Rules of the EOT church

Debre Mewi St Gebriel Church
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Contents to be covered in coming months session

- Ways to construct a church
- Rule/Sacrament of Baptism
- Rule/Sacrament of Confirmation
- Rule/Sacrament of Holy Communion
- Rule/Sacrament of Matrimony
- Rule/Sacrament of Confession
- Rule/Sacrament of Priesthood
Rule or "sireat" come from a Ge'ez word "Serea" meaning regulation, boundary.

In Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church the meaning of church can be;

- A place or building where Christians gather in

- A general name for group of Christians
  - Psalms 117: 3, Psalms 113:1, Matthew 16:18, Matthew 18:17, Act 18:22

Therefore rule of the church means regulation, boundary in which Christians should manage themselves in and obey.
Types and buildings of a church

• To build or construct a church the permission of the ark bishop of the region is mandatory
• If the ark bishop doesn't permit it is impossible to build church
  – Fitha negest chapter 1 No. 3
• There are three types of church: Basilica/Solomon temple like/, circle and cave
Basilica/Solomon temple like
Cave
The three doors of a church

- **East door**: entrance of priests, **North door**: entrance of males and **South door**: entrance of females

- The meaning of being three;
  - Represent trinity
  - Represent the three worlds of Angles: *Iyor, Ramah, Erior*
  - Represent the three levels of Priesthood: Deacons, Priests, and Ark bishops
  - Represent the three types of Christians: priests, males and females

- A church can has a lot of pillars: this represents the fact that a lot of angles guard the church in and outside
Parts of a church

• Interior of a church: church building (*bete krstiyan*) in Ethiopia invariably consists of three concentric rings:

1. A square sanctuary (*maqdas*) or the Holy of Holies (*qiddusten qiddusan*) is situated in the middle of the circle and is screened. The Ark (tabot or tsilat) and its contents with its container or *mambara tabot* are treasured here. Only priests and the king can enter into this part of the church.

2. Next to the *qiddusten qiddusan* comes the second part of the church (*qiddist*). This is an area reserved for those receiving Holy Communion. It has four doors on the four directions (N, S, W, E).

3. The rest of the congregation stands in the outer ring, *always barefooted*, on the floor covered with matting. This is the third part reserved for the choir and is called (*kine mahlet*). Men and women are separated by a partition. Priests circulate in their midst while praying, blessing and swinging their censers until the interior is filled with clouds of incense. The interior is decorated with wall paintings and the usual icons. It has three doors (N, W, S).
• A church has a sign at the top of the roof
• On the sign an egg of ostrich is hanged; the eggs have fixed number with meaning; If it is
  – 3 (Sacrament of trinity),
  – 5 (the five passion nails of Christ),
  – 6 (the six gospel rules),
  – 7 (the seven pillars sacrament of the church) and
  – 12 (the twelve apostles)
Why ostrich eggs?

• B/c unlike other birds, ostrich hatch by looking at the egg continuously hence the secret between the church and the folk of Christians is deep and secret; the church always keep the folk who obey the rule and teach to enable them keep rule of God!
  — Fitha Negest 12 and Ezekiel 44:19

• After a church is constructed in such a way the Ark (tabot) will be kept inside! Without the ark there is no service in our church
The church and lighting service

• Lighting candles and *tuaf* in the church is mandatory.

• Especially while reading the bible parts and mainly the gospel lighting many lights is recommended and ordered.

— Fitha Negest chapter 1
Rules within the church service

• Unless for praying and/or other services entering and only sitting in the holy of the holies is forbidden

• From the folks (people without priesthood) no one is permitted to take part from the holy commune inside holy of the holies, unless they are priests and deacons.
  — Fitha Negest chapter 1

• Buying and selling for personal reasons and eating inside and around the church are strictly out of low.

• Un-baptized people are not allowed to enter inside the church until they do so.
  — Fitha Negest chapter 1
Care and preparation must be done before going to church

• Couples should separate their bed one day before going to church. Exodus 19:15, 1 Corinthians 7:5-7

• Females must not go to church for 7 days while they are on Menarche. If she gave birth for a boy or girl should not enter church for 40 and 80 days respectively. After these days she can enter after taking shower;
  — Leviticus 12:15, Leviticus 19:25, Fitha Negest chapter 6

• If males had day dreaming they should not enter church on that day, the next day they should take shower and enter; Leviticus 15:2-18
Glory to God!
To be cont....