public school is relatively high at the primary level.

*Yek'olo-temaris* have limited contact with their parents. While some of the children visited their parents two times per a year others have not seen their parents for three years. Children said that they do not want to visit their parents because it will interfere with their education. They said that, daily rehearsal is the most important part of the study. If they go back to their family, they will engage to work (which they escaped from it). They will also have the social life with their family. For them, this will make them forget what they have studied. The mode of the instruction is oral education. They have to remember everything they have read on the holly books line by line. This view of the children may challenge the global model of childhood in which growing up with the biological parents is understood as the only normal place for children (Ansell, 2005).

These *Yek'olo-temari* children are not forced to stay away from their parents. This implies that listening children's view is important asset of understanding their lives. In the new paradigm social studies of childhood, getting children's voice is the major methodological and theoretical foundation to understand different childhoods (James and Prout, 1990). Even though children have some level of dependency on older students and the teacher, they have independent life by managing their day to day life and livelihood. This supports the idea that there are different forms of dependence that varies in degree. It can differ from partial and specific form to total and general forms. One might need assistance to complete a given task independently so do the adults (Lee, 2001).

### **Livelihood strategies**

#### **Begging**

Begging is traditionally and religiously accepted activity for students in the traditional church education. Studies have indicated that begging is historically linked with the Orthodox Christianity in Ethiopia (Abebe, 2008; Minaye, 2003; Demoz, 2003). In this study, children explained that begging has purposes beyond fulfilling subsistence. It is a tradition excised by students of the traditional church education for long time. Students begging activity does not necessarily mean they are poor and their family are incapable. Begging is believed to increase the insight of *yek'olo-temari* to understand the secret meaning of the traditional education.

It is traditionally accepted from the past that it is not possible to understand the education by eating fresh food. It is the part of the hardship to discipline their body. In the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, to be spiritually strong and to connect oneself with God, food deprivation or refraining from meat and dairy products (food that are considered as luxury in Ethiopian context) is common. Eating by begging which is not fresh is way of strengthening their soul development to easily understand the education and of course, they are practicing their religion at the same time.

Begging is also form of showing their humbleness by doing humiliating activity. In which, lowering oneself is accepted as being humbleness in the orthodox tradition in Ethiopia. This finding tend to be consistent with Bass (2004), "*begging is believed to instill a sense of humility and discipline in the child*" (P.26) in the context of *talibe* children who are studying Islamic traditional education in West Africa.



Generally, begging is a process of discipline student's worldly life by refraining from comfortable life in the school. It is the course they put their flesh on the challenge and give priority for the development of their soul. Begging and hard life makes children curious, thirst for soul, and strengthens their quest for new knowledge. This belief is transmitted from the past and it reproduces itself in the school from the senior to the new students. One may feel sympathy of their life, but they are petty of others who are in modern/luxury life speculating the possible hardship they might face in the hell after they die.

The social and cultural context has wider determination in understanding children's activity. The reasons that make children to beg differs depending on the social context children live. For instance, in his study on street children in Addis Ababa, Abebe(2009b) said that poverty is the primary reason to push children to work (beg) on streets. Children in the street also want to engage in begging activity to socialize and enjoy their autonomy in addition to disruption in the livelihood strategy of the family. This shows that the reasons of begging by *yek'olo-temari* is different from the street children in Addis Ababa. It has traditional/cultural implication beyond subsistence.

Abebe(2009b) has also found out different ways of begging mechanisms of child beggars in the street of Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Some of them are artistically convincing alms givers by singing with poems that make them petty. Some of the children in the street of Addis Ababa beg by insisting the alms givers. When it comes to *yek'olo-temari* children, showing humbleness is characterizes their begging strategy. The society has also different reaction for child beggars in the context of street children and *yek'olo-temaris*. Abebe showed that the public have negative reaction for child beggars in the street of Addis. However, in the present study, children said that society accepted them except some who have different religion. It is means of the believers to exercise their religious rituals through which they believe their soul will be blessed if they give for students in the traditional education.

In this study, children do not haphazardly beg. Rather, neighborhoods in the town are divided and allocated to the students by the criteria set by the leader of students. This allocation of sites is difference observed from child beggars in Addis Ababa (Abebe, 2008). The begging activity in the traditional school is institutionalized and managed by the school by allocating children in different neighborhoods.

To discuss the begging activity of *yek'olo-temaris* with other studies in African context (*talibe* children), though the findings of this study regarding the involvement of children in begging

activity is similar with the *talibe* children who are enrolled in distant Quranic school in central and west Africa (Bass, 2004; Thorsen, 2012), there are differences in the level of time they spent on begging; the type of item they received and the amount of the alms they take. It is emphasized that in some of Quranic traditional schools, children spend more time in begging than study. It has been found out that they give the larger portion of the alms for their teachers. *Marbouts*(teachers) are considered as exploiting children by making children beg by force to increase their income by recruiting more *Talibes* (Thorsen, 2012). In contrary, I have not observed and children did not report this kind of exploitation in the case of *yek'olo-temari* children who are enrolled in the Ethiopian Orthodox Church traditional school in Dangila.

### **The chicken entrepreneurship**

In addition to begging, children have a livelihood strategy of small poultry retail business. They have business strategy of retail by buying when the price of chicken lowers (especially, during fasting time because most people in Dangila do not eat meat and dairy products during this period which fasting practice of orthodox Christians). By fasting these chickens, they sell to the market when the price of the chicken is escalated (after fasting time or during holidays). In Dangila town and the area, celebrating the holidays by cocking chicken (*Doro wot*, which the most popular traditional food in Ethiopia made from chicken and sauce). Therefore, by selling they sell the fattened chicken during holiday, they get profit. They also get income by selling eggs.

### **The daily life of *yek'olo-temari***

In the social studies of childhood, the sociologies of children advocate the study of children's day to day accounts in its specific occurrence rather than focusing solely on their future. The new paradigm criticizes the conceptualization of children as becoming by mainstream disciplines such as in developmental psychology. To achieve this mission, Ethnography is preferred way of research approach (James and Prout, 1990). Ethnography helps to understand children's daily lives by situating their accounts in their cultural context. According to (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007) ethnography is a type of qualitative research that gives emphasis on the interpretation of practices and the context it happens. The Ethnographic study conducted with *yek'olo-temari* children in Dangila shows that they have their own typical way of spending their daily life. Their daily life is mostly dominated by the educational studies.

To summarize their daily life from morning to evening; they wake up at 4am and study in the class (group) up to 7am. Then they pray until 9am. After having breakfast, they will return to study again till 12am. Again they get back to their study from 1pm to 4pm to their study after having their lunch. The time from 4pm to 7pm is for begging, dinner and time to relax with their peer. From 7-10pm is the last study time. The level of time they spend on their study by combining their lively strategy of begging and poultry retail in a limited physical and social space of the church/school, make the daily life of *Yek'olo-temaris* so typical which is different from other children.

In the global model, childhood is considered as a time to be cared for by others, free for learning and leisure, without responsibility (Bourdillon, 2006; Punch, 2003; Ansell, 2006). In contrast, in this study, play seems to have limited places with these children. Play is admitted as a childish activity which is related with less maturity in the school context. Children are expected to be behaving in calm way like religious adults. Generally, it is possible to say there is no difference between the adults and the children behavior which is not common in other social context of Gojjam or Dangila. This phenomena of blurred demarcation between the childhood and adult seems be consistent with Bordillon(2006) idea. By taking the idea of O Connell Davidson, Bordillon asserted that the dualistic categorization of child and adult could oversimplify the complex nature of children's life at different age.

*Yek'olo-temari* children are expected to spend their time in the school and the church or the surrounding of the church except for begging and marketing. They are not advised to freely spend their time in the town. The center of the town is the symbol of worldly life. The urban life style is not welcomed by the teacher. If a child frequently goes to the town, he will be considered as "*duriye*" which might be synonymous to street children. However, children have shown their negotiating capacity by doing activities (such as riding bicycle) which are not welcomed by the school without losing their harmony of studying and living in the church by hiding themselves. These negotiating capacity of children supports the idea that the people whom they are with; the type of activity they and where they are doing it determines children's experiences of agency. (Abebe, 2012). Furthermore, I observed *Yek'olo-temari* children watching and wondering around the city. I understood that they do this kind of activities by hiding themselves from *yeneta*.

## **Social relationships of *Yek'olo-temari* children**

### **Horizontal (peer) relationships**

*Yek'olo-temari* children have their own social phenomenon. I have seen the social relationship of these children by dividing in two thematic categories. Horizontal social relationship is the first category which focuses on their same age peer relationship. In this instance of their social relationship, friendship, cooperation and sharing characterize their relationship. While social networking initiated their friendly relationship, sharing and cooperation is the most emphasized values in their friendship.

Individual life seems to have limited place in the peer relationship of *Yek'olo-temari* children. They eat their meals together. If one does not have meal to eat and if his friend has, it does not matter. There is no calculation when they share and eat what they have. The communal character of children is highly related with the society in the rural areas of Gojjam(Dangila). However, it is more emphasized in religious setting because of the strong promotion of being generous and sharing what one has in the Ethiopian orthodox Christianity. Conflict is the most unacceptable behavior in the church. It is understood as devil act which initiated by Satan. The finds of this study in the horizontal peer relationship tend to be different from Corsaro(2006) finding in which conflict and disagreement is considered as the basis of friendship and group bond in Italian and African American children.

This can justify the variability of childhood aspects globally and that children's social interaction is not universal. Rather, cultural norms and values have their own contribution in the way children's social behavior is manifested in their interaction with their peers. As it has been documented in Corsaro's study, while conflict is a basis for the solidarity of the group in some culture, it has also the opposite reaction in other culture. *Cultural beliefs and values are likely reflected at each level of children's peer relationships, including interactions and friendships* (Chen and French and Schneider 2006: p.7).

### **Vertical social relationships**

The second category in the social relationship of *Yek'olo-temari* is vertical social relationship. In this theme, I have discussed the vertical peer relationship which focused on their relationship with older students (mostly above the age of 15) and with *yeneta*(leading teacher). Interdependence characterizes in the vertical peer social relationship. Older students

teach and assist the younger students. In the teaching process of the traditional school of EOC at Dangila, *yeneta*(the teacher) only teach the highest level of students. But the lower level students are taught by higher level students hierarchically. In addition to educational assistant, they also help the new children to adjust to the school (such as by making bed for them from local wood and teaching them how to preserve the food they beg for long time). In turn, the younger children help the older students by giving some service (such as fetching water).

The younger children give respect to older students. Respecting hierarchically based on educational status or age is common in the traditional education of EOC. Younger children respect the older students, and the older students, respect the adults hierarchical. For instance, if older person joins a group of children sitting together, younger ones will stand up and offer the guest a place to sit. This is most common in the rural area of Dangila but it is practiced in the town as well though the level is lesser.

The commonly known nuclear family may not be always practiced in other parts of the world. Goody (1982) asserted that relation defines parenthood in some parts of Africa. Beyond the conventional biological parenthood, in West Africa, there is educational foster in Africa. The finding of this study seems to support Goody's (1982) view related with the social relationship between *Yek'olo-temari* children and *Yeneta*. In the vertical social relationship, the relationship between *Yeneta* and *Yek'olo-temari* children is like father-child relationship. Children reported that they take the teacher as their father even if they are not biologically born from him. They said the teacher is not different from their father. Even, some of them have said he is more than their father. In Ethiopia, biology may not necessarily describe parenthood or kinship. Based on the hagiographies of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, Kaplan (1997) mentioned the concept of "spiritual kinship" to discuss about the parent-child relationship during the medieval period in Ethiopia.

*Yek'olo-temari* children are so obedient to *yeneta*. They revealed that they cannot be out of his order. It is not only *Yek'olo-temari* children who have such kind of respect for a person like *Yeneta* and other religious fathers and leader but also the orthodox people in Dangila and the rest of Ethiopia have special place for them. They are like social counselors who serve as a mediator in personal, familial and communal problems.

Like a child in Dangila(Gojjam area) do for their parents, these children give service for *Yeneta*. They help him the small garlic farming. *Yeneta* can order anything to do for him as per their capacity. But children have revealed that they are happy for being obedient and give

some service for him. They cite bible when they justify their respecting and obedient behavior to *Yeneta* and older students. They said, by doing these, their soul will be blessed by God.

I prefer to discuss children's vertical relationship, vertical peer relationship and relationship with *yeneta*, together on the context of the contemporary debates on children's agency because they have common characteristic of interrelatedness. In the vertical peer relationship, the older students teach and assist them to adjust with the life in the traditional education. The younger students offer reciprocity by giving some services such as fetching water. *Yeneta* is a social father who has a responsibility of giving guidance, control and manages the activities of the traditional school. Children also give a service for him like any other children did for their father in the rural Gojjam such as helping in the small garlic farming. This shows, as Abebe(2012) said, inter- and intra-generational relationships are the characteristic of many children in the rural Ethiopia.

These relationships have implication in the interrelatedness of children's social relationship at different levels. The interdependence nature of *Yek'olo-temari* children with different social groups supports Abebe's (2012) finding. He argued that interdependency in the Ethiopian rural children create conducive condition for children to practice different levels of individual autonomy while they negotiate the dynamics in which the collective interest. Consistently, children in the rural Ethiopia *are neither independent citizens nor autonomous individuals with separate right but interdependent beings whose daily livelihoods are intricately entwined with and are inseparable from that of the family collective* (Ibid, p.2). Children in the school have a family like relationship and their interdependency is not limited to the biological kinship it is extended to the spiritual kinships (Kaplan, 1997) which bounds these inter-and intra-generationally. This supports the notion of being reserved from putting children in dichotomous construction dependent or independent (Kjørholt, 2004).

### **Institutional relationship**

So far children's inter and intra generational social relationships have been discussed. The other focus of this study was the relationship between *Yek'olo-temari* children and the institution (church/school). I do not separately treat the church and school because both of them do not have clear boundary. The school is located and belongs to the church. It is considered as the part of the church. The church offers a school for *Yek'olo-temari* children to get free education and to produce new generation for the perpetuation of the traditional

practice. The church also provided a shelter for the children even though it is grave house built by the families of the deceased and do not have all the facilities such as light and water.

The children have their gesture for the church and the school. They give different services for the school and church. *Yek'olo-temaris* have development day (they call it *yelemat ken* in the local Amharic language) every Friday. Children give different services for the church and the school only during this day. For instance, during my field work, I had the opportunity to observe when they built a house for *yeneta*(teacher). They built the house by dividing the tasks.

Moreover, they give other service in the church such as cleaning, helping during construction, and playing *Kebero*(local drum) during *qdasie*(divine liturgy). Furthermore, they participate in the distribution of *Tsebel*(holly water) for the believers during holidays. Children explain their service for the church and the school mostly from their religious perspective. They believed that their soul be blessed and it will help them to get a place in the kingdom of heaven after death by doing these services for the church. In the activities that has to be done formally for the school or the church during the development day (*yelimat ken*), the consequence of absence may shaped children's service for the school. They said that they will be penalized some money up to 7 birr(0.39 usd) if they are absent during development day. But, their voice mostly lies on the reward they may get from God after they die. They expressed their view that they are happy to work for the church and they believed it does not interfere with their study as they work once per a week.

Furthermore, a big responsibility is put on these children for the perpetuation of the tradition for the future generation. These traditional schools served as a guardian of the traditions and its contribution for the continuity of the tradition for the future is immense (Hable Sellassie and Tamerat, 1970). As Chailot(2009) asserted, the perpetuation of the traditional education of Ethiopia is challenged because of the modernization. The existence of the traditional education is dependent on these children. It is plausible to argue that the church/traditional education and the children have interdependent relationship. A number of human rights issues may be raised from the UN convention of rights of children (1989) perspective because of the service they are giving for the church and the school. But, children's right should be placed within the wider socio-cultural and politico-economic context of their livelihoods and that the hub of the analysis should include the interrelatedness of rights, duties and

obligations. In short, the collective strategies in the rural Ethiopia have significant implication in shaping children's in the daily and generation reproduction (Abebe, 2012).



## Chapter VIII

### Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations

#### Summary and Conclusions

The study was conducted to study *Yek'olo- temari* children's view on mobility, education, social life and livelihood based two months ethnographic field work in Dangila, Ethiopia. Even though the interview primarily conducted with fourteen *Yek'olo- temari* children at the age of 15 and below enrolled in the traditional school of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church (EOC), *Yeneta* was also the part of the interview. In addition, participant observation and focus group discussion were used for the data collection.

The religious/traditional factors have strong implication for children to be *Yek'olo- temari*. For instance, *Selet* (pledge) is one of the religious practices in EOC that the believers pledge to do/give something if God/church has fixed something. Most of the participants said that they were sick during early childhood and their parents pledged to one of the church that they will make their children to study the traditional education of the church if they are cured. Even if the children, parents and significant others have their own role in the decision making process, it is within the influence of the wider social structure or belief system of the society.

*Yek'olo- temari* children migrate to the distance places and live there by having few contacts with their parents till they finish their study. All of the participants came from the rural areas surrounding Dangila town. The reason for the mobility are to escape from familial work; less access to the traditional education; belief of low performance in the traditional education if they live relatively comfortable life with their parents in which hard ship is believed to give spiritual strength there by it promotes understanding.

These children study and live in the grave houses inside the church. Their livelihood strategy is a combination of begging and small chicken entrepreneurship. Begging has a cultural meaning beyond subsistence. There is a belief in the traditional school that begging will increase their insight and spiritual development by instilling humility and discipline by refraining from fresh foods. These children's begging activity did not necessarily reflect poverty. In the same family, if two children study in the modern and traditional education, while the child in the former school get support from his/her parents for food expense, the child in the traditional education should beg for the subsistence. This shows that begging is one way of socializing children for the religious context of the church.

The daily life of *Yek'olo-temari* children is dominated by educational activities. They do not engage in play and leisure activity. Rather, play is understood as childish activity and reflection of immaturity by the children and the teacher. *Yek'olo-temari* children are supposed to act like adults. And this is reflected in their peer interaction which is primarily focused on chat and discussion. This is different from other children in the area where play is an important aspect of their life in addition to their contribution for the household reproduction. The children expressed less importance of play and leisure. This implies how *Yek'olo-temari* children are culturally and religiously conceptualized as a special group of children in Ethiopia.

I have seen the social relationship of the children by dividing in to two major themes, horizontal and vertical social relationships. In the horizontal (peer) relation, their friendship is initiated by social networking and it is characterized by sharing and cooperation. Conflict is not acceptable behavior in their peer interaction. In the vertical social relationships, the children have interdependent social relationship with the older students and *Yeneta*. Furthermore, the children consider the teacher as their father where social parenthood is prevalent in Ethiopia. Interdependence also characterizes the relationship between *Yek'olo-temari* children and the school/the church. While the church offers free education for them, they give some service for the church in return. In addition, a big responsibility of perpetuating the tradition of the church through the education is vested on these children and this made the church dependent solely on *Yek'olo-temari* children.

To sum up, the study shows that children are social actors within the possibilities and constraints of the social structure (belief system/tradition). I have observed children's negotiating skill between their agency without losing the harmony of living within the tradition of the school and the church. For instance, there was one case in the study a child learn how to ride bicycle by hiding from the lead teacher. If the child does this activity openly, he will not be welcomed by the school community because this is considered as worldly/modern activity. And this might, distort his relationship with school/church. *Yek'olo-temari* children lead their life by living far from their parents and they sustain their life by engaging in chicken retail and begging. This might challenge the view which considers children dependent and incompetent. The children are independent at the same time dependent which is determined by the type of activity and context they are engaged in. Finally, the study revealed that *Yek'olo-temari* children seem to have childhood experience different from the dominant global model which is work free and playful phase of life.

## Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study with emphasis to *Yek'olo-temari* children's perspectives, the following major recommendations are suggested:

1. Policy makers in the area of education and childhood in Ethiopia should consider the traditional practices of *Yek'olo-temari* children. Efforts should be done to integrate the modern education with the traditional education of EOC. This might increase the authenticity of the education for the children in the rural Ethiopia.
2. Regardless of educational goals and practice of the traditional education of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, the government should give them attention like students in the modern school. If they choose to study the traditional education, their rights should be respected and they deserve equal attention as the government does for the modern education.
3. Governmental and non-governmental organizations that are engaged in improving the lives of children in the country should give attention to improve their lives in consistent with the traditional/religious practices of the school/church.
4. Researchers who are interested in the tradition should give attention to the lives of *Yek'olo-temari* children by using research methods that promote the expression of their lives from their own perspective. I strongly recommend for other researchers to conduct a study on the gender and other uncovered issues in this study. It may be fruitful to study the tension and conflict between the traditional schools of EOC and the modern schools as both are still active in the northern parts of Ethiopia in shaping children's lives no matter what the degree might differ.

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## Appendices

Appendix I	Interview guide for the children
Appendix II	Focus group discussion themes of the children
Appendix III	Interview guide for <i>Yeneta</i> (lead teacher)

## Appendix I

### Interview guide for the children

Date \_\_\_\_\_ Time \_\_\_\_\_

Place \_\_\_\_\_

Age \_\_\_\_\_

Place of Origin \_\_\_\_\_

Educational level \_\_\_\_\_

Parent's economical status \_\_\_\_\_

#### A. Contributing factors and migration

1. When do you come to Dangila? How do you come? With whom did you come?
2. Did you face any challenges when you come to Dangila?
3. Why do you enroll to the traditional school of EOC?
4. What is the role of your parents in your enrollment of this education? What was your reaction towards your parents' contribution?
5. Are there any persons whom influenced you to study the traditional education?
6. How do you describe your feelings because you are studying the church education?
7. How do you compare your life when you were with your parents and here in Dangila?
8. Do you experience new things since you came here? If so, what are they?
9. Do you have siblings? If yes, what are they doing?
10. Do you have contact with your parents?
11. If yes? How many times per a month or year? What did you feel when you meet them?
12. If no or rarely, what is your reasons for having not or seldom visits?
13. What do you feel because you live far from your parents?
14. How do you cope with it when you missed your parents?
15. Do you think you faced problems because you are living far from your parents? If yes, how do you describe it?
16. Which one is better for you, living with parents or by being living apart from them? What are the reasons for your preference?

#### B. Livelihood strategies

1. Where do you live?
2. What do you feel because you are living in grave house?
3. Do your parents support you economically?

4. Where do you get money for stationary materials, cloth, food and the like?
5. Do you do any income generating works? If yes, where, how and with whom?
6. Do you face any problem because you work?
7. Does the work interfere with your education? How do you negotiate it with your education?
8. Did you do any work before you come here with your parents? If yes, what kind of work?
9. How do you learn the work you do here?
10. Do you beg? If yes, what? When? Where? With whom?
11. What is your feeling towards begging? What kind of benefit do you get because of the begging activity?
12. Do you encounter any problem while you beg?
13. Could you explain me the society's reaction when you beg?
14. What do your parents feel because of your begging activity?

### **C. Social relationships**

1. Do you have friend? Why do you make him your friend?
2. What kind of activities do you do with your friend?
3. How do you spend your time with your peer?
4. What kind of relationships do you have with older students?
5. Do you have any relationship with children outside the school?
6. What is the role of *Yenta*?
7. Do you accept everything *Yeneta* has said or there are times you do not?
8. What does *Yeneta* meant for you?
9. How do you describe your relationship with *Yeneta*?
10. Do you have any tuition fee for the school/church?
11. Do you give any service for the school/church?
12. What do you feel if you work for the school/the church?

### **D. Daily life**

1. Could you tell how spend your time yesterday from morning to evening?
2. With whom did you do the activities?
3. Which activity do you like most?
4. Which activity do you frequently do?
5. What do you feel when you see the way other children live?
6. Where do you spend your time in most of the time?
7. Are you allowed where ever you want to go?
8. Is there anyone who controls you in your day to day life?

## Appendix II

### Focus group discussion themes of the children

No of discussants \_\_\_\_\_

Discussion place \_\_\_\_\_

Date and time \_\_\_\_\_

Themes of discussions

- Contributing factors
- Appropriateness of begging
- Friendship
- service for church and the school

To address the above themes during focus discussions the following guiding questions were prepared even if there were follow up questions based on the ideas children brought during the discussion:

1. Why children choose to enroll the traditional education over the modern school?
2. Is begging appropriate? Why?
3. What should friends should be?
4. Is that appropriate to work for the school/church? In what way should/not be?
5. What are the advantages and disadvantages of working for the church/school?

## Appendix III

### Interview guide for *Yeneta* (lead teacher)

Personal information

Age \_\_\_\_\_

Level of Education \_\_\_\_\_

Place of Origin \_\_\_\_\_

1. How many students are enrolled in the school?
2. What are the contents of the education?
3. What kind of teaching methodology do you have?
4. Do you teach all the students?
5. Could you tell me the teaching time?
6. Do the children learn voluntarily?
7. How do you describe the children's motivation for the education?
8. How do you assign the room for the children?
9. Why children live in the grave houses? Is that traditionally appropriate?
10. Do all the rooms have light and water facility?
11. How do you describe the social relationship children have among themselves?
12. What kind of relationship do you have with the children?
13. In what way should children spend their day in their spare times?
14. What kind of service children give for you, the school and the church? And how do you describe the children's reaction towards the service they offer? Why do they have to give service?
15. What is your opinion about children's begging activity?
16. How do you allocate neighborhoods for children to beg? What is the reaction of children about the allocation?
17. Why all of the students are boys? What are the underlining reasons for the involvement of boys only?
18. What kind of behavior is appropriate for the children in the school? Why?
19. What kinds of behavior of children are considered as inappropriate in the school? Why? What is your response for inappropriate behavior?