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Pentecostalism in a Rural Context: Dynamics of Religion and Development in Southwest Ethiopia.

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Pentecostal Christianity originated as an urban movement in America and as it spread to Africa it was initially taken up most enthusiastically in towns and capital cities (see Anderson 2004, Gifford 1998, Hollenweger 1997, Martin 2002). In Ethiopia the Pentecostal movement largely started in towns, particularly Addis Abeba, Awasa, Nazret and Harer. However in recent years Pentecostalism has spread to the countryside and is increasingly being taken up by rural communities. This paper will explore why rural Ethiopian communities are attracted to Pentecostalism and how it impacts on their social, cultural and economic practices. In particular, I will consider the developmental consequences of Pentecostalism and how Pentecostal beliefs and practices encourage or block processes of change that are generally termed ‘development’. As part of this I will explore the theory of development – of what constitutes ‘good change’ – that is implicit in Pentecostal philosophy and that is generally known as ‘transformational development’. I will show how this notion of change is significantly different to notions of change prevalent in the secular development world in that they emphasise transformations of subjectivity and social relations first, then leading to economic transformation, rather than focussing solely on the economic as is apparent in the work of many secular development NGOs. Evidence from rural areas suggests that this model of transformation is perhaps more effective and that it provides a route to change that is both meaningful and morally acceptable to local people. I will argue that this is part of the reason that Pentecostalism is popular with rural communities keen to develop and modernise. These issues will be discussed with particular reference to the Gamo Highlands of Southwest Ethiopia, a relatively remote set of farming/weaving communities, who in the latter part of the twentieth century have experienced a large scale conversion to Pentecostalism. The paper will explore the processes of social, economic and subjective transformation that have taken place in the area and consider how religion and development have become intertwined in the Ethiopian countryside.¹

Studies of Pentecostalism in Ethiopia

Most studies of Ethiopian Pentecostalism have focussed on urban settings, where it has predominantly been the educated elite who have been attracted to the new faith (Tibebe 2009, Haustein 2009). The early Pentecostal pioneers were predominantly young people in their teens and twenties, studying at urban colleges and Universities in the 1960s, newly exposed to modern ideas and lifestyles that did not fit easily with the Orthodox Christianity of their childhood. As Tibebe Eshete has argued, regarding the urban situation, ‘the mood of the youth in the 1950s and 1960s was one of quest, searching for a new key to life, new ideas that would provide the emerging new social form with a new ethos for life’ (Tibebe 2009:141-2).

In this time of openness and searching, people were attracted either to the new ideas of Marxism or to the new ideas of Pentecostalism, which both suggested radical new ways to conceive of individuals and society, meaning and justice. It is only in more recent years that Pentecostalism has spread from the towns to the countryside, from the urban elite to the rural masses. It is clear that the social and cultural context of the contemporary rural community is very different to that of the urban elite in the 1960s. So for these communities still engaged in traditional subsistence activities, embedded in tight-knit communities, and with often low levels of formal education or literacy, why would this new faith be appealing? What, indeed, are the dynamics of Pentecostalism in contemporary rural settings? In this paper I will look at the spread of Pentecostalism in the Gamo Highlands of southwest Ethiopia, particularly in the community of Doko, about 5km from the small town of Chenchä.

Before looking at the spread of Protestantism and Pentecostalism in the Gamo Highlands, however, it is instructive to first quickly review the more well-known history of Protestantism in the neighbouring community of Wolaita. While Wolaita shares a number of linguistic and cultural elements in common with Gamo, their histories of engagement with Protestantism and Pentecostalism are significantly different.

Protestantism in Wolaita

Much has been written about the rapid conversion of the Wolaita people to Protestant Christianity during the 1930s (eg. Balisky 2009, Fargher 1996). In the 19th century Wolaita was a powerful kingdom in the area of what is now Southern Ethiopia. It exacted tribute from neighbouring communities, including those in the Gamo Highlands, and dominated regional trade routes that ran through the area and on to Arabia (Abir 1970, 1975). At the end of the 19th century the kingdom of Wolaita was conquered and subjugated in a very bloody battle by Emperor Menelik and incorporated into the new nation state of Ethiopia. Having previously been a considerable power in the region, the Wolaita people found this colonialism and subjugation deeply humiliating and demoralising. Under this pressure the traditional politico-ritual system and locally valenced notions of power and value largely broke down. And yet although the northern colonisers promoted Orthodox Christianity, the people of Wolaita generally were not interested in taking on the religion of their conquerors. In this situation there was something of a spiritual void. Thus when Protestant missionaries of the SIM arrived in the early 1930s people were very interested to hear about this new religion and found its discussion of suffering and salvation to be very meaningful. During the Italian occupation, when the foreign missionaries were forced to leave the country, local Wolaita evangelists carried on their work and during this short period thousands and thousands of Wolaita people converted to Protestant Christianity. The rate and extent of this conversion was so great that it was seen as a ‘miracle’ by many of the foreign missionaries who returned in the 1950s (Fargher 1996). In the years since, many of the Protestant churches in Ethiopia have become charismatic and new Pentecostal churches have emerged. All have been strong in Wolaita, which to this day is known for its largely ‘Pente’ population.

The story of Wolaita conversion thus centres around the break-down of a traditional politico-ritual system under the pressure of conquest and colonialism. The resulting spiritual void, and the attendant feelings of humiliation and suffering, left people open to new religious ideas and receptive to the messages of foreign missionaries who happened to arrive at the time. In the Gamo Highlands, just a little further south, the history of Protestantism took a rather different turn. As we will see below, the eventual break-down of the Gamo traditional

politico-ritual system was not caused by violent conquest and colonialism, but through a much more gradual process of market penetration.

The Early History of Protestantism in the Gamo Highlands

The forty or so communities of the Gamo Highlands never organised into a centralised kingdom and consequently never exerted any major power in the area. When they saw the violent conquest of Wolaita by Menelik's forces, they quickly agreed to surrender when these same forces arrived at their door-steps a year or so later. Thus the conquest of Gamo was a much more peaceful affair, and far less blood was spilled. Because of this the people of the Gamo Highlands did not experience the intense humiliation and despair that their neighbours suffered in Wolaita. Although the early years of the 20th century were not easy ones, as the local people had to get used to supporting and serving the Northern overlords, they did not experience a huge rupture like their Wolaita neighbours. The traditional politico-ritual system managed to continue to function, and local leaders, or *kawos*, were incorporated into the new power structure as *balabbats*, where they functioned as intermediaries between the people and the state (Bureau 1981, Donham 1985, Freeman 2002a:31-33). In this situation people managed to adapt to the changes and were reasonably content with their lives.

It is perhaps for this reason that when the first Protestant SIM missionaries reached the Gamo Highlands in the early 1930s, they were remarkably unsuccessful in winning any converts. According to Brian Fargher, the SIM missionaries were not at all well received in the Gamo Highlands at this time. Of some missionaries who started to build a SIM station, he writes:

They worked for one year in relatively peaceful conditions but by January 1936 they began to experience problems. They were detained for two days ... in the Galta area, where they had been itinerating and preaching. They were hit with sticks and had stones thrown at them. On two occasions they were arrested and they had their premises looted no less than three times (Fargher 1996:99).

In sum he concludes that 'in this area, more than any other part of Ethiopia, the missionaries were clearly not welcome' (ibid:137).

Nonetheless, the SIM missionaries persisted and returned after the Italian occupation and by the late 1940s finally managed to set up a small church in Chench, despite intense opposition from locals and officials. In 1957 they opened the first Bible School in Chench and very slowly they began to build up a small Protestant community in the town. However right through to the 1970s they were extremely unsuccessful in winning any converts in the surrounding rural areas. And in many respects the story of the conversion of the Gamo Highlands has less to do with the actions of these missionaries and their followers in Chench, and more to do with the increased rural to urban and back to rural movement patterns that developed as the people of the Gamo Highlands became increasingly involved with weaving and trade.

The first groups of Protestants that emerged in the surrounding communities were by and large not directly converted by the Chench missionaries, but were local people who had themselves been converted whilst away weaving or trading in various towns round the

country. Thus the small Kale Heywet church in Doko Shaye was started by Maada Maale, a local man who was converted in Addis Abeba and subsequently returned to Doko Shaye in the mid 1960s. Similarly, the first believers in Doko Yoira converted whilst away weaving in Addis Abeba and then returned to the countryside with their new faith and set up a tiny church in the late 1960s. These new churches were Kale Heywet and had some degree of affiliation with the SIM/Kale Heywet church in Chench, but their origins were elsewhere. This process continued slowly throughout the late 1960s and early 1970s as men increasingly took up weaving and moved to towns to sell their cloth. Many of them came across the new faith in Addis Abeba or Soddo or Dila and then returned to their rural homes a few years later and sought to convert their friends and neighbours. Back in the highlands, though, people were generally very opposed to the new faith and by 1970 the number of people attending the tiny new Kale Heywet church in Doko Yoira could be counted in single digits, and almost all of them were weavers and traders who spent much of their time away in local and regional towns.

Pentecostalism

In the early 1970s something happened that had a big impact on this fledgling community - some of its members encountered Pentecostalism. Three of the Doko Yoira Protestants started trading in Goba town, in Bale, and there they came across the Pentecostal Mulu Wengel church. They were instantly attracted by the vibrant singing and energy. But most importantly, they were impressed by the healings and exorcisms which they witnessed. As they moved backwards and forwards between Goba and Doko Yoira they began to introduce the practice of healing by sending away the spirits 'in the name of Jesus' or '*Be Yesus Sim*' - in Amharic. As Yakob, one of these three traders, remembers:

At that time the spirits used to trouble us a lot. People got sick and had many problems. But if we came to God we got better. When we prayed we got well. But the healing was most powerful when we said '*be Yesus sim!*' Then the spirits would go away. Other people saw this and they began to join us.

This new Pentecostal practice of spirit exorcisms in the name of Jesus did not go down well with the SIM missionaries and church leaders in Chench and became a source of tension between the two communities. However the spirit exorcisms became so important to the Doko Yoira community that eventually they decided to break with the Kale Heywet church altogether and to invite the preacher from the Mulu Wengel church in Goba to come and help them grow their community. The preacher from Goba was none other than Pastor Tzaddiku, now Head of the Mulu Wengel Church nationwide, and for many years he visited Doko Yoira and helped build the church.

So we can see that in this early phase there were two main dynamics that led to the initial spread of Protestantism and then Pentecostalism to the rural areas of the Gamo Highlands. The first converts were not converted in the countryside, but became attracted to the new faith while they were away living in towns. Perhaps like the University students in the 1960s who first came to towns and experienced the profound incompatibility of their traditional beliefs with urban life (Tibebe 2009), the first Gamo converts were also led to question the truth of their traditional beliefs in an urban setting. It is here, not in the countryside, that the Protestant message became meaningful to them. But unlike the University Youth of the

1960s, who went on to become doctors and engineers and establish themselves in Addis Abeba, these early Gamo converts went back to the countryside, settled back into their villages and tried to bring their new faith with them.

Secondly, in the rural context it was the power that the Pentecostals and their God appeared to have over the local spirits that initially began to interest more people. The Protestant beliefs of the Kale Heywet did not, at this time, accept the existence of the spirits, and thus seemed blatantly ridiculous to most people in the villages. Their ontology was so fundamentally different that it was hard for most villagers to take their message seriously (see Freeman 2012b). Their preaching did not address local people's concerns and largely fell on deaf ears. But the fact that the Pentecostals acknowledged the spirits, and at the same time appeared to have superior powers that could banish them, was an altogether different proposition, and one that Joel Robbins (2004) has argued has been central to the spread of Pentecostalism globally (see also Bialecki et al 2008). For people troubled by the spirits, or living in fear of them, the Pentecostal promise of being able to escape them and be free could be both meaningful and appealing.

Nonetheless, by the time of the Derg, the Pentecostal community in Doko Yoira still numbered only around 200 people. The majority of the local people – who were not involved in weaving and trading and had not been exposed to urban life – were resolutely against the new faith and deeply attached to their traditional culture. They were quite against the small group of people that had stopped taking part in many of the traditional practices and started following their own religion. The idea of being able to be free of the spirits may have held some appeal, but at this point in time it largely seemed like fantasy to most people. And given that most of traditional life was organised around appeasing the spirits one way or the other – through sacrifices, initiations, offerings and the observance of taboos – it would have been unclear to most people how else it was possible to live.

The Derg Period: Persecution

In 1974 the Marxist Derg government came to power with its initial mission of secularisation as the route to justice and equality. It outlawed both traditional religious practices and also so-called 'foreign' religions, including Protestantism and Pentecostalism (see Donham 1999). During the early years of the Derg, from 1974-1979, Protestants and Pentecostals were severely persecuted throughout the country. Indeed, as historians have shown, this period of national persecution of the Protestants and Pentecostals played an important part in their subsequent identity formation (Tibebe 2009). Throughout the Gamo Highlands churches were closed, believers were beaten, and many were imprisoned. In Doko the small church in Yoira was forcibly closed and used as a school. Huge arguments broke out in the community and the Pentecostals were harassed and beaten. In the face of this persecution many of the newer, locally-converted believers gave up and returned to the traditional culture. Of those that remained committed – predominantly the weavers and traders with urban experience - many fled to Wolaita or Addis Abeba, only to experience the same persecution there.

By 1979 the heavy persecution ended and the Yoira church was returned to the Pentecostals and again opened its doors. Tensions were still high in the community, and most people were very opposed to the new faith. Whenever someone decided to join the church, most often a young person in their teens or early twenties, huge arguments would erupt in that person's family and neighbourhood as people tried to get them to return to the traditional ways. In

these situations Yakob, the trader we met earlier who was now back living in Doko Yoira, would come and talk to the family and try to make peace. Sometimes he would succeed, and other times the new convert would return to the traditional ways under the intense pressure from their family.

Processes of Spiritual Transformation

During the 1980s and 90s the Pentecostal community in Doko grew only slowly. The few people that did convert during this period, however, underwent a profound personal transformation. The church got more established and organised, a preacher came and started a program of church education, and the Pentecostal project of 'spiritual transformation' started in earnest. Let us look for a moment at the type of change that the Pentecostals sought to bring in the members. The Mulu Wengel church, like most other Pentecostal churches in Ethiopia, seeks to bring about what they call the 'spiritual transformation of the whole person', or as we might see it, the transformation of the self. Not only does the new believer take on Jesus Christ as their saviour, they also learn to see themselves in a whole different way, as people who will go to heaven or hell, who can be infused with the Holy Spirit if they will only open their hearts, and as people who can make choices about their actions, their relationships and their future. They are encouraged to take ownership of their lives, to challenge the status quo, and to look for ways to grow and improve.

In Doko the preacher set up study groups and week by week introduced new converts to core Pentecostal concepts, slowly building up a different view of the world, a different kind of morality, and a different vision of community. Wendu, a young man in his early 20s who joined the church during this period, recalls how this process changed him in quite fundamental ways. He says:

When I first started going to church and learning, my thinking began to change. Before I didn't really think very much. As I started to learn, my thinking became wider... It changed me. I thought more about my life, about what I want, about what is good and what is bad, about how to live. Before I just lived. I didn't think about it very much.

And alongside this study, converts were supposed to stop partaking in all aspects of traditional culture that were associated with the spirits. Those that joined the church were required to stop participating in the rituals and practices of the traditional culture and to partake only in church rituals. As has been noted similarly in several other contexts, they were encouraged to make a 'complete break with the past' (Meyer 1998, see also Freeman 2012c, Hamer 2002). In Doko, the Pentecostals shunned all traditional practice. They refused to take part in animal sacrifices or to eat meat from animals that had been slaughtered in offerings to the spirits, they stopped drinking alcohol, and during traditional mourning ceremonies they would sit on the side and refuse to join other community members who marched round the mourning field brandishing spears and chanting war songs. Whilst partaking in communal work groups, they would sit separately at breaks and refuse to drink the traditional beer, instead being served milk (Freeman 2002a:57-59). Most importantly, they refused to get initiated to the position of *halak'a*, and stopped taking part in the traditional system of ritual exchange.

The system of initiations to the title of *halak'a* is a key feature of traditional Gamo culture. These initiations can be described as a form of 'redistributive feasting' whereby men, along with their wives or mothers, amass surplus wealth in order to take prestigious titles by

sponsoring huge feasts at which the community eat (Freeman 2002a. See also Abélès 1978, Halperin & Olmstead 1976). Up until the late 1990s these huge initiatory feasts were central to life in Doko. Even between 1995 and 1997, when I conducted my first period of fieldwork, some 20-30 men became *halak'a* every year in each district of Doko (Freeman 2002a, 2002b). This involved considerable expenditure of resources by wealthier individuals and served to redistribute wealth and grain around the community. It was one of the areas where the non-involvement of the Pentecostals was the most noticeable, as Pentecostal men refused to get initiated and or to eat at the initiation feasts of others.

The Pentecostals emphasised the direct connection between the individual and God. The mediating power of parents and ritual leaders that was central to the traditional culture was denied. And just as this process was central to the birth of the modern 'individual' in sixteenth century Europe (Weber 1904-5 [2008]), it started a process of individualisation in the Gamo Highlands. This was quite explicit in the local teachings, as church leaders encouraged the new converts to try to find ways to be self-sufficient and not dependent on their fathers. Most people living in Doko were engaged in family-organised subsistence agriculture. Male household heads owned the land and organised household labour to farm it. Sons were thus entirely dependent on their fathers. Church leaders encouraged young men to develop alternative sources of income and thus free themselves from this control. Many of the earlier converts, who were now church elders, were indeed the pioneer weavers and traders who had experienced the independence gained by market activities even before they joined the church. In promoting the message of the church, they were also promoting an alternative lifestyle and encouraging those that still lived under their fathers to break away and experience the freedom that could be gained through market activities. For those farming sons who had not taken up weaving or visited local towns, this was a new and exciting message. As Wendu told me:

In the past if you were poor you looked to rich people to help you. If you were young, you looked to your father to help you. There was no other way. The church elders showed me that there was another way, that there were different possibilities. They showed me that by weaving, by trading, by making things to sell in the market, it was possible to find your own way, to be independent.

So whilst the earliest converts were those whose market activities took them to urban contexts, when they brought Pentecostalism back to the village they also spearheaded a process of encouraging rural people, living in village contexts, to become more involved in market activities. Thus we can see that the 'spiritual transformation' promoted by the church is not only a process of personal, religious transformation, but encompasses and influences attitudes to all areas of life. In fact the Pentecostal project of transformation goes straight to the heart of farmers and their communities, and works to transform them from the inside out.

The Pentecostal Model of Change: Transformational Development

This transformatory process was not an unintended consequence of the new faith, but part of its wider vision for change. According to most of the leaders of the Protestant and Pentecostal churches that I spoke to in Ethiopia, spiritual transformation is considered just the first step in a broader process widely known as 'transformational development', through

which believers are encouraged to build new relations, new communities and new economies.

The concept of transformational development has spread widely through the Protestant and Pentecostal world and puts an emphasis on 'serving the whole person' and addressing what are perceived of as social, physical and spiritual needs. One key text states it thus:

I use the term *transformational development* to reflect the concern for seeking positive change in the whole of human life, materially, socially and spiritually. The adjective *transformational* is used to remind us that human progress is not inevitable, it takes work.... True human development involves choices... This requires that we say no to some things in order to say yes to what really matters. Transformation implies changing our choices. (Myers 1999:3)

This concept of transformational development is about development as much as it is about spiritual growth. In fact it is an ideology of development that is radically different from that used by secular development organisations, starting from the spiritual and then moving out to the social and the material.

However, in rural Ethiopia in the 1980s and 90s there were very few opportunities to get involved in market activities and to bring about social and economic change. Increasing numbers of men took up weaving, while others such as Wendu started making hats and mats for sale in the local market. But the incomes generated from these activities were not sufficient to free these young men from their dependency on their fathers. The church created a group of transformed young people, who then found that they had to fit back into the local society and live, more or less, as they had before because there was nowhere else to go and nothing else to do. And for those continuing to live a traditional life, it seemed that the Pentecostals were just people that believed some bizarre things, separated themselves off from traditional life, and caused tensions and cleavages in the community. Relatively few were curious to explore further or get involved.

The Secular Project of Development

However, this all began to change after the fall of the Derg, when the EPRDF came to power and moved from a Marxist development approach to one initially based more on neoliberal principles. The economy was increasingly privatised, state monopolies were abolished and price controls were lifted (Demissie 2008). In 2002 the government set out its new vision of development in its Sustainable Development and Poverty Reduction Program. The Program clearly committed itself to the neoliberal economic vision of building a free market economy and aiming for significant growth in GDP. The Government of Ethiopia aimed to do this through an approach called Agricultural Development Led Industrialisation (ADLI). The overriding focus was on the commercialisation of agriculture, strengthening the private sector and achieving rapid growth in market exports. The Program set out two possible futures for today's primarily subsistence farmers – they either become workers in large commercial farms and plantations, or they become small scale entrepreneurs growing cash crops for the local or export market.

NGOs were considered to be an integral part of this development program. Most NGOs work in rural areas and up until recently many of them have focussed on the provision of basic services, such as schools, clinics and potable water. However since the early 2000s there has been a noticeable shift towards projects focusing on market-driven economic development, in line with the ADLI approach. The frontline area for today's pioneering NGOs is projects engaged in Private Sector Development, Value Chain Development and Pro-Poor Market Development. The focus is overwhelmingly on production for the market and the transformation of Ethiopian smallholders into rural entrepreneurs. This neoliberal ideology is prevalent across the vast majority of international development NGOs working in Ethiopia. Today's NGOs send business mentors to work with rural communities so that they can turn traditional activities into income-generating enterprises, try to link them with providers of credit so that they can start new companies, encourage them to re-invest their profits so that they can grow these companies, and facilitate market linkages with private sector processors and exporters. In this vision of development farmers are not merely seeking to increase production and sell to the anonymous market, they are being encouraged to increasingly engage with the market and to think and act like businessmen. This neoliberal model of development, with its emphasis on value chains and business linkages, is quite different from earlier approaches to development and marks a quite radical shift in development interventions. As one senior member of a Dutch NGO explained to me:

It's a different model of development. We used to focus on push-side, on production. Demand-side is new. What we did before was not sustainable. We increased production, but not based on market demands. We want farmers to be pulled into value chains by the opportunities provided by the market. That's the new change coming up in development thinking.

In essence, then, the aim of contemporary 'development' in Ethiopia, and elsewhere, is to transform smallholder farmers into entrepreneurs, to get farmers more engaged in market activities, to turn subsistence producers into capitalists. The synergies with the Pentecostal project are clear.

Dynamics of Religion and Development

The government and NGOs, of course, do not intentionally promote Pentecostalism, just as most Pentecostals would not say that they are involved in 'development'. Indeed their theory of change implicit in NGO activities does not even consider the type of social and personal transformation that must take place for a smallholder farmer, entangled in close-knit family and community relations, redistributive economic systems and traditional politico-ritual structures, to emerge as an individualist, strategic, profit-maximising agent. Instead their primary strategy is to change economic structures and to reorient the opportunities and constraints available to individuals. Development programmes typically focus on facilitating access to agricultural inputs, brokering market linkages, providing access to credit, and so on. Where there is a focus on the individual it is solely in terms of capacity building and skills training.

But as it happens, these interventions are precisely the changes necessary for the Pentecostals to fulfil their mission of social and economic transformation in rural areas such as the Gamo Highlands. Or conversely, the personal transformation brought about by the Pentecostal

church created individuals who were ready and able to take advantage of the new opportunities offered to them by the secular development interventions.

In 1998 a development NGO started working in Chenchä and selected Doko as one of its target communities. One of its major program activities was to develop a cash crop in the highlands so that farmers could increase their income through the market. The NGO distributed apple saplings and trained people in their propagation (see Freeman 2012c). The Pentecostals were the first people to jump at the opportunity. They were primed and ready and enthusiastic to try something that seemed to offer a promising new type of market-driven livelihood that would earn them enough income to more fully gain their independence and become 'modern'. They had also been trained to start thinking in a more long term fashion and to consider what they could make of their lives, rather than just how to enjoy today. This also shaped them to be interested in new business activities and how they might be able to transform their lifestyle. As Wendu told me:

When I heard about the apples, I thought that I could change my life.
Other people just think about today, about drink and women. Pentecostals think about the future.

Many of these Pentecostals made a lot of money in the apple business in the early 2000s. For many years there was a booming business in apple fruits and, more importantly, in apple seedlings. Those farmers involved in producing apple seedlings were able to amass a lot of wealth in a very short time (see Freeman 2013). And since they had long since removed themselves from the traditional practice of *halak'a* initiation they were able to keep their newly found wealth to themselves and to invest it in their businesses or their children. Instead of having to sponsor huge feasts for the community, they simply tithed 10% to the church and then could morally and legitimately keep the rest of the money for themselves. Their traditional neighbours watched from the sidelines as the Pentecostals became rich and began to develop new lifestyles.

In the following few years, many of the traditional men also began to get involved in the apple business. They too began to make money. However, as soon as they generated a surplus they found that kin and community started to demand a share of their wealth, most particularly through demands for them to sponsor the huge feasts necessary to become *halak'a*. In this situation, and seeing how their Pentecostal neighbours were able to keep their own money and spend it as they pleased, many people became more curious about Pentecostalism and decided to explore the church. Many liked what they saw there and huge numbers started to join. The numbers are staggering. While the Pentecostals were a small minority of some 10% in the late 1990s, by 2010 the vast majority, over 70%, of Doko had converted (Freeman 2012c). The conversion was sudden and dramatic and coincided exactly with the apple boom. This might sound like an extremely utilitarian understanding of the attractions of Pentecostalism, but the timing cannot be a coincidence. Many new converts talk about the difference between being Pentecostal and traditional in largely economic terms. For example, Adane, a young man who converted to Pentecostalism in 2005, told me that:

Becoming *halak'a* is not good. It makes you poor. You have to spend all your money to become *halak'a*. People sell their land and their cattle and then they have nothing... I prefer to go to the church and use my money to grow up my children and live well.

People such as Wendu, who have now been in the church for many years talk quite differently about their faith. And for many of the new converts, the process of ‘spiritual transformation’ is just beginning, as they now start the process of bible study and church education that will transform their notions of self and spirit. For the time being though, many of them seem to understand the material benefits that it brings and sense the consonance it has with their new capitalist mode of production.

Conclusion

This paper has explored the dynamics of Pentecostalism in a rural community in southwest Ethiopia. It has shown how the initial appeal of Pentecostalism was felt in the towns and then was brought back to the countryside through rural-to-urban-and-back-again movement patterns. Moreover, these movement patterns, and the spread of Pentecostalism they facilitated, were inherently tied up with increased involvement in market activities, and recursively, Pentecostal ideology, when brought back to the villages, led people to desire more involvement in the market. At the same time, church membership enabled people to remove themselves from traditional redistributive practices and legitimised the accumulation of wealth. The power that the Pentecostals appeared to have over the traditional spirits enabled believers to both acknowledge their existence and simultaneously distance themselves from them, empowering them to leave behind traditional practices and to transform their lifestyle and behaviour – bringing about a change that mainstream Protestantism had not been able to achieve.

In urban situations Pentecostalism tends to provide a new meaning system and form of communal involvement for people newly disembedded from traditional communities and seeking to create a new lifestyle in the modern urban setting. In rural settings the dynamic is different. In this situation Pentecostalism itself contributes to the shift to market practices and the disembedding of the individual from the community. It provokes a shift in values, brings new motivations and legitimises new types of behaviour. In the rural context, the Pentecostal ethic most clearly supports the spirit of development.

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Notes

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