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**THE QATABRÉ SHEIKH, *MAWLĪD* CELEBRATION  
AND INTRA-FAITH DEBATE ON THE *MAWLĪD*  
CELEBRATION**

**BY:**

**AMIRA KEDIR**

**ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY  
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Addis Ababa University  
School Of Graduate Studies

The Qatabré Sheikh, *Mawlīd* Celebration and Intra-Faith Debate on the  
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By:

Amira Kedir

Thesis Advisor:

Ahmed Hassen Omer (PhD)

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This is to certify that the thesis prepared by Amira Kedir, entitled: The Qatabré Sheikh, *Mawlid* Celebration and Intra-Faith Debate on the *Mawlid* Celebration and submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Masters of Arts in Social Anthropology compiles with the regulations of the University and meets the accepted standards with respect to originality and quality.

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Examiner \_\_\_\_\_ Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Examiner \_\_\_\_\_ Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Advisor \_\_\_\_\_ Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

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## PREFACE

The preparation of this thesis has its roots based on four points. While my personal initiative is in the fore front, the value it will render for the Ethiopian Muslims as it deals with Islamic issues, policy makers will benefit from it and all through, it consolidates our knowledge in as far as the Sheikh of Qatbaré, the *Mawlid* ceremony and the intra-faith debate are concerned.

Even if the already mentioned intentions motivated my engagement in this task, there have been some challenges to overcome. The first challenge was the sensitive nature of the topic I had chosen. It was very difficult for me to handle divergent views generated by informants. This was for informants try to underestimate the contrary views to their own. Secondly, many of informants and the local people, observing my young age and feminine reality did not that much put their confidence on myself. Thirdly, financial constraints had affected my research in many ways as influencing data collection and staying longer period in the field research.

This thesis is organized into four chapters. The first chapter deals with the introductory part and the necessary methodological and conceptual frame based on which the content of this thesis is presented. Then is the second chapter which is a literature review attempting to assess and review the available works quite related to our topic in particular about Islam in Ethiopia and the Islamic reform movements which have actively been proliferated in this country since recent decades.

The third chapter is trying to treat about the Islamic activities at the site of Qatbaré which is the hard core of this thesis. The *Mawlid* ceremony and teaching learning activities has been such a prominent feature ever since the Qatbaré Sheikh's days until our own time.

Chapter four of this thesis attempts to discern the details of the thesis data and the analysis. Very sensitive this topic is, the present student has tired the level best to be impartial in treating the intra-faith debate whose focal point is the *Mawlid* ceremony on the plat form of Qatbaré. In order to prepare this thesis, both primary and secondary data have been utilized. Rich data are further supplemented by Focus Group Discussions, Interviews, Field Trip Observation and Questionnaires. The agendum of the debate is the *Mawlid* which partisans have underscored either to celebrate it or not. The findings of this thesis can be summarized in such a way that the site of Qatbaré and its leading Sheikh had played quite determinant role preserving Islamic

learning and culture. Added to this, the continuity of this site in offering Islamic education eventually witnessed the celebration of *Mawlid* for long period of time. Again, intra-faith debate has taken the *Mawlid* celebration as a point of the debate agenda. Finally, the thesis has arrived at the key finding in underscoring that the point of debate has been on the question of interpretation of the textual law of Islam.

The thesis is finally very impartial as already stated so much so that it could not take either side. Instead, it proposes an extra mile of alternative route for the objective of which the Islamic religion and the Ethiopian Muslims should not be fragmented by moving away from their religion well taught by the Prophet Muhammad. The conclusion upon which this thesis has arrived is quite modest which invites for further research on this topic.

## ABSTRACT

*The basic objective of this thesis is to study the Sheikh of Qatbaré, the Mawlīd celebration and the intra-faith debate at this Muslim site whose founder was Sheikh Issa ibn Hamza al- Qatbaré (ca. 1866-1949). The method followed to collect data for the preparation of this thesis is qualitative one. The rich data collected essentially cover the role of the Qatbaré Sheikh, the how of the Mawlīd ceremony and the details of the intra-faith debate whether Mawlīd should or should not be celebrated. After carefully handling our data through qualitative method, data analysis has been undertaken as much as possible.*

*The logical outcome of the data analysis has come up with major findings which can be stated as the key motor of this thesis. These findings underscore that the site of Qatbaré which was founded by Sheikh Issa ibn Hamza had produced distinguished 'ulama after their study at this site. It also underpins that the Mawlīd ceremony at this site has created wider interactions of different Muslim people who could annually celebrate the Mawlīd. The main findings of this thesis is that the intra-faith debate which has made its point of argument the Mawlīd ceremony usually put its premise on the interpretation of the Islamic text than the Islamic legal ground.*

*The findings of this thesis help to finally draw a trajectory of an alternative route which is properly stated in pinpointing the direction which the undergoing debate seems to take up. The conclusion of this thesis is also quite modest as such intra-faith debate among the Ethiopian Muslims cannot be mastered both in quantity and quality which one may try to capture from this thesis.*

## Glossary

<i>Adab</i> (Ar.)	- A custom or norm of conduct
<i>Adat</i> (Ar.)	- Arabic term to denote culture
<i>'Alim/'Ulama</i> (Ar.)	- Scholar/ scholars who have capacity to transmit Islamic doctrine and knowledge
<i>Amir</i> (Ar.)	- Political leader who commands society's life. If it is in religious sense it is <i>imam</i>
<i>Baraka</i> (Ar.)	- Blessing
Bid'a (Ar.)	- Innovation that used in Islamic law or practice, but which is not present in the <i>Sunna</i> of the Prophet
<i>Da'wa</i> (Ar.)	- Propagation mechanism or means to diffuse the religion of Islam
<i>Dalīl</i> (Ar.)	- Arabic term denoting a proof or evidence
<i>Darīr</i> (Gur.)	- Money to be given to the shrine of holy people
.	
<i>Dhikr</i> (Ar.)	- Remembrance of Allah (God) and is Prophet
<i>Dibbé</i> (Ar.)	- Small or big drum to perform rituals
<i>Du'a</i> (Ar.)	- Supplication or performing prayers

<i>Fiqh</i> (Ar.)	- Islamic jurisprudence
<i>Hadīth</i> (Ar.)	- Reciting and repeating of the Prophet of Islam
<i>Hadra</i> (Ar.)	- Islamic <i>Suḥḥ</i> gatherings
<i>Hajj</i> (Ar.)	- The annual pilgrimage to Mecca, Arafat, Mina and Madina during the second week of the Dhu l-Hijja, the final month of the Islamic (lunar) calendar
<i>Haram</i> (Ar.)	- Performing something forbidden in Islamic law
<i>Hassana</i> (Ar.)	- Something or someone qualified as good
<i>Hijra</i> (Ar.)	- The migration of the Prophet from Mecca to Medina
<i>Ibada</i> (Ar.)	- Religious obligations or acts of worship
<i>Idal-Adha (Arafa)</i> (Ar.)	- Religious ceremony which falls on the 10th of the month of Dhu l-Hijja on the mountain of Arafat
<i>Idal-Fatir</i> (Ar.)	- Ceremony after the final 30 days of Ramadan
<i>‘Ilm</i> (Ar.)	- Knowledge
<i>Isnain</i> (Ar.)	- Term designating Monday

<i>Jam'a/ plu. Jam'at (Ar.)</i>	- Term representing group/ groups
<i>Jebata (Gur.)</i>	- Giving something
<i>Juz (Ar.)</i>	- Basic chapter of the holy Qur'an. The Holy Qur'an divided into 30 juzs
<i>Ka'ba (Ar.)</i>	- The name of the sacred Black Stone, located in the Haram in Mecca
<i>Liqa (Ar.)</i>	- Arabic term denoting get together or meeting
<i>Madrasa (Ar.)</i>	- School
<i>Madhab (Ar.)</i>	- A school of thought in Islamic scholarship.
<i>Manzūm'a (Ar.)</i>	-Islamic Panegyrics
<i>Mawlid (Ar.)</i>	- Annual birthday celebration for the Prophet Muhammad
<i>Mustahab (Ar.)</i>	- An act which is recommended for something appreciated
<i>Qadi (Ar.)</i>	- A judge whose responsibilities are in the areas of Islamic law
<i>Qawa (Gur.)</i>	- Arabic lone word into Guragegna denoting coffee

<i>Qur'an</i> (Ar.)	- Muslims Holy Book
<i>Rabī al-Awwal</i> (Ar.)	- The name of the 3 <sup>rd</sup> month in the Muslim (lunar) calendar
<i>Sahaba</i> (Ar.)	- The companions of the Prophet
<i>Salat</i> (Ar.)	- Prayer or divine service obligatory upon all Muslims.
<i>Salat al-Asir</i> (Ar.)	- The afternoon prayer
<i>Salat al-Isha</i>	-Late evening prayer
<i>Salat al-Jam'a</i> (Ar.)	- Performing prayer in group
<i>Salat al-Jum'a</i> (Ar.)	- The Friday prayer
<i>Salat al-Subih</i> (Ar.)	- A morning prayer
<i>Salat-atrawih</i> (Ar.)	-Prayers repeatedly performed during the month of Ramadan after the late evening prayers ( <i>Isha</i> )
<i>Salata al-Zhur</i> (Ar.)	- The noon prayer
<i>Salfi</i> (Ar.)	- An Arabic term denoting religious movement which calls for early Islamic practices.
<i>Samut</i> (Gur.)	- Eight
<i>Sangā</i> (Gur. /Amharic)	- Castrated ox

<i>Shari'a</i> (Ar.)	- Islamic law
<i>Sheikh</i> (Ar.)	- Islamic scholar
<i>Shirk</i> (Ar.)	- literary denoting partnership. Technically associating anything with Allah
<i>Shura</i> (Ar.)	- Get together for discussion/making
<i>Sira</i> (Ar.)	- The life history of the Prophet Muhammad
<i>Sufi</i> (Ar.)	- A Muslim looking for an effort in search of truth. <i>Sufi</i> mean clean
<i>Sunnah</i> (Ar.)	- Practices and behavior of the Prophet Muhammad
<i>Sura</i> (Ar.)	- A unit of the Holly Qur'an
<i>Tabi'in</i> (Ar.)	- The generation that comes after the Sahaba
<i>Tafsir</i> (Ar.)	- Interpretation of the Holly Qur'an
<i>Tawassul</i> (Ar.)	- Intercession
<i>Tawhīd</i> (Ar.)	- The theological doctrine regarding the oneness of God

<i>Ummah</i> (Ar.)	- Muslim community
<i>‘Umra</i> (Ar.)	- A visit to Mecca outside of the <i>haji</i> session
<i>Ustaz</i> (Ar.)	- Arabic term denoting a teacher
<i>Wahhabiyya</i> (Ar.)	- A religious movement pioneered by Muhammad ben Abd al- Wahhab in the 18 <sup>th</sup> century
<i>Wajib</i> (Ar.)	- An act which is obligatory in Islam
<i>Wali/ ‘Awliya</i> (Ar.)	- A person in search of intimacy with the remembrance of Allah. <i>Wali</i> denoting active holy man but <i>‘awliya</i> after death
<i>Ziyarah</i> (Ar.)	- A periodical visit to the holy shrine

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

In this chapter the basic tasks to be undertaken are developing the background of the study, the problem statement, the objective, the data collection method. It also deals with the significance of this study, the limitations and the ethical considerations upon which the rest part of this thesis will have solid basis.

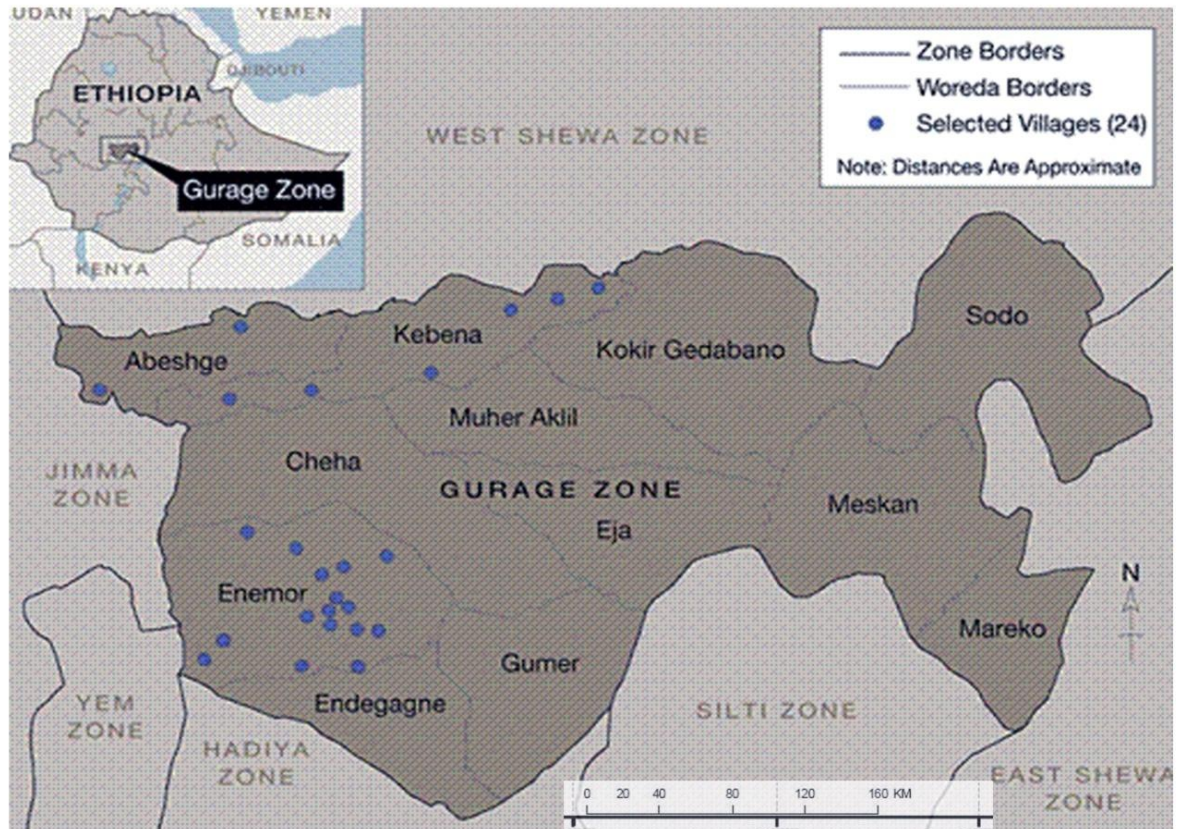
#### 1.1. Background of the Study

Islam has been diffused throughout the world for the people of different tradition and cultures (Ali 2011: 2). Ever since the introduction of Islam it has to shape the social, political and cultural developments of several communities in the world. It has also linked the culture of variety of people (Seyoum 2012: 1).

Islam in this regard has a long history in Ethiopia next to Christianity. The Ethiopian peoples have embraced Islam in 615 C.E. when the first Muslim immigrants came to Ethiopia and after that Islam had began to spread to various parts of the country. Thus, Muslims have started to live in Ethiopia from the very beginning of Islam and this includes various Ethiopian ethnic and linguistic groups (Martin 2004: 231). Based on different sources, Ethiopia is one of the countries in the world that first offered a fertile ground for the expansion of Islam from the very outset. The hospitality and welcome of the ancient Ethiopian king to the *Sahabas* provided a suitable situation to the survival and expansion of Islam in Ethiopia. Be that as it may, Islam has played and still playing a significant role in shaping and molding the social, political and cultural developments of several group of people in Ethiopia (*Ibid.*). According to the year 2007 Ethiopian Population Census, Muslims constitute around 34 per cent of the Ethiopia's population, which makes them the second largest religious group in the country. However, many Ethiopian Muslims still question the data as it further provokes fierce public debates among Muslims on the percentage attributed to them (Desplat and Østebø 2013: 5).

The Guragé people are one of the ethnic groups that are found in Ethiopia in the Southern Nations Nationalities and Peoples Regional State. They are classified as a Semitic speaking people; their occupancy is the Guragéland of this Regional State (Worku 2000: 43). The





Map 2- Map of the Guragé Zone

Source: Gurage Zone Office, Walkitte

Before the split of the Silté Zone from Guragé in July 2001, it used to consist three groups: the Sebat Bēt (Seven House), the Soddó Kistane and the Silté. Christianity and Islam are the two major religions, which are practiced in the Zone. There are also some indigenous religions such as *Waq*, *Bozah*, *Mue't* and *Damāmuít*. These indigenous religions refer to the gods and goddesses of war, fertility and thunder. The Sebate Bēt Guragé are adherents of both Christianity and Islam after they abandoned “*Waq*” during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The Silté are also adherents of Islam and the Soddó Kistane are followers of Ethiopian Orthodox Christianity although not all followers are. There are a lot of traits these groups do share in common and the geographical

proximity between these groups also helped them to enter inter-group marriage relations (Nishi 2005: 158).

There are rich traditions about the origin of Islam in the Guragé Zone, but most of them have no satisfactory historical authenticity. Different sources in fact trace different dates some of the dates of these sources could be traced back to the 13<sup>th</sup> century long before the war of Ahmed ibn Ibrahim Al-Gazi while others give the war as a reason for the introduction of Islam to this area by the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Whatever the date, Islam expanded well especially with the contribution of Islamic scholars (Sheikhs) in the region and shaped the culture and history of the Guragé people (Abdu 1995: 9). Islam, as a major religion among the Guragés, its expansion did not expect the role of missionaries from different places to propagate it. Rather, Muslim religious scholars (Sheikhs) have contributed a lot for its dissemination in Ethiopia in general and the Guragéland in particular (Dinberu et al. 1995: 195). Besides those Muslim Sheikhs, the Jihad that was declared by Hassan Enjamo can be also considered as one factor which contributed a lot for the diffusion of Islam in the Guragéland particularly on the Sebat Bēt Guragés (Ahmed 1987: 11; Abdu 1995: 22).

Islam has special characteristics among the Guragé. It is true that all Muslims could celebrate two occasions without any doubt, these include *Eid al-Fatir* and *Eid al-Adha*. However, the celebration of *Eid al-Adha (Arafa)* is somehow different among the Guragés from other places. The Guragés could give greater religious importance for the celebration of the *Arafa* than other festivals. At the time of *Arafa* the natives flow to home from different parts of the country, even from abroad, to celebrate the festival with their families and relatives. Thus, they could prepare themselves long before the celebration date. They could work hard to get more money and save it for the purposes of purchasing different things for the celebration like ox, sheep, butter, and other necessary materials. Unlike other places, the Guragé Muslims are singing and dancing during *Arafa* festival in which usually the young groups of both sexes are participating (*Ibid.*: 28).

The other special characteristic of Islam among the Guragéland is the existence of several weekly, monthly and annual celebrations of *Mawlid* ceremonies which remain main area of debate among the Muslims in Ethiopia. In fact, the *Mawlid* in real sense is the annual one to

celebrate the Prophet's Birth Date. Other weekly and monthly ceremonies known as *liqa* are held every Monday in which it could prolong to cover the whole week. People can be gathered from different places to celebrate the *Mawlīd* festivals, especially annual *Mawlīd* ceremonies like the one at Qatbaré, and the Abrate. These *Mawlīd* ceremonies are celebrated with the intention of remembering religious fathers who contributed a lot for the diffusion of Islamic knowledge (*Ibid.*). Among other Muslim Sheikhs like Sheikh *Sayyid* Budela, Sheikh Beshir and Sheikh Issa Hamza were the leading figures to play significant role both in Sebat Bēt Guragé and Silté Zones. They used to play a leading role for the spreading of Islam by constructing *madrasas* for advanced Islamic teachings, and, in building new mosques here and there in the Guragéland (Abdu 1995: 9-14). These Sheikhs had attended their education in different parts of Ethiopia mainly from Ifat in North Eastern Shawa and Wällo (Ahmed 2006: 16).

The students who used to attend their education at Qatbaré, after completing their study, they could come back to become teachers within their respective settlements. According to Ahmed, Ifat was the major place from where Islamic religious education reached to other places mainly to Wällo and to the Guragéland. The school of thought dominating the teaching of this Islamic center has been Shāfi'ī as elsewhere in Ethiopia in general (*Ibid.*: 14). These Sheikhs had began to spread Islam by advancing knowledge using different Islamic teachings. The returnee Sheikh could diffuse Islamic knowledge like *Dhikr*, *Tawhid*, *Hadīth*, *Fiqh* and Quran to those people who could come there in search of knowledge. Thus, their Islamic education centers could easily become the most important core areas of all Islamic activities. It is in these sites, that most of the Guragé Sheikh of our time could obtain their religious education. Due to their contribution, the followers of Islam in Ethiopia in general and peoples of Guragé in particular could try to recount their works by celebrating their *Mawlīd* and, annually and occasionally visiting their tombs. The *Mawlīd* festival could attract pilgrims from distant areas all over Ethiopia. People who could follow these Sheikhs argue that these religious leaders have charisma and could do whatever they want with the help of Allah and considered as mediators between Allah and all members of humanity. These Sheikhs are well known by the place where their Islamic centers could be traced as in the case of the Qatbaré Sheikh, the Abrate Sheikh and the Wālāné Sheikh and so on. Besides the above Sheikhs there are also others who had contributed and still continue contributing for the development of Islam in this region (Abdu 1995: 9-14).

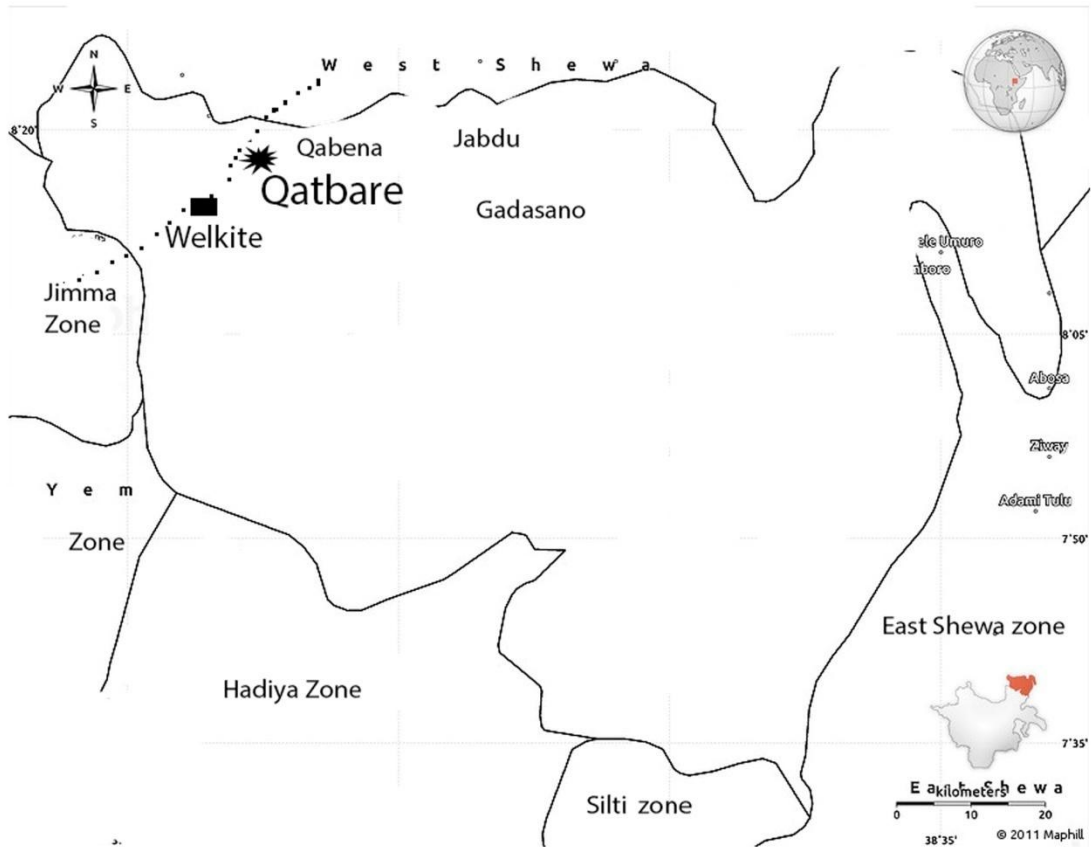
Muslims in the Guragé Zone could peacefully live with other religious followers and traditional believers. This also is the other feature of Islam in Guragé Zone. Religious distinction has not been used as the criteria to create friendship and other social activities in this area. Rather, in the Guragé Zone Muslims and other religious followers could help each other during the time of happiness and difficulties. Even it goes further arranging marriage with non-Muslims. We can mention the case of *al-Hajj Shalaqa* Sultan the first successor of Sheikh Issa whose mother was the daughter of the Christian chief from Gumar (*Ibid.:* 27).

### **1.1.1. The Settlement of Qatbaré: Geographical Location**

Qatbaré is a center of Islamic learning in the Guragé Zone of the Southern Nations Nationalities and Peoples Regional State. It is geographically situated closer to the Zonal town of Walqitté which is situated at the distance of 155 Kilometers from Addis Ababa along the Jimma road. From Walqitté, there is a dry weather road which is branched to the left side where Qatbaré is located at the distance of about 10 kilometers. This road is snaking through the rugged terrain and for this is not easy to travel in safety. Prior to the coming of Sheikh Issa to Qatbaré, this site was covered with dense forest having a small node of settlement where long distance caravan traders could occasionally rest there to pass the night. The wider physical setting where Qatbaré is situated is known as Qabéna densely settled by the diverse clans of Sebat Bēt Guragé (Worku 1984).<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless there is a tendency that the Qabénas are not belonging to the Guragé, the fact which needs further research.



Map 2 The Site of Qatbare

The seat of Sheikh Issa may have been created after he was visited by some of the leading local people, who heard about his celebrity while he settled at Sawitat during their presence there to visit him. Some of the visitors were those who had come to the site of Sawitat from the small caravan route of Qatbaré itself. They had particularly invited him to their village of Qatbaré underscoring that how much the settlement would be comfortable for his Islamic activities. Contrary to this view, the current field trip and further identified source clarify that it was only following Dani yu-Ssani of Dana. It was with the invitation of the local people and the good will of Sheikh Issa ibn Hamza that the latter gradually moved to Qatbaré whose arrival was accompanied with the unmatched ceremonial welcome.

It was also after this development that Qatbaré had gradually assumed a status of celebrated center of Islamic learning. It had also started serving as a hinterland point of cultural and economic interaction of diverse peoples from different parts of Ethiopia. It should not also be missed that the frequent visitors of this site were from the very beginning those with different cultural background and attitudes but under the wider banner of Islam. Therefore, this thesis picks up a more recent major aspects of the Qatbaré Sheikh, the ceremony and intra-faith debate within the rank of members of Muslim community with particular emphasis to those participating at the *Mawlid* ceremony at Qatbaré, and those Muslims who are extending the Qatbaré *hadra* in Addis Ababa during the weekly *liqa* ceremony and moreover in their daily life activities. However, the focus of this thesis remains with Qatbaré and the case of Addis Ababa is to further elucidate how much the Qatbaré *Hadra* is dynamically extended by the returnees from the ceremony at Qatbaré.

## **1.2.Statement of the Problem**

Islam is a religion having followers of diverse population groups of various cultures all over the world. The mode of life of these different population groups and their social characteristics in turn, could influence Islam itself in many ways. It can also not be denied that Islam in its own turn could also well influence these population diversities and their cultures in many ways (Trimingham 1976: 31). Ali (2011: 31), on his part, states that Islam as a religion is widespread throughout the world and it has followers of diverse origins and cultures. Be that as it may, it is difficult to look at the dynamics of Islam in micro realities having a close look at its unit form for

its long history has clearly shown the emergence of different sects and the proliferation of wider interpretations in the rank of the religion itself. Despite such realities, ever since it appears as a religion of the Ethiopians, it has continued to play key roles all through in social, economic and political activities of the country at large. What is not yet properly handled in the fields of Social Science researches is one of properly treating the question how Islam both as a religion and as way of life for the Ethiopian adherents in relation to their diverse ethnic, cultural and geographical frames can be properly studied (Hussein 2001: xiii).

Hussein, in another study (2009: 449), for example, states that there were comparatively little scholarly literatures which have focused on Islamic activities in Ethiopia. It is only since 1993 that corpus of literature mainly in Arabic language were published on the Ethiopian Islam. Most of these works have largely focused on the expansion of Islam in Ethiopia, its confrontation with its environment for survival, religious tolerance, religious conflict, Islamic revivalist movements and others. The question of debate due to diverse issues within Islam itself has not yet properly attracted researches. Nonetheless, Mustafa Kabha and Haggai Erlich in their joint article have tried to give some insights for example the question debating on the Al-Ahbash and the *Wahhabiyya* Interpretations of Islam (2006: 590-538). Jon Abbink also has written on the transformation of Islam in Wällo (2007). There are also other few scholars like Hussein Ahmed (2005), Terje Ostebø (2009), Mohammed Mukthar (2003), Mohammed Ibn Rabee (1998) and John Subhan (1983) who are focused on these issues. However, the celebration of the *Mawlid* of Qatbaré Sheikh and visits of their tombs (*ziyarah*) were not at all studied by scholars though it could form the hard core of the dialogue within the rank of the Ethiopian Muslims. Moreover, the current complexity in the rank of the religious setting in Ethiopia is characterized by “tension” within followers of Islam due to confusion of different sorts. Therefore, to handle such conceptual problems, this thesis intends to study on the celebration of the *Mawlid* of Qatbaré Sheikh and other related centers to it.

The fact that Ethiopia has always been a platform of different and wider socio-cultural interconnections; it has always been a vital center of research activities in different disciplines. This thesis is an anthropological one which is designed to critically study the Qatbaré Sheikh, the *Mawlid* and the intra-faith debate in the *Mawlid* ceremony at Qatbaré and Addis Ababa. The importance of Addis Ababa is to justify how much the Qatbaré *Hadra* is extended to it in the

form of *liqa* by those who could participate at the Qatbaré *Mawlid* ceremony. It helps to properly understand the source, the course and the direction of this debate among the Muslims due to such cultural and religious relations since very long period of time. The fact that no serious follow up has been attended; there is a crying need to tackle this challenge. The real challenge is not only the rising intra-faith debate but also the essence of proper investigation behind this debate.

### **1.3. Objectives of the Study**

#### **1.3.1. General Objective**

The overall objective of this thesis is to study the Qatbaré Sheikh, the *Mawlid* ceremony at Qatbaré and the intra-faith debate among Muslims on its celebration but with special emphasis on the justification and interpretation of the actors of this ceremony.

#### **1.3.2. Specific Objectives**

- To explore and document the history of the Qatbaré Sheikh and his Shrine
- To identify and clearly establish the details of the Qatbaré *Mawlid* celebration
- To carefully analyze the details of the intra-faith debate regarding the *Mawlid* celebration at Qatbaré
- To properly understand and document the relations and interconnections of the history of the Sheikh, the *Mawlid* celebration and the debate trilogy

### **1.4. Methods of Data Collection and Analysis**

The collected and organized data that are intended for the presentation of this thesis are generated from different sources. Accordingly, published and unpublished sources collected from different libraries and from different private hands, from field trip and participant observation, the individual interviews, Focus Group Discussions and questionnaires are utilized. Peculiar attention should also methodologically be followed as the subject matter is very sensitive careful data after check, balanced interview, tolerate the views of the debaters carefully handled. These data are in one way or another have decided the content of this thesis. Their

crucial importance should not be underestimated for that matter. Their importance can be seen as follows:

### **1.5.1. Qualitative Data Collection Methods**

#### **1.5.1.1. Field Trip and Participant Observations**

Observing the physical environment of the study area, understanding the day to day human activities, looking into and their cultural set up and their religious belief as well as stay for sometimes in the field are some of the basic essentials in the anthropological research. Accordingly, such sates of activities were undertaken by the present researcher in the last few months. Such observations have further helped not only in mastering such essentials but also to carefully select both the individual interviewees and Focus Group Discussants and prepare relevant questionnaires. These are no doubt very crucial in preparing both the framework and content analysis of the present thesis.

#### **1.5.1.2. Interview**

Interviews were conducted with different people who had different views regarding the *Mawlid* celebration at the site of Qatbaré. Mention should be made of the fact that this interview had considered both individuals selected for interview and other key informants as well. People who had participated in the celebration, Muslim religious leaders and other peoples who are directly or indirectly involved in the intra-faith debate are involved. The purpose of the interview both for the key and other informants is to carefully understand the intra-faith debate among Muslims regarding the *Mawlid* ceremony.

In this thesis, in-depth interviews with key informants were used as major source of data collection. According to Kumar (1989: 1), “key informant interviews involve interviewing a select group of individuals who are likely to provide needed information, ideas, and insights on a particular subject.” Key informant interviews often provide data and insight that cannot be obtained with other methods, because information comes directly from knowledgeable people (*Ibid.*). Thus, information taped from the key informants had been used to obtain relevant data on the *Mawlid* ceremony at the site of Qatbaré and the justifications from both debating sides. Indeed, the purpose of the data collection is to acquire knowledge and views from informants

identified both from the study site and those ones who due to job realities moved to Addis Ababa but annually participate in the *Mawlid* ceremony at Qatbaré. The selected key informants should at least fulfill the following criteria:

- Intimate knowledge of the Qur'an and the *hadīth* (tradition of the Prophet)
- Descendants of the Qatbaré Sheikh and others who have known about their tradition.
- People who work in the Qatbaré mosque and have also made their everyday life there
- Frequent visitors of Qatbaré to attend the annual *Mawlid* ceremony

### **1.5.1.3. Focus Group Discussions**

Bloor and Wood (2006: 88) underscore that focus groups provide data from a group of people much more quickly than individual were interviewed separately and it further provides an opportunity to obtain large and rich amounts of data. During the field trip at the study area and Addis Ababa, Focus Group Discussion was used as a preliminary data collection method to obtain rich information on the Islamic intra-faith debate. The focus group discussion involved different category of people, who have good knowledge of the subject and who have diverse perception towards the *Mawlid* ceremony at Qatbaré. Thus, it is of great help to understand the crux of the matter regarding the intra-faith debate under consideration. In addition, through Focus Group Discussions an attempt was made to explore the extent of the debate and to understand the real senses of the debate. Three groups of FGD were arranged and their composition includes knowledgeable religious leaders, people at their young age and women. Each group consisted up to ten to twelve participants. They have been differently grouped as their experience could be varied in both experience and time perspectives. A series of audio-recorded group when discussions held with differently composed groups of individuals and facilitated on group beliefs and interpretations in respect of a this topic. Note taking had been also used to enrich the data which is helpful for the preparation of this thesis.

#### **1.5.1.4.Semi-structured Interview**

It is often possible to collect valuable information from members of the community. In this study, therefore, semi-structured interview has been conducted from various informants. It was set with the intention of leading the informants with an open ended nature, rather than restricting them to responding what they were asked. Thus, through this method valuable information was carefully obtained. The informants were in particular religious leaders and other less knowledgeable individuals but well versed on the Qur'an and the *hadith*.

#### **1.5.2. Published and Unpublished Sources**

These materials have shown both strength and deficiencies. They are including both primary and secondary ones. Their strength is that it is quite remarkable to be based upon them to start and cement them with other field data so as they could give a meaningful pattern in order to forward a reasonable analysis. Their deficiencies should not be left out as they could alarm us to take care of some sensitive elements which could be either because of their interpretations or due to their lack of properly mastering the subject at hand. Having this in mind, different sources of such kind have been utilized.

#### **1.5.3. Methods of Data Analysis and Interpretation**

In the data analysis process, the collected data was analyzed in such a greater detail. Data through Key Informants Interview, Focus Group Discussions, Participant Observation and Semi-structured Interview have carefully been collected, analyzed and utilized. For instance, the collection of data from informants were recorded, and then transcribed. The next task was one of coding process, after that key themes were developed and categorized. The categorization was by verifying each coded segment of the transcription into separate files, linking to its respective labeled code. Then, in line with the objectives of this thesis, the identified categories were integrated into themes. Due to the nature of this topic the content has been prepared in both diachronic and synchronic ways as both of these are quite helpful for anthropological research.

## 1.6. Conceptual Framework

### 1.6.1. Schools of Thought on the Celebration of *Mawlīd*

Debates in both inter and intra-faith natures or levels have always been prominent features of the life of religiosity. Arthur Goldschmidt (1983:39) critically argues that whenever we think about any religion and particularly about Islam, he underscores that one should remember such religions have never been phenomena of one epoch or so but beliefs or faiths which have evolved and have gone through different stages of debates and they are still and will still continue to do so. Debates here vary from group to group and individuals to individuals in both time and space perspectives. Debates in both inter and intra levels in the religion or another and within the diverse religious communities can sometimes be difficult to describe as such issues involve individuals' deepest thought. Abu-Nimer (2001) gives a succinct description that faith is trusting in something. This something refers in our case is religion. The religion one must trust and believe in is the one someone best knows. This knowledge comes through nothing but in a series of debates which could open doors for learning. Schielke and Debevec (2012:1), in their introductory chapter to their edited volume (*Ordinary Lives and Grand Schemes: An Anthropology of Everyday Religion*), transmit that people can debate how they could conceive or perceive belief, ritual life with an intention to obtain the image of specific religious tradition as comprehensive. The debate which should be made, according to these authors, is as to how religion is a "sustainable anthropological category."

The schools thought developed here properly help to carefully treat the very question of the subject matter of *Mawlīd* or *Milād*. The question under consideration is what is the verdict of *Shari'ah* on celebrating the Holy Birthday of the Prophet? From the point of view of *Shari'ah* in celebrating this date of the Prophet's Birth praiseworthy or blameworthy? Do those arranging such celebration receive blessing or not? Three approaches have been developed to properly handle this and many other related problems. The Imam Jaluluddin al-Suyutī rigorously **approaches** to respond to this problem in formulating an approach that the celebration of *Mawlīd* is an occasion of happiness on which people could assemble themselves, recite the Holy Qur'an and then associates the prophecies of Mohammed that has been transmitted in *hadith* particularly in pinpointing the miraculous events happened on his Birth Date . Then diet is set before them and hence satisfaction. He argues that *Mawlīd* is a *bid'a* (something an innovation)

but *bid'a hassanah* (a good innovation) so much so that those arranging it will get blessings as those recitations could elaborate great things happened on the Birth Date of the Prophet. Al-Syuti's argument is developed into a sizeable essay and assumes high point in the debate around *Mawlid* ceremony.<sup>2</sup>

This approach has, however, been refuted by a parallel argument developed and **approached** by the Imam Abdul Fadl Ibn Hajar (*Ibid*), who argues that *Mawlid* is an innovation invented by useless and idle people, who again are slaves of their stomachs on whom the lower desires of the *Nafs* (life) predominate. This religious scholar has explained several rules indicating that *Mawlid* is neither *Wajib* (religious obligation) nor *Mandub* (commendable) for neither the *Shari'ah* demand it nor did the *Sahabah*, the *Tabi'un* and the 'Ulama of early generations celebrated it. The Imam further argues that it was only after Sultan Muzaffar, the 7<sup>th</sup> Century ruler of Ibril, who had started it with an intention to obtaining nearness to Allah. However, the Sultan's act was both justified and discredited about *Mawlid* and hence from the very beginning the *Mawlid* ceremony was ushered in Islamic history involving series of intra-faith debates. Many 'Ulama supported and did not criticize and still many other 'Ulama did criticize and refute it hence the opening of the debate around the *Mawlid* ceremony.

The third approach was by Imam Abu Abdllah Ibn Al-Hajj (*Ibid*), who tried to discuss about *Mawlid* with maturity and that *Mawlid* should be celebrated with joy and happiness to extend gratitude both to the Allah and His Prophet. However, he has carefully criticized that those *haram* (prohibited) things mixed in it should not be accepted and well filtered. The prohibited things mixed in *Mawlid* ceremony in actual fact needs thorough research to be established. It is not an easy thing to easily and happily pass over. It transcends and crisscrosses *Mawlid* realities and therefore *Mawlid* ceremony could involve moral concerns of Muslim people in general and those insisting *Mawlid* ceremony in particular. This issue as Schelke (2010:28-33) argues is in the category of moral universe so that it needs both attention and carefulness to deal with.

The approach of this thesis has been one of carefulness and serious attention and could not avoid these three arguments but benefitting from these three approaches. It has further attempted to create a new path of scholarly thinking in posing major questions by treating the *Mawlid*

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<sup>2</sup><<http://www.isalmicacademey.org/html/articles/english/Milad.htm>>: 2014-11-23.

ceremony at the site of Qatbaré in the Guragé Zone of Southern Nations Nationalities and Peoples Regional State.

### **1.6.2. Theoretical Framework**

Islam has several followers of diverse origins and cultures at the world wide level. Its long history also clearly shows the emergence of its different sects and the proliferation of deeper religious interpretations. According to Trimmingham (1976: 31), the mode of life of different population groups and their social characters could largely influence Islam itself as a religion. The different sects of Islam gives different interpretations and direct their followers accordingly. Their concern is giving special emphasis for the practical Islam than the normative one. In this sense, practical Islam refers to this religion as being practiced by whoever identifying himself or herself as a Muslim. However, what should be believed or practiced by a Muslim or normative Islam nothing but how they could forward their justification with reference to the Holy Qur'an and the *hadith*. Roff (1987), for instance, underscores on the needs to focus on how any Muslim actually perceives and practices his religion and how a particular context significantly influences a particular perception or practice. Ali, (2011: 4-5) on his part, points out that using practical Islam can lead us to focus on anthropological aspects than the theological and philosophical ones and it can further help to understand how much it can invite or a general endless debate. Seeking to understand the Qatbaré Sheikh, the *Mawlid* ceremony and the intra-faith on the celebration of the *Mawlid* in the face of the practical Islam significantly help us to understand the core of the debate, among others, practices performed by the participants in the course of the ceremony and further to understand the many faces of Islam. Practical Islam, in this sense, is not one of distinguishing the right from wrong, Islamic or un-Islamic. Its intent seems to show the basic issues of the *Mawlid* of Qatbaré and the main areas of the debate which can be forward by the followers interpretation and practices. However, this is not something to do with the ideology of normative Islam.

Different conceptual frames drawn from the works of different scholars who have largely focused on the dynamics of religious process particularly in Africa. Much of these publications put their emphasis on the concepts of conversion, religious change and debate, various determinant factors and prospective quite helpful to treat religious issues as in the case of this thesis. According to Østebø (2009: 464), the perspectives that are drawn from these critical

scholars are either misjudged or restricted. Therefore, he proposes eclectic model for the treatment of change in the rank of a given religion. In this thesis, I will try to handle the issues raised using different perspectives as proposed by Østebø.

This thesis deals with change in the rank of Islam, above all the *Mawlid* and the intra-faith debate without involving the relationship of Islam with other religions. As this thesis tries to assess and analyze religious change, religion cannot be studied by itself without the surrounding cultural environment. Claude Lévi-Strauss (1995) states that “words are instruments that people are free to adapt to any use, provided they make clear their intentions” (Lévi-Strauss cited in Ali 2011: 5). Therefore, Ali strongly supports Claude Lévi-Strauss’s argument as it can solve such kinds of conceptual problems. It is for these reasons that using different anthropological concepts become essential in order to successfully study this topic.

### **1.7. Significance of the Study**

The significance of this thesis should be seen in the light of current intra-faith debates around the celebration of *Mawlid* at the site of Qatbaré and the *ziyarah* of the same Islamic center which still shows that there is something unclear either for the debating parties and general Muslim public as well. It is hoped that the completion of this thesis will modestly contribute towards the clarification of this issue not only at the level of the study area but also elsewhere in the country at large.

It seems due to such misunderstanding around this intra-faith debate that currently we do abundantly observe hovering confusions within the rank of Islam in Ethiopia. The significance of this thesis is one of serving both researchers and general readers to advance knowledge regarding this topic.

The current confusion within the rank of Muslims and the ongoing intra-faith debate needs to be properly clarified. As this thesis clarifies such issues its findings are quite helpful for policy makers so much so that proper justice can be properly attributed as far as the intra-faith debate is concerned.

### **1.8. Scope /Delimitation/ of the Study**

The Qatbaré Sheikh, the *Mawlid* ceremony and intra-faith debate which this thesis attempts to treat has shown both focus and scope. The focus here is the issues upon which the Intra-faith debate parties are trying to justify. The *Mawlid* ceremonial activity and the *ziyarah* which the Muslim participants could perform at the site of Qatbaré is one of the basic tasks which this thesis tries to address.

The intra-faith debate which this thesis attempts to treat will also remain the scope of this thesis. Otherwise this thesis will not deal with the remaining Islamic activities in grater details. In terms of space the main focus is the site of Qatbaré. However, there are some remarks on Addis Ababa and Dājān town for the life and career of the Qatbaré Sheikh had to do with these two centers. The case of Addis Ababa is still important because some of the participants on the *Mawlid* ceremony are residents and those who could claim their origin from Qatbaré.

### **1.9. Limitations of the Study**

The subject matter this thesis has treated had encountered some challenges. Among such challenges, the current widespread confusion and misconception within the rank of members of the Ethiopian Muslim communities stand out quite clearly. Due to this, some of informal and formal information had not successfully been obtained. Another has to do with lack of access to some written Islamic sources who could trace about the Qatbaré and the *Mawlid*. The financial and time constraints have also hindered in one way or another the quality of this thesis. Realizing such risks, extensive library research and modest field research were undertaken to avoid such risk.

### **1.10. Ethical Considerations**

Unnecessary biases had not been a problem in the course of the preparation of this thesis. The ultimate task was just ensuring the objective analysis and interpretation of the collected data from several corners. Hence, based on the opinion of every participant of the study area, due respect has been given as the intention of working with them was only to have reliable data that would support the preparation of this thesis. Moreover, informants were ensured that the information they have divulged could only be used for research purpose and that the result will

also not to harm them by any means and that the reference part of this thesis will keep the anonymity of the informants whenever necessary.

## CHAPTER TWO

### Review of Related Literature

This chapter covered the literature review which tests how much research has been undertaken on this topic and the related subjects in as far as Islam in Ethiopia and the diverse Ethiopian region is concerned. The intention here is to evaluate how much the existing literature is helpful to reconstruct the subject under study. Equally, this part shows the visible gap which will be covered by this thesis and by the related research in the future.

#### 2.1. Islam in Ethiopia

Islam was introduced to Ethiopia during the 9<sup>th</sup> century by way of the Red Sea areas and along the Gulf of Aden Coast. Ethiopians were, therefore, the first to embrace Islam after the *Sahaba*, who had first accepted it and others encircling the Prophet Muhammad. This fact had occurred for the Prophet Muhammad had chosen Ethiopia (the Empire of Aksum) to become a home for the refugee *Sahabas* in the year 615 A.D (Hussein 2006: 4). This was a situation after they were maltreated by the Quraysh authorities in Mecca. The Prophet Muhammad told his followers that “If you go to Abyssinia you will find a king under whom none are persecuted. It is a land of righteousness where God will give you relief from what you are suffering” (Ibn Hisham 1937: 347). The then Aksumite king had welcomed them and permitted to freely practice their faith. This leader also refused the demand of the Quraysh authorities to send them back to Mecca. Due to this, the Prophet Muhammad had declared to leave alone the Abyssinians from the *Jihadic* threats. Based on the above lines, Islam has since then peacefully expanded into the Ethiopian regions with the contribution of the above followers of Prophet Muhammad (*Sahaba*) and with the activities of Muslim traders and clerics all through (Abbink 1998: 111).

As already stated, Ethiopia is the first country which had accepted the religion of Islam after Arabia; and, it has therefore occupied a special place in the history of Islam since the lifetime of Prophet Muhammad himself. However, for the past centuries the Ethiopian leaders had suppressed and discriminated Islam by perceiving it as an inferior, secondary and or alien religion both to the country and its people. This threat had its strong impact on the lives of the

Ethiopian Muslims (*Ibid.*: 113). Thus, Ethiopian Muslims have seriously struggled for their freedom and equality from the very outset. From such struggles, Muslims demonstration in Addis Ababa in April 1974 which involved peoples from different social spectrum can be mentioned. Muslims in that demonstration had stood against the joint mission of the State and its benefactor, the Ethiopian Orthodox Christianity. Before the revolution, the Ethiopian Orthodox Christianity was a state religion. However, the 1974 socio-political revolution had ushered in a new situation by overthrowing the feudal elites from their power, which was replaced by the Derg rule. From then and on, state and religion had separated entities so that the state and religion are not in their complementary relations (Hussein 2006: 10). The 1995 Ethiopian Constitution also realized that state could not interfere in religious affairs and also the reverse is true (Constitution of the FDRE 1994: 4-5). Initially, the Derg military regime had brought some changes on the lives of the Ethiopian Muslim communities so much so that Muslims were allowed to build mosques and *Madrasas*, travel for *hajj* and *'umra* and also to further participate in the country's socio-political spheres. Moreover, it is stated that Islamic holidays were officially recognized by the Ethiopian state (Hussein 2006: 16). However, when the Derg military regime had endorsed Marxist ideology, in the year 1977, it had restricted the above religious rights and suppressing leading religious leaders of all. Hence, it had followed a very restricted and unsuccessful socialist policy. The Derg regime was finally overthrown by the Ethiopian Peoples' Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), in May 1991 (*Ibid.*)

Unlike other regimes, the Ethiopian Peoples' Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPDRF) had introduced a much flexible policy of Federal Rule to secure the rights and equality of ethnic and religious communities. The changes that occurred after the Derg regime had opened opportunities for Muslims to be recognized as citizen of the country. The current supreme law of the country, the (constitution) has guaranteed religious equality and freedom. Moreover, Muslims in Ethiopia accordingly started participating in religious activities such as building new mosques, *Madrasas*, Islamic organizations, publishing Islamic magazines and newspapers. The Ethiopian Muslims have also since then become active in public spheres. Additionally, religious leaders have begun to travel for *hajj*, and, in search of religious education as well to different countries by using the opportunities of such kind which was favorably created by the current regime. Besides, several missionary organizations of different religions were allowed to enter

into the country to work hard in spreading and inculcating religious values within the rank of the Ethiopian society. This was also true in the case of Islam in Ethiopia (Abbink 2007, 67-70).

As already stated, the coming of the EPRDF into the political scene has ushered in considerable changes in the status of the Ethiopian Muslim community (*ummah*) regarding the right and freedom of their religion. It gives better religious freedom than its predecessors and abolished many of the restriction on religious matters. Due to this, Muslims have positive predisposition towards the current regime (Dereje 2013: 33). Hussein (2006: 16), states that the increasing freedom renewed interests of Muslims to expand their religious activities in building among others, new mosques *madrasas* and in establishing different organizations. It increases the process of Islamic religiosity and rapid increase of religious feeling within the rank of the Ethiopian Muslim society. This, in turn, seems to have led to the developments of a new thinking which could increase intra-faith debate within the rank of the adherents of Islam in Ethiopia. Indeed, the widespread publication have also invited many Muslim scholars to contribute several articles dealing with different views, some were serious to challenge some misconception and understandings. It seems due to this that reformist ideas and intra-faith debates have mushroomed in contemporary Ethiopia. Such intra-faith debates usually revolve around the true line of the Islamic faith (Østebø (2007: 1). In this thesis we will see reformist movements which appear after the coming of EPRDF to the power in the following pages.

## **2.2. Islamic Reform Movements in Ethiopia**

It goes without saying that Islamic reformist movements have been penetrating into Ethiopia from different countries at least since the downfall of the military socialist regime in 1991. The social, political, and economic changes that have made their appearance in the last few decades gradually have transformed the Ethiopian Muslim society. This development has also facilitated the emergence of new reform movements which effectively have gained public presence (Desplat 2005: 486). According to Zerihun (2013: 151), among such reformist movements, the *Salafi*, the *Jama'at al-Tabligh* and the Intellectualist movements are standing out quite clearly. To make this discussion more clear, it is appropriate to discuss those reformist movements in detail.

### 2.2.1. The *Salafi* Movement

As Østebø states, of the three movements the *Salafi* movement is the one which had arrived in Ethiopia in the late 1940s, and, it had gradually attracted the attention of many public audiences. The *Salafi* Islam in this context refers to the teaching of Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahab and not connected with the 19th century *Salafi* movement of Muhammad Abdu and Rashid Rida in Egypt. This reformist religious movement was first introduced into Saudi Arabia, and, it was gradually diffused into Ethiopia from the south-eastern part of the country. The term *Salafi* commonly used in Ethiopia is *Wahhabi* Islam (Hopfe 1991, Zerihun 2013: 151). Traveling for *Hajj* to Saudi Arabia has become the vehicle of the *Salafi* movement. This can be manifested whenever the travelers could return to their country so that its expansion did not need the coming of missionaries here in Ethiopia to further propagate it. The *Salafi* movement has always enjoyed in rural areas and it has especially influenced people who speak Afan Oromo. It seems that the movement has coincided itself with particular ethnic Oromo speaking peoples (Østebø 2007: 4). Regarding this Østebø states the following:

*The Salafi movement has since been strong in areas such as Harargé, Balé and Arsi. The movement's adherents are mainly from the Oromo population, with Salafism growing stronger in Jimma area and eastern Wollega. The Oromo are also dominating the movement in areas outside of Oromiya, clearly seen in Ayer Tena, the center for the Salafi 'ulama, where the majority of the residents are from Balé (Ibid.)*

The *Salafi* movement did not develop to the level of an organization before 1990s. It had rather used to be diffused its ideology by using mosques in an informal manner. This has enabled it not to be exterminated by the Derg military regime so that it has eventually survived series elimination moves. However, the fall of the Marxist military regime empowered the *Salafi* to successively expand their ideas. There were many other Muslim organizations such as the *Ethiopian Muslim Youth Association* (their activities dominating big cities), *Islamic Da'wa and Knowledge Association* (dominant in Balé) and also other groups which carried out the expansion of the idea to everywhere in Ethiopia. Moreover, the *Awwaliyah School and Mission Centre*, in Addis Ababa, is also one of the main centers for the diffusion of the *Salafi* ideas which was later changed to the *International Islamic Relief Organization* in the year 1993. Some scholars argue that, this reformist movement has come into existence in the Muslim world to particularly orient the followers of Islam to apply the literal and clear interpretation of the Qur'an

and that of *hadīth* (Bauer Oumer 2006, 79; Nega Aba Jebal 1986). As Armanios (2004: 4) states, “the *Salafi* movement is the *Sunni* puritanical movement, well-known in recent years and it is arguably the most pervasive revivalist movement in the Islamic world.”

The *Salafi*'s main debate stands against the inclusion of any ideas and practices that are not included in the Qur'an and in the *hadīth*. Practices such as the celebration of *Mawlīd*, visits to tombs, shrines and other related *Sufi* supported activities are considered as something innovation (*bida'a*) and *shirk* (connecting other beings with Allah), this is the *Salafi* interpretation (Meron 2013: 124). Most scholars argue that, the debate on such kind of issues is a rather recent phenomenon but quite related with the change in the regime in 1990s and the abolition of many of the restrictions on religion (Meron 2013 and Zerihun 2013). The *Salafi* highly encourages its members to strictly adhere to the deeds of Prophet Muhammad i.e, the *Sunna*, among others, the beard growing and wearing of trousers above ones ankles (*isbal*) (Desplat 2005: 490). According to Meron (2013: 124) in this interpretation female Muslims should cover their faces with *niqab*. These practices by the *Salafi* considered as an identity marker between those who are *Salafi* and those who are not. Edelbay (2012: 125) on his part states that “the *niqab* is a Muslim woman's headdress that covers the face leaving eyes visible.” This is just a *Salafi* view which can be differently perceived by other debaters. The *Salafi* further include additional prayers and fasting (Meron 2013: 124).

Moreover, according to Desplat (2005: 483), there are debates among the followers of Islam due to the presence of different schools of thought and that of traditional religious practices. These schools could vary on certain issues and have entertained to broad legal interpretations or *fiqh*. In the *Sunni* world, these include, among others, Imām Mālikī bin Anas, Imām Abū Hanīfah, Imām Muhammad al-Shāfi'ī, and Imām Ahmad ibn Hanbal, after whom the Mālikī, Hanafī, Shāfi'ī, and Hanbalī schools are respectively mentioned.

The Hanafī School is the oldest school of all which is founded by a certain Iraqi scholar called Imām Abū Hanīfah. Abū Hanīfa was a student of a well-known Iraq scholar Hammād ibn Abī Suleymān. The Hanafīs uses the consensus of the Muslim community (*ijm'a*), analogical reasoning (*qiyas*), juristic discretion (*istihsan*) and the customs of the local population enacting said law (*urf*) as sources of Islamic law besides the Holy Qur'an and the *hadith*. Nowadays, it is

prevalent in countries and regions like Turkey, Central Asia, the Balkans, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, and Bangladesh. The Māliki School was founded and owes its name from Imām Māliki bin Anas who was a scholar from Medina. Māliki bin Anas did not get his knowledge by searching celebrated teachers outside his home town like other scholars of his age rather he believe that his native town Medina, the most important core area of all religious centers by stating that, Medina was the origin and primary source of Islamic knowledge. The view of this school is that the practices of Medina (the first three generations) to be a superior proof of the "living" *sunnah* than isolated, although sound, *hadiths*. This school has sizable in countries like North Africa, Mauritania, Kuwait, and Bahrain. The Shaf'i school was founded by Muhammad Imām Muhammad al-Shāfi'ī. The Shāfi'ī school uses the Holly Quran, the *sunnah* the Prophet, *ijma* (consensus), *qiyas* (analogy) and the opinions of Muhammad's companions (*Al-khulafa ar-Rashidun*) as sources of Islamic law.

It is prevalent in Egypt, Sudan, Ethiopia, Somalia, parts of Yemen, Indonesia, and Malaysia. The last school of law is the Hanbalī School founded by Imām Ahmad ibn Hanbal, who was from Arabian origin. The view of this school is that the Qur'an is the primary and absolute sources of law and that of the *hadīth* is the other (Zolkiplé and Sukimi 2011: 236). These schools of thought usually give alternative interpretation for the sayings and deeds of the Prophet Muhammad and, guides how Muslims should practice their religion. There are theological and doctrinal differences among such various schools of thought. Among these schools of thought, the *Salafi* movement follows the Hanbali School which could use literal interpretation of the Qur'an and that of the *hadīth* (*Ibid.*)

There is also the other sect of *Salafi* movement called the *Takfir wal-Hijrah* whose foundation process by Sheikh Muhammad Amin was realized in the year 1994-1995. The members consider themselves as the true Muslims and considered other Muslims including the *Salafi* as non-believers or *khafir*. They separated their mosques not to pray together with other Ethiopian Muslims. The Tarro Mosque, in Addis Ababa, is the main headquarter where this *jama'a* can be found. This movement clearly shows the new direction of the *Salafi* movement although it seems to have lost much of its potentials. The more recent phenomenon is the establishment of *Madhkaliyyah* group. Østebø is of the opinion that the *Madhkaliyyah* group is much stricter than the *Salafi*. He further argues that, there is no rich information on this group. It is well known that

this group has established its own organization called *Najiah* (salvation) by the end of the year 2006 (Østebø 2007: 9).

According to Zerihun (2013: 151), nowadays it is difficult to get individuals who identify themselves as a part of the *Salafi* movement. However, there are individuals, who only strictly abide to the Qur'an, the *Sunnah* and considered the practices of the local Muslims as mere innovation. People usually attribute their appellation as *Wahhabiyoch* or *yä tawhid sewoch* for those individuals.

### **2.2.2. The *Jama'at al-Tabligh* Movement**

The other reformist movement which Østebø (2007: 9), underscores is that of the *Jama'at al-Tabligh* movement. This movement is the largest of the movement in the history of Islam in Ethiopia, which was first established in India in 1929 by certain Maulana Muhammad Ilyas al-Kandahlawi (Zolkiple and Sukimi 2011: 236). The movement was introduced to Ethiopia through Muslim missionaries originally from South Africa and by the Kenyan Indians during the 1970s. Sheikh Musa Kikiya had contributed a lot for the introduction and expansion of this Movement in Addis Ababa, especially for the Gurage Muslims, who have lived in Addis Ababa. For Østebø (2007: 14), *Salafi* to Oromo so is the *Jama'at al-Tabligh* in the Gurage ethnic group. His opinion underpins that “the *Tabligh's* ethnic character must also be seen as a way of expressing the particularity of the Gurage trading-community in the capital, Addis Ababa” (*Ibid.*) Like any other Islamic reformist movements in Ethiopia, the activities of the *Jama'at al-Tabligh* movement were strongly harassed by the Derg regime (1974-1991). However, they strongly build up their potential during the post 1991 period. Sheik Musa has made his center of *da'wa* (*markas*) in the Kolfe area of the city of Addis Ababa where he has his permanent residence since then. The activities of *da'wa* are something to be performed short and long term bases. The first one is covering a very short time of not more than twenty four hours. The second one is again a period of four months if it is within Ethiopian regions and outside the country. People do always participate in the *da'wa* activities based on the financial status and time availability (Zerihun 2013: 151). For instance: individuals who are students may or could participate on *da'wa* that may be for 24 hours or for three days, while others who could have access to finance and time may participate on four months *da'wa* or other *da'wa* outside of the country. As

Zolkiplé and Sukimi (2011: 236) argue the *Jama'at al-Tabligh* usually teaches its followers to become abide for the six principles. These six principles were derived from the lives of the companions of the Prophet Muhammad (*sahaba*) and include faith (*Imaan*), prayer (*salat*), the knowledge and remembrance of Allah (*ilm* and *dhikr*), honoring a Muslim (*ikraam-e-Muslim*), sincerity of intention (*ikhlas-e-niyyat*) and inviting and preaching (*dawah*). Moreover, it also highly encourages Muslims to participate in religious praying in various mosques and to share the knowledge's of the Islamic teachers (*ustaz*). These six principles of the *Tabligh* are to develop 'the self and personal character' among members of the *Tabligh* movement (*Ibid.*). Unlike the *Salafi* members, the *Tabligh* is not that much in direct conflict with the traditional practices like the veneration of saints and the celebration of *Mawlid* rather it can be true that their members could engage in these kinds of practices (Østebø 2007, Patrick Desplat 2013). Indeed the Guragé Muslims of Addis Ababa who could maintain their traditional practices with them, besides their participation, in the *Tabligh* (Østebø 2007: 9-10). Of the four schools of thought, the *Jama'at al-Tabligh* movement closely associates itself with the Hanafî school of thought (*madhāhib* plu. *madhhab*) (Zolkiplé and Sukimi 2011: 236).

### **2.2.3. The Intellectualist Movement**

Another movement that has appeared in Ethiopia is that of the Intellectualist movement which was founded by the group of students at Addis Ababa University and other Ethiopian higher institutions. This does not, however, mean that some interested senior secondary school students did not involve in this movement. These students could organize their group or *jama'a* led by *amirs* or leaders. This movement has first linked itself with the *Tabligh* movement through the march of time, it has become in closer ties with the Muslim Brotherhood which is dominated by the views and teaching of Egyptian Islamic scholars Hassan al-Banna and Yusuf al-Qardawi (Islamfiche Project 2004: 1). The Intellectualist movement could put their influence through lectures for publics, published magazines and other books. The *Bilâl* magazine had significantly played a major role on posting the idea of these students as early as the years 1990s (Hussein 2006: 13). These students had used pen-name of the Najat Abd al-Qadir, in order to not be caught by the country's government as catalysts to the movement of Muslim Brotherhood. If that is so it can be said that the government could have involved in their activities every time (Hussein Ahmed 1998: 98).

Unlike the *Salafi* movement, the Intellectualist Movement has dominated the urban areas with the participation of large number of students particularly from university and college. Contrasting with the rural areas, individuals who could live in urban areas were highly exposed to the urban way of life and closer to the question of modernization than that of religious teachings. Individuals who could not support the Islamic interpretation of their parents, and those who have interest for Islamic education could easily join and participate in the Intellectualist movement. These individuals had Islamic knowledge from their parent's before they could join this movement. However, once they joined it, they could highly encourage reading books about Islam which could easily help them to find out where they could get proper Islamic knowledge on the basic tenets of Islam. The Intellectualist movement has underscored that Islam as a broad religion can be used for everyday life so that its followers should be active by participating in all social and political sectors but under the banner of Islamic guidelines. Moreover, they could also give emphasis on issues like religious equality and peaceful co-existence with members of other religious institutions. In contrast to the *Jama'at al-Tabligh* movement, the Intellectualist movement definitely opposes the grafting of traditional practices into Islam besides their advocacy of "modern *Sufism*" (Østebø 2007: 10). In contrast to the *Salafi* and the *Jama'at al-Tabligh*, the Intellectualist movement has never been reduced to any particular ethnic group and different individuals from various ethnic groups could easily join it. Therefore, it is difficult to conclude that this movement is attached with this or that particular ethnic group (*Ibid.*: 15).

In general, each religious movement, already stated above, has the intention of preaching Islam and the essence of struggling for Islamic religious success. However, with the emergence of these reformist movements has ushered in the fierce debates that are currently increasing "tension" within the rank of the followers of Islam in Ethiopia. According to Østebø (2007: 14), the relationship among different reformist groups in Islam is so problematic that increase tension within the rank of the followers of Islam. The *Salafi* criticizes both the *Jama'at al-Tabligh* and the Intellectualist movement which has close attachment with the Muslim Brotherhood and the *Jama'at al-Tabligh* criticizes by the *Salafis* by their activities of *da'wa*. For the *Salafi*, the *da'wa* activities that are accomplished by the *Jama'at al-Tabligh* are not included in the Qur'an so much so that it is considered as innovation or *bid'a*. Furthermore, they oppose *Tabligh* because of their local practice like veneration of the shrines, celebration of the Birth Day of the Prophet and other *Sufi* saints and further other related *Sufi* practices (Meron 2013: 124). Again, the

Intellectualist movement has criticized the *Salafi* based on the *Salafi* interpretation of the Qur'an and the *hadith* in the literal manner and this makes them to think within a narrow circle by forgetting the teaching of various Islamic scholars. As already stated above, both the *Jama'at al-Tabligh* and Intellectualist have positive consideration towards *Sufism* that makes them to have close ties in some sorts than the *Salafi* (*Ibid.*)

### **2.3.The Celebration of the Birth Day of the Prophet Muhammad (*Mawlid*)**

Prophet Muhammad was born in 570 C.E in Saudi Arabia the city of Mecca (Martin. 2004: 776). As we understood from different sources the precise date of the birth of the Prophet Muhammad is not yet known and there has always been great controversy over it.<sup>3</sup> When we look into historical works, a number of dates regarding the birth of the Prophet are given. Some historians state that, the Prophet born was on Monday, the 12<sup>th</sup> of Rabī' al-Awwal, in the Year of the Elephant. Other extremely important early sources also refer to 10<sup>th</sup> of Rabī al-Awwal, 2<sup>nd</sup> of Rabī al-Awwal, 8<sup>th</sup> of Rabī al-Awwal, 17<sup>th</sup> of Rabī al-Awwal, and there are also others who say the exact date of the Prophet is not properly known and no precise date is given. The 12<sup>th</sup> of Rabī' al-Awwal however seems his exact birth date. Recently, the date 12<sup>th</sup> of Rabī al-Awwal, is the Birth Date of the Prophet's for people flows their ceremonies in this date.<sup>4</sup>

Scholars state that, the term *Mawlid* indicates the Birth Date of the Prophet Muhammad which is derived from the Arabic word *walad* means to give birth or bear a child. Different sources trace varying dates regarding the celebration of *Mawlid*. Most scholars argue that the celebration of the *Mawlid* did not begin at the time of the Prophet Muhammad, three generation of Muslims afterwards. Most historians have recorded that the first person who celebrated the Prophet's Birth Date for the first time was King Muzaffar who was the king of Irbil at the end of the seventh century. According to these records, at that time the king gave sheep, chicken, cream and sweets for the celebration of the festivals (*Ibid.*). Some other further states that, the beginning of the celebration of the *Mawlid* was during the 8<sup>th</sup> century when the house of the Prophet turned into the service for prayer in Mecca. This was done by Al-Khayzuran who was the fifth and most

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<sup>3</sup>< [www.qsep.com](http://www.qsep.com)>: accessed on November 2014-02-13.

<sup>4</sup><<http://www.islam21c.com>>: accessed on November 2014-11-20. Although it is religious book Bukhara the Prophet of Mercy Muhammad: corroborates the same point of view.Scenes from His Life

famous Abbasid Caliph. There are also other historians who gave priority for the beginning of the celebration before King Muzaffar. Based on them the beginning of the celebration may have been during the 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> Hijra. It is stated that it was started by Umar bin Mullah Muhammad. Sultan Salahuddeen Ayyubi's, Sultan Arbal Malik and further Abu Saeed Muzaffar al-Din had officially celebrated *Mawlid* by following him.<sup>5</sup>

In the 12<sup>th</sup> century the observation of the Prophet Birth Date was proposed somewhere in private corner. Before the beginning of such observance, sizable number of people could visit the place where the House of the Prophet, was situated. It is established that quite a number of people could officially visit every year on the Birth Date of the Prophet. During earlier times people could perform activities which have elements of *Sufi* influence like animal sacrifices and torchlight, public speech in the period of feast. Furthermore, presentation of sermons, recitations of the Qur'an and award of gifts to officials were other activities on the very ceremony. Ruling families used to play leading role on the occasion (*Ibid.*).

The beginning of the celebration of the Birth Date of Prophet Muhammad in another source is indicated as public holiday can be traced back to the 13<sup>th</sup> century, in Cairo; and, it was gradually spread to other Muslim world within short period of time (Gori 2010: 51). Schussman (1998: 216), on his part, writes that the official celebration of Prophet's Birth Day had began, in Egypt, during the time of Fatimid. This was by the end of the eleventh century C.E. In this sense, the celebration appeared not only for the Prophet's sake but it also seems to have connected with the Fatimid ruler who had the influence of *Shi'a*. During the early thirteenth century, Sunnis used to celebrate the Prophet's Birth Date publically under the rule of Nur al-Din of Syria. After that many of public celebration had taken place in different areas like Arbala (Southeast of Mosul in the Upper Mesopotamia). The festival was influenced by *Sufi* elements (*dhikr*), although, the festival also subject to Christian involvement like torchlight processions which is not a tradition of *Sufi*. About the same time, in Cairo the celebration of *Mawlid* by Saladin's appeared by *Sufi* and folkloristic practices. From Egypt the celebration seems to have spread to other places like Mecca and subsequently to North Africa, al-Andalus, India and the Ottoman empire. Thus, the celebrations of *Mawlid* became popular in the entire Muslim world (*Ibid.*; 217). A historical

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<sup>5</sup> <Noorani Islamic Research Institute <http://www.tangali.net>>: accessed on November 2014-11-20.

narrative of this short paragraph is to understand how much the *Mawlid* ceremony has long presence in the dynamics of the Muslim world.

As already indicated, *Mawlid* is commemorated in other countries with significant Muslim population, as in India, Egypt and the like even if the legitimacy of its celebration has been questioned by many scholars of Islamic law (*fiqh*). Furthermore, most Sunni scholars are supporting this celebration with the exception of *Wahhabi* scholars, who could not perfume it. Scholars who are in favor of celebrating the Birth Date of the Prophet regarded it as permissible in Islam, and consider it as praiseworthy event. Most of the time, the celebration has always been organized in Birth Date orders. Decorating mosques and homes, giving food and money and narration of stories about the life of the Prophet Muhammad are among such activities on the celebration. Furthermore, the celebration of the Birth Date of the Prophet has been considered as the way of demonstrating the love for the Prophet. Hence, the celebration of the *Mawlid* ceremony could not be uniform in different countries based on their diverse cultures. This means culture could influence the very festivities that will appear in the *Mawlid* celebration. For example, Tunisian in Qayrawan, includes singing and recite hymns praise to Muhammad on the *Mawlid*. The Indonesian Javanese week-long Sekaten ceremony commemorates *Mawlid* in the Sultanate of Yogyakarta. Moreover, in other nations like Egypt, Sudan and Ethiopia *Mawlid* is not only including the Birth Date of the Prophet rather it also denotes for the celebration of birth dates of local *Sufi* saints as well.<sup>6</sup> In Ethiopia *Mawlid* is also used as a generic term for the celebration of birth dates of local *Sufi* saints and not only restricted to the observance of the birth of Prophet Muhammad. Therefore, there are different *Mawlid* celebrations held each year and attended by so many people for the two indicated purposes.

Currently, this festival is considered as one of the more official holidays among most Muslim population in different countries. Unlike in the case Egypt and other countries which could celebrate the *Mawlid* ceremony, in Saudi Arabia the observation of the Birth Date of the Prophets is not considered as an official public holiday. Because new ideas can be a means of differences and were not always looked up favorably by *'ulama* and scholars in Islam. In many cases they were qualified as innovations (*bid'a*). The celebration of the Birth Date of the Prophet

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<sup>6</sup> <[Welcome to Muslim Faith Word Press.Com](http://Welcome to Muslim Faith Word Press.Com)>: accessed on November 2014-11-22.

(*Mawlīd*) is good cases in point (Martin 2004: 329). Accordingly, there were some who considered it as praiseworthy innovation or *bid'ah hassenah* as we discussed above, others considered it as a disliked innovation, and there are others even saying it reached the level of prohibition (*Ibid.*).

The word *bid'a* differently used by scholars of Islam. While some give negative interpretation, others equally give positive interpretation. Scholars, who could positively interpret argue that, *Mawlīd* is a praiseworthy innovation or *bid'a hassenah*. As they unanimously argue the second caliph Umar ben Al-Khatab who was the second Caliph in the list of the four Caliphs, after he had seen an innovation in *tarawih* prayers (*salat*) said: “Truly, this is a good *bid'a*.” According to Martin (2004: 107), as the ‘*ulama* based ‘Umer made a distinction between a good and objectionable *bid'as*. As results of this, new ideas were steeped into Islam through not appeared in early Islam but which could now be accepted as good innovations. There is also a certain Egyptian author Jalal al-Din al-Suyuti (1445–1505), who classified *bid'a* into the five legal classifications. These are the forbidden, the reprehensible, the indifferent, the recommended, and the obligatory *bid'as* (Gori 2010: 51). Currently, people who are in favor of the celebration of the Prophets Birth Date considered it as a praiseworthy innovation or *bid'a hassenah* and further believed that Allah will give rewards for what they doing (*Ibid.*)

Mention should also be made of the fact that those who have negatively interpreted argue that, if innovation did not exist in early Islam but occurred much later in the course of history it is something unacceptable. Nowadays, the *Salafi* (*Wahhabi*) for their rejections of the celebration of the Birth Day of the Prophet and further consider it as an innovation or a *bid'a* (Martin 2004: 107). *Wahhabiyya* which was first founded by Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab (ca.1703–1792) has strong opposition to the *Mawlīd* celebrations and cults of saints and pilgrimages of tombs. It is in fact based on the need to do away with all innovations after the three best generations. The movement strictly follows the teachings of the Hanbali scholar Taqi al-Din Ibn Taymiyya. The religious zeal of *Wahhabi* is dominating the current Kingdom of Saudi Arabia where the celebration of *Mawlīd* festival is not recognized as a public holiday (Schussman 1998: 217).

Finally, the celebration of the Birth Day of the Prophet Mohammad has been considered as something praiseworthy and respectful innovation; and, it is one of the official holidays for the

diverse Muslim population in different countries including Ethiopia. However, a deep controversy has accompanied by involving debates among Muslims. This is the base of argument for the debate which forms the content of this thesis.

These are major reference materials to be reviewed and to be used for the preparation of this thesis. However, other extra sources have been collected both in written and oral forms during the one month field trip in January 2014 and series of interviews held in Addis Ababa all through. Further, the day to day library research has helped to update all references. It can be said that the inevitable gaps existed at the real beginning of the preparation are now almost ceased or if still it is what any future researches will complete it conclusively.

## CHAPTER THREE

### THE SITE OF QATBARÉ AND ITS ENVIRONS: THE SOCIO-RELIGIOUS SPACE

This chapter deals with the socio-religious space of the site of Qatbaré. It starts by treating this site as the main headquarters of its founder, the teaching activities, the details of the annual *Mawlid* ceremony and other related activities performed by participants presenting themselves both from the site itself and the nearby as well as distant areas. Moreover, the successful career which Sheikh Issa ibn Hamza had undertaken not only at Qatbaré but also in Addis Ababa and Däjän (Gojjam).

#### 3.1. The Site of Qatbaré: The Seat of Sheikh Issa Ibn Hamza

Once Sheikh Issa had settled at this site of his choice, he had started to undertake profound Islamic activities. Qatbaré was his prime choice in this regard. He took several sites into consideration for comparison. It was in such a way that this site which had to become the center of paramount importance in Islamic affairs was first chosen. He was first accompanied by a few followers and resided there. A mosque was quickly erected followed by the *Madrasa*. The teaching of Qur'an was his first task. Moreover, other basic religious teachings had begun to be offered. Among different disciplines which used to be taught during Sheikh Issa's early career at Qatbaré were: *Fiqh* (Islamic law), *Tawhīd* (Islamic Theology), *Hadīth* (Reciting and repeating of the Prophet), and *Dhikr* and *Awrād* (the ritual repetition of God's names). Since its foundation the name of Sheikh Issa ibn Hamza and the Islamic site of Qatbaré continued to be identified as the Islamic site of Qatbaré and Sheikh Issa, on his part, as the Qatbaré Sheikh. Herein after his name will be identified, in the course of this thesis, as *the Qatbaré Sheikh* (*Yä Islam Nätsäbraq* 2011: 11; Informant: Adnan Sultan).

One important question is as to how the Qatbaré Sheikh had preferred this site as his preferable center of Islamic activities? There are reasons to be mentioned in this regard: firstly, the celebrated Islamic revivalist leader, Hassan-Enjamo, had resisted the Menelik campaigns against the petty Muslim principality of Qabéna (a district in which Qatbaré is located); and, particularly the site of Jäbdu where Hassan had defeated the army of Menelik is also at a close distance with

Qatbaré. Indeed, the Qatbaré Sheikh may have preferred his site to show his solid alliance to Hassan, who at the same time, created close ties with the local Muslims, above all, in keeping their moral make up (*Ibid.*). Secondly, the fact that Qabéna had been a platform of early Islamic diffusion in the Gurgéland, the Qatbaré Sheikh may have thought to obtain the overall support from the inhabitants of this district. Thirdly, the accessibility of Qatbaré to the rapid flow of visitors due to the plain nature of its relief may have encouraged the Qatbaré Sheikh to settle there. Fourthly, the fact that the close favorites and colleagues of the Qatbaré Sheikh such as the Sheikh of Sädé, that of Gädäbano and of Wäläné were in close distance, he may have chosen Qatbaré to closely work with them in as far as Islamic religious activities are concerned (*Ibid.*) Mention should also be made of the fact that the site of Qatbaré has passed through several challenges; and, it had finally reached our own time through its walk of century old. Several students have been trained there in different fields of Islamic religious study. This area has always been one of the solid centers of religious activities in the Guragéland, as center of educational and social affairs in the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> and in the last thirteen years of the 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. Several informants assert that it was at this celebrated site that everything helpful for the purpose of Islamic mission was accomplished by the Qatbaré Sheikh after whom this site is named and it will also continue to exist in keeping such great name and his unfading fame.

### **3.2.Sheikh Issa Ibn Hamza (The Qatbaré Sheikh)**

#### **3.2.1. A Brief Outline**

Since there is not rich written document most of the information on the life and career of the Qatbaré Sheikh have come through oral data obtained from the local people. According to these informants, the various miracles are closely associated with the life and career of the Qatbaré Sheikh. He was also well known within the rank of his followers by the name *Sheikhoch* and *Gétoch*. The Qatbaré Sheikh was, above all, the founder of the teaching center of Qatbaré and considered as the “saint” of Guragéland as well based on his qualitative achievements. According to Martin (2004: 724), “saints are friends of God having particular spiritual powers (*barakat*) that could result in their ability to perform different miracles.” Many Muslims are convinced that, even after death, the *barakat* of the saint is accessible, and miracles may be performed on his grave site. For believers, a saint is still alive and has close ties with God and may serve as an intermediary between worshiper and God. The local informants state that there

had been several miracles which the living memory still recounts in relation with the Qatbaré Sheikh. He is considered by them as *wali* and he used to foretell about the future. The people considered that such religious figures are gifted such miracles from God which could further help to solve problems with the help of the creator Allah (God).

The Qatbaré Sheikh was born, in 1858 E.C. (1866 A.D), at Abanj Kursai in Ezhā *Woreda* of the present Guragé Zone. Like in most cases of the Ethiopian Muslims, he had received early Islamic knowledge starting from his early age. He had, for instance, his first Islamic knowledge in Masqan by the Bidara Sheikh. To further advance his religious knowledge, the Qatbaré Sheikh had attempted to find different Sheikhs who were famous at that time in Islamic teaching. To complete Qur'anic education, he moved to Gädäbano where he had well attended Qur'an under the supervision of Sheikh Se'id. Once completing his Qur'anic education, he did not limit his knowledge. He instead went from place to place in search of further Islamic knowledge (*ilm*) like *tawhid*, *fiqh*, and *hadīth*. Sheikh Abbaye of Ifat and Sheikh Jamalü Daniyy of Dana were among others, who taught the Qatbaré Sheikh in those days. He also went to another site of Cheno in Ifat to obtain advanced Islamic knowledge. While he was a student at Dana, he had started being interested in teaching the local students. Above all, he is remembered in serving his teachers in washing their cloths and further participated in other family and social activities. Key informants interviewed for the purposes of this thesis reveal that the Qatbaré Sheikh had obtained permission of teaching from the Sheikh of Dana (Sheikh Dani yu-Ssani). Moreover, Sheikh Dani yu-Ssani decided to help out the Qatbaré Sheikh to find his center of education at Qatbaré. Key informants state that Sheikh Dani yu-Ssani seems to have guided the Qatbaré Sheikh to the site of Qatbaré itself because he saw in his dream a site which was covered by vegetation. Thus, the Qatbaré Sheikh took several sites under the criteria of the Dana Sheikh and finally compared them to select the suitable place for his Islamic teachings. He had finally used to choose Qatbaré as his center of Islamic education. Before settling at his center, the Qatbaré Sheikh had well diffused Islamic knowledge to his birth place of Ennemore and many other places in the present Guragé Zone (*Biläl* 1992: 25).

The Qatbaré Sheikh, during his life time, had worked hard in diffusing Islam both at his birth place and in other places in Ethiopia through advanced teaching of his Islamic knowledge and further by building new mosques (Abdu 1995: 13). Key informants unanimously underscore that,

what he did for religious equality and the establishment of *Qadis* in Ethiopia is unforgettable in the Ethiopian Islamic memory. One religious scholar, *Ustaz* Mensur Ahmed, states that the Qatbaré Sheikh was a great person, who had agitated the Ethiopian Muslims to struggle for the survival and for religious equality. Moreover, he also played a significant role for the construction of Masjid al-Nur at Addis Ababa after serious problem with the imperial rule.

The Qatbaré Sheikh was not totally barred from disseminating Islamic knowledge even if he had faced punishments from the government for his active contribution to Islamic activities. When he was exiled to Gojjam, in the year 1928, he had built the first Masjid at Däjän and had also succeeded in preaching about Islam there (*Ibid.*). According to key informants, the imperial government forced the Qatbaré Sheikh to exile at Däjän. While there he was convinced that there were no Muslim mosques and he could not succeed in preaching Islamic knowledge like other places in the absence of at least one mosque.

Since then and until his last days, the Qatbaré Sheikh used to spend his entire life in diffusing Islamic knowledge to his followers. After returning from Däjän, he had further continued his task of diffusing Islam at Qatbaré (*Bilal* 1985: 25). Key informants assert that though there were many religious teachers in the area none of their teaching was as valuable as the teaching of the Qatbaré Sheikh. He died on Maskerem 8, 1941 E.C (September 18, 1949). The Focus Group Discussion participants are all unanimous in underscoring that he was survived by his several students for whom the Ethiopian Muslim are quite proud of.

As already noted, after the death of the Qatbaré Sheikh, his successor was his own elder son *al-Hajj Shaleaqa* Sultan. Similar to the previous Sheikh, *al-Hajj Shaleaqa* Sultan also did remarkable job in supporting the Islamic center. In addition, he had a very good knowledge of Islamic thought with his strong background education which he had obtained from his forefathers. He had played a considerable role in strengthening and spreading Islam in the Guragéland. He had also constructed the impressive masjid at Butajira in 1970s (Abdu 1995: 14). Currently, it used to gather people (*liqa*) in weekly and monthly basis. *Al-Hajj Shalaqa* Sultan had passed away in 1990. It is interesting to remark that according to key informants, the date of the death of Qatbaré Sheikh and his son *al-Hajj Shaleaqa* Sultan was on the same day, on Monday, 18<sup>th</sup> of September despite the difference in the year. A few informants assert that this is

nothing but a “miracle”. Sheikh Issa and his son, *Shalaqa* Sultan, were buried in the same place at Qatbaré and most of their followers come and annually flock to Qatbaré to make *Ziyarah* and occasionally as well for the purposes of getting their blessings.



Figure 1. Left to right Sheikh Issa ibn Hamza and his son *al-Hajj Shalaqa* Sultan. Source: Courtesy of Adnan Sultan, 2014.

After the death of *al-Hajj Shalaqa* Sultan his son *Sayyid* Faris was in service as a local religious leader of the area which in any way he is the second in line of succession. Key informants state that succession right can be given for the son if the son has something different at his early age and if he could appear in the Sheikh’s dream. Martin (2004: 650), on his part states that the *Sufi* Sheikh could inherit his charisma and position into the son who could most fit. As informants state, the Qatbaré Sheikh had chosen *al-Hajj Shalaqa* Sultan after realizing his behavior, his wisdom and capacity to succeed him.

While *al-Hajj Shalaqa* Sultan was alive, he had proposed his elder Sheikh Baderu-Zeman, to succeed him. However, his other son, *Sayyid* Faris took the position and served, as a Sheikh, with good quality. He had in fact assumed this position towards the last days of his father. That was the reason why *Sayyid* Faris had become the second successor only for four years. After his death, his brother *Sayyid* Yaqut had succeeded. It should be known that Baderu-Zeman was living in the United State of America and he could not return for succession. When Sheikh Yaqut had passed away, after four years of services, his son Sheikh *Muhammad* Selman had succeeded

and he had served for two years. However, Baderu-Zeman had already returned from the United States taking the leadership from his nephew. This however brought about a succession problem. Indeed, the supporters of Sheikh Baderu-Zeman and Sheikh *Muhammad* Selman get into conflict at Masqan on the occasions of Mikāelo *liqa* ceremony. A person participated on the side of Sheikh Baderu-Zeman was killed in 2012 and Sheikh *Muhammad* Selman is sentenced to long prison since then. Therefore, Sheikh Baderu-Zeman is the present Sheikh at Qatbaré and he gives supplication (*du'a*) to the participants on the *Mawlīd* ceremony on behalf of his grandfather.

According to Ishihara (2013, 93), the descendents and followers of any *Sufī* Saint or *wali* could play significant roles as “guardian and mediators in the formation and maintenance of these center as sacred places.” Similarly, the descendants of the Qatbaré Sheikh and his followers (*murīd*) have a decisive role to take care of the shrine of the Qatbaré Sheikh in preserving and securing it. Moreover, according to key informants, the name *Sayyid* and *Muhammad* is used as a title of respect specified for male descendants of the Qatbaré Sheikh. Similarly the name *Sitti* to be attributed in case there will be female descendants. As informants assert, every follower (*murīd*) of the Qatbaré Sheikh usually identify the latter’s descendents with these two titles of *Sayyid* and *Muhammad* for male and *Sitti* for female.

### **3.3. The Teaching Center of Qatbaré: Its *Madrasa***

Since at least the arrival of Islamic scholars, the areas of the present Guragé Zone have always been a platform of teaching and diffusion of Islam as well as a milieu of preservation of both Islamic culture and education. Scholars from these areas have played decisive role in the dissemination of the faith in this area in particular and in Ethiopia in general. This has been the case especially since the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. They have contributed to the further development of Islamic theology as manifested in the propagation of the religious orders, veneration of saints, and visits of the shrines. They also actively promoted and sustained Islamic tradition (Abdu 1995: 9).

According to religious scholars, Islam obliges its followers to disseminate Islamic religion and knowledge to other fellow ones. This can be the case, among others, through the building of Qur’anic schools or the *Madrasa*. The Qatbaré Sheikh, was, according to informants, well

conscious about what kind of special room does a person have if he could diffuse his Islamic knowledge to others.

Indeed, the Qatbaré Sheikh had provided basic Islamic knowledge, for instance, the teaching of Arabic and the recitation of the Holy Qur'an at his center and elsewhere. Moreover, to complete the 30 *ajzea*, (sing., *juz*) of the Holy Qur'an, students should have to follow some steps. The first step to learn the Qur'an is learning the Arabic letters. The second step is learning or knowing every signs on the letters so as to know how to read the Qur'an. Learning the vowels and how to pronounce them is the other step in learning the Qur'an. Students take varied times to complete the 30 *ajzea* the Holy Qur'an according to their strength and the time they will give for it. Besides, the life of the Prophet (*Sira*), the ideology of unity (*Tawhīd*), Islamic law (*Fiqh*), the ritual repetition of Allah's names (*Dhikr*), the interpretation of Qur'an (*Tafsir*), and other higher level Islamic knowledge (*ilm*) are provided for students, who could appear there from different places. Prior to the commencement of this Islamic center, according to informants, people move place to place in search of Islamic knowledge (*ilm*), however, the Qatbaré Sheikh played such noteworthy role by opening his Islamic teaching center at Qatbaré. Accordingly, students could save their time from going here and there to look for known teachers outside their village.

Moreover, by the time the Qatbaré Sheikh was alive, it was not only religious knowledge that was offered but also other supplementary courses used to be delivered for the students. For instance, students who trained at Qatbaré used to be dispatched to the countryside to proselytize or teach. This could happen once they completed their education at the site of Qatbaré. Teaching other people obviously needs knowing their language, culture, and their social life. The Qatbaré Sheikh, at his center, helped the students to get some knowledge on how they could socialize themselves with the surrounding people. Furthermore, these teachers also move far away from Qatbaré used to be advised by the Qatbaré Sheikh regarding their safety. One of the informants states that the Qatbaré Sheikh, while active, the students used to be trained both in traditional and modern education how to read and speak the Amharic side by side of their study in Arabic. Moreover, he had taught his students how to handle in their ways of lives and how to protect themselves from possible enemies for the time was in complete correspondence with the Italian occupation of Ethiopia (1936-1941). It can, therefore, be said that the Qatbaré Sheikh was not only a religious leader but also able war commander as he had his own army (Abdu 1995: 14).

According to informants, despite the fact that the Qatbaré Sheikh was the founder of his Islamic center, he was also a quite responsible religious figure for the flourish of Islamic education there. The fact that the Qatbaré Sheikh was in favor of modern education, the local people know and then used to be confused with his intention as if he was an agent for Christian and secular education. Key informants explain that at that time, the perception of the local people for modern education was not clear and they could send their children only to the center for the intention of Qur'anic Knowledge. However, the Qatbaré Sheikh had played quite significant role to change the perception of the local people with respect to modern education. As key informants unanimously underscore, the local people had challenged the Qatbaré Sheikh not only for his modern education but also because of his way of wearing in the style of the *shumament* (appointed officials of the time). Informants further explain that the Sheikh used to wear that kind of dress for he had different activities to do with the government and he has to imitate in their way.

Currently, students from different parts of Ethiopia periodically visit this Islamic center of Qatbaré for advanced Islamic knowledge. They could attend their education either by settling at the center or by residing at their homes in the nearby villages. As key informants confidently state, the number of students seems to have gradually decreased over time. The main reasons for such decreasing number of students are identified by informants. The first reason is that the successors of the Qatbaré Sheikhs, who took the responsibility over time are not well versed in Islamic scholarship as in the case of Sheikh Issa. One of the informants states that, without any doubt, there were quite a number of students in the past pre 1940s year than the post 1940s. While the Qatbaré Sheikh was alive, quite noble tasks had been accomplished to attract students. The same may relatively true in the time of his son and successor, *al-Hajj Shalaqa* Sultan. Things have however changed gradually and the number students drastically decreased.

Other key informants state that the other reason for the decreasing number of students, at the center, is one of economic difficulties. Students could not easily come at the center from far places. If they could come it is not that much easy for them. During their stay, at the center, it is difficult to support their daily hood, satisfying their basic needs is quite difficult, above all when the number of students could possibly increase. Based on these key informants, while the Qatbaré Sheikh was alive, different solutions had been attempted to secure the students from

such problems. The Qatbaré Sheikh used to own vast plot of land, in different places with an intention to support his students. Therefore, students used to be expected to be engaged in different activities to support themselves using such opportunities extended to them by their Sheikh. Moreover, at that time, people who used to inhabit in the nearby villages, could also support the center in supplying food for those students, who used to be there in search of learning. The same is true when *al-Hajj Shalaqa* Sultan had come into the leadership of Qatbaré. He also owned foreign cattle population well bred for the purpose of helping the students during their stay at the center. Nevertheless, the number of the students as already stated was decreasing due to other reasons.

Informants further forward basic reasons for the decreasing number of students at the center. Among others, the change of the focuses of the responsible person in other developmental activities instead of supporting the center, the change of the perception of the people for modern education, and the openings of diverse centers in different places of Guragé Zone are some of them counted by key informants. Currently, besides offering Islamic education, the site of Qatbaré also hosts a significant *hadra*. The local people in the *hadra* widely involved in different developmental activities such as planting trees and naturally producing of honey in bee-hives. The honey produced at Qatbaré called “*Yä Qatbaré Mar*” which literary means (the Qatbaré honey) and this site is considered as the major producer of honey in the study area.



Seed Planting



Honey Production

Figure 2. Recent developmental activities being performed by the Qatbaré *Hadra*. Source: Courtesy of Adnan Sultan, 2014.

### 3.4. The Annual *Mawlid* Ceremony at Qatbaré

One of the informants states that the exact date of the beginning of the celebration of the *Mawlid* in the present Guragé Zone is not known. However, it has been celebrated, for long time, in the area. *Mawlid* is a religious holy day which was celebrated by the people of the region on the Prophet Muhammad's Birth Day. It is as already stated that the Birth Day of the Muslim Prophet has been given a unique place by Muslims. The Muslim people, all over the world, consider this day as the day on which they could reflect their respect and love for the Prophet. It is within such spirit that Muslims from different areas prepare different activities to celebrate the day at Qatbaré.

Zerihun (2013: 146), in his study of *wali* venerating practices among the Silté Community, mentions the annual celebration of *Mawlid* as one of the major and oldest practices which is appeared to honor a *Sheikh* or *wali*. Similarly, at Qatbaré, there is an annual celebration of *Mawlid* to honor the Qatbaré Sheikh, who was a leading agent of Islamization in the present Guragé Zone in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The *Mawlid* is annually celebrated in the shrine of the Qatbaré Sheikh.

In fact that there is no rich written document, most of the history of the Shrine of the Qatbaré Sheikh comes from the oral information. This information can be obtained from the local informants. According to some key informants, the way of the annual celebration of *Mawlid* had started by the Qatbaré Sheikh was quite different from other centers. First, he had invited different *‘ulama* from many places which are situated in the present Guragé Zone to share experience on the issue of religion and the state of the religious activities of Muslims. Key informants confidently underscore that even the question of the construction of Masjid al-Nur at Addis Ababa was raised on that occasion and it was on that particular moment the Qatbaré Sheikh was unanimously chosen also selected to facilitate the process to construct it. Through time, Muslim people, who had recognized the miracles of the Qatbaré Sheikh, had started to flock at the site of Qatbaré to celebrate the *Mawlid* ceremony with him on an annual basis. According to other informants, there is a pilgrimage which used to be conducted during the festival of *Mawlid* (*Mawlid an-Nabi*). Nevertheless, the surrounding Muslim people started to prefer only to celebrate other major Muslim Holy Days such as the *Mawlid*, the *Eid al-Fatir* and the *Arafa* (*Eid al-Adha*) at the shrine of Qatbaré. In addition to this, every Monday people are also gathered to conduct a *hadra* (religious meeting). This is something which is regularly held with the specific purpose of reciting the several miracles of Qatbaré Sheikh.

As it is already noted, the yearly celebration of the *Mawlid* at Qatbaré attracts diverse people from different places. Muslims from different areas could travel to this site where special prayers are held. Various activities can also be performed during the ceremony. There are readings from the Quran. Then meal services, and the *dhikr*, and *awrād* are repeated together. Religious singing and dancing are also the other two elements regularly performed on the ceremony.

Key informants were unanimous that there are people, who could organize the celebration of the Birth Day of the Prophet every year at the site of Qatbaré. They argue that both the Prophet and the Qatbaré Sheikh used to have capacity of performing miracles of different sorts whose secrete can be perceived as something beyond the knowledge of human beings. That is why they could always mention the names of the Prophet and that of the Qatbaré Sheikh in search of their support. Furthermore, several tasks of the Qatbaré Sheikh are recited now and then during the *Mawlid* ceremony. In conclusion, several activities are usually held at the site of Qatbaré both

to honor the Birth Day of Prophet Mohammed and to further simultaneously remember the significant activities and the miracles of the Qatbaré Sheikh.

While the Qatbaré Sheikh was alive, the *Mawlid* ceremony used to be held in the months of Rabī' al-Awwal on any day of the week. However, the date is clearly connected with the Prophets Birth Day. The lunar month is sometimes emphasizing the twenty-ninth and thirtieth of that very month (Martin 2004: 299). The fact that, the month of Rabī' al-Awwal usually falls in the Ethiopian rainy season of July or August, this could always create some problems for people due to the rise of the volume of big rivers to cross. To avoid such risk, the first successor of the Qatbaré Sheikh, *al-Hajj Shalaqa* Sultan, had changed the date of the *Mawlid* ceremony to be held between Tahsas 27 and 30 of the Ethiopian calendar. According to key informants, another reason to change the date into the last days of Tahsas 27 Ethiopian calendar was that *al-Hajj Shalaqa* Sultan had deliberately fixed this to block Muslims from participating in the activities of the Ethiopian X-Mas along with the Christians (the *Al-Masihyya*). The Muslim inhabitants of the study area used to commit error in religious sense; and, hence he had rallied to make necessary corrections.

Meanwhile, the decision to celebrate the Prophet's Birth Date at the site of Qatbaré has further been reconsidered by the present Sheikh residing there and the local Muslim religious leaders that the celebration should not be coincided with the ceremony of *Eid al-Adha*. This was for instance happened in 2013 for which the *Mawlid* ceremony at Qatbaré was held on 17<sup>th</sup> Tir (2006 E.C. i.e., 25<sup>th</sup> January 2014). The reason to change the date of the *Mawlid* celebration was for most of the Guragé people from Addis Ababa and elsewhere could visit their parents in order to celebrate *Eid al-Adha* so that they could expend amount of money in offering gifts to their respective families.

The celebration of the *Mawlid* ceremony at the site of Qatbaré had stopped for the seven years from 1942-1949. It was the Sheikh who did it. According to key informant, Adnan Sultan, the reason to stop the celebration had a different story. As he states, once the Qatbaré Sheikh was in short of money. He wanted to sebetwecure it from different people but his effort was without success. However, one of his followers gave him the money. The Qatbaré Sheikh had on his turn asked him from where he had obtained the money. His reply was that he brought the money by

selling an ox that was left from the *Mawlid* ceremony at Qatbaré itself. Indeed, the Qatbaré Sheikh was quite angry for he believed that the cattle and everything brought there for the *Mawlid* should have to be shared among the participants without leaving anything behind. The Qatbaré Sheikh had considered this situation as if using the Prophet's Birth Day donation for personal use. Due to this, the Qatbaré Sheikh restricted to not celebrate it for seven years as already stated. Therefore, it was not celebrated for seven years before his death. However, *al-Hajj Shaleqa* Sultan had re-started the *Mawlid* ceremony at Qatbaré after time consuming dialogue with the 'ulama and the public at large.

During the annual festivals, mentioned by the informants, so many people come to the Qatbaré Sheikh from different parts of the present Guragé Zone and the surrounding areas such as that of Silté, Oromia (Sebeta, Finchir, Adami, Bako, Jimma and Borena), Dirre Dawa, Harar, Hawasa and Addis Ababa. Some pilgrims could visit Qatbaré to fulfill their vow of offerings and others could also visit there because they have troubles of their own such as personal illness or the illness of their close relatives or friends. Women may visit the grave to secure their fertility, for the health of her child and son. They could also expect success in marriage. Men on their part could expect securing their business success or success in marriage life. Others could also visit the shrine for general wellbeing of the public, without a specific request or simply to honor the sheikh, who could have once been one's teacher or his/her teacher's teacher. All those could show their common respect and love for the Qatbaré Sheikh.

### **3.4.1. The Participants of the *Mawlid* Ceremony**

As it is already noted, in the annual *Mawlid* ceremony, at the site of Qatbaré, people from the nearby or distance places could come to celebrate it together. Key informants assert that, the Qatbaré Sheikh was born in Ezāh so that the Guragé people have become the significant participants in this celebration particularly those who were born in the Ezāh *Woreda*. One of the informants states that there are a number of Sheikhs as educated and *Mawlids* to be celebrated with the name of Sheikhs who were originally from the Guragéland. We can mention for instance the Abrate Sheikh in Ennemore and the Qatbaré Sheikh in Qabéna and many others at Gädäbano and elsewhere in the Guragéland. People, particularly those from Ennemore, usually follow the Abrate Sheikh and celebrate the *Mawlid* attributed to his name while people from

Qabéna regularly celebrate the Qatbaré *Mawlīd*. This is not to underscore that the Abrate Sheikh *Mawlīd* is only attended by the people who are from Ennamore or the Qatbaré *Mawlīd* is only celebrated by the Qabéna people alone. Instead the diverse people from different places could come to different sites and celebrate the *Mawlīd* ceremonies. What seems clear is that it is not ethnic or clan issues which could dictate people to celebrate the *Mawlīd*. It is instead the geographic proximity. If there were earlier promises distance should not be the matter of debate. People who live around the Qabéna are more likely to celebrate the Qatbaré *Mawlīd* while people who could live around the Ennemore have a chance to celebrate the Abrate *Mawlīd*.

The other reason is the earlier closer ties of the inhabitants of the area. There is still another reason which closely related to the perception of the people itself. According to informants, people especially from countryside believe that, if someone is a follower of Qatbaré Sheikh, it is impossible for him or for her to attend the *Mawlīd* celebration at Abrate Sheikh as if they are enemy to each other. However, most of the participants in the study area assume that, nowadays, this perception has gradually faded away as their common goal is the survival and success as a religion of Islam in the region and hence should not bother whether they attend the *Mawlīd* at Qatbaré or at Abrate. Therefore, following any one of other Sheikhs or attending either site should not create a barrier between the inhabitants of the two areas.

The other major participants in the ceremony are people who can be found in their adult or old ages. Most of them could come from the rural areas. As key informants confidently state, most of the time adolescents, both boys and girls, could not have paid due attention in celebrating this kind of ceremony especially those ones from the different urban centers. The youth may have no any idea about the Qatbaré Sheikh and what he had after all accomplished for the good of Islam during his life time. They are especially attracted to modern education and expose themselves to the western culture. Joining diverse groups that are in a position of opposing the activities can be an additional reason not to participate. Two of our informants, Adnan Sultan and *Ustaz* Mensur, could not however agree with the above indicated argument. According to them, the major participants on the annual celebration is the youngsters. The idea of standing against the *Salafis* (the *Wahhabis*) with respect to the ceremony could make them to finally become closer to the issue and to widely engage themselves in these activities. My personal observation during the

field trip was that the participants of the *Mawlid* were people with varying age limits and it is difficult to accept the views proposed by informants.

Generally, key informants assert that people from different places, all over Ethiopia, can be allowed to participate on the *Mawlid* ceremony without any restriction on the basis of their ethnic or clan background. The place where they live, their age distribution and because their ethnic origin can at not be quickly justified. The Qatbaré Sheikh during his life time served as a teacher in different places the example of which is his exile to Gojjam. With the intention that people who could appreciate his effort for the expansion of Islam could easily become follower (*murīd*) and eventually participate in the annual and occasional religious ceremonies.

### **3.4.2. The Overall Activities of the *Mawlid* Ceremony**

Seyoum (2012: 56) states that shrine of any sort is a sacred place dedicated to the *Sufī* saints (*awaliya*). Pilgrimage and ritual performance are performed there. Similarly, at the shrine of Qatbaré, the Muslim participants could perform various ritual activities to honor the Qatbaré Sheikh himself. Thus, the following pages will elaborate different activities related to the annual *Mawlid* ceremony at this site.

#### **3.4.2.1.Pre-Ceremonial Activities**

According to informants, there are lots of pre-ceremonial activities that need to be accomplished before the *Mawlid* ceremony could start. These activities are performed by the descendents of the Qatbaré Sheikh, their close relatives and the people who live around the Qatbaré Masjid. They can properly select people this purpose. They could also try to make the celebration more comfortable and safe for all attendants. For instance, clearing and cleaning the road leading to Qatbaré before the celebration starts is the first task to be performed. The intention is to make the public march as safe as possible while they could reach at the site. Reserved places both for men and women are another major activity. As already observed, the place for male and female sexes are different, and, it is strictly forbidden for both sexes to enter into the place of opposite sex. As informants state, during earlier times, both male and female could celebrate together at the same place. However, things have gradually changed with the coming to scene of different '*ulama* and *ustazs*. The debate around the *Mawlid* gradually increased the challenges against the ceremony which eventually seems to have contributed towards the separation of male and female and not to

mix with each other while performing the ceremony. This is an indication that debate against the *Mawlid* celebration by the *Salafi* (*Wahhabi*) scholars has started to challenge the actual aspects of the *Mawlid* at least at this level of their debate.



Figure 3. Female Participants in their reserved space. Source: Photo by Amira Kedir, January 26<sup>th</sup> January, 2014.



Figure 4. A reserved space for male participants. Source: Photo by my brother Sadik Kedir, 26<sup>th</sup> January, 2014.

Fetching wood and water are also among such activities to be expected from the responsible person in need of giving service at Qatbaré. According to key informant Adnan Sultan, water is fetched for the participants could not face trouble for performing their prayers. The water at Qatbaré could not be advisable for drink so that participants could buy water for their drink from the nearby. The other activity before the celebration is beginning is securing safety places for participants. According to informants, the participants could prepare their temporary huts for themselves. However, in some places the present student had witnessed temporary houses which were built by the masjid care takers themselves. One of our informants states that those places are strictly restricted for the family and descendents of Qatbaré Sheikh alone.

Key informants further agree that, the descendents of Qatbaré heikh and their neighbours can form a temporary committee to perform pre-ceremonial activities with regard to *Mawlīd*. This group can be divided into two: those who could facilitate some tasks in Addis Ababa and at Walqitté and those who could do some job at the site of Qatbaré itself. The members of the assigned group in Addis Ababa and at Walqitté have the responsibility to finally bring necessary materials for the ceremony. While those who could stay at the site of Qatbaré could in fact take all the responsibilities at there as it is a site where the ceremony could takes places.

There are also additional activities which the participants themselves could perform. For example, some people, who want to celebrate the *Mawlīd* at the site of Qatbaré could make ready for the ceremony days before. They could try to buy all the things that are crucially essential for the ceremony. In spite of this, people who had made their, vows last year could also have to deliver this year what they had promised even if they don't have any money to buy the fact that promise is a promise. Therefore, buying the things they had once promised and or other things that are essential for the ceremony should properly be implemented. This could not meant that participants could only give what they had promised last year. Nevertheless, it is a major activity that most participants are willing to do as this is what they should share for others. Generally, preparing everything that are essential for the ceremony can be regarded as pre-ceremonial activities.

All these activities have *Mawlīd* as the *Mawlīd* need pre-preparations before being celebrated. It superficially seems that such preparation have nothing to do with the intra-faith debate related to

the *Mawlid* nevertheless, it should be carefully taken into account that the preparation should realize the *Mawlid* and hence the debate in the celebration.

### **3.4.2.2. Activities During the *Mawlid* Ceremony**

#### **A. Reading the Holy Qur'an**

Reading the Holy Qur'an is one of the major activities of the *Mawlid* ceremony. They are, however, related *Surah* of choice instead of reading the whole integral text of the Holy Qur'an. As the aim of the celebration is to educate the people, participants in this ceremony are encouraged to keep saying the selected *Surahs* from the Holy Qur'an again and again. This can allow the participants to familiarize with the basic articles or *Surahs* for the daily praying. These *Surahs* are among others the *Fatiya*, *Nas*, *Eklas* and *Felek*. The celebration can be started with the reading of *Suratul Yassin* and this article or *Surah* is the beginning of the ceremony for every Muslim gathering. Therefore, reading the Qur'an in group gives the ceremony a wider shape. Key informants unanimously underscore that both the occasional and the annual gatherings can be held everywhere any place where the participants could get Qur'anic and other Islamic learning.

#### **B. Performing the *Dua'a***

In addition to several activities already listed there exist numerous invocations (*du'as*) to be said at different times of a given day for different reasons. As it is already noted, most of the time people could come and join the ceremony with their friends, relatives and neighbors. This could allow them to perform things in group in reserving temporary houses, preparing meals, making *du'a*, chewing the *khat* and reading the Holy Qur'an. Key informants eventually assert that participants in the ceremony could perform the ritual activity of *du'a*, in every place by securing the approval of the descendants of Qatbaré Sheikh and other elders who could involve in making *du'a* for them. According to key informants, Islam always encourages its followers to make *du'a* for other people in order to get what they expect in return. Therefore, making *du'a* either individually or in group is the other major activity of the *Mawlid* ceremony at the site of Qatbaré.



Figure 5. Female participants while reciting the supplication (*dua'a*). Source: Photo by Amira Kedir, 27<sup>th</sup> January, 2014.

### **C. Meal Offering**

Most participants state that, most of the time, the *Mawlīd* ceremony to honor the Qatbaré Sheikh can be followed by food offerings. During the annual *Mawlīd* ceremony, informants state that, food is prepared to offer to the attendants of the *hadra*. This could happen if someone comes up with gifts such like cattle and others. Key informants state that cattle that are brought by the people should be submitted to the assigned people and shared after slaughtered to the participants. Despite this, key informants further underscore that people, who could come to celebrate the *Mawlīd* ceremony, at Qatbaré could share their bounty with their Muslim brothers and sisters. This itself strengthen their religious networks. Thus, everything that can be brought by members of the Muslim community for the *Mawlīd* should be shared for the participants on the day of the *Mawlīd* ceremony and the result is happiness and joy to the Muslim *ummah* at large.



Figure 6. Female Participants while preparing food. Source: Photo by Amira Kedir, 26<sup>th</sup> January, 2014.

#### **D. *Khat* Consumption**

According to Ishihara (2013: 94), the stimulant *khat* is regularly used by the Muslims on every *hadra* with an intention of making supplication to Allah (*du'a*). Similarly, most of the people, who are participants on the *Mawlid* ceremony, at the site of Qatbaré, could chew *khat* all along their way to Qatbaré. In most cases, *khat* is chewed, among groups or friends for several hours. As it is already observed, chewing the leave of *khat* at this place is one part of the people's ritual activities; and, it is never considered as sort of drug. Families and friends could chew *chat* on religious ceremonies and further any time when their need arises.



Figure 7. Male participants on *khat* ceremony. Source: Photo by Amira Kedir, 27<sup>th</sup> January, 2014.

Contrasting to this, chewing *khat* has now become a point of controversy among Muslims. Individuals, who could oppose the *Mawlīd* celebration, consider *khat* chewing as one point to be opposed. According to them, *khat* is a drug which could affect people's mind.

Generally, most of these gatherings and celebrations such as the *Isnain liqa*, the *monthly liqa* and the *Mawlīd* ceremony are always accompanied by the chewing of *khat*. At this site, the leave of *chat* is not only an essential object for the celebration of special religious occasion, but also families, friends and relatives use it to entertain themselves. It seems that *khat* plays a significant role in religious life. It further strengthens social life. It is also a means of sociability and expressing one's respect and friendless in one way or another. *Khat* is available in large amount for sale near Qatbaré where the *Mawlīd* ceremony is taking place. Indeed, the large majority of Muslims are highly addicted to it as they are most of the time chewing it every day without interruption.

### E. *Manzūm 'a* (the Islamic Panegyrics)

As already observed in the study area from the activities which people could perform in group, *manzūm 'a* is the major and the very important one. People perform *manzūm 'a* even on their way to the site itself. The *manzūm 'a* is mainly concentrated on the Prophet on the one hand and on the miracles of Qatbaré Sheikh on the other. Nevertheless, there are other Muslim people, who could stand against the activity of *manzūm 'a*. According to them, the first reason is the *manzūm 'a* could hold problematic meanings. It means that it can hold meanings which could uplift the power of Qatbaré Sheikh to the status of Allah. These and other similar *manzūm 'as* are strictly forbidden in Islam and basically considered as *shirk*. The other reason to oppose the *manzūm 'a* is the uses of tool that looks like drum which is locally called *dibbé*. According to those who oppose, using drums and any other man made tools to appreciate the Prophet and any other *Sufi* saint is strictly forbidden for the Prophet himself did not use those drums for such purpose.

Finally, one of the religious practices during the *Mawlīd* ceremony, at Qatbaré, is the pilgrims' song hymns in praise of the Qatbaré Sheikh emphasizing on his charisma and his spiritual superiority, particularly regarding his role as spiritual guide. Informants insist that, some of the songs would show the belief of the people that the Qatbaré Sheikh could not only support them while they are alive but also that he could play an intermediary role between them and Allah even in the life hereafter. Furthermore, the coming from different areas to celebrate the *Mawlīd* at Qatbaré assert as if the Qatbaré Sheikh himself is among them during every celebration though they could not deny that he did already pass away. This is in fact based on the information from the Focus Group Discussion and personal observation during the field trip.



Figure 8. Male participants while reciting the *manzum'a*. Source: Courtesy of Adnan Sultan, 2014.





Figure 9. Female Participants while reciting *manzum 'a*. Source: Photo by Amira Kedir, 26<sup>th</sup> January, 2014.

#### **F. *Dhikr* and *Awrād***

Aside from the above activities, the most important practice is undoubtedly the calling of the name of God (*dhikr*) through regular repetitions of words, by reciting several names of God which are found in the Holy Qur'an. *Dhikr* (remembrance) is therefore one of the most common forms continuously performed by participants at the *Mawlād*. This recitation could either be in silent or can loudly be spoken. And, it could be performed either in individually or in group. According to key informants, the major reason for the celebration of the *Mawlād* ceremony is nothing but to remember the life of the prophet and to make continuously perform *salawats* in the name of Allah and his Prophet. The *awrād* could take place after the praying of *Salat al-Asir* is completed. One of our informants states that performing the repeating *awrād* and *dhikr* is such a major activity and it is also one part of the celebration.



Figure 10. Male Participants while reciting the *dhikr and awrād*. Source: Photo by Amira Kedir, 26<sup>th</sup> January, 2014.

### **G. Hadīth**

According to Muslim scholars, *hadīth* in Islam is an important source of guidance in fact next to the Holy Qur'an. As already noted *hadīth* is the reciting and repeating of what the Prophet said. Remembering the saying of the Prophet is the other activity on every *Mawlīd* ceremony. As informants assert, selected people could invite the '*ulama* and several *ustazs* from different areas to attend *Mawlīd* ceremony. *Hadīth* could be repeated in Arabic and others who could master the Arabic language could easily translate for the participants who could not handle the Arabic idiom.

### **H. Gift**

The central element on the ceremony is one of offering a gift. Pilgrims could extend votive gifts to the shrine. Whatever their background or status, the pilgrims visiting the tomb could arrive with gifts and vows in search of the spiritual favor of saint perhaps for material success or for medical relief. As already observed in the course of the fieldwork, people extend gifts for the

mosque whatever the amount or the quality. The objects that are offered by the pilgrims could include food, cattle, sheep, money etc. According to the local informants and based on my field data as well as observation there is a hut in which such offerings of the pilgrims could be administered. Some people are assigned there. Usually they are descendents of the Qatbaré Sheikh just to collect the offers and to extend their *du'a* on behalf of the supplicant. Cattle and sheep can be slaughtered and their meat to be distributed among the participants on the ceremony. Our informant Adnan Sultan argues that there are people who could bring a number of oxen in group. The group may include friends, relatives or close neighbors. After bringing an ox or oxen they could ask the descendant of Qatbaré Sheikh to extend to them their *du'a*. After that, the ox or oxen could be slaughtered and the meat distributed for participants.

### ***I. Ziyarah***

The *Mawlīd* participants could perform two kinds of *ziyarah*. The first kind of it is the one which includes the extension of salutation to the descendants of the Qatbaré Sheikh, especially the person who is in charge of both the site and *Mawlīd* ceremony. Key informants unanimously state that the Qatbaré Sheikh during his life time used to extend his greetings in which people could kiss his hands. Such task could take long time for it was the participants from different places could arrive either in group or on individual bases to salute him. There numerical strength is quite remarkable. Every participant, as well mentioned by the local informants, had the interest to physically see and kiss the sheikh. This task seems to have continued even after his death until our own time. My key informants underscore that; currently performing *ziyarah* has gradually decreased. As these key informants further assert, the reason behind is that the present Sheikh at Qatbaré did not live there with the local people for long times as visit the site on and off coming from the United States of America. Therefore, people do not know much about the activities of the present Sheikh at Qatbaré. Indeed, there are people who want Sheikh *Mohammed* Selman (who is in jail due to the conflict over the succession) to take the responsibility leaving aside the one in the USA. According to key informants, when Sheikh *Mohammed* Selman was active at Qatbaré, for two years, the number of the local people flocking there was quite high.

One of the most characteristic features of Islamic religious practice, in the Guragéland, was the widespread phenomenon of pilgrimage (*ziyarat al-qubur*) to the shrines of several saints.

According to Martin (2004: 332) nowadays, *ziyarah*, visits to the shrine of saints and to the sacred places are quite common among the Sunni Muslims. Most of the informants illustrate that visiting the shrine of *Sufi* saints can differently be treated from the visiting of common persons. The visit of the shrine of *Sufi* saint like Qatbaré is regarded as something which is religiously sacred. The *Mawlīd* ceremony and the *ziyarah* visit should separate the male and female participants. The male participants could actively perform all the time while women visitors use their time to visit the shrine and perform *ziyarah* by the time male participants are sleeping. Actually, participants are not sleeping all the night but after finishing their *Salat al-Subih*. They could use this time for the shrine is found at the reserved place for male participants. When people are visiting the grave they could ask the Qatbaré Sheikh all their wishes should be fulfilled. All participants could read in common “*Suratul Fatiha*”. Participant could put money (*darir*) in a box which is prepared for this purpose. According to key informants, the money which can be collected from the *ziyarah* could be spent to different religious and social activities.

As already noted, during the celebration, people can be encouraged performing the *ziyarah*. Informants reveal that hundreds and thousands of pilgrims have visited the shrine over many years with many distinctive local rituals and performances. The practice of pilgrimage (*ziyarah*) to the shrines of saints can generally be considered beneficial for all visitors could assume that God could intervene on behalf of pilgrims so that everything is good for each visitor. Based on informants, visiting shrines for *ziyarah* could make people to aware them that there is death and this also makes people to respect God. Whenever Muslims could visit the shrines of the holy people, like that of the Qatbaré Sheikh, to perform their prayers a response or reply could be through him (*tawassul*) to gain the blessings or the *barakah*.

Nonetheless, visiting the shrines of the *Sufi* saints is almost becoming one area of controversy among Muslims. Regarding these my key informants assert that there are people, who defiantly oppose the activity of *ziyarah* at the Muslim site of Qatbaré. The *Wahhabi* or the *Salafi* group strongly rejects all in reducing what has been identified as an innovation. According to them, people who celebrate the *Mawlīd* ceremony at Qatbaré could perform the *ziyarah* with the intention of reaching God through intercession (*tawassul*). Indeed, visiting the shrine by people except the non believers is allowed in Islam. However, making the dead as a mediator between God and the living human being is strictly forbidden according to them both by the Qur’an and

the *hadīth* for that matter. Currently, all activities related to the *ziyarah* are gradually changed with the coming to scene of different ‘*ulama* and *ustazs*. It seems that the debate around the *Mawlid* celebration has gradually increased. The challenges against the ceremony eventually seems to have contributed towards the change of the perception of the local people on what to say whenever visiting the shrine of the Qatbaré Sheikh. This by itself is an indication that debate against the *Mawlid* by the *Salafi* or *Wahhabi* scholars has influenced people on the issue of *ziyarah*.

Martin (2004: 533) insists although many reform-minded local religious elites (‘*ulama*) have argued that the visit to the *Sufi* shrines was a non Islamic innovation (*bid’a*) and thus it is forbidden. Many others however have accepted such practices as the local expressions of the Muslim piety.

Be that as it may, it is evident from the field data that the debate to celebrate or not the *Mawlid* ceremony at Qatbaré is still fresh. Despite such trend, however, there are still quite a number of the Ethiopian Muslims both from the nearby or the distant places flocking to this site to visit the shrine in search of *baraka* (blessing). This is in fact within the milieu of hot debate at this site on this issue.

### **3.4.3. The Values of Performing such Activities**

As mentioned in the preceding discussions, there are different activities which people perform on the day of the *Mawlid* ceremony at Qatbaré. Currently, *Mawlid* ceremony widely celebrated by Muslims from different places. Why is it significant and what meanings does it have for Muslims who engage in the celebration? What are the values of performing such activities? This section will discuss the overall values of the ritual practices that are conducted on the ceremony.

#### **3.4.3.1. Religious Values**

Informants are of the opinion that participating on the *Mawlid* ceremony and performing such activities have religious values. Every activity on the ceremony has its own value. For instance, one of my informants Aman Shifā reveals that conducting *dhikr* about the Prophet, all the time, and especially at the time of His Birth Day has a special place in the eye of Allah and Allah, they argue is clearly stating in the Qur’an as to when and where *dhikr* can be made.

The other religious value is that it opens opportunities for *'ulama* and *ustazs* to share their religious knowledge to the Muslim community or the *ummah*. It is insisted by informants that, before the presence of Muslim teachers like that of the Qatbaré Sheikh, most of the people in the present Guragé Zone were believers in traditional religions. There were existed different traditional cults like *Wāq*, *Damāmit* and *Bozha* in Sabāt Bét. However, the Qatbaré Sheikh and other teachers had played significant role in educating these people about Islam through different means. Diffusing Islamic knowledge to those participants is a golden opportunity for the *'ulama*. By disseminating their knowledge Islamic teachers (*ustazs*) could also get a reward from Allah. Thus, the *Mawlīd* gatherings are according to them an effective and efficient means for the purpose of calling the people to Islam (*da'wa*) and further educate children the life and career of the Prophet Muhammad. Regarding this, informant Adnan Sultan a grandson of the Qatbaré Sheikh, asserts that, celebrating the *Mawlīd* ceremony is quite significant to learn the life of the Prophet (*sira*) and to listen to *hadīth* and *madh* (pries) as well. It helps attendants to increase their basic Islamic knowledge like the Holy Qur'an and *hadīth*. Furthermore, when participants could reach at the site, they have at hand books about Islam, the Holy Qur'an in particular, Islamic discourse in cassettes and videos and etc. They insist this could be the additional means of disseminating religious knowledge (Cf. Appendix D).

Furthermore, in the annual celebration of the *Mawlīd* at Qatbaré people are accompanied by prayer (*salat*). It is well noted that according to the Islamic theology, offering prayers with the *jamaat* (group congregation) is a *wajib* (something essential), and also *mustahab* (a commendable act). As for its importance it has been accepted that *Salat al-Jamaat* carries more reward than individual prayer. Moreover, Muslims believe that the *jamaat* prayer could develop a harmony and unity among them, further acquaints them with detailed Islamic affairs, provides them an opportunity to know about the problems which their fellow believers could face and to further enjoy the blessings of the pious and the saintly Muslim figures.



Figure 11. Male Participants while performing prayers of *Salat al-Asir* in group (*Salat al-Jam'a*).  
Source: Photo by my brother Sadik Kedir, 26<sup>th</sup> January, 2014.

Besides, different people conduct pilgrimage to the shrine of the Qatbaré based on their belief that the saints have power to intercede between them and Allah. This is not only during their life time but also after their death. As local informants clearly remark, there are some people, who equate the value of visiting and participating on the annual *Mawlid* celebration with the visit to Mecca.

#### **3.4.3.2. Socio-Cultural and Economic Values**

Besides the religious values, it is indicated by informants that the celebration of *Mawlid* has socio-cultural and economic values. Ishiharn (2013: 91) on her part states that, the pilgrimages centers used as the place where meeting could be held by people from various localities and from different ethnic groups. As Ishiharn further states, these centers can be considered as typical places where political, ethnic and religious boundaries are transcended (*Ibid.*). As a matter of fact there are not such boundaries at Qatbaré as it brings diverse people from different places with diverse cultural and ethnic background. Therefore, it helps to create cultural exchanges between

the diverse people of Ethiopian Muslim. This could further create respect, tolerance, and sense of belongingness as well as love between the diverse participants.

It can be said that participating on the *Mawlid* ceremony at Qatbaré could help people to know what religious activities is going on in other places. News about religious activities in other places, the situation of the market, and series of human activities among different Muslims can be discussed in the mean time. In such kinds of occasions, people could get a chance to discuss problems facing the Muslims. Therefore, it can be said that a means of solving problems that are faced by fellow Muslim brothers and sisters that could be considered as both socio-economic and political values of celebrating a *Mawlid* at Qatbaré or elsewhere.

Unlike other ordinary days, most participants during the ceremony are more than willing to share what they could possess for others. Supplying food to people and extending happiness to the Muslim *ummah* is one way of celebrating the occasion. Celebrating together the *Mawlid* ceremony can be a factor that could bring together different people so that acquaintances are renewed and new friends can be secured. Different people who could not know each other or those in contact over several years could meet each other.

The other social value that is counted by many of our key informants is that, nobody is returned to his/her home without getting anything. According to Martin (2004: 332), the veneration of saints usually serves the psychological needs of many believers particularly the visitors whose hope could be to receive *baraka* (blessing), cure from illnesses, help in misfortune, intercession with God, and so on. Several informants state that Allah (God) better listens to their praying through these people for they were closer to Him while they were alive and they worked hard for Islamic tasks all their life before death. Therefore, Qatbaré according to these informants, is a place where people could get whatever they wish for.

The other major value is that, people could get relief from their multiple sufferings whenever they are blessed by the *du'a* and blessings from Qatbaré Sheikh. According to informants, there are some people who believe that the soil around the shrine of Qatbaré Sheikh can be a “proposed” medicine for all kinds/several diseases and believers take some soil from the shrine to their respective homes. Regarding this *Wäyzäro* Halima Yasin states that, “I believe soil around the shrine of the Qatbaré Sheikh becomes medicine for all kind of diseases. I drink or oint

this soil by mixing it with water.” Therefore, most people could come there by seeking health or medicine and this could be the other major value of participating in this kind of occasion. One of our informants, Rehima Jemal, states that her participation on the *Mawlīd* ceremony at Qatbaré is starting from her early age. According to her, her father was suffering from cancer. He went to different countries in order to obtain medicine for him. After so many efforts the doctors told him to cutoff his hands. However, her father and her grandfather refused the decision of the Medical doctors and started to find other way to get away from his suffering. One of a friend of her grandfather told him to go to Qatbaré to get his *du’a*. Therefore, her grandfather and father went to Qatbaré for seeking health. As she further mentions after getting *du’a* and water from the Qatbaré Sheikh her father becomes better. After that her father and his family become the follower (*murīd*) of Qatbaré Sheikh and go there annually and occasionally. She also goes there every year to participate on the *Mawlīd* ceremony and further to give gifts every year after the death of her father. She also continued her participation in Addis Ababa at Qatbaré Masjid. She believes that *Sheikhoch* is there for her in every single day whether in her difficulties and happiness.

The Qatbaré Sheikh is remembered for his looking after his followers not only when he was alive but also after his death he becomes intermediary between them and Allah. His blessings continue forever, which pass from generation to generation. Regarding this one of the informants *Ato Abdela Beka* illustrates that, he had attended the *Mawlīd* ceremony for 20 times. As he asserts, within these 20 years of experience at Qatbaré so many miracles are happened. According to him, one day the Qatbaré Sheikh appears in his dream and asked him to construct a small house which has a quadrilateral shape. After that he started to interpret in his own way and then he interpreted. After that he became the follower and everything has certainly changed. As he recounted, his son was born with disability means he can no longer talk and listen but he attends his education with normal students. During his life as a student, he did things for which he has always been proud of. This could in fact happen with the blessing of the Qatbaré Sheikh. As *Abdela* states *Sheikoch* had given him blessings throughout his life so as to play an intermediary between him and Allah.

Furthermore, the *Mawlīd* ceremony brings the conflicting parties together and allows getting into the state of peace. In this sense, the descendents of the Qatbaré Sheikh play important role both

as advisors and as mediators of several social and family conflicts. While the Qatbaré Sheikh was alive, whenever conflict arose among people, the Qatbaré Sheikh was the one who could genuinely see each case and make important judgment. This indicates that no one was out of his route though he was the quite respected and well educated. This further implies the Qatbaré Sheikh had so much contribute on the social life of the people.

The celebration has also its own economic value. It is well observed, during my field work, that different economic activities were undertaken by participants of the *Mawlīd* celebration. For instance, the inhabitants of Qatbaré and who could also come from different areas could perform many things. They could for instance purchase cloths and other things from traders who could arrive from Walqitté. Besides, they could also bring different things to sell there being the place where the ceremony could take place, things usually include fruits and foods. Therefore, the celebration brings the different business men together especially as it opens opportunities for the local people to purchase everything and by serving them from going to distant areas in search of different items.

### **3.5.The Qatbaré Sheikh and the *Liqa***

The Qatbaré Sheikh was reported to have extended significant contributions to Islamic scholarship during his active lifetime. Indeed, he is perhaps the best known as the sole founder at Qatbaré of what is called the *liqa*. One informant states that the Qatbaré Sheikh did something which makes him different from his contemporaries. He was one of the key co-operators for group works to be performed in the name of common goals and benefits of the Ethiopian Muslims at large. He further worked a lot in teaching children of the Ethiopian Muslim community (*ummah*) so that they could do to one direction to follow the path of Allah. One of such tasks was the *liqa*. Zerihun (2013: 146), on his part defines, the *liqa* as the variant form of *wali* performing venerating practices. According to our informants, the word *liqa* is an Arabic term which literary means “bringing people together”. Several *sheikhs* and the ‘*ulama* of the region do share the same view. There are however two kinds of *liqa* which were proposed by the Qatbaré Sheikh. The first type of *liqa* he proposed is *Isnain liqa* (the Monday *liqa*). It refers to the gatherings which are held every Monday. Monday was chosen for it is the day of the Prophet

Muhammad's Birth. Thus the Qatbaré Sheikh had started to gather people from their settlement on every Monday.

As stated above, every Monday the followers of Qatbaré Sheikh (*murīd*) were gathered together either individually or in group to read the Holy Qur'an, to recite *Manzūm 'a*, to retell the deeds of the Qatbaré Sheikh on *Khat* ceremony and to make the supplication (*du'a*). This act has been known as *hadra*. The religious practice of *hadra* is regularly held every Monday. The *hadra* held in a given house is called *ratiba*. The *ratiba* houses at the site of Qatbaré are those built from wood with their roof covered by grass and used for such religious gatherings whether it is weekly, or monthly or even annually. It supported by most of our informants that the house of *hadra* was once burnt in, the year 2000 by the *Salafi (wahhabi)* followers. However, it was rebuilt by the local people in the same year.



Figure 12. The remains of the burnt *ratiba* (house of *hadra*) at Qatbaré. Source: Courtesy of Adnan Sultan, 2014.

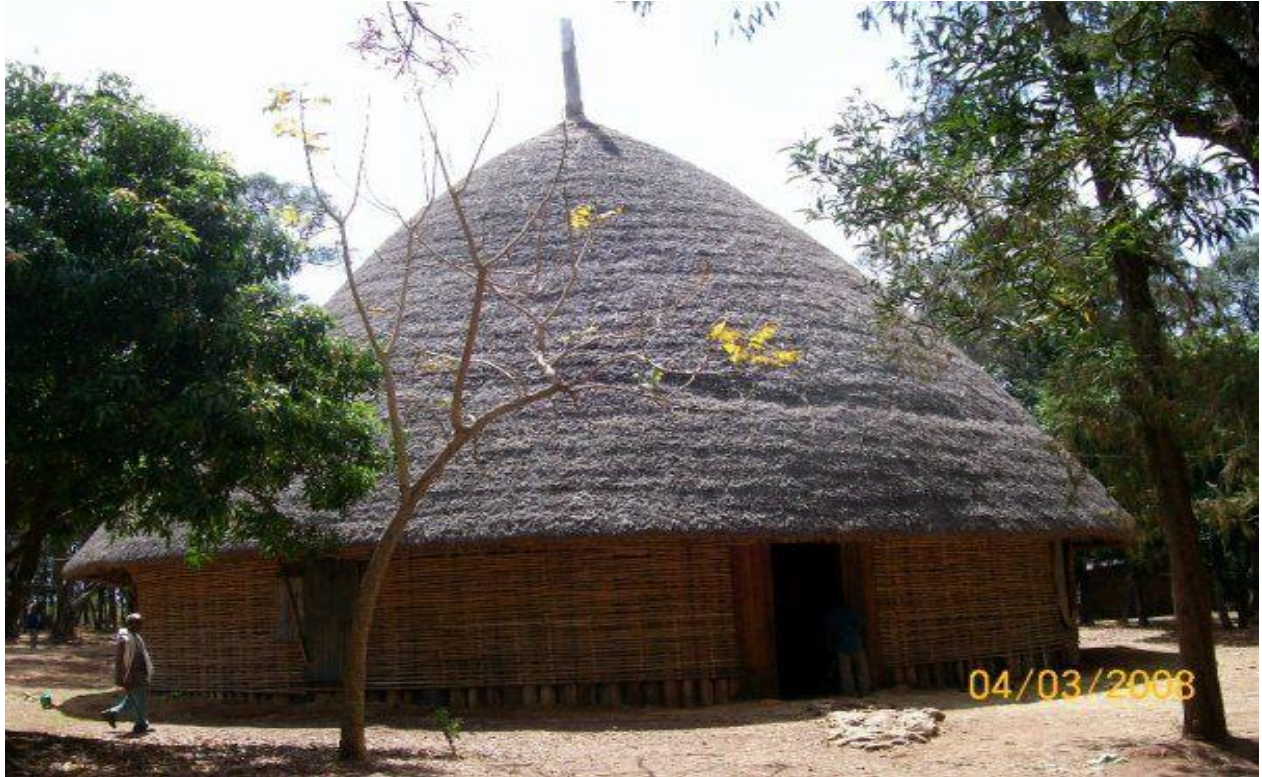


Figure 13. The present *ratiba* (house of *hadra*) at Qatbaré. Source: Courtesy of Adnan Sultan, 2014.

The informants further underscore that, the mosque and the *ratiba* have different functions. On the one hand, the mosque is a place where the Muslims could perform regular religious prayers and gratify the name of the Creator Allah. In regular time, men and women could pray side by side with a half curtain dividing the prayer hall. However, during the *Mawlid* ceremony, this place could only serve the male participants and it is strictly forbidden for females to enter there. On the other hand, the *ratiba* is a place where the Muslims could memorize the *hadith* and further venerate the Qatbaré Sheikh every Monday.



Figure 14. Qatbaré Masjid (at the site of Qatbaré). Source: Courtesy of Adnan Sultan, 2014.

The Miracles of the Qatbaré Sheikh are locally narrated on every weekly based gatherings where the Muslim followers are chewing *khat* and giving supplication the (*du'a*). The *hadra* program could start on the Monday morning and comes to its end at 4 p.m. after the completion of the *Salat al-Asir*. The ritual performance of *hadra* is further accompanied with the lunch program which is followed by the coffee ceremony. During the field work, the researcher has observed the attendants of *hadra* gathered in their ritual house. The *hadra* program is led by one of descendants of the Qatbaré Sheikh. Every Monday, every attendant of *hadra* could appear with its own *khat* and gives to a person who could lead the *hadra*. Then, after praying and blessing, the *khat* leaf is distributed to all attendants of the *hadra*. The peoples could sit for lunch in group. People could sit according to their intimate relationship with each other but in circular shape. The sitting arrangement would enable friends to discuss on problems facing the Ethiopian Muslim community (*ummah*). During the coffee ceremony, in addition to the prayers in Arabic, the elder participants could recite *dua'a* in the Guragé language. After the prayer, the coffee is served for the attendants of the *hadra*.

Indeed, people could gather together every Monday at the site of Qatbaré Masjid of Addis Ababa situated near the quarter commonly called the *Sumale Tera*. The activity at this site is exactly the same as the annual celebration of the *Mawlīd* ceremony. Reading the Holy Qur'an, *manzūm'a*, the *dhikr* and further chewing *khat*. The only difference could be the large number of participants on the annual ceremony. However, in every week people prefer to stay at home and do perform activities exactly the same way that they doing at the site of Qatbaré.

Besides weekly (*Isnain*) *liqa*, the Qatbaré Sheikh had proposed the monthly gathering called the *Sangā liqa*. According to key informants, the name *Sangā* literally means castrated ox. There is slight difference between the weekly and the monthly *liqa*. This is due to the fact that *Isnain liqa* includes people of a particular village while the *Sangā liqa* includes participants beyond that. Different names are given here as the *Sangā liqa* involves the wider public from distant areas. According to our informants, the Qatbaré Sheikh used to send his students to different places, on the occasion of the *Sangā liqa* ceremony to deliver the basic Islamic knowledge. One of the informants Adnan Sultan states that one day in one month people from diverse groups could gather together to remember the Prophet and to retell the tasks of the Qatbaré Sheikh. When we come to Masqan area, the *liqa* is called *Samut Sangā*. The word *Samut Sangā* means eight castrated oxen and it refers to the people of eight *Qabalés* and the name has nothing to do with oxen. Perhaps it is something associated to the *Sangā liqa*. This *liqa* is celebrated on the day of the last Monday of the month under the responsibility of one of these *Qabalés*. It seems also due to this that the name stands as it is. For instance, if it is celebrated in Mikāelo as the Mikāelo *liqa*. It had played a decisive role in solving problems such as local conflicts between these eight villages. These gatherings have not only religious significance but it also have socio-cultural values. For instance, different people, from diverse ethnic background could easily meet there. Thus, this ceremony has gradually become a bridge in linking diverse Muslim groups, who may be different in their linguistic and ethnic setup.

As already stated, since there is no rich written document, most of the life and career of the Qatbaré Sheikh and his shrine could come from oral information obtained from the local people. Therefore, most informants argue that, it is difficult to know exactly which act (whether the *liqa* or the annual ceremony) had started first. Our key informants assert that the weekly *liqa* had started first and the monthly *liqa* followed and finally the annual celebration had stepped.

Abdu (1995: 28), in his study of aspects of the history of Islam in Guragéland, states that the *liqa* had originated at Masqan and called *Samut Sangā*. The initial purpose of this *liqa* was not in fact religious. It was rather one of cultural phenomenon solving inter clan conflicts and to find ways to protect themselves against their common enemies. Nevertheless, some of key informants could not agree with Abdu's idea and insist that the Qatbaré Sheikh had not started anything without spiritually guided by Creator Allah. The idea of *liqa* from its very beginning was quite religious through it could also serve as a means of resolving social problems. Key informants usually underscore that in those days, the perception of the contemporary government towards these gatherings was not good. It was rather considered as something dangerous for the country at large. Therefore, the government had prepared the file that says *Liqā Fayl*. This was to change them at the government court.

One thing we need to understand here is that the Qatbaré Sheikh had developed a mechanism of celebrating the Birth Date of the Prophet. It is a ceremony which could help people to reassert their ties to one another and to commonly recite the name of the Prophet Mohammed on weekly, monthly and yearly basis. However, this does not mean that people are only participating in these *liqas*. As already noted, based on the idea of *liqa*, people could also establish their way of different gatherings or their own local *liqa*. For instance, there are women, who are gathering together every month on the last day of Monday. It is called *Isnain qawa*. *Isnain qawa* indicates the coffee ceremony on Monday.

The participants, in this occasion might be close friends, relatives or former neighbors. According to key informants, there could be a number of these kinds of groups that are established in different places for religious and social purposes. The number of the members may vary in diverse groups. For instance, our case in point contains a member of about 15 women, who could come from the surrounding *Qabalés*. In this case, the members could contribute some amounts of money, usually 20 birr. These members meet on Monday which could fall in the 4<sup>th</sup> week of every month. The meeting of the group can be after completing the *Salat al-Zhur*. However, some close friends and relatives could come to help the responsible person. While the present student was in the field, the turn of making coffee for the members was in the hand of *Wäyzäro* Layla Se'id and she had a responsibility by then arranging everything that is essential for the gathering. In this kind of occasion, meals could have ritual meanings. Moreover, such

meals include the Guragé cultural foods like *biraprat* (which is made up of *bula* and cheese (*ayebé*)), *shoshet aziz* (literary means three kind includes *gomen* (cabbage), *kinché*, and *qocho* (*inset*)), and further it can be rice as well. Sometimes, it includes the *kitfo* (chopped meet mixed with butter) if the host can offered it. In the house of *Wäyzäro Layla*, *aybe beqocho* for food and *karibo* (non-alcoholic drink prepared from barley) were prepared for drink. These kinds of foods could be choose because the members consider that those foods are good to make *du'a* than others. The foods, in combination with the prayers could help immediately get the blessings.

Besides giving 20 birr, for the gathering, the members could also bring different items for the ceremony. This is called the *jebata*. These may include *chat*, coffee, milk and etc. *Yä qibe bunna* (coffee with butter) is the major drink on that particular day and is prepared five time for the ceremony. During the field work the present student has noticed that, the members of the local Muslim communities discussed the current problems facing the Ethiopian Muslim community (*ummah*) and further proposed solutions to get away from this impasse. Therefore, informants unanimously underscore that such kinds of gatherings are not only essential for religious purpose but also they could serve for social purposes. Most of these gatherings are proposed and finally participated by females, and, it could further include even Muslim people but who are not the followers of the Qatbaré Sheikh.

Moreover, Abdu (1995: 32) states that the Qatbaré Sheikh had not only proposed two kinds of *liqa* but also others such as *yä dārmā dawā*. According to him, *Yä dārmā dawā* was first proposed by someone before. However it gradually becomes weak through time. It had began to revive during the 19<sup>th</sup> century with the contribution of the Qatbaré Sheikh. Contrary to Abdu, however, our informants argue that there might be a number of different gatherings in which people could perform for religious tasks. However, there was no a *liqa* bearing the name *yä dārmā dawā* during the Sheikh's time. Regarding this, informant Adnan Sultan asserts that one can get groups who could gather together for a coffee ceremony known as *yä dārmā qawa*. *Yä dārmā qawa* means contributing some money to prepare coffee in the house of any of the member of the group. These kinds of gatherings had not began by the Qatbaré Sheikh. It was rather people themselves proposing the gatherings to consult (*shura*) on religious and social purposes. If someone is in trouble from the member, this group could occasionally gather to resolve the problem. Other female members could be gathered within their associations such as

Sitti Fatuma's. The name Sitti Fatuma here indicates the name of the daughter of the Prophet Muhammad (Abdu 1995: 33).

### **3.6. Beyond Qatbaré**

There were several roles well registered by the Qatbaré Sheikh beyond his principal residence. Many examples can be mentioned for example in Addis Ababa and the town of Dājān in Eastern Gojjam of the present Amhara National Regional State.

#### **3.6.1. The Case of Masjid Al-Nur in Addis Ababa**

The Qatbaré Sheikh's role could not be limited within geographic limits of Qatbaré itself. It is beyond that. It is, for instance, difficult to distinguish or detach the Qatbaré Sheikh and the Banin Sāfar Mosque of Addis Ababa which is commonly known as Masjid al-Nur. This mosque was the first of its kind, in the capital of Addis Ababa, in having a real structure of any mosque to be qualified as mosque all over the world. The determinant role of the Qatbaré Sheikh in supporting the construction of this mosque and its eventual realization in Islamic services, in both educational and religious senses of the word, was quite crucial one. It is, after all, to be noted that the Muslim community of Addis Ababa did not have even a single mosque to perform their prayers. This was quite evident ever since the foundation of the capital, in 1886, and until the first few years of the twentieth century. One remarkable memory according to informants was that it was difficult to perform *Salat al-Jam'a* due to lack of mosque serving this purpose. This vacuum used to be filled by the Yemeni Arab Tujjars<sup>7</sup>, who used to offer their buildings to perform the weekly *Salat al-Jum'a*. One of the *Salat al-Jam'a* prayers who used to play the role of spear-head in both organizing and facilitating the event was the Qatbaré Sheikh.

Brilliantly realizing the absence of reasonable mosque in the capital and the eventual consequence this would bring against the Muslim believers, the Qatbaré Sheikh once created cordial relations with the Yemeni Arabs so as to gradually resolve the problem step by step. Accordingly, the Qatbaré Sheikh, after securing the *Jam'a* prayers in the residence of Yemeni Tujjars further asked if they extend their solid support for constructing a mosque. The Yemeni Arabs had assured him that there were no difficulties if the authorization of such construction and a sizable plot of land can be secured from the government side. The Qatbaré Sheikh did not

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<sup>7</sup> The role of the Yamani Arabs in Ethiopia has been well treated by Hussein (1997: 339-348).

waste his time. To properly find a solution for this basic question raised by the Ethiopian Muslims, he dedicated both time and energy in representing them to secure their basic religious rights. There was no gate left unreached and office un-knocked by that dedicated Muslim religious figure to find the final solution for such contemporary problems. Even if he was morally discouraged by different corners, his struggle to peacefully handle that problem was quite remarkable as it was maturing without any interruption. He was a hard nut to resist the challenges of the then imperial system. He was also such indefatigable religious leader in tolerating the moral crusaders of his time, at different levels, and, in addressing the challenges of the time which was significantly imposed on the Ethiopian Muslim scholars.

### **3.6.2. The Exile of The Qatbaré Sheikh to Däjän**

The Masjid al-Anwar to be discussed here should not be confused with the Anwar Mosque of Addis Ababa which was built by the Italians in late 1936. It is rather the one situated at the town of Däjän, in the Eastern Gojjam Zone, of the Amhara National Regional State. This mosque was among one of such ones constructed by the Qatbaré Sheikh. It is a mosque having several distinguishing characteristics. The Qatbaré Sheikh, like as in the case any other mosques, which he had tried to support by peacefully raising the matter before the contemporary feudal authorities. He used to pose basic questions to resolve basic problems the Ethiopian Muslims used to face then. Even if his effort used to be, in some cases turned into a fiasco, he had decided not to give up such issues. He used to verify whether or not such refusal was from the corners of the local authorities. He used to patiently identify whether or not such refusal had legal ground or executed on mere and baseless allegations.

The Qatbaré Sheikh, above all, used to stand before every powerful authorities of the time feeling that the cause of his fellow Muslims was his concern; and, that whatever destructive consequences against the Ethiopian Muslims could also directly affect him. Those who were not happy towards the success of the Ethiopian Muslim communities had then tried to block his crucial efforts. Once, in 1948, the compound of the Qatbaré Sheikh was stormed over night by the imperial forces and the Sheikh himself was taken to the distant site from where he was eventually exiled to a remote area of Däjän in Gojjam. The intention was to neutralize him from ardently supporting his fellow Muslim communities and his own family; and, to basically block

as well his religious activities at Qatbaré and affect his moral ground. That intention did not, however, succeed from the very beginning. This was because it did not take the Qatbaré Sheikh much time to easily and peacefully interact with his Gojjamé brothers at Däjän. This interaction did not further exclude the Ethiopian Muslims from their fellow Christians. By the time the Qatbaré Sheikh used to discuss, with members of the Muslims of Gojjam, realizing the absence of mosques to perform prayers in that region did not escape from his thought. This made him deeply felt sad for a Muslim without mosque for prayers meant something very difficult if one properly considers the value of religion.

The Qatbaré Sheikh, who had never given up started to promise and announce the local Muslims of Gojjam that he should offer them a sizable land on which a mosque would be erected. People could not, however, believe him for that kind of promise. The local Muslims of Gojjam to the contrary used to express their deep concern that let a right to be a Muslim and practicing this religion at their own respective homes should not be compromised due to the act of the newly arrived Sheikh in Gojjam. This concern could not, however, make sense for the Qatbaré Sheikh. He had among other things, employed his methodology of struggle, both endurance and tolerance and set out for practical actions. He had officially endorsed his application letter to the contemporary government authorities. The warning which he had received from different people was that “Islam had no fertile ground” in Gojjam could not block his spiritual activities and the quest to erect a Muslim mosque. It had, instead, motivated him for further actions. He was a hard nut to crack in defending the cause of the Muslims of Gojjam by underlining that their cause was not only the question of the legal rights of peoples but also that the Muslim cause were religious, political and something of critical significance which could raise several national issues and religious values. It took the Qatbaré Sheikh almost solid two years, the years in which he had moved from place to place, in search of the final solution regarding problems which the Muslims of Gojjam had encountered. The efforts he had undertaken despite the difficulties he could face from the cruel feudal authorities finally bore fruits and the right to erect a Muslim mosque did finally materialize in Däjän. This had helped quite a lot for the Qatbaré Sheikh to have obtained more religious followers.

The role of the indefatigable Qatbaré Sheik and other Muslims of Gojjam finally helped the small town of Gojjam to have a mosque both for the educational and religious activities. The

mosque, at Däjän, significantly served as the center of Jam'a prayers, as an institutional home for teaching and learning as well as a genuine centre of Islamic religious activities.

### **3.6.3. The Qatbaré Sheikh: Post- Däjän Activities**

It is established that the Qatbaré Sheikh had left the town of Däjän and returned to his seat of Qatbaré. There were two activities he had performed after he had left Däjän. The first task was in Guragéland and the second was in Addis Ababa. The reasons behind his quit of Däjän were firstly he was pressed by the Imperial court at Addis Ababa and its regional extension at Däbrä-Marqos after they carefully realized that the Qatbaré Sheikh was successfully secured several Muslim followers, the tendency which these authorities didn't favor of at all. Secondly, it is also unanimously reported by informants including Adnan Sultan, grandson of the Qatbaré Sheikh, that the Sheikh was ordered to leave Däjän for another additional task the Imperial Ethiopian government used to expect from him to perform. This was something which has to do with the Guragé clans of Masqan and Maraço. It is reported that an inter clan conflict had flared up to the extent that it was beyond the control of local and district authorities of the time. Indeed, the Qatbaré Sheikh, who was well known in resolving conflicts by arbitration was ordered to resolve such inter clan conflict by repeatedly physically presenting himself by executing repeated mission to Masqan and Maraço inhabited area from his seat of Qatbaré. It is reported that this task attributed to him by the Imperial and local authorities was quite successful. This fact was also well corroborated by the Masqan and Maraço communities. The local tradition has proved that the efforts to resolve Masqan and Maraço conflicts by the Sheikh of Qatbaré had registered better records in peace building rather than mere Imperial and local administration's heavy hands who had attempted to resolve that conflict by force.

There was another major task the Qatbaré Sheikh did undertake after completing the Masqan-Maraço conflict resolution. It was his active teaching activities in several centers of the Guragéland other than Qatbaré. The teaching role he had performed at his birth place of Ezha and Butta-jra were the two illustrative cases in point. If the Qatbaré Sheikh had performed such noble tasks after he had left the town of Däjän was next to the Guragé was nowhere than in the city of Addis Ababa.

It should be mentioned that prior to his exile to Dājān, while actively working at Qatbaré, the Sheikh had already a rented house his residence in Addis Ababa at America Gebbi (compound). The purpose of having his residence in Addis Ababa was to use it as a home for temporary sojourn while performing different religious activities. His residence by then used to perform regular prayers both by the surrounding Muslim residents and by participants of the *liqa* ceremony every week on Monday. It is further indicated in the local tradition that the Qatbaré Sheikh had some of his students in Addis Ababa to attend advanced learning at the level of ‘*Umda* and *Minhaj*’. There was also additional task by the Qatbaré Sheikh to be mentioned here apart from his Islamic teaching task was that an extra-service rendered by him to his fellow Guragé inhabitants of Addis Ababa is well established in the living memory. It is widely recounted by the Guragé elders in Addis Ababa that the Qatbaré used to advise his subjects that the idea of saving should be understood by all who could engage themselves in business activities. It is indicated that he had underlined the importance welfare association to save money and assure the sustenance business in Addis Ababa. Therefore, it can be well understood that the service which the Qatbaré Sheikh used to render to the members of the Guragé community in Addis Ababa was not only religious but also economic and social as well.

Finally, mention should also be made of the fact that a mosque was erected by his son and successor *Al-Hajj Shalqa* Sulatan at Somali Tera in 1967 but keeping the significant name Sheikh Issa as it is still known as the Mosque of Qatbaré Sheikh. It is still serving to perform regular prayers both by the surrounding Muslim residents and by participants of the *liqa* ceremony every week on Monday. The very important point of this task by *Shalqa* Sulatan is that the crucial role of the Qatbaré Sheikh has well kept its continuity in Addis Ababa.

## CHAPER FOUR

### THE MAWLĪD AND THE INTRA-FAITH DEBATE

The basic points to be raised in this chapter are the two principal debates regarding the *Mawlīd* ceremony at Qatbaré. These are on the one hand those debate participants who strongly try to justify that *Mawlīd* is something an innovation but should be continuously celebrated. On the other hand there is a debating solid block who strongly stand to denounce the importance of *Mawlīd*. The basic findings of this thesis is as far as the intra-faith debate is concerned will modestly be presented.

#### 4.1.The Debate

The overall findings of the data under study clearly reveal that there has always been intra-faith debate with respect to the *Mawlīd* ceremony at Qatbaré. The debate has always revolves around the celebration or not of the *Mawlīd al-Nabi* at this site. This is nothing but an intra-faith debate among the fellow Ethiopian Muslims. This intra-faith debate already assumes a position contradicting each other: hence the pro- *Mawlīd* and the against- *Mawlīd* celebration debates.

As already mentioned, there are different perceptions and opinions about whether the *Mawlīd* ceremony at the site of Qatbaré should be celebrated or not. Let us now move on to the topic of the opinion of the groups regarding the celebration of *Mawlīd* ceremony there. All these groups have different arguments in support of their respective stances. Let us first consider the group that supports the *Mawlīd* celebration and their arguments.

##### 4.1.1. The Pro-*Mawlīd* Ceremony Debate at Qatbaré

Regarding the arguments of the group, who could celebrate the birth of Prophet at the site of Qatbaré, the following arguments are forwarded by those whose stand is in favor of celebrating the *Mawlīd*. The central argument of this group lays on that innovations are of two types: Praiseworthy innovation which is not contradicting with the Qur'an and the *Sunnah*; and, the blameworthy innovation, which includes anything that disagrees with the *Sunnah*. According to them, there is a strong Prophetic saying (*Sahih-hadith*) which could appreciate a good innovation citing that the Prophet Muhammad mentions that a person who innovates a good thing in the

religion of Islam earns the reward of it, and, that of all whom who could perform it after him without diminishing their own rewards until the end of his life. Key informants argue that people, who could celebrate the *Mawlīd*, at the site of Qatbaré, could use this day standing up for the Prophet, to learn and spread the story of Prophet Muhammad since birth, extending *salaam* (greetings) upon him and reading the *Surahs* from the Holy Qur'an during such celebrations, holding gatherings of the *dhikr*, performing various things to show their joy, reciting different poems, and other things that are done to commemorate " *Mawlīd* ". They could further claim that although it was not practiced, in the early years of Islam, the ceremony of the Prophet's birthday is something a "good innovation".

According to the ceremony's participants, the second reason to celebrate Prophet's *Mawlīd* at the site of Qatbaré is explained as something showing love for the Prophet and the Qatbaré Sheikh himself. Therefore, such a day is worth celebrating as informants confidently argue. Indeed, one of my respondents of Addis Ababa, *Wäyzäro* Fatia underscores that we all love our Prophet, we also always try to follow him and become happy celebrating his birthday; and, one more important thing it does not mean our happiness is only on that day, with the a grace of Allah; and, His Last Messenger, Muslims have always been happy, for the Muslim *ummah*, *Mawlīd* ceremony is a joy as it is an honor for all Muslims.

The *Mawlīd al-Nabi* at Qatbaré could also help to commemorate the Qatbaré Sheikh and his religious career. My informant, a certain Mensur Ahmed, is of opinion that the Prophet's *Mawlīd* is not an innovation. There are, according to him, a number of ways to extend love for the Prophet. He asserts that by posing a question as to what is wrong with it. Everyone should have to know according to him what true love all about.

The view of many of the interviewed informants is interesting as they unanimously insist that denouncing the *Mawlīd* ceremony is denouncing Islam itself. They say it is part of worshiping Allah (*ibada'a*). It is the avoidance of the celebration which is innovation according to these informants which is the invention of *Wahhabis*. It is evident that Prophet would fast on Monday in remembrance of His Birth. Fasting is a kind of worship and worship represents the gratitude of a person, therefore, Muslims must also show gratitude on the day of Birth of Prophet.

Some of the people, who could advocate these celebrations claim that even if, the *Salafi* could not celebrate it they should have celebrated it. According to them, there are many things which they can adopt in their daily ritual and in their social life after the times of the Prophet Muhammad. For example, it is not the same the carpet that they have now and the one during the Prophet's time. In the eye of those people who could say *Mawlid* is an innovation and it is not acceptable to celebrate, it is also unacceptable praying it with .today's carpet which is decorated with different ideological designs. It is also unacceptable keeping an alarm-clock to wake-up for *Salat al-Fajir*, making Azan by using microphone, listening to the Holy Qur'an on i-pod and other devices because the Prophet himself and none of his companions did not practice it and even not being fabricated at that time. With regard to the informant Muhammad Shifā, the first reason that most people, who could oppose the celebration of the *Mawlid* that neither the Prophet nor his companions did celebrate it. That the Prophet or his companions did not celebrate could not justify not celebrating unless it was clearly addressed by revelation as something being forbidden or disproved by the Prophet himself. By this principle it is difficult doing any praying besides those mentioned in the Holy Qur'an, saying that just because it doesn't appear in the Holy Quran or *Sunnah* or ways of the *Salafi*, doesn't mean it is forbidden. The informants, who try to advocate the *Mawlid* ceremony at the Qatbaré consider their acts as a praiseworthy innovation that can allow them to earn the reward of it.

More than what are mentioned above, the idea of denouncing the *Mawlid* celebration may not be supported by those who debate against. Their arguments could not depend on something a written data collected from the study area but in terms of the interview or in terms of the Focus Group Discussion. There are additional points of arguments generated from some activities practiced not during the Prophets but adopted after he had passed away but still active in day to day Islamic religious activities.

There are two basic points of arguments in this regard. These are nothing but the bringing together of the whole text of the Holy Qur'an which did not happen during the life time of the Prophet but it was rather during the time of the first Caliph, Abu Bakr As-Seddiq, who was the successor of the Prophet. This, by itself, is a proof that the *Mawlid* ceremony alone should not be targeted as if it is a singular practice happened after the Prophet's death. In this regard, an article published by the Ethiopian Islamic Affairs Supreme Council (2004: 6) clearly illustrates this

argument in Amharic as “አቡ-በክር አሲዲቅ ቁርዓንን ሰብስበው መጽሐፍ ብለው ሰየሙት።” which clearly proves the presence of Post-Prophet Muhammad event is still in practice though it is something as innovation. Besides, the same source (*Ibid.*), further underscores another post-Prophet Muhammad innovation by Umar Ibn-Al-Khattab, the second Caliph in the list, who organized people for *Salat-attrawih* under one *Imam* and he qualified what good *bid'a* is it! The Amharic equivalent mentioned in (*Ibid.*) reads as “ኡመር ኢብኑል ኸጣብ ሰዎችን በአንድ አማም ሰብስበው ምንኛ ያማረች ቢደግ ነች አሉ!”

In any case the *Mawlid* ceremony, not only at the site of Qatbaré but all over Ethiopia and the world at large is now days facing a critical challenge by these who have forwarded their doubt with respect to its religious importance. It should be noted that those Muslims, who are advancing their debate to support the continuation of the *Mawlid*, as the Prophet’s Birth Day ceremony, has based their argument not only on the oral data but also in written documents which can be traced back to the medieval times. They underscore that there are many innovations still practiced by Muslims other than the *Mawlid* ceremony. They forward their doubt as why those who oppose their stand are fingering at the case of *Mawlid* alone.

#### 4.1.2. The Against- *Mawlid* Ceremony Debate at Qatbaré

According to Martina (2011: 5), the literate people could simply perceive these activities as nothing but part of the traditional or cultural activities. They could also perceive it just as a vestige of the pre-Islamic polytheism in the time of ignorance (the *jahiliyya*). Similarly, informants try to justify that the ceremony of the *Mawlid* at Qatbaré is a manifestation of the *shirk*. They have come up with:

The first argument is that the celebration of *Mawlid* all over the world in general and the *Mawlid* at Qatbaré in particular has no roots in the *hadith* of the Prophet Muhammad. Equally none of His *Sahaba* used to celebrate it. Therefore, it is according to them a *bid'a* or an innovation. One cannot celebrate the *Mawlid* without any religious proof so further goes their argument. There is no evidence if the Prophet had ordered others to celebrate of His Birth Day or he Himself had celebrated it. There is no clue in the Holy Qur’an or in the *hadith* if His *Sahaba* used to celebrate it. According to the advocate of this debate, the Prophet himself neither celebrated His Birth Day nor did he order his early companions such as, Abu Bakr, Umar, Uthman and Ali to do so. One

of our informants, Umer Muhammad, highlights while he is underscoring in his own words as “We must clearly understand the difference between *ibada* and *adat*. What we call *adat* as he states includes what we Muslims do in our everyday life. Muslims can do whatever they want if there is no such limitation from the Holy Qur’an and the *Sunnah*.” In their daily life, Muslims according to him can use any innovation to make their life quite easy. What Muslim calls *ibada* is a way of worshiping Allah. When Muslims come to *ibada*, Allah has already warns all Muslims what to do to worship Him in His Holy book; and, in practice observing what the Prophet had done in his life. Allah made holidays part of the *dīn* or the *ibada* so much so that they should be treated and tolerated though they had never been celebrated by the Prophet or by his companions. The concept of “holidays” is part of the *dīn* due to the fact that Allah has sent down for the Muslim to celebrate the two *Eids*: the *Eid al-Fatir* and *Eid al-Adha (Arafa)*. Thus, to make the *Mawlid* ceremony as parts of the *dīn* or the *ibada* Muslims should have in first place obtained certain clue or *dalīl* from the Holy Quran just as in the case of other holidays.

Those who oppose to celebrate *Mawlid* insist that celebrating *Mawlid* is a *bid’a* or innovation. Their argument is that God (Allah) has already perfected their religion through His Holy book and through the *Sunnah* of the Prophet Muhammad Himself. According to them, their source to confirm this is the Holy Qur’an and the *hadith*. Indeed, adding new practices to the Islamic faith is an innovation that leads them to astray. Thus they strongly suggest that it should be rejected.

There is another argument put forward the idea that the *Mawlid* appeared when the *bid’a* has become widespread since the last three generations. Hence, following this innovative things make people to disclose to other *shirk* activities. For example, people who could celebrate the *Mawlid* ceremony at Qatbaré, turning to dead saints and holy men for favors and visiting their graves with the aim of speeding their responses is *shirk*. Furthermore, they could not seek the help of Allah but they usually call upon or seek the help of the Qatbaré Sheikh. This is nothing but a *shirk*. Calling upon and seeking help and support from anyone except Allah is the other form of *shirk* which should not be permitted as it distances people from the true path of Allah (God). Furthermore, according to our informants, there are also some people who could believe that the Qatbaré Sheikh is the only one doing everything for them. Such an exaggeration of a person may lead to further *shirk* or polytheism which could not be allowed by Islam.

Another argument opposing *Mawlid* argument is that there are only two occasions which the Muslims all over the globe celebrate. These are *Eid al-Fatir* and *Eid al-Adha*. Therefore, celebrating the birthday of the Prophet Mohammed is nothing but an innovation. By the same token, people who could come to the site of Qatbaré, from different places to celebrate the birthday of the Prophet Mohammed are in fact according to the argument engaged in the practices of such innovation. There is no basis for this which is mentioned either mentioned in the Holy Qur'an or as the *Sunnah* to be justified.

The fourth argument is Allah orders the Muslim Community (*ummah*) extend their love to the Prophet more than anybody else. To do so there is no way other than following the *Sunnah* route. Celebrating the *Mawlid* ceremony at Qatbaré has nothing to do with extending love to the Prophet. One of the debating member groups and a key informant as well states that if someone wants to extend love to the Prophet, then what better way to do it exactly like the Prophet taught his adherents it is not the *Mawlid* case. Celebrating His Birth Day could not be considered as *Sunnah*. Therefore, this is one way of deviating from the *Sunnah* and it is not extending love to him at all. To love the Prophet is one obligation to all Muslims. Muslims should love him more than anybody else. Celebrating his Birth Day is not however extending the love Muslims could have for him. They can extend their love by doing exactly what he taught them to do. Loving the Prophet clearly implies keeping his *Sunnah*. Adhering strongly to the *Sunnah*, and avoiding anything that could go against it. Performing something that is not included in the Holy Qur'an and what is not *Sunnah* is just a *bid'a* or innovation even if the Muslims do it by qualifying it as the good intention (*bid'a hassenah*). ”

One of the key informants asserts that people who are in a position of celebrating the Birth Day of the Prophet argued that they could celebrate for keeping the memory of the Prophet Muhammad alive. Well that is wrong that there are a lot of ways that people could do every day without distinguishing what should be kept as. Doing only what is ordered the (*wajib*) or recommended the (*mustahabb*) action could be enough. For example, by begging for peace and blessings of Allah (making *selawat*) when his name is mentioned by someone and after making *wudu'* by reciting *shahadatayn*. Therefore, while doing all these the Prophet is well remembered and there is no need to remember him only on His Birth Day celebration.

One argument those debating not to celebrate the *Mawlid* underscores that there is no sound historical consensus on the date of Birth of the Prophet. There is no agreement through he was born in the month be Rabī' al-Awwal as there is still a contradiction on the exact date. While some state His Birth Date was on the 12<sup>th</sup> of the same month others propose other dates. An informant states that he personally does not want to practice the doubtful things in Islamic religion. He indicates that there is no exact or precise date regarding the Birth Date of the Prophet and a number of dates are proposed. Some mention the 10<sup>th</sup> of Rabī' al Awwal, still pick the 2<sup>nd</sup>, the 8<sup>th</sup> and the 12<sup>th</sup> of Rabī' al Awwal. If so it seems difficult to celebrate the *Mawlid* by guess if they do not exactly know the date.

The Focus Group Discussants for this purpose reveal that celebrating the Birth Day of Prophet Mohammed means just something similar to what the Christians do to the celebration of the Birth Day of Jesus. Therefore, bringing similarity with other religions is strictly forbidden. Furthermore, the Prophet Muhammad was careful to warn his adherents not to imitate other faiths. It was, above all, *Ato Se'id Muhammad* among other Focus Group discussants who argues that he personally follows the position that he should be opposed to celebrate *Mawlid* as it is just something similar to the Charismas. He argues that religious holidays should be limited to the two ones well revealed by Allah (God) that are: the *Eid al-Fatir* and the *Eid al-Adha*. Otherwise, there is no any divine reward for celebrating the Prophet's Birth Day according to him.

The opposition of the *Mawlid* celebration has reached on the consensus that all scholars understand that the Prophet had died on the 12th of Rabī' al Awwal or the third month of the lunar calendar. This means when they celebrate the Birth of the Prophet they should have realized that they actually celebrating His death and for that matter this could not be considered as something *Sunnah*.

The group which stands against the celebration of *Mawlid* forwards the argument that *Mawlid* is from amongst the rejected innovative celebrations in the Muslim world at large. Indeed, those celebrating it have assimilated some elements of traditional religions. This itself reflected on the celebration of *Mawlid* held at the shrine of Qatbré where pilgrims could gather together to sing and dance, chewing *khat*, and other related tasks all night long. They could seek the intercession of the Qatbré Sheikh so that God might bestow his grace upon them. The veneration of shrine

which has become a sacred site through their connection with the *wali* is also another manifestation of religious activities in Islam. Furthermore, those who could participate in the celebration of *Mawlid* are of different types. Some could not limit themselves and they could add to it some prohibited actions of mixing men and women, dancing, singing or other acts of *shirk* like invoking and calling upon Allah's Messenger the Prophet and the Qatbaré Sheikh, etc.

Taking the case of Qatbaré, it is not only the *Mawlid* celebration, but also the way it is celebrated which those who debate against celebrating *Mawlid* have defiantly opposed. They are of the opinion that performing any event on the Birth Day of the Prophet Muhammad is something an innovation which can divert Muslims from their proper religious route. The anti- *Mawlid* ceremony view puts forward a key point that there is no problem of extending greetings to the Creator (Allah) in thanking Him for the Birth of His Prophet so that this should not attend only Birth Day. What they oppose is the feast and the intrusion of non-Islamic tasks on the day of the *Mawlid*. This is something quite different from what Allah had revealed for the followers of Islam. What is not convincing is that the two debating corners do not have parallel written references to consolidate their debate as they have in fact rich oral sources to argue against the idea of each other.

Interestingly, just as in the case of those who favored the celebration of the *Mawlid*, there are also written materials, not only oral, which underpin the non importance or the invalidity of the *Mawlid* ceremony. Instance of such trend is that (Muhammad 2005: 1) states that “It is not permitted to celebrate the Birth Day of the Prophet or the birthday of any other person, because this is a matter that has been innovated in the religion. The Prophet did not do this, neither did his successors, the Rightly-Guided Caliphs (*al-khulafaa’ al-raashidoon*), or others among his Companions, or those who followed them exactly (in faith) during the best centuries these are the people who had the best knowledge of the *Sunnah* of the Prophet.”

Besides, the same source (*Ibid.*), further argue that gathering the Qur'an in one book and gathering together for *Salat-attrawih* behind one *Imam* has basis in the *Shari'a* and are not *bid'a*. According to this source, “Gathering the Qur'an in one book in the religion has basis in the *Shari'a* because the Prophet approved and ordered writing of the Qur'an, though it was inscribed in parts. The *Sahaba* collected it in one book in order to preserve it.”

Similarly Sheikh Saleh ibn Fawzan states that “Allah's Messenger performed *Salat-atrawih* with his *Sahaba* but he later discontinued it fearing that *Salat-atrawih* might become an obligatory duty upon the Muslims. However, the *Sahaba* continued praying *Salat-atrawih* in separate groups during the life of Allah's Messenger and after His death until Umar gathered them behind one *Imam* like they used to pray behind Allah's Messenger and so, this is not a *bid'a* in the religion.”<sup>8</sup>

Finally, it comes on the part of this thesis that the intra-faith debate which the rank of the Ethiopian Muslims with particular case study of the Qatbaré clearly reveals the emergence of two parallels, i.e. those in favor of the *Mawlid* ceremony and those who advocates its invalidity. As this issue is raised in the third and fourth chapters of this thesis, it can be argued that the two groups have put strong intellectual and historical background in which they have developed their arguments. These are in fact both oral and written sources. What is very important is that although there are many facts registered orally which probably seem to be different, the two debating corners cite the same Islamic *hadith* while debating. Therefore, it can be concluded that the premise of is not that much because of producing different written facts to argue upon. It is instead in interpreting the Islamic *hadith*. If we cite one *hadith* here their difference is only a word which is “*kulla*” or “every” in Arabic.

“*Kullu bid'atin dalalah wa kullu dalalatin fi nmar!*”, a rough English rendering of it goes as:

“*Beware of newly-invented things (in religion), for every newly-invented thing is an innovation and every innovation is a going astray.*”

According to those who are supporting the *Mawlid* ceremony, the word “every” used in this *hadith* is to indicate “most” but not all innovations and *Mawlid* is not amongst those rejected innovative things. While those opposing group could interpret the word “every” to denote all invented things in Islam and suggest the avoidances of all innovative things from Islamic spiritual life.

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<sup>8</sup> Sheikh Saleh ibn Fawzan ibnal Fawzan, Quran *Sunnah* Educational Program WWW qsep.com: accessed on February 2014-02-13.

### 4.1.3. The Scenario

As already stated, it should be noted that intra-faith debates with respect to the *Mawlid* ceremony has a long history at the global level. The Ethiopian Muslims do share intra-faith debate along the same frame. The intra-faith debates regarding this topic at Qatbaré is nothing but a mini-testimony which has never escaped such trend any time a ceremonial gate together is organized be it on the weekly, monthly or yearly basis. One point of departure should, however, be taken into account. Until 1974, the Ethiopian state religious stand was pro-orthodox Christianity standing on solid basis for Christian interest so much so that the existence of Muslims itself, in this country, was quite under question mark. The Ethiopian Muslims were not considered as citizens and Hussein (1994) confidently argues that they were qualified or identified as “Muslims in Ethiopia.” It was such that survival issues overshadowed or dwarfed the chance to develop debate of any form in a religious sense. Indeed, the outbreak of the Ethiopian revolution in February 1974 changed the *status quo*. The revolution had guaranteed citizenship and addressing the social justice in any form of it. It did not however last long as the military rule had become quite heavy hand against religion and the spiritual leaders without religious difference.

Mention should make of the fact that the long history of the country had never prepared fertile ground for possible intra-faith debate in quite visible and magnificent way. The Ethiopian reality however ushered in a new phase following the fall of military regime and the advent of the Federal Rule since 1991. The democratic environment seems to have created a fertile ground towards social and religious awareness. There is no doubt that intra-faith debate within the rank of the Ethiopian Muslims assumed a legitimate ground to flourish. The question of intra-faith debate having an agenda of the *Mawlid* ceremony at Qatbaré should be seen within context.

The *Mawlid* issue as an agendum of debate can indeed be considered with much attention among the Ethiopian Muslims after only 1991. The high point of debate which had aggravated intolerable differences was the case of the year 2000 when both the pro and against-*Mawlid* ceremony activities were flaring up all over the country. Such were accompanied by events when those against the *Mawlid* ceremony group had burned centers of rituals for *Mawlid* nearby the leading centers of Islamic learning operated by *wali* and their successive representatives and decedents. These incidents had occurred almost all over Ethiopia. The specific flash points which must be mentioned are the Mufti Sadiqo Islamic center in Jimma, the mosque at the town of

Asaba Taferi in western Harargé Zone and the one in Dangila in the Awi Zone of Amhara National Regional State.

There has been growing awareness among the Ethiopian Muslims to debate over the *Mawlīd* issue even in greater detail after the year 2000. The first reason for such awareness had to do with the nature of Islam itself whose theological school has significantly focused on this issue. The second reason can be seen in the light of growing debate between the *Sufi* and the *Salafi* groups which had reached a high stage since then. Accordingly, the question of *Mawlīd* has been raised now and then by the counter-debating participants. The basic agenda has always been whether *Mawlīd* should be celebrated or not. For one reason or another debate is gradually becoming intolerable among each other as such things occasionally involved physical clashes in an attempt to force the counterpart to give up.

There is a major question to be posed here as to why intra-faith debate has taken such content of sharp disagreement in spite of a reasonable debate within one religious umbrella. Two ideas can be developed in order to treat this question. The first is the growing debate which stands to insist not to celebrate the *Mawlīd* ceremony. This is associated with the *Wahabi* or the *Salafi* sect which underscores that there is no need to do as they insist nothing is written either in the Qur'an or does it exist anything mentioned in the *hadīth*. However, there is still a challenge against the *Wahabi* or *Salafi* despite their growing success to convince those who argue that the *Mawlīd* ceremony should be celebrated. The *Wahabi* (*Salafi*) group does not seem to easily be successful for the leading *Sufi* scholars and their deeper ties with the wider Ethiopian Muslims cannot be underestimated. The overall current situation around the *Mawlīd* ceremony is not yet resolved for the intra-faith debate is also not yet concluded in favor of this or that side. The finding of this thesis is that it is difficult to force this or that side of the debate to give up in peaceful manner. It is that let they forward their debate everywhere and any time within the Muslim environment. And, let also their debate continue without interruption but as already stated in quite a peaceful manner without being easily transformed into mere hatred and unnecessary grudge among fellow Muslims. Indeed, if such problems could not easily be handled it could easily lead to unnecessary conflicts which could not help the two debating sides.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### CONCLUSION

The basic import of this chapter is to present a tentative but modest conclusion in as far as the findings of this thesis are concerned. Crucial element which this thesis contain are the Sheikh of Qatbaré, the *Mawlīd* ceremony and the intra-faith debate around the *Mawlīd* ceremony from which this conclusion will developed and serves as solid remarks of this thesis.

In the preceding chapters of this thesis, the preparation of it has its initial activities in briefly describing the background of the study area, its geographical location; and, how the religion of Islam has been diffused there by maintaining special characteristics among the Guragé Muslims, particularly in the case of the celebration of *Eid al-Adha (Arafa)*. Clear objectives are designed to carefully treat the intra-faith debate based on reliable sources which have been accessed both through library activities and by an organized field work to the study area. The methodology designed, the conceptual frame work employed to undertake both the data collection and the data analysis all in one have brought the completion of this thesis.

The data which are carefully analyzed and even synthesized have clearly established how Islam has reached the study area, how the site of Qatbare, being founded by Sheikh Issa ibn Hamza (1866-1949), has served as a solid center of Islamic teaching and learning, as the religious center where to read the Holy Qur'an, recite the *hadith* and even, although debatable, the headquarters of the *Mawlīd* ceremony which is a grand get together to celebrate the Birth Date of the Prophet Muhammad.

By choice, due effort has been shown to study, analyze and arrive at the conclusion that the *Mawlīd* ceremony has arisen a debate not only at Qatbaré but also all over Ethiopia and the world between the strict advocates of the *Sufi* and that of the *Salafi (Wahhabi)*, respectively, within the rank of the religion of Islam.

It is clear that the intra-faith debate within the Ethiopian Muslims around the celebration of the *Mawlīd* ceremony has long history which is not a matter of concern until recently. Recently, however, things are taking different direction as the debate has started to involve force either for or against it. Such is quite a phenomenon at the settlement of Qatbaré Sheikh. It is also equally

important that the debating parties clearly know and agree that *Mawlid* ceremony is something innovation (*bid'a*).

The core point of debate is such that the *Mawlid* is something good to be continuously celebrated and should not be interrupted in the view of the *Sufi* Islam. They, however, could not deny that it is something post-Birth Date innovation (*bid'a*) of the Prophet Muhammad. Nevertheless, they do appreciate it as good innovation. To the contrary is the *Salafi* (*Wahhabi*) advocates, who unanimously denounce the *Mawlid* ceremony in the name of Prophet Muhammad. The *Salafi* (*Wahhabi*) advocates argue that *Mawlid* ceremony is Post-Prophet Muhammad *factum* and something an innovation (*bid'a*) and hence there is no need to celebrate.

In as far as this thesis is concerned, the crux of the matter is not to underscore whether the *Mawlid* ceremony should be or should not be celebrated. It is, instead, one of genuinely looking into the subject; analyze the point of their arguments and finally designing even the proposal of an alternative route in how to finally see the future process. The final statement of this conclusion is that the intra-faith debate flaring up in the Muslim world, all over Ethiopia and at Qatbaré which this thesis picks is the issue of celebrating the *Mawlid* or not. This debate is not at all the point of departure, both by the *Sufi* and the *Salafi* advocates from the normative Islam. It is, instead, the matter of practices and above all that of interpreting the Islamic law not in the way it is in the text but in a manner they could perceive which has become a source of the intra-faith debate. When one looks at this point, it seems as if one or another side is based on the wrong interpretation. However, this is due to the nature of Islamic law itself and the Arabic text itself which invites different interpretations.

The arch supporters of this debate are the leading *'ulama* as they always critically stand on both sides. It seems, however, difficult to denounce either side. An alternative route should be mapped. This alternative route is nothing but the peaceful co-existence of the two debating sides. They should indeed co-exist by looking for the better future to have religious freedom but without one negatively influencing the other. Finally, the fact that the intra-faith debate at the Muslim site of Qatbaré is one of the hard core of this thesis, the fundamental maxim of Sheikh Issa ibn Hamza (the founder of Islamic education center at Qatbaré) itself which runs as “ሁላችሁም በአላህ ገመድ ተሰሰሩ አትነጣጠሉም” which laterally means as “all of you are one

by the cord of Allah and you should not be separated.” This statement which calls for an Islamic unity strongly underpins an alternative route to be given only to one Islamic religious umbrella and common Islamic hood then confronting each other by posing controversies and time consuming intra-faith debates without end. Further, future conclusion is open as the present thesis is not the only one to be claimed final in the course of research in as far as such topic is concerned.

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**List of Informants**

No.	Names	Gender	Age	Date of Interview	Place	Remarks
1.	Abdela Bekā (Ato)	M	45	28-1-2014	Qatbaré	<i>Ustaz</i> or religious teacher and has knowledge on the Qur'an and the <i>hadīth</i> .
2.	Abdurahman Mustafā (Ato)	M	38	30-10-2013	Addis Ababa	Journalist and has broad knowledge on Islamic law.
3.	Abdusemed Nassir (Sheikh)	M	65	12-1-2014	Qatbaré	<i>Ustaz</i> at the study area and has broad knowledge about the history of the life and career of the Qatbaré Sheikh.
4.	Adnan Sultan (Ato)	M	35	17-10-2014/ 14-1-2014	Qatbaré and Addis Ababa	The grandson of Qatbaré Sheikh. He is an important informant about the history of Qatbaré Sheikh and all the activities of the <i>Mawlīd</i> ceremony.
5.	Alemedin Muhammad (Hajji)	M	55	15-1-2014	Qatbaré	<i>Imam</i> and have well knowledge on the Qur'an and <i>hadīth</i> .
6.	Aman Shifā (Ato)	M	35	13-1-2014	Qatbaré	<i>Ustaz</i> at the study area and good knowledge on the Qur'an and the <i>hadīth</i> .
7.	Amir Kedir (Ato)	M	33	13-3-2014	Addis Ababa	Journalist and has well on the issue of intra-faith debate on the <i>Mawlīd</i> ceremony at Qatbaré.
8.	Fatih Behradīn (Wäyzero)	F	36	12-3-2014	Addis Ababa	She has had a very good knowledge on the issues intra faith debate on

						the celebration of <i>Mawlid</i> .
9.	Hadra Jemal ( <i>Wäyzäro</i> )	F	66	20-1-2014	Qatbaré	Follower of Qatbaré Sheikh at the study area and has so much experience on the celebration.
10.	Halima Yassin ( <i>Wäyzäro</i> )	F	43	3-2-2014	Qatbaré	<i>Ustaza</i> or religious teacher. She has good knowledge on the issue of intra-faith debate within Islam.
11.	Hanisa Shkur ( <i>Wäyzäro</i> )	F	38		Addis Ababa	MA student at Addis Ababa University in Literature. She has good information on the issue of intra-faith debate within Islam.
12.	Hassan Taju ( <i>Ato</i> )	M	38	16-11-2013/ 14-3-2014	Addis Ababa	He is an important informant on the issue of intra-faith debate. He is a writer on the issue of intra-faith debate and translated various books which focus on the issue of intra-faith debate within Islam.
13.	Hussein Abdu ( <i>Hajji</i> )	M	56	20-3-2014	Addis Ababa	<i>Imam</i> at Masjid al- A'isha, has well knowledge on the Qur'an and the <i>hadith</i> .
14.	Idris Muhammad (Doctor)	M	40	28-3-2014	Addis Ababa	From department of linguistic and Philology at Addis Ababa university. He has well knowledge on the issue of intra-faith debate and Islamic law.
15.	Layla Se'id ( <i>Wäyzäro</i> )	F	55	19-11-2013	Addis Ababa	Well experienced on the celebration of the <i>Mawlid</i> .
16.	Lubaba Se'id ( <i>Wäyzäro</i> )	F	37	9-3-2014	Addis Ababa	Teacher at Marwa International Academy and has well knowledge on the Qur'an and the <i>hadith</i> .
17.	Mensur Ahmed	M	39	15-10-2013	Addis Ababa	<i>Ustaz</i> or teacher and has knowledge

	( <i>Ustaz</i> )			23-3-2014		on Islamic law.
18.	Mahmud Aliyu (Sheikh)	M	58		Addis Ababa	<i>Imam</i> at Masjid al- A'aisha, has well knowledge on the Qur'an and the <i>hadīth</i> .
19.	Mardiya Alli ( <i>Hajjiya</i> )	F	68	13-2-2014	Addis Ababa	She has Intimate knowledge of the Quran and the <i>hadīth</i> .
20.	Muhammad Nur Hussein ( <i>Ato</i> )	M	45	3-2-2014	Addis Ababa	Pharmacist and a member of <i>Tabigh Jamm'at</i> . He has good knowledge on the Qur'an and the <i>hadīth</i> . He also has broad knowledge about the issue of intra-faith debate in Islam.
21.	Muhammad Hussein ( <i>Hajji</i> )	M	68	18-12-2014	Qatbaré	Religious father at the study area and have broad knowledge about the Qatbaré and the <i>Mawlid</i> ceremony.
22.	Muhammad Tahir (Sheikh)	M	76	15-1-2014	Qatbaré	Religious father at the study area and good knowledge on the Qur'an and the <i>hadīth</i> .
23.	Mustefa Shifā ( <i>Ato</i> )	M	73	11-1-2014	Qatbaré	He works in the Qatbaré mosque and has also made his everyday life there.
24.	Rehima Jemal ( <i>Wäyzäro</i> )	F	53	15-2-2014	Addis Ababa	<i>Murīd</i> of Qatbaré Sheikh and has general knowledge on the <i>Mawlid</i> ceremony.
25.	Se'id Muhammad (Medical Doctor)	M	27	22-2-2014/ 14-6-2014	Addis Ababa	Medical Doctor at Tekur Ambasa Hospital and had broad knowledge on the issue of intra-faith debate. He has also attended his Islamic

						education in different countries like Saudi Arabia.
26.	Shemesiya Bireda ( <i>Wäyzäro</i> )	F	55	15-1-214	Qatbaré	A woman with good information about the celebration of <i>Mawlīd</i> ceremony at the site of Qatbaré.
27.	Umer Muhammad (Ato)	M	48	29-2-1014	Addis Ababa	A person with a very good knowledge of the Qur'an and the <i>hadith</i> .
28.	Yassin Farejā (Ato)	M	45	18-12-2013	Addis Ababa	He has broad knowledge on the religious history of Guragé zone.
29.	Zehara Adem ( <i>Wäyzäro</i> )	F	66	8-1-2014	Qatbaré	She is well versed in the history of the Qatbaré Sheikh.
30.	Zhur Habib ( <i>Wäyzäro</i> )	F	46	12-2-2014	Addis Ababa	She is frequent visitor of Qatbaré and always attends the Annual <i>Mawlīd</i> ceremony.

## Appendices

### Appendix A. Questions for Key Informants

1. How do you explain the career of Sheikh Issa ibn Hamza or the Qatbaré Sheikh?
2. How did the *Mawlīd* ceremony of Qatbaré Sheikh start?
3. What are the reasons of celebrating the ceremony of Qatbaré Sheikh?
4. Who are the major actors in this ceremony?
5. Who are the major participants in the ceremony?
6. What are the major activities of the participants on the ceremony?
7. What are the reasons to perform those activities?
8. What are the benefits of such activities?
9. Is there any evidence for the celebration of *Mawlīd* in the Qur'an and the *Sunnah* ?
10. How do you explain your activities with reference to the Qur'an and the *Hadith*?
11. What do the Muslim Imams and Sheikhs as well as the scholars of the Four Schools state about the celebration of *Mawlīd*?
12. What are the main current challenges about *Mawlīd* ceremony in the rank of Muslim communities of Ethiopia?
13. Why do some of the Muslim believers oppose a *Mawlīd* ceremony in general and at Qatbaré in particular?
14. What are your justifications to celebrate or not to celebrate this ceremony?
15. How do you evaluate the current size of attendant of the *Mawlīd* ceremony at Qatbaré?
  15. A. If it is decline give your suggestion?
  15. B. if it is increased give your suggestion?

## Appendix B. Questions for Focus Group Discussion

1. How do you justify the celebration of *Mawlīd* at Qatbaré Sheikh?
2. Give your personal reasons about the religious importance of *Mawlīd* ceremony in general? At Qatbaré in particular?
3. How do you explain the religious values and role of the Qatbaré Sheik?
4. How do people consider *Mawlīd* ceremony at Qatbaré?
5. Give the basic import of *Mawlīd* day in terms of:
  - with respect to *Sira* (the life of Prophet)
  - in terms of *Madih* (praising)
  - in terms of community support and treating them
  - in terms of knowledge
6. What are some basic arguments to denounce *Mawlīd* ceremony?
  6. A. From Qur’anic point of view?
  6. B. From the *Hadith* point of view?
7. Way many Muslim scholars do consider as innovation?
  - Historical evidence?
  - Current realities at Qatbaré?
8. When did the *Mawlīd* ceremony of Qatbaré Sheik start?
9. How do people argue about the religious quality of Qatbaré Sheikh in terms of *Mawlīd* ceremony?
10. Is it just to argue *Mawlīd* ceremony is tantamount to be non-Muslims or as Christians?

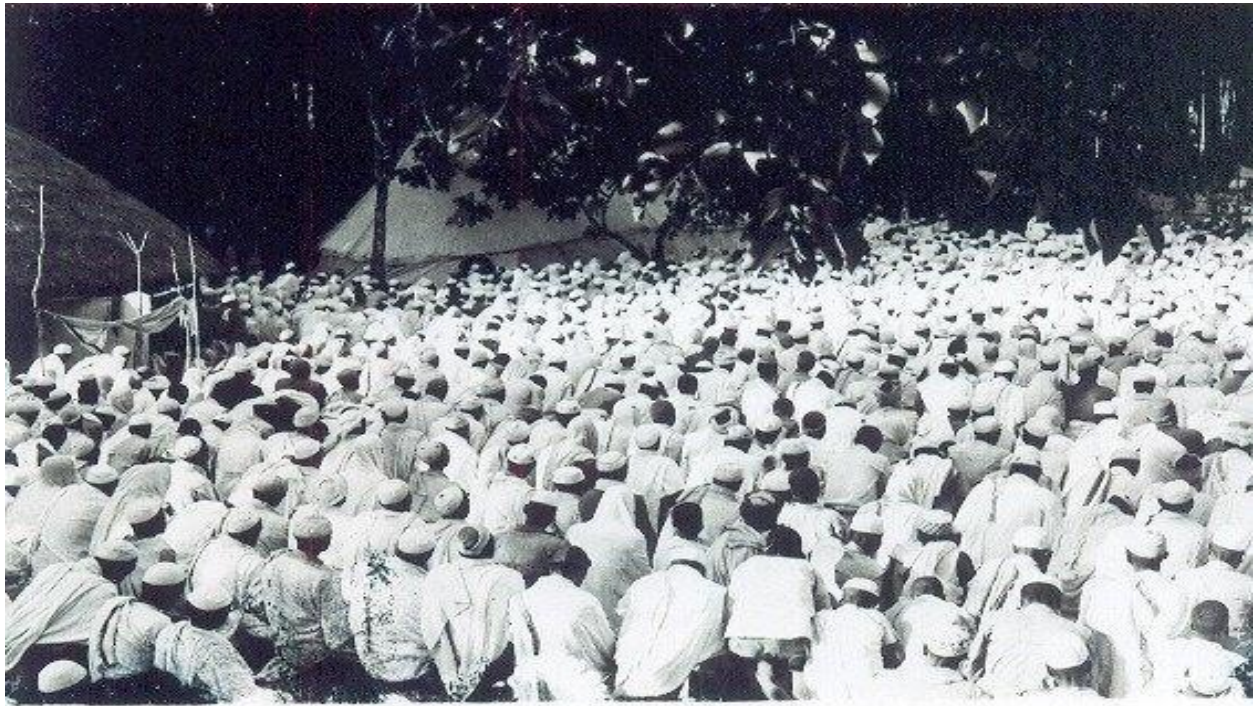
Why do some Muslims compare *Mawlīd* ceremony with the Birth Date of Jesus?

Appendix C. Questions for the Committee

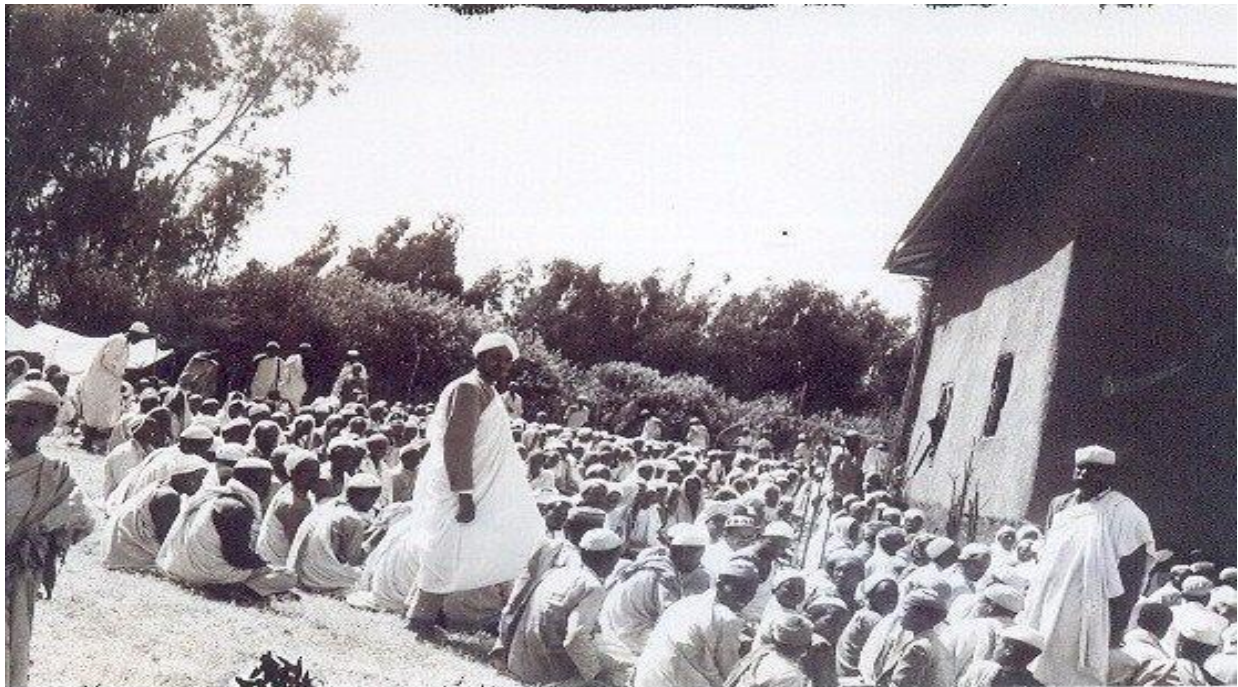
1. ሼህ አሳ ሀምዛ ማን ናቸው?
2. የቃጥባሬ መውሊድ መቼ እና እንዴት ተጀመረ?
3. የሊቃና የመውሊድ አጀማመር ሂደት እንዴት ይታያል?
4. መውሊዱ ከመከበሩ በፊት ለመውሊዱ ድምቅት የሚሰሩ ስራዎች ምንምን ሊሆኑ ይችላሉ?
5. የመውሊዱ ለት የሚከናወኑ ክንውኖች ምን ምን ሊያጠቃልል ይችላል?
6. በመውሊዱ ላይ የሚከናወኑ ክንውኖችን ማከናወን ሀየማኖታዊ እና ማህበራዊ ፋይዳው ምን ሊሆን ይችላል?
7. ተሳታፊዎች ከየት ከየት ይመጣሉ ተብሎ ይታሰባል?
8. በይበልጥ በመውሊዱ ላይ የሚሳተፉት እነማን ሊሆኑ ይችላሉ?
9. በመውሊድ ላይ የተሳታፊዎች ቁጥር እንዴት ይታያል እየጨመረ ነው ወይስ እየቀነሰ?
  - 9a. እየጨመረ ከሆነ ምክንያቱ ምን ሊሆን ይችላል?
  - 9b. እየቀነሰ ከሆነ ምክንያቱ ምን ሊሆን ይችላል?
10. የቃጥባሬ ሼህ ተከታይ ወይም ሙሪድ በመሆን የሚገኘው ጥቅም ምንድን ነው ተብሎ ይታሰባል?
11. የቃጥባሬ ሼህ ተከታይ ወይም ሙሪድ በመሆኖ በሂወቶ ላይ የተፈጠረ ለውጥ አለ ወይ? ካለ ምን ሊሆን ይችላል?

**Appendix D. Photo Showing Former Celebration**

**A.**



**B.**



## DECLARATION

I, the undersigned declare that this paper is purely my original work and has not been presented for a degree in any university. All the materials used for this study are dully acknowledged.

Name            Amira Kedir  
Signature       \_\_\_\_\_  
Date            June 2014  
Place           Addis Ababa University

I confirm that this thesis has been submitted with my approval as an academic advisor.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Ahmed Hassen Omer (PhD)  
June 2014