

**THE EMERGING DYNAMICS OF SOCIO RELIGIOUS  
CONTROVERSIES AND CONFLICTS IN OMO NADDA WEREDA,  
JIMMA ZONE , OROMIA NATIONAL REGIONAL STATE**

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**ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY  
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Addis Ababa  
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DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL ANTHROPOLOGY

This is to certify that thesis prepared by Gemedu Akuma, entitled: *The Emerging Dynamics of Socio-Religious Controversies and Conflicts in Omo Nadda Woreda, Jimma Zone, Oromia National Regional State* and submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts (specialization in Social anthropology) complies with the regulations of the University and meets the accepted standards with respect to originality and quality.

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## **ABSTRACT**

*This thesis deals with the emerging dynamics of socio-religious controversies and conflicts in omo Nadda woreda of Jimma Zone. Religious conflicts have become topics of discussion among peoples across Ethiopia, particularly in Jimma. Thus, the purpose of this study was to examine the emerging dynamics of socio-religious controversies and conflicts in Omo Nadda woreda. To this end, qualitative data gathering method was employed. A total of thirty six research participants: from the dwellers, religious leaders, administrative and police offices of woreda and zonal level were purposely selected and interviewed. Besides, FGDs and case study was conducted. The research participants were drawn from different social strata, gender, age, ethnic background, marital status and religious background. Moreover, relevant documents were reviewed. All the data generated through these data gathering tools were analyzed thematically and meanings were constructed out of them. The study examined the extent to which developments and movements within Islam in the last fifteen years have challenged the centuries old Sufi tradition in many ways. Hence, the study examined how contentious elements between Islamic sects such as doctrinal differences and claims to the office of the Majlis contribute to religious controversies. It also tried to identify different factors contributing to Muslim-Christian conflict in the area. Similarly, it explored how the emerging religious teachings undermined the healthy relationship between the inhabitants. The study further examined controversies over religious radicalization among different sections of the community and how the local authorities have been trying to resolve religious conflicts and mitigate religious controversies in Omo Nadda Woreda of Jimma zone*

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AFAN OROMO GLOSSARY

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<i>Ada</i>	Custom
<i>Abba-Muda</i>	Spiritual leader responsible for the process of ointment
<i>Abba-warra</i>	Husband
<i>Asenna</i>	Type of marriage based on the free will of two spouses
<i>Ayyana</i>	Spirit
<i>Balbala</i>	Lineage
<i>Bokku</i>	Scepter made up of Olive tree
<i>Buti</i>	Abduction (marriage by force)
<i>Caffe</i>	General Assembly of Oromo people
<i>Dabo</i>	Work group organization
<i>Fira- dhiho</i>	Nearest kin
<i>Fira fago</i>	Distant kin
<i>Gada</i>	An indigenous Oromo socio-political system
<i>Ganda</i>	The lowest (primary) level of administrative unit
<i>Hadha-warra</i>	Wife
<i>Harcamu</i>	Out of norm practices in Oromo Community (taboo ).
<i>Idiri</i>	Traditional self help association
<i>Ilma-angfa</i>	Senior son
<i>Jigi</i>	Traditional social organization of <i>Jimma</i> Oromo
<i>Muti</i>	Family
<i>Naqata</i>	planned type of marriage in Oromo community
<i>Qallu</i>	A person on which spirit descends
<i>Qomo</i>	Sub moiety
<i>Waaq Gurracha</i>	Black God
<i>Waaq</i>	God

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*DEFINITIONS OF ARABIC TERMS*

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<i>Bida'a</i>	Religious innovation or addition
<i>D'awa</i>	Propagation of Islam
<i>Dai'i</i>	An individual who is devoted to the propagation of Islam
<i>Dhikr</i>	Recollection, Regular repetitions of words or formals in praise of God
<i>Hadith</i>	Tradition including the life, career and activities of the Prophet Mohamed
<i>Hajj</i>	A pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina
<i>Hijra</i>	The flight of Prophet Mohammed from Mecca to Medina
<i>Imam</i>	Leader of the congregational prayer
<i>Menzuma</i>	Islamic religious poem
<i>Mawlid</i>	The birth day of Prophet Mohammed
<i>Niqab</i>	A way of covering the whole face except the eyes for Muslim female
<i>Qadi</i>	A judge in accordance of the shari'a code of law
<i>Quran</i>	The word of Allah transmitted to prophet
<i>Salat</i>	The five daily prayers of Muslims
<i>Shari'a</i>	Islamic code of law
<i>Sheikh</i>	A religious leader of Muslim communities
<i>Shirk</i>	The worship of creatures rather than Allah
<i>Sunnah</i>	The reported deeds and words of the Prophet.
<i>Tawhid</i>	The oneness of Allah (Divine unity)
<i>Ulema</i>	Muslim religious scholar
<i>Wali</i>	God's protégé; saint
<i>zakat</i>	Alms Tax

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*ACRONYMS*

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CSA	Central Statistical Agency
EIASC	Supreme Court of Ethiopia for Islam Affairs
EOC	Ethiopian Orthodox Church
ETV	Ethiopian Television
FDRE	Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia
IIRO	International Islamic Relief Organization
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
SIM	Sudan Interior Mission
SNNPR	Regional State of South Nations, Nationalities and peoples
VOA	Voice of America

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Background of the Study

In Ethiopia, religion is deeply ingrained into the socio-cultural and politico-historical life of the people. Notwithstanding to some erratic misconceptions, Ethiopia, to all intents and purposes continued to be a hub for two major religions - Christianity and Islam. These principal religions played and continue to play an important role in the social, cultural and the political life of the people. By and large, these two religions enjoyed periods of peaceful co-existence that is punctured by brief periods of crisis. Therefore, their historical relation is intermittently marked by a period of crisis and cooperation; forceful conversion and tolerance as well. According to Tadesse Tamrat, the period of peaceful coexistence the two religions had at their first contact was short lived, and hostility seemed to have started as early as the beginning of the eighth century /after a century of the first *hijra* (615 AD) (Tadesse, 1972:31).

Muslim-Christian conflict in Ethiopia has been linked to the nature of the relation established between the Ethiopian states and the Ethiopian Orthodox Christianity or the Church (Abbink, 1998:112). Starting from its inception, Christianity had a strong relationship with the State. In fact, it seems to have been a state religion up until the demise of the Imperial regime in 1974. On the contrary, Islam as well as other 'indigenous faiths' were not bestowed with an equal status and recognition as Christianity had.

With this general background, let me discuss political dynamics in relation to religion in my study area by using historical prism. The history of Islam in *Jimma* began with the establishment of the independent kingdom of *Jimma* and its official adoption of Islam in 1830. *Abba Jifar I*, the first monarch of *Jimma*, became effective in making most of the people Muslims (Lewis, 1984a: 41-42).

The introduction and spread of Islam in *Jimma* has served as a leading ideology of the kingdom. Islam was functionary in all of its diplomatic, commercial and political ties with other neighboring states like *Limmu Enarya*, *Gomma*, *Guma* and *Gera*. The same ideology has marked the cordial relationship it had with the states such as the Mahadist State in the Sudan, Yemen and the Sultanate of Zanzibar. The physical evidence for *Abba Jifar's II* ideological disposition is a two story buildings he had built at the Holy sites of Mecca and Medina (the destitute Arabia) to accommodate pilgrims from *Jimma* and Ethiopia since the post Italian period to this day (Braukamper, 2002:54).

The forceful incorporation of *Jimma* to the Ethiopian state in 1888 was followed by an agreement that conditionally "reward" the Kingdom to continue with its regional autonomy and maintain its Islamic identities (Guluma, 2002:54). But steady infiltration of Christianity was on progress through government administration activities and labor migration. The partial treatment of administrators along religious lines soon became one most contentious issue dominating the dialogues. And eventually this controversy was used as a pretext to end the administrative autonomy of *Jimma*. The Monarch, who was eagerly driven by the interest to tap the enormous coffee resource, which was then becoming a valuable cash crop in the global market, would naturally be ready to take any pretext that show up. Hence, following the death of *Abba Jifar II*, Emperor Haile Selassie

It ended the autonomy of Jimma that marked the end of "the last and only administrative manifestation of Islamic existence in Ethiopia (*ibid*).

Islam in Ethiopia in general Jimma in particular was favored by the short lived Italian colonial administration to give the impression that Italian supported Islam and Muslim communities contrary to the imperial regime of the time. The Italian divide and rule colonial policy led to the construction and maintenance of mosques, opening of *madrassas*, appointment of *qadis* (judges) to courts and a radio transmission in Arabic that aimed to address the Muslim population in Ethiopia. Even though Trimmingham has indicated that the number of pilgrims during the Italian occupation had decreased, the continued pilgrimage to *hajj* during this period had surely made it possible for Ethiopian Muslims keep their contact with the wider Muslim world (Trimingham, 1952).

When Haile Selassie returned from exile in 1941 the only physical legacies of the Italians were left behind to the Muslim community. The restored Haile Selassie has taken the systematic destruction of the sense of the statehood of Jimma as a top agenda; and an unfinished business of the pre Italian period. This seems to kick off the decade's long period of isolation and stagnation for the Muslim community in Jimma and in the rest of the country. The all rounded integration of *Jimma* began deterring any strong local trends to drift away and dissolve autonomous mentality. This integration aimed at the economic centralization and appropriation of the rich coffee yield of the region (Guluma, 2002:63). And the Muslim community of Jimma remained in a subordinate status since 1940's. The influx of co-religionists to the area was also followed by systematic alienation of the local Muslim Oromo from political and administrative posts.

When *Derg* came to power, it took a 'revolutionary' measure to sever the century old Church-State relationship and gave an official recognition for the observance of Muslim holidays. However, apart from taking some image building measures by giving ceremonial status to Islam, the *Derg* continued with the same approach of the imperial regime. *Derg*, of course owing to its Marxist political ideology, was anti-religious. In line with its ideological disposition, *Derg* had indiscriminately despised or undermined religious practices. It had aggressively suppressed local Islamic practices among the Sufi Muslim majority (*ibid*).

More localized shrines were denounced in public as anti-revolutionary actions. Religious practices like the *mawlid* celebration and other related festivity at various congregations were highly restrained. Particularly the *Sufis* who gather for *Dua* (a group prayer to beseech for other) at a selected shrine was highly restricted or minimized, and mainly in the urban areas they were forced to change their venue to individual households or compounds of mosques (if any).

These situations became an excuse for many to escape and exile to the countries like the Sudan, Egypt and the Gulf States. Of course, the attraction or appeal these countries have in the mind of those self exiled people more enlivened by the expectation of a better life they imagined those countries would offer, than the religious freedom they could enjoy. Moreover, furthering their Islamic education has also become an enticing effect for many, besides the economic gains they could get from the booming labor market. The limited quota offered for the hajj pilgrims inevitably become a safer and cheaper short cut, for the lucky, both to secure the economic gain and to fulfill the religious duty (Bawer, 2006:48).

Nonetheless, the new policy introduced by the EPRDF government since 1991, has ensued a dramatic changes in the political and social life of the people. Particularly, the constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia promulgated in 1995 fully recognized ethnic federalism and basic human and democratic rights including freedom of belief. As a result, each religious institution in the country picked up the opportunities to expand their evangelical activities including the construction of churches and mosques. This remarkable political shift has opened up a new chapter for all religious communities. Paradoxically, it has resulted in intra and inter-religious controversies, strives and conflicts at different corners of the country.

Religious conflicts have become serious issue generally in Jimma Zone and particularly in different woredas like Omo Nadda, Tiro Afeta, Serbo and Gomma currently. These conflicts have greatly affected the living conditions of the people in the study area. The causalities of these conflicts have attracted the attention of both local and international Media outlet. However, the underlying root causes of these conflicts have not yet been systematically researched. Thus, this research aims to study the emerging dynamics of socio-religious controversies and conflicts in Omo Nadda Woreda of Jimma Zone, Oromia National Regional State.

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

Despite the hopes that the 1995 Ethiopian constitution has guaranteed religious freedom and equality, the current developments of religious intolerance have become topics of discussion among people across Ethiopia. Several woredas of Illu-Ababora and Jimma Zones of Oromia Regional State namely Omo Nadda, Tiro Afata, Sarbo, Gomma (Bashasha), Gerra and Didessa experienced serious inter-religious conflicts. These

conflicts caused local crises wherein a number of religious institutions (churches) and houses burnt. Thousands of Christian communities were displaced and forced to leave their homes. Most of them, whether they were sick or healthy, old, young or kids, fled to *Jimma* town to save lives. The conflict attracted the attention of local and foreign media outlets. In the mean time, both governmental and non-governmental institutions have tried their best to safely handle and contain the crisis there. However, the crises continue to reconstruct themselves and tend to relapse from time to time.

A number of studies have been conducted on the issues of conflict in Ethiopia. For instance, *Assefa (1999)* focuses on ethnic integration and conflict in the case of Oromo and Amhara settlers in Aro Addis Alem of North Eastern Wollega. *Tizazu (2007)* conducted research on inter-ethnic conflict in South-Western Ethiopia, a case between Zeise and Dirashe communities. *Asnake (2010)* carried out research on Intrer-group conflicts in the Awash Valley of Ethiopia focused on the case of Affar and Karrayyu Oromo. But these researchers did not directly focus on religious conflicts. Rather on inter-ethnic conflicts.

*Zelalem (2008)* conducted research on religious conflict which took place in 2006 in Didessa woreda of Illu-Ababora zone and *Gera* woreda of Zone and *Mohammed(2010)* conducted research on religious conflicts in towns of North Eastern Ethiopia (Desse, Kombolcha and Kamese). However, these studies do not: firstly relate the issues of Muslim-Christian conflict with the current trans-local linkages with missionaries of both principal faiths (Christianity and Islam) who directly or indirectly affect the relationships of these groups. Secondly, they do not take into consideration changes and controversies among Islamic sects. Due to these, they did not clearly identify factors that contribute to

religious conflict rather than mentioning the immediate causes of the conflict. Besides, the studies do not consider and explore whether or not ethnicity and religion complement or compete each other.

Therefore, this research is different from the aforementioned studies because it gives due emphasis and examines both the Muslim-Christian conflict and the extent to which dynamism and contentious elements among Islamic sects (*Suffiyya*, *Wahabbiyya* and *Khawariyya*) affect the healthy relationships of the inhabitants of the study area. The study also explores the relationship between ethnicity and religion.

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

This study has general and specific objectives.

#### **1.3.1 General Objective**

The general objective of the study is to examine the emerging dynamics of socio-religious controversies and conflicts in Omo Nadda woreda, Jimma Zone, Oromia National Regional State.

#### **1.3.2 Specific Objectives**

The specific objectives of the research are;

- To explore how far contesting elements among Islamic sects affect the healthy relationships between Muslims and Christian community.
- To identify the major factors contributing to the prevalence of religious conflict.
- To examine the perception of the people of the study area towards religious radicalization.

- To analyze the extent to which intra-religious dynamics affect Muslim-Christian relation.
- To understand the overall means, particularly whether or not ethnicity and religion complement or compete each other.

#### **1.4. Significance of the Study**

The study has academic and non-academic significance. Academically, the study is significant as a point of reference for those researchers, who want to conduct research on similar topic. It also contributes to bring empirical data on religious conflict in Omo Nadda of Jimma Zone. In addition, it may contribute for the development of theories. As religious conflicts are considered threat to peace, the study is very important beyond academic contributions for policy makers, religious institutions and non-governmental organizations. It contributes to better understanding for sources of religious controversies and conflicts. It also contributes to the decision-making process regarding religious conflict.

#### **1.5. Scope of the study**

Jimma Zone has nineteen woredas. This study focuses on Omo Nadda, where religious conflict has been intense. I was initially eager to cover various woredas of Jimma zone. Time, logistic and resource constraints made the study to be limited to Omo Nadda. This study mainly focused on "religious conflicts" by delimiting other multi dimensions of conflicts. For instance, there is a conflict or dispute between a person, between the host community and investors, and conflict over resources. Nevertheless, against all these constraints, I have employed my maximum effort to gather relevant data, in addition to the research area, from Jimma town, Sarbo and Tiro Afata.

## **1.6. Field Work Experience**

In order to collect primary data I conducted fieldwork from January 2012 to March 2012 (for three solid months). At the beginning of January 2012, I contacted the Zone administration and secured research permit and letter to Omo Nadda woreda. Then, I went to Omo Nadda Woreda administration. I conducted in-depth interview and collected primary data from informants and key persons. Even though, the topic is sensitive and the zonal and woreda authorities strictly follow any activities within the community, the informants provided necessary data and information without hesitation. In addition, being a native to *Afaan Oromo* helped me to understand easily what my informants responded.

## **1.7. Selection Criteria of Research Setting**

Schurink (1998c:280) calls the 'setting' as a natural habitat where researchers can get first-hand information about the participants. Gay (1996:208) and Tuckman (1999:397) on their part, refer a 'setting' as to a place where the researcher observes events as they spontaneously occur, as opposed to a setting where variables are controlled or manipulated data collected and studied in the context. The data are not extracted from the setting by instruments, such as questionnaires. Analysis of the data also takes the setting into consideration.

The setting for this study is Omo Nadda woreda which is found in Jimma zone, Oromia National Regional State in southwestern Ethiopia. I selected this setting first and foremost because religious related problems are common and very sensitive across the zone particularly in Omo Nadda. For instance, Omo Nadda was the center of the 2011 Muslim-Christian conflict. At a time, the conflict caused destruction of churches, forced people to migrate from the area to another place. Accessibility is another factor for the

selection criteria. I have lived in Jimma since 2005 and that helped me to get access to relevant information from natural setting.

## **1.8. Research Methodology and Data Source**

The methodological approach used in this study is qualitative; since it allows flexibility and holistic exploration in a wider social setting as far as anthropological research is concerned. The qualitative approach has advantage since it helps to channel conversation, sensing, and questioning to preconceived quantitative data. Generally, this approach has well-matched for appropriate inquiry on the dynamism within Islam and emerging socio-religious controversies and conflicts.

### **1.8.1. Methods of Data Collection (Instrumentation)**

The study was based on data obtained from primary and secondary sources. The primary data was collected using interview, focus group discussions (here after FGD) and Case Study. These have enabled me to gather vital information on the socio-religious controversies and conflicts particularly between Muslim and Christian communities. I have also gathered secondary information to substantiate the primary data. Secondary data were collected from religious scriptures, books, journals, magazines, various workshop proceedings and reports on the issues of Christianity and Islam. It was collected for critical analyses on major factors that contributing to Christian-Muslim controversies and conflicts relevant to the research problem.

#### **1.8.1.1. Interview**

The major methods of data collection were series of formal and informal interviews. Informal interviews primarily helped me to identify key informants especially for

selection of cases. In addition, it enabled me to get information about people's attitude and feelings towards religious conflict. Above all, the method helped to gather extensive information on factors which can affect healthy relationships of the inhabitants to substantiate and analyze data gathered by in-depth interview. In the same way, formal interviews were used as primary data collection. Sixteen (16) formal interviewees were selected both purposely and by snowball sampling procedure. Eight of them were key informants while eight of them participated both in formal interview and in focus group discussions. This means they participated in FGD and in-depth interviews. This method helped me to get more information and answers for research questions. Firstly, it helped me to analyze the extent to which dynamism and movements within Islam have become the central concern and contributed to Muslim-Christian conflict in area under investigation. The method also enabled me to explore peoples' response to religious radicalization controversies. The method also enabled me not only to investigate how contestation over the office of *Majlis* has become the key issue between *Sufiyya* and *Wahabiyya* but also its current political implication. Furthermore, the method helped me to analyze how new religious teachings become the adverse effect to mitigate the traditional voluntary association like *idir*, *jigi* and *dabo*.

#### *1.3.1.2. Focus Group Discussions*

To gather diverse information on religious conflicts, I also conducted FGD. My intention to use this instrument was to triangulate the collected data and to fill the gap that others methods can not cover. To Denzin and Lincoln (1994:364) the use of group discussion is not meant to replace individual interviewing, but it is an option that deserves

consideration because it can provide another level of data gathering or a perspective on research problem not available through individual interviews.

In this study, I selected twenty-four FGD participants where eight of them came from formal interviews participants. Broadly, I divided the FGD participants into two groups based on their religious background because of two reasons. Firstly, nowadays religion is always a sensitive issue and hence local authorities of Jimma give due attention. Secondly, I suspected that bringing Muslims and Christians together probably hinder to gather an authentic data as both groups came into conflict at different moments. Thus, I organized two FGD with Christians and two with Muslims, separately. The members of each FGD were six in number.

#### *1.8.1.3. Case study*

In order to identify the immediate cause of Muslim- Christian conflict in Omo Nadda, I utilized one case study in Asenabo town of Omo Nadda Woreda because the 2011 Muslim-Christian conflict was started in the town. When I conducted this case, I mainly focused on how, when and by whom the conflict was started and spread to the surrounding towns. I also considered responses given by Omo Nadda Woeda administration for the issue happened in the town. This case study helped me to identify triggering factors that contribute to religious conflicts as well as the roles played by some individuals to instigate Muslim-Christian conflict within the social setting. The method also helped to get relatively relevant data about the root causes of the conflict and eventually to analyze the subsequent effects. Secondly, it helped me to explore cases that instigate mistrust and religious polarization among the adherents of different religions in Jimma. Finally, it helped me to identify individuals' attitude towards the conflict.

### **1.8.3. Research Participant Selection Criteria**

Purposive and snowball sampling were employed to select thirty-six research participants for all method of data gathering (interview, FGD and case study). In addition, the research participants were drawn from different social strata, gender, age, marital status and religious background in order to consider inclusion criteria. In line with this, Bernard (2006: 187) notes that there are many good reasons in using purposive and snowball sampling procedures. Hence, purposive sampling is widely used in intensive and critical case studies, while using snowball procedure avoids the ethical problems and can produce samples that are less biased. Target populations were selected purposely from both adherents of Islam and Christianity. The assumption is that they could give relevant information as they are the practitioners.

Secondly, participants included Omo Nada woreda and Jimma zone administrators, head of police offices. Because, they are among the responsible bodies assumed to manage whenever conflicts might emerge or crop up. Moreover, the assumption behind this was they represent the official version about the conflicts. This is why they were selected purposely to gather information from them.

Thirdly, religious leaders and intellectuals (both from Muslims and Christians) were purposely selected for similar purpose. Generally, informants were individuals who knew a lot about the local culture and more about religious conflict and willing to share knowledge about the issue under study Bernard (2006: 196) is quite correct that good key informants are people that can provide the reliable information and with whom a researcher talks easily and confidently.

From thirty-six research participants, eight of them were key informants that this study extensively relied on (see annex 2). Four of them are from Christians and four are Muslims. All informants were assessed through purposive and snow ball techniques of data collecting procedures. They appear to have been superior storehouse of the knowledge and experience about the general socio-economic, political, cultural, religious, geographical and environmental conditions of Jimma area.

#### **1.3.4. Ethical Considerations**

In every datum gathering occasion, I used to inform my respondents that the outcome of the study and the information they give is used only for academic purposes. The study does not approach the issues with a preconceived theoretical perspective and, concerned with the predetermined number of samples. I would remain open to obtain and construct the existing reality and meaning from the actions and reactions of society's constituent, as individuals. I would not prefer a precise set of questions to be asked in a given sequence of pre-established categories of answers over semi-structure interview guiding questions. I have rather maximized openness in which the interviewees could respond in their own words. In the development of interview questions, more emphasis were given to the answers of interviewees in order to substantiate through reflection, paraphrasing and summarizing during the interview process.

All of the participants interviewed with their full consent and in convenient places where their privacy was kept. Hence, before beginning the interview, the purpose and content of the questions were explained to them and they had given their full consent orally. Great care was made to provide a relaxed atmosphere for the interviewees, so that they feel comfortable when talking about themselves. That is, no names mentioned in the research

document without their consent. I had continuously told them that if they are not willing to participate they have a right to withdraw from the study.

I have tried to implement Frey and Fontana's (2000:678) assumption underlying ethical consideration in qualitative research. The fact that the objects of inquiry in interviewing are human beings, researchers, must take extreme care to avoid any harm to them. Traditionally, ethical concerns have revolved around the topics of informed consent (receiving consent by the subject after having carefully and truth fully informed him or her about the research), right to privacy (protecting the identity of the subject) and protection from harm (physical, emotional, or any other kind).

#### **1.8.5. Methods of Data Analysis**

Semi-structured and unstructured guiding questions were prepared in English (see annex 1). Then, these guiding questions were translated in to *Afan Oromo*. Raw data were collected through recording and writing responses of the participants. The analysis started with the transcriptions of the audio interview data in *Afan Oromo* to provide unique perspectives on the cultural content specificity during the fieldwork. These translations/transcriptions were carefully reviewed for consistency, as were the intensive notes and analytic memos. I also listened to the audio tape quite number of times comparing them with the transcription as well as the intensive field notes and analytic memos. Corrections were made and the transcriptions were broken into units, and read numerous times. They were divided into sections based on major topics and subtopics were identified for accurate analysis. Then, the analysis was organized according to the initial semi-structured questions. Eventually, the analysis selectively concentrated on the differences or similarities in perspectives on the assigned titles and subtitles.

## 1.9. Organization of the Study

The research document comprises five chapters. Chapter one deals with the introductory part. It includes the background of the study, statement of the problem, objectives, significance, scopes, and methodology and field data collection. Chapter two presents literature review. Under this chapter conceptual and theoretical frameworks and empirical studies were reviewed. Chapter three discusses descriptions of the study area and important aspects of socio-cultural and historical features of religious dynamism in Gibe region, to which Jimma Zone belongs. Chapter four illustrates Intra-Islam reform movements. It is the main chapter of the study which describes the dualistic nature (unity and diversity) among Islamic sects, dilemmas of religious radicalism, intra-Islam complexity, and the recent success of *Wahabbiyya* sect in attracting adherents. Chapter five focuses on religious conflicts. This chapter mainly focuses on Muslim-Christian conflicts in Jimma. Under this part, different factors that contributed to religious conflicts were examined. In addition, the current situations of the study area and government response to religious controversies were analyzed. Lastly, I forwarded a concluding remark.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

#### 2.1. Introduction

This chapter has two parts- literature review and conceptual framework. The former assesses key literatures. The later discusses concepts of: religion, conflict, religious conflict, religious identity, and religious radicalization/fundamentalism and empirical studies in the Ethiopian context. My intention in this section is to look at some of the key literature and conceptual aspects in line with the key research questions which will be addressed by this study, notably the issue of socio-religious controversies and conflicts.

#### 2.2. Religious Discourse and Conflicts in Ethiopia

In Ethiopian history, different developments have been observed some of which provided a background for the present relationships between Christians and Muslim communities.

##### 2.2.1. Religious Discourse

Discourse in general is a way of organizing human experience. It establishes frames of meaning by the recounting and interpreting of events and situations (Apter, 2004: 644).

Since the inception of Orthodox Christianity in the fourth century, different stories and religious discourses have been invented by highland Christian scholars. Ethiopian imperial system nurtured the perception of the supremacy of northern Christian highland cultural traditions and values and the subjugation of others. The first one is the story of their genealogical connection as descendant of biblical Israel and thus they are chosen to rule other societies permanently. For instance, the fundamental principle embodied in the *libre Negest* always served to define Orthodox Christianity and highland Christian

culture to legitimize their political domination. The document has explained the recognition of highland Christian kingdom with historical and genealogical connection to ancient Israel, as well as being one of the earliest kingdom based on Judaea-Christian teaching (Sanders, 2002:166).

Similarly, the notion that considered Ethiopia as an 'Island of Christianity' has its own impact on the current Muslim-Christian relations. The concept might have been invented to attract the European interest on the rivalry over the control of the trade route of the Red Sea coast with the Ottoman Turkey. Erlich (1994:791) explains that the notion of Ethiopia as a Christian Island cannot be proved by authentic historical evidence. Depicting Ethiopia as an Island of Christianity is considered to be a refutation of other religious group communities.

The other issue to be mentioned is concept of the first hijra in the history of Islam *al-najashi*. According to Erlich, the concept has double message. On the one hand, it reflects Ethiopia as a symbol of generosity since her people accepted the Prophet Muhammad's missionaries in the year 615. Due to this fact, a group of Muslim community in the Middle East should not interfere in Ethiopian affairs on condition that Ethiopia did not mistreat Muslims. On the other hand, the story carries a totality of different message to be used by the more radical Muslims. For them Ethiopia represents Islam's first failure as it historically prevented Islam from spreading into Africa and continued to subjugate its own Muslims. The story has been used in order to depict Ethiopia as an enemy of Islam and Arabism (*ibid*).

### 2.2.2. Power Relations: Christian versus Muslim community

The past power relationships between the adherents of the two major religious communities (Muslims and Orthodox Christians) have their own negative impact on the current existing relationships of the groups. The interaction between these groups had never been separated from the sphere of politics in the imperial regimes. Emperors of Ethiopia always had to be Christians and were the protectors of the church, while the head of the church officiated in the crowning ceremony of the emperors (Erlich, 1994:791; Bahru, 1998 and Abbink, 1998: 113).

The Ethiopian Orthodox Christianity was not only a religion but also source of political power. Therefore political power and Orthodox Christianity were hardly separable for centuries. On the contrary, Muslim communities were not even able to inhabit the central part of the country where Orthodox Christianity was dominant source of power. This has resulted in a dynamics of Islamic expansions in the peripheral areas of the country. Generally, Orthodox Christianity had also shown its interest to expand to the peripheral parts. Regarding the issue, Taddese Tamrat's (1972:32) account, "Church and State" present many incidents of conflict between Aksumite kingdom and Muslims of Arabia in the seventh and eighth centuries along the Red Sea as a religious and maritime motive.

The medieval period, conflict between highland Christians and Muslim Communities of Southeastern lowlands popularly known as war of 'Ahmed Grag' is part of this. This protracted war even attracted the two most influential powerful countries of the time namely Portuguese and Turkey from the west and Middle East respectively. The participation of the Turks and the Portuguese on the side of Muslims and Christians

respectively, certainly escalated the hegemonic struggle (Hussein, 1994:40; Dereje, 2011:13).

The root causes of the longstanding crises of the Ethiopian State and Society was religious inequality that had been entrenched by past successive regimes. The institutionalization of one religion to assume a dominant political role in the society and using it as ideological justification for empire building, coupled with other misguided policies have triggered a number of conflicts. Even efforts to create homogenous religious identity had practically been observed in the last quarter of 19<sup>th</sup> century when a number of Muslims forcefully embraced Christianity, particularly in Wallo.

### **2.2.3. Socio-Cultural Marginalization of Muslim Community**

Socio-cultural marginalization of Muslim and non-Christian communities was a serious issue in the era of Imperial regime. Hussein Ahmed (2006) notes that throughout the imperial period Muslims were not referred to as Ethiopian Muslims but 'Muslims in Ethiopia,' despite the fact that Islam in Ethiopia spread primarily through the works of indigenous missionaries, and except for a small trickling of Arab missionaries and traders, the bulk majority of the Muslims are indigenous people.

Practically, the identification of Ethiopia only with respect to Orthodox Christianity had forced some Ethiopian Emperors to pursue a policy of forceful conversion (particularly during the reign of Yohannes IV) and the exclusion of Muslims and other non-Christian community. The process of reunification of Ethiopian state with emphasis on Orthodox Christian identity led to the popular view of and attitude disregarding and mal-containing other religions; and deprived their adherents of practicing their faith (Ostebo, 2007). For instance, Muslims were totally deprived of many of their rights such as lack of access to

land ownership, modern education, and employment in governmental institutions including in the armed forces. Muslims citizenship was officially denied and they were identified as 'Muslims in Ethiopia' which denotes the connotation of being foreigners. Moreover, the intermarriage between the state and the church, with monarchy and Christianity as the defining elements of Ethiopian nationhood, led to the perception of Islam as anti-thesis and prevented it from having its due place with the broader (ibid).

Several writers claimed that there were two occasions that served as reasons to associate Islam with external enemies. The first is the sixteenth century, Gragn's victory over highland Christian kingdom. His victory was made possible by his contact with the powerful Middle East State of the time, Ottoman Turkey. Turkey rendered materials and some military support to Gragn (Erllich, 1994:636). The second is the support of many Muslims to the Italian occupation of the 1930s. During Ethio-Italian war, Emperor Hayla Sellassie put issues of both Italia invaders and Muslims on diplomacy table to get external and internal support. In fact, the fascist Italian's conscious of the situation that Muslims were oppressed, they tried to use it to get dual allies. Accordingly, they provided Ethiopian Muslims with relative religious freedom to get their loyalty and weaken the resistance movement. At the same time, to convince Islamic states such as Saudi Arabia that Italy is committed to encourage Islam and Ethiopian Muslims in order to get their support (Hussien, 1994:776). This period is considered a time of freedom by the Muslims of Jimma.

As Markakis notes, the discourses of west-east relations (Orientalism) also characterized successive regimes of Ethiopia until 1974. It manifested itself in political, economic, social and cultural aspects in general and marginalization of Islam and other indigenous

religions in particular .For instance, the Oromo people were not encouraged to develop their history, traditions and especially language (Markakis, 1994:226).

Sanders also reported that the Oromo could not benefit from the socio-economic structure unless they had to speak highland Christian language, convert to Christianity and adopt the highland Christian names and basically reject any thing that identified them-selves as an Oromo (Sanders, 2002: 166). Ethiopian Muslims were the subject of the Christian state and not full citizens of the country enjoying equal right and were deprived of from the civil servant. The church was until 1974 also the largest land- owner in the country (Hussein,1994:776; Abbink,1998:113).

In reality, Ethiopian Muslims are indigenous; they are not descendents of Arabs and Islam is part of wider cultural and religious diversity of Ethiopia. However, the regime had at large not viewed Islamic cultures as an integral part of 'Ethiopian culture' but as an embodiment of external troublemaker (ibid). The traditional view of Imperial regimes of Ethiopia towards Islam that is, Islam is dangerous to Ethiopian culture and identity had remained at the center of the perception and misperception between Ethiopian Orthodox Christianity and other religions, a chronic problem existing these days (Medhane, 2004:272). Thus, the study of Ethiopian Islam and Islamic institutions and the interactions between the Muslim and non-Christian communities had been discouraged.

## **2.3. Conceptual Framework**

### **2.3.1. Religion**

Different anthropologists and other scholars define and conceptualize religion from different perspectives. Even there is a considerable disagreement among anthropologists

concerning the phenomena to which the term 'religion' applies. The scientific grounds for this disagreement are almost always based on comparative consideration (Barton, 1966:96). Some of them see religion from culture of a society. For instance, Durkheim assumed that all societies required some kind of religion to bind them together. Thus, in his work, "The elementary forms of religious life" stated that, "religion is a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to things set apart and forbidden beliefs and practices relative to unite into a single moral community called a church, all those who adhere to them" (Durkheim, 1973: 197)."

Similarly, Spiro conceptualizes religion as an institution consisting of culturally patterned interaction with culturally postulated superhuman beings. For him: "religion is an attribute of social groups, consisting of certain parts of their cultural heritage; that its component features are acquired by means of the same enculturation processes as other variables of cultural heritage are acquired (cited in Barton, 1966:96)."

Geertz conceptualizes religion as a culture system that gives meaning to human existence. For him:

*Religion is a system of symbols which act to establish powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting moods and motivations in men by formulating conceptions of a general order of existence clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic. For Geertz religious concepts spread beyond their specifically metaphysical context provide a wide framework of general ideas in terms of which a wide range of experience can be given meaningful. Then, he concludes that the*

*anthropological study of religion is therefore a two-stage operation: first an analysis of the system of meanings embodied in the symbols which make up the religion proper, and, second, the relating of these systems to social-structural and the psychological processes( Geertz, 1973:90).*

Based on the social function of a religion, the Father of Structural-Functionalism, Radcliffe-Brown states that "a religion is independent of its truth or falsity. Even religion irrespective of its status (tradition or modern) may be important and effective parts of the social machinery" (Radcliffe-Brown,1952:154). He argues that any religion is an important or even essential part of the social machinery by which human beings are enabled to live together in an orderly arrangement of social relations. In the structural-functionalist view, religion is seen so as to how it contributes to maintain the social function of the group (*ibid*).

Others specifically see religion in relation to politics. Lewellen (2003: 66) notes in his account of "Political Anthropology", religion and politics have been closely interrelated with the development of human culture and civilization. Religion plays paramount role in political affairs. For him, religion not only reinforces existing political structure but also it manipulates powerful forces of opposition.

Lewellen explanation of religion and politics does work for Ethiopia's situation. During the Imperial regimes the unity of state and Christianity considerably existed together for a long time and even got constitutional recognition in the first quarter of 20<sup>th</sup> century. On the other hand, Islamization, especially among the Oromo had been part of the protest against the state, which had been perceived as a Christian.

For Bharucha (2007:189), religion is central to naturalizing social arrangements and distinction and maintains their legitimacy and "rightness." Religion provides an external, authoritative framework of "truths" and linked practices that validate the existing social order and promises eventual rewards to those who obey the rules and accept their place in that order.

The conceptualizations of religion by the above Authors (Durkheim, Greetz, Radcliffe-Brown and Bharucha) imply that, religion by its very nature advocates unity and the maintenance of social function of the group. In contrast, in this study, I argue that religion can also cause social conflicts by using my empirical data from Jimma.

### 2.3.2. Conflict

Scholars define conflict in different ways. This implies that there is no universal definition of conflict. According to Douglas and Burton works(cited in Zelalem, 2008:21), conflict is a state, rather than a process. They argue that people who have opposing interests, values or needs are in a state of conflict, which may manifest in the form of a dispute. For them, conflict can be understood from two categories objective and subjective dimensions. The objective dimension of conflict derives issues related to land, food, water, societal resources and commodities. Whereas, the subjective dimensions of conflict arises from negative feelings such as fear, anger, hate, mistrust and hostility.

Assefa (2005:52) notes that conflict can be defined as; "clash, competition, or mutual interference of opposing or incompatible force or qualities." Conflict is a feature of all human societies, and potentially an aspect of all social relations. It is a common

phenomenon among human beings. People have experienced conflict in their day- today life while they are interacting. As Girma (2009:15) notes, it is part of social life that could not be avoided. Basically conflicts can be caused by social, economic, political and religious matters.

There are some proverbs in Oromo society which show the inevitability of conflict. For instance,

*In Afaan Oromo :*

*Dhala Nama haa turuu, dhagoonni walitti bu'aa Jiraatu.*

*Ilkasanii fi Arrabni walitti bu'aa waliin Jiratu.*

*Literally in English:*

*Let alone human being, there is a conflict between stones.*

*Teeth and Tongue sometimes contradict.*

Gulliver (1979) discusses the conceptual difference between conflict and dispute based on duration and issues in contention. He argues that conflicts are long term, deep-rooted problems that involve non-negotiable issues of basic human needs and resistant to resolution whereas, disputes are short term disagreements that are relatively subjects to resolve.

He further remarked to show the main differences among disagreements, conflict and dispute based on degree of intensity. Conflicts, according to him, happen when the disputants are unsuccessful to resolve the social violence. Disagreements are commonly

solved by mutual understanding between the parties themselves. When the disputants fail to resolve their disagreement by themselves, the disagreements change in to dispute.

### **2.3.3. Religious Conflicts**

Regarding religious conflicts, several scholars have claimed that religious identity differences can increase the risk of conflict and intensify it. On the contrary to other scholars, anthropologists understand that conflict is part of society, constructed in and by society, and sometimes even constitutive of society. Max Gluckman was one of the first anthropologists to turn his attention from homogeneity and homeostasis in culture to internal division and conflict. He argues that many societies are elaborately divided and cross-divided by customary allegiances that pit members of the society against each other in various ways (Gluckman 1956: 1).

Huntington (1996:267) argues that religion fosters strong loyalty and private commitments than other ideologies. He arguably notes that religion frequently appears as a prime cultural marker distinguishing groups in conflict. For him, conflicts are rooted in religious difference in and of themselves, as religion psychologically provides the most reassuring and supportive justification to fight against threatening "godless" force. Similarly, Horowitz (1985) also argues that religious differences are more important than language differences as a social cleavage that can develop into conflict.

Religious conflicts are enacted at global, regional and local levels. Edward Said (1978:5) notes, the global level political Islam can be attributed to the Western cultural domination and a European representation of the east, known by Orientalism, as backward. According to Said, this made religious matters a complex issue between Western Christianity and Islamic World. "The Orient was a European invention, and had been

since antiquity a place of romance, exotic, haunting memories and landscapes" (ibid). For him, the relationship between occident (west) and orient is a relationship of power, of domination, of varying degree of a complex hegemony (ibid). In Ethiopia, as the relation between the west and the east, the discourses of Orientalism also characterized successive regimes of Ethiopia until 1974. Orientalism manifested itself in political, economic, social and cultural aspects in general and marginalization of Islam and other indigenous religions in particular (Markakis and Fukui 1994:226).

Ernst (2004) on his part notes that modern Islamic reform movements are very much a part of contemporary history which basically derived from the negative attitude of Western ideology towards Islam. Islam became a forum of solidarity against Western ideology. These days, Islam gives priority for transnational concept over concrete local communities, despite the ethnic, cultural and linguistic diversities of those communities. Similarly, this thesis clearly showed trans-national politico-religious concepts are taking deep root at the expense of local customs among Muslims in Ethiopia.

#### **2.3.4. Religious Identity**

Before I proceed to religious identity, it is important to highlight how anthropologists and others conceptualize identity. Lewellen notes that nowadays there are varieties of the difficulties in finding general terms and concepts of identity that are widely applicable. Because:

*In the very real sense that no society has been historically isolated all identities and cultures are relatively hybrids, intermixtures of multiple confrontations between unequal societies in complex interaction with the demands and constraints of particular ecosystems. However, individuals*

*assumed their identities from groups of membership in which they belong to. Each group possessed a particular social organization and sense of values, including notions of religion, which have been passed on from generation to generation (Lewellen,2003:162).*

According to Erikson (1968:19), identity is a depiction of one's unique personal experience, culture, and religious orientation. Identity may be defined as one's consciousness of one self and others' perception of one's individuality. For him religion is a particularly important aspect of identity.

As far as religious identity is concerned, Parson ( 1982:111) writes that religious identity can be constructed in two ways-ascribed and achievement. He argues that religious identity has moved from once being ascribed to an individual based on birth to being achieved based on individual choice.

Volkan on his part suggests that religious identity has quantitative and qualitative properties. In its quantitative property, religious identity rises and falls in levels of importance. This presents salience level and measure of how those levels are changing may be known and expressed or relatively unknown in its importance. By qualitative, what is meant is that religious identity development is not just part of a simple quantitative increase in religiosity. Instead, there are qualitative statuses of religious identity in which one's relationship with the outside-religious-world is fundamentally different in each of the religious identity statuses (Volkan2006:12).

Religious identities may be manifested themselves in different ways. Some of them have been linked with cultural domination (socio-political). Others have been linked with

resource competition among same or different Ethnic groups. Globally, for instance, the persistent problem between the western Christian and Arab world emanates from cultural domination of the western hegemony over Orientals. Regarding this, Lahoud and Johns (2006) in their account on "Islam in world politics" note that the constant and rapid changes of the last century afflicts the Muslim world and have created a perceived inferiority to the west and have brought an existential crisis that has led to a quest for identify. The struggle for the definition of Muslim identity took the form of struggle between the proponents of tradition (Muslims) and those of modernity (Western world).

#### **2.3.5. Religious Fundamentalism (Radicalization)**

Regarding the term and concept fundamentalism/radicalization, different Anthropologists and other scholars define and see religious fundamentalism from different perspectives. Fundamentalism, according to Thomas Meyer, is not a religion and denomination of religion but style of religion. It is also not exclusive to any particular religion: There is a fundamentalist Christian style, a fundamentalist Muslim style, and a fundamentalist Hindu style, and on and on. Fundamentalism is not exclusive to religion at all. One can be fundamentalist about politics or economics or race or gender (Meyer, 2000: 29).

In the context of Ethiopia there are two parallel arguments regarding religious fundamentalism. Erlich, as Israeli scholar, argues that *Wahhabi* with external support (particularly from Saudi Arabia) is one of the major discourses that persist in Islamic religion with the intention of relating it to political motive. He also argues that *Wahhabi* has been engaged in radicalizing Islam (Erlich 2007). However, Ostebo who conducted detailed field research on *Wahhabi (salafi)* movement in Bale argues that Islam in Ethiopia is far from being politicized and religious fundamentalist ( Ostebo, 2008). In

this study I will try to see to what extent religious radicalization contributes to Muslim-Christian conflicts which have been experienced in southwestern Ethiopia particularly in Jimma since 2000.

## **2.4. Religion: the Current perspective in Ethiopia**

### **2.4.1. Local Political Shift**

In the long history of political culture in Ethiopia, religion was mobilized in support of stereotyping and prejudices as the basis of negative discrimination to the extreme and morally reprehensible limits to attain power over the 'other'. The historical religious inequity culminated by the military regime through guaranteed the equality of religion and freedom of conscience based on the Marxist anti-religious discourses. The regime preferred to minimize the influence of all religious traditions. The regime has proved hostile to all religions and mobilized schools for anti-religious indoctrination of and propaganda of ideology deploying the vulgar of socialism (Husein,2006).

Since societal policy is one factor that contributes to local change, many changes have been experienced among religious communities of Ethiopia with the demise of the Marxist oriented regime. The 1995 Constitution has recognized religious freedom and equality for all ethnic groups. This condition has created new chapter for all religious communities specially those who had low status to expand their own religious ideology. The marginalized religious groups have tried their best to benefit from the new paradigm religious policy of the country and freedom of organization. As a new condition of increased religious freedom emerged, this predictably paved the way for marked enthusiasm and to the boosting of religious activities from the side of the Muslim

population (Ostebo, 2007:1). For instance, they have started to build their own institutions.

The new freedom of movement abroad has enabled the full restoration of the hajji for Muslim communities. Hundreds of mosques have been constructed. The culture of every religious community is now flourishing. Copies of the Quran are sold in nearly every bookshop. Religious publishing houses issue various kinds of religious literature (Erllich, 2007:178). Despite these, inter-religious as well as intra-religious intolerance have been observed in different parts of Ethiopia particularly in: Wallo, Harar, Kokosa, Jimma and Illu-Abba-bora Zones and South Nation Nationalities of Regional State (Ostebo, 2007 and [www.inst.at/trans/17Nr/5-3/5-3\\_teshome-negash17.htm](http://www.inst.at/trans/17Nr/5-3/5-3_teshome-negash17.htm)).

#### **2.4.2. Trans-local Dimensions**

Religious issues in the Horn of Africa always have been related with transnational core matters such as cultural, political, and economic in general and border issues in particular. According to Sisay (2006:5), the Horn of Africa is one of the most conflict-ridden and unstable sub-regions of Africa and the World. Ethiopia also shares various issues which have been experienced in the Horn of Africa. The pace of globalization has brought Ethiopia in touch with the events of outside world. Thus, the current global or local issues of Ethiopia have never been free from religion.

One of the causes of the current religious conflicts and tensions between Christians and Muslims is the involvements of transnational actors (Medhane, 2004). Nowadays, globalization has its own impact on socio-economic, political and cultural aspects of a given society in general and on specific localities in particular through the advancement of communication technology and flow of ideas crossing the boundaries. As Roy Sumit

(2005:27) notes in the era of globalization, information communication technology characterized by a new vision of exchanging information across borders and creating the scope of unique form of human relationships. Since the world is becoming a village through the process of globalization, cross-border religious conflicts have negative impacts in every country. Erlich (2007:4) reported that as a result of these religious conflicts and controversies at the global level are transformed to be part of the national as well as local agendas. Although his neutrality can be questioned, Erlich further states that foreign interferences particularly Islamic involvements in religious affairs of Horn of Africa become challenging and problematic. He tries to identify how transnational non-governmental organizations play negatively a great role in the current religious issues of Ethiopia in multi-dimensional aspects. He argues that Saudi money is behind much of the current Islamic revival in Ethiopia to develop conservative Islamic ideology in various ways. These are by constructing a number of mosques and Quranic schools, spreading of the Arabic language and translating literature, organizing of conferences of preachers, spreading of the contention that Muslims are an overwhelming majority in the country.

#### **2.4.3. Empirical Studies on Religious Conflicts in Ethiopia**

Despite the liberal atmosphere has been created by FDRE government; post-1991 has witnessed series of religious conflicts in different areas of the country. Among the different researches done over conflict in Ethiopia a quick review of few works demonstrate how acute the issue of religious conflict is and how diverse the causes are.

Otebo also discusses how conflicts between Christians and Muslims had been occurred in Kamise (Wollo) and Begi (Wollaga) constituted religious issues. He reported that in

both cases the scale of the conflicts and the levels of the violence were surprisingly high. The causes often revolved around the construction of mosques and churches, and in relation to public celebration of religious holidays. Allocations of plots for churches and mosques have produced protests from Muslims and Christians respectively (Ostebo, 2007: 11).

There were also religious conflicts between Muslims and Christians in Harar, and between radical Muslims and evangelical Christians in the woreda of Kokosa, Oromia Regional State (ibid).

Zelalem (2008:79) reported that conflict between Christian and Muslim communities erupted in different woredas of Jimma and Illu-Abba Bora Zones namely Gomma and Ddessa in 2006 developed out of religious issues. Due to these conflicts in those woredas, some people from both sides were killed, injured, and Churches and houses were burnt. Many people were intimidated and subsequently forced to convert their religion.

Mohammed Yimam in his field study in the towns of North Eastern Ethiopia (the cases of Dessie, Kombolcha and Kamiseon), generally in Wollo, reported that there were conflicts between Muslim and Christian communities at different times. According to his findings there are several deriving forces that can negatively affect the symbiotic relationships of Muslims and Christians and that eventually led the two religious groups into conflict. These structural problems include the emergence of religious revivalism, partiality and manipulation of religion, provocative preaching, and religious publications.

In his publication that came out before most of the aforementioned conflicts, Abbink (1998:123) stressed that:

*the process of Islamic revival in Ethiopia - as evident in the new written media, self-organization and proselytizing - together with the forms of expression of Islamic identities among the various major ethnic groups of the country will provide a fruitful as well as urgent area of study.*

This thesis tries to examine the Islamic revivalism and intra-Islamic controversies as well as inter-religious conflicts taking the case of Jimma.

## CHAPTER THREE

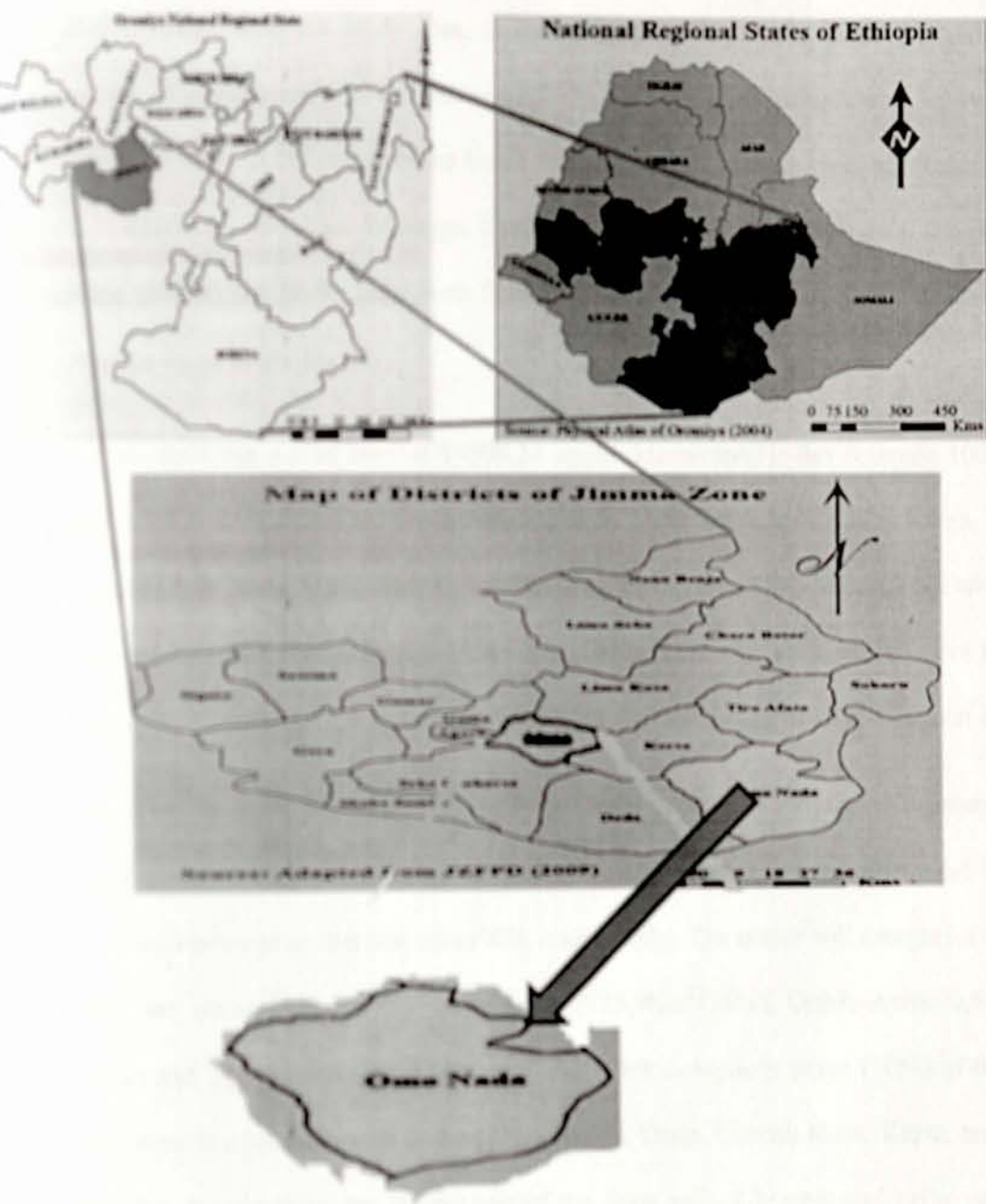
### DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY AREA AND THE PEOPLE

#### 3.1. Introduction

In this chapter, descriptions of the study area, important aspects of socio-cultural and historical features including an overview of religion in Gibe region will be discussed.

The first part of the chapter discusses the physical settings of the study area. The second gives light or brief history of Jimma Oromo community. The third describes how Macca Oromo had been settled in the Gibe region. Besides, family and marriage types are discussed. Finally, the chapter deals with an overview of trends of religious practices in Gibe region. Here, the ultimate objective of discussing the past and present socio-cultural and religious aspects of the Oromo is to reveal the changes that the people of the study area have experienced, particularly with regard to the emerging dynamics, the objective real situations governing the religious conflict took place focusing on Omo-Nadda woreda.

Figure 2.1 Map Showing Selected Study Areas



### 3.2. Description of the Study Area: The Physical Setting

Before describing the study area, it is important to highlight about the geographical setting of Jimma zone. It lies between  $7^{\circ}13'$  –  $8^{\circ}56'$  North latitude and  $35^{\circ}49'$  –  $36^{\circ}38'$  East longitude. It is located in the South Western part of Oromia National Regional State. It is bordered with East Wallagga Zone in the North, with West Shawa and Southwest Shoa zone in the North East, with SNNPR in the South East and South, and with Illu Ababor Zone in the West<sup>1</sup>.

Jimma zone has a total area of 19506.24 square kilometers. It lies between 1000 meters and 3500 meters above sea level. Areas such as Limu Seka, Mana, East Kersa, Northern area of Dedo, Omo Nada, Eastern and Southern Gera, Seka Chekorsa, Sokoru and Eastern Gomma have an altitude ranging between 1500 meters and 2000 meters above sea level. These areas represent the widest area of the zone which accounts 52% of a total area.

Based on the general characteristics of traditional ecology, Jimma zone consists of three major climatic zones namely badda /temperate 12%, badda daree /subtropical 78%, and gammojji/tropical or thermal zones 10% respectively. The major soil categories of Jimma Zone are chromic and pellic verti soils, 2925.9 Km<sup>2</sup> (15%), Orthic-Acrisols, 9553 Km<sup>2</sup> (50%) and Dystric Nitosols 6827 Km<sup>2</sup> (35%). Orthic-Acrisols cover (50%) of the zone's total area. It covers the vast area of Omo Nadda, Dedo, Limmu Kosa, Kersa, and Sokoru woredas. It constitutes the largest part of the Zone soils. Chromic and pellic verity soils cover the smallest proportion of the zone's total area (15%). The vast area of the Limmu

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<sup>1</sup> *Manuscript from Jimma Zone Economic and Finance Office.*

Seka, Kersa, Yabu, Northern Omo Nada and Dedo woredas covered with this soil. It constitutes the smallest part of soil type in this zone<sup>2</sup>.

As far as natural vegetation is concerned, almost 49.6% of the zone total area is cultivated. The remaining 50.4% of the total land areas are vegetation cover (22.8% under forest, 18% woodland, and 9.6% grass land. The Natural vegetation is highly endangered through human intervention for different purposes. Currently, Jimma Zone is divided into 19 woredas and urban administration of 527 Ganda (kebele) Administrations. It has 31 urban centers (towns with more than 2000 populations). Jimma town is the capital of the Jimma zone, and is located at 355 kilometers South-West of Addis Ababa<sup>3</sup>.

The study area is Oromo Nadda woreda which is found in the Eastern part of Jimma zone of Oromia National Regional State, South-Western Ethiopia. The woreda comprises thirty-seven rural and two urban administrations. Although Omo Nadda is a center of my research, information had also been gathered from Tiro Afata, Qarsa, Gomma woredas and Jimma town.

The woreda is located at 310 kilometers South-West of Addis Ababa and 65 kilometers East of Jimma town. In its relative location, Omo Nadda woreda borders Sokorru woreda in its northeastern part. To the north, it borders Tiro Afata, to northwest it borders Kersa woreda. In its Western part the woreda borders Dedo. Finally, in its South Western part

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<sup>2</sup> *Manuscript from Jimma Zone Economic and Finance Office.*

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

the woreda borders the Regional State of Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples (SNNPR).<sup>4</sup>

In Ethiopian topographic settings, Omo Nadda woreda makes a part of Ethiopian plateau that extends from North to South, West of the Great African Rift Valley in general. The woreda is categorized by diversified land forms that have dissected plateaus, plains and massive mountains in particular. Some of these mountains and domes include Mayi Guddo, Gudajje, Dassu Bore, Antijo, Kaba Colle, Gawuda, Cillammo, Karra Sooree, Alaalaa Nadda Addiyya and Yabodo Abato. The average altitude of the woreda is about 2464 meters above sea level. The prominent topographic land mark of this woreda is Mayi Guddo which has the highest elevation in Jimma Zone with an altitude of 3344 meters above sea level at its peak in the Southern part of the woreda. Where as the lowest counter part of the woreda and the Zone is 880 meters above sea level around the Gibe-Gojab- Omoo basin. Climatically, the woreda is classified into lowland (13.6%); mid-highland (62.8%) and highland (23.6%) (Deressa, 2010).

Omo Nadda is endowed with enormous water bodies. It is dominated by perennial rivers such as Gibee Gudda/Long Gibee, Gibe Tinna/Gelgal Gibe, Gojab, Nadda Gudda/Long Nadda, Nadda Tinna/ Small Nadda and Beyyam. The woreda has also a number of small streams which flow throughout the year. These include Karra, Kawwa, O'o, Linga, Siika, Baadhbessaa, Koda and Anniso (*ibid*).

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<sup>4</sup> Manuscript from Omo Nadda administration Office.

### 3.3. The Oromo: an Overview

The Oromo are the single largest ethnic group in the Horn of Africa (Mohammed, 1990:xi).They occupy a land that extends from North-Eastern Ethiopia to East central Kenya and from the Sudan in the West and Somalia in the East (Lewis, 1984a: 590). A number of scholars have written about the socio-political organization of the Oromo. For instance, according to Gada Melba (1988), the Oromo are divided into two major groups or moieties Borana and Barentu. Borana was senior (angafa) and Barentu was junior (qoxusuu). These two major groups form the Oromo nation and sub-clans. The Oromo, according to Gemetchu (1994) are divided into five major groups: the Tulama and the Macca, the Saboo and the Gona, the Rayya and the Aseboo, the Siikko and the Mando and the Itu and the Humbanna.

Mohammed (1990: 18) discusses that prior to and during the 16th century, the Tulama and the Macca groups lived under common Gada government and law. The Macca\_Tulama is said to have founded Oda – Nabee as their new caffe centre. Oda-Nabe, in place of Haroo- Walabu, became a socio-political and religious center for Macca-Tulama where Gada rituals were performed and preparations for attacks were undertaken (*ibid.*:25, 42).

However, the Macca group in the end separated from Tulama and established its own center at Tute Bisil Osole, known as Oda Bisil. It was located in the upper Gibe basin between Gedo and Bilo. This location was used as a strategic place to further expand into the areas they finally dominated (Tesema, 1980: 23 and Mohammed 1990).

### 3.4. The Settlement of the Macca Oromo in Gibe Region

Although scholars have not yet established the exact date of the first settlement of Oromo in Jimma, the Macca of present Western Oromo claim the politico religious center of oda Bisil in their oral traditions. During their expansion, the Macca branches of the Oromo were regulated by the tuma (law) made at Oda-Bisil. By receiving rules and principles from Oda-Bisil, they also applied it to their localities where they newly occupied and settled (Dejene, 2002:25).

Some scholars suggest that the Macca lived in Tuutee Bisil Osolee for four to five generation before they dispersed in different direction. Then, a strong Macca group the saddacha confederacy led by Diggo Jarso, the great grandson of Wayyu fought against the indigenous people at Ogdii Budo, near Dedo defeated the indigenous people. Thus, the different Oromo clans spread out and eventually dominated the area between the Gibe River in the North and Gojab River in the South(Deressa,2010:23).

The Oromo people formerly administered under the umbrella of one Gada system and later on disintegrated into many centers. After crossing the Gibe River and settled in Jimmaa area, the Macca Oromo lived under their Gada administration. The Macca Oromo formed Jimmaa saglan(the nine sub-clans) under Abbaa Gada. These Jimma saglan include Diggo, Badi,Qorre, Laaloo, Billo, Hagalo, Harsu, Saddacha and Abbu Kakko. They continued to be governed under the newly established common Gada center-Oda Halle in the present Omo Nadda woreda (*ibid*).

According to the informants Oda (sycamore tree) is found in a plain field not far from the river. Under Oda the clan elders formulated and enforced law. Oda was the centre for

solving political, social and economic problems through discussion. *Oda* was the place where the Oromo community congregates according to its clan to seeing of the pilgrimage to Dirre Abba Muda (field of annotating). Abba Muda was the spiritual head in traditional Oromo religion. Furthermore, *Oda* was the centre of discussion about enemy and war and it is the place where election of abba Bokku (leader of Gada government) and Abba Dula (leader of war) conducted and ointing them. In addition it is the centre for Butta ceremony (Dejene, 2002).

Oda Hulle or the newly established common caffe of the Gada center was centered at Hulle in the specific area of Hulle Beyyam, in the present Oomo Nadda woreda of Jimmaa Zone. According to informants Oda Hulle was chosen by Babbo Koyee, from the saddachaa group of Macca Oromo during Robale Gada. It was Gada Untaa who became the first Abba Gada at Oda Hulle. Gada Unta was busy, since Oda Hulle was the first Gada center in Gibe region<sup>5</sup>.

Elders of the study area remember *Gada Untaa* according to the following proverb which implies that the busy nature of *Gada Unta*.

<i>Furuli Abba Gada</i>	<i>Abba Gada's horse</i>
<i>Kan Gada Untaa</i>	<i>Of Gada Unta</i>
<i>Sadacha Gantaa</i>	<i>Sadacha of Guta</i>
<i>Mirma gadi-beera</i>	<i>Gray below its neck</i>
<i>Warri Gada Untaa</i>	<i>Clans of Gada Unta</i>

<sup>5</sup> Anonymous key informant

Jimma oral traditions associated the name Oda Hulle with that of Oda Jimma. It was at Oda Hulle that the *seera tuma Hulle* had been issued, which was perhaps the common law throughout the Jimma Oromo. The Macca sub-clans agreed to hold their council of elders to celebrate their traditional Gada ceremonies and to declare their law (*sera*) under certain Abba Gada (Dereessa 2010).

At the council of Oda Hulle Diggo Jarso came out as the more powerful Abba Gada. All clans' representatives met and swore an oath of allegiance (*Kaka/Kaku*) to Diggo Jarso. It was from this word that the latter name of Jimma Kaka was derived. The Kaka (oath) indicates not only the Oromo clans' faithfulness to the Diggo Jarso (Abba Gada) but was also associated with the unity of the clans (Tekalign,1984:36). The Kaka (oath) also included the right to possess the land belonging to their leaders contrary to the traditional Oromo Gada principles of communal land ownership which had already been a part of the Oromo tradition (*ibid*).

Guluma (1980) and Mohammed(1990) scholarly identified some basic factors that contributed to the gradual decline of the Gada- system in the Gibe region. These factors are, in the first place, the competition among the Oromo and the struggle of the Oromo against the intrusion that the Abyssinians imposed upon them. As a result, some Gada leaders took over the power and declared themselves *Moti* (king). Secondly, the introduction of new belief systems and religions such as Islam and Christianity into the Oromo land have affected the culture of the Oromo and contributed to the decline of the

*Gada* system. After that, the changes in the mode of livelihood of several Oromo community, mainly from pastoralist to mixed agriculture play significant role.

The conquest and the incorporation of Oromo-land in to the Ethiopian Empire had highly affected the *Gada*-system. From among the above factors, the informants attributed the decline of *Gada* practices mainly to the introduction of Islam and Christianity and the conquest of the Oromo by Menelik II (*ibid*).

### 3.5. Livelihood of *Omo Nadda*

The nine Jimmaa clans of Macca Oromo community residing in Omo-Nadda woreda are Diggo, Badii, Qore, Lalo, Billoo, Hagalo, Harsuu, Saddacha and Abbu Kakko. There are also Garro, Yem, Dawuro, Amhara, Guragge and kambata ethnic groups settled in the rural and small urban areas of the woreda.

Nowadays, the people of *Omo-Nadda* both Oromo as well as non-Oromo communities are further divided into various sub clans and lineages. Lineage members have the obligation of helping someone of their members when she/he has faced serious difficulties. Nonetheless, since the settlement pattern does not necessarily depend on the patri-lineage, people lead cooperative social life where ever they settle in the woreda. The people of the woreda focus on neighbor-hood, friends' voluntary associations and organization for mutual aid. For instance: *Dabo* (working together to help each other), *rejji* and *jigii* (helping each other at a time of sad). Although they are conscious of belonging to patrilineage and recognize kinship obligation to kinsmen, daily life and

economic cooperation with neighbors and friends also play a significant role in the community members' social life.<sup>5</sup>

The people's livelihood is based on mixed agriculture. The largest percentage of *Omo Nada*'s land mass is recognized to be suitable for crop production. The suitable climate of the woreda has made it possible for the farmers to grow different types of crops throughout the year. Thus, maize, *teff*, sorghum, millet, barely, and wheat are the major crops grown. Coffee, sugar cane, cotton pepper and lentils are also widely grown as cash crops. Cattle, sheep, goats, donkeys, horses and mules are the major livestock kept by farmers. Chickens and beekeeping are also profound economic activities of the communities.<sup>7</sup>

### 3.6. Descent Structure, Family and Marriage

The Oromo are patriarchal society. They trace descent through the male line. They readily identify themselves from others in terms of genealogy appealing to a patrilineal ideology. The maternal and affinal kinships are also important. The *Jimma* Oromo descents are classified into numerous categories and they use them very inconsistently. This makes difficult to find an equivalent anthropological terms of these descent categories as the people of the study area sometimes use them interchangeably. Nevertheless, *mati* or *warra*, *balbala* and *qomo* are used in this study to indicate family (both nuclear and extended) lineage, sub-clans and clan respectively. The *Jimma* Oromo recognize their descent, both from mother's and father's lines as *fira* (relatives). For instance, a mother's brother is identified by the term *exsuma*, and the most liked of

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<sup>5</sup> Informant: Dito Tura

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

maternal kin. *Firaa* itself is divided into *fira-dhiho* (nearest kin) and *fira-fago* (a distant kin). Both *fira-dhiho* and *fira-fago* cooperate with each other in time of hardship and enjoy together in time of happiness though the degree may vary. Radcliffe-Brown (1952:21-22) raises an interesting observation, which is relevant to this issue. He asserts that kinship is normally bilateral.

Family is the basic unity of Jimma Oromo society. Generally, there are two types of families. These are nuclear and extended family. The former comprises of father, mother and children, where as the latter includes children, parents and grandparents. Both nuclear and extended families are collectively known as *mati*. The nuclear family may have husband, wife and children living in the same home that hold different duties and who lead their livelihood together.<sup>8</sup>

As in other Oromo communities, among the Jimma Oromo, father (*Abba-warraa*) is considered as the head of the family and as a result assumes greater responsibilities of major activities which are accomplished outside the house. A father carries out activities like plough, harvesting, weeding, constructing or repairing houses, selling or buying cattle and crops in large amount.<sup>9</sup>

On the other hand, a mother (*haaba-warra*) also plays a paramount role in keeping the bond of family. She is assigned to domestic activities which are considered as feminine domain. But at the same time she has responsibilities in field works like fetching water, collecting firewood, harvesting crops, weeding, planting trees and applying manure (compost) to the agricultural fields.

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<sup>8</sup> Anonymous Informant.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

A mother is required to prepare food and domestic practices for the work groups, guests and all the time for her family members. She is always over-loaded and has no rest throughout her life. The majorities of women informants mentioned that even though they are expected to work in domestic and in agricultural fields simultaneously maintain the bond of family more than a father, they are not lucky enough to utilize their property as *abba-warra* do. Loosing equality of using property together with their husband is the negative side in the family way of life.<sup>10</sup>

The first born son (*ilma - angfa*) is expected to learn from his father and support him in the field works. The other children have to follow the same line as their elder brother do based on their age and capacity.

On the other hand, girls in the rural areas partly have to assist their mother in household activities and engage in other field works like weeding, harvesting and adding manure to the field. They engage in double work and required to learn lots from their mother that they are expected to apply the skill after marriage.

Marriage legitimizes the relationship between spouses and imposes certain rights and responsibilities that support the functioning of family life in a good way. Marriage in Omo-Nadda Oromo is the most respected social bondage. According to the custom of Jimma Oromo, marriage among blood-kin (*fira dhiga/Qomo*) is strictly forbidden or regarded as *harame* (insect taboo). Every cultural setting may have its own ways of conducting marriage. Among the Jimma Oromo there are four types of marriages. These

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<sup>10</sup> Anonymous informant.

are *Naqata*/betrothal marriage/, *Asenna* (marriage by interest), *Buti*/abduction/ and *Dhala*/inherit marriage/.<sup>11</sup>

Each of these types of marriage has its own features. For example *Naqata* is the most acceptable, respectable, preferable and planned type of marriage in Oromo community. This marriage passes through long process. For example there is *Qoranna* /investigation/ whether the two parents have blood-kin relationships or whether the parents' fit equal economic and social status. This marriage is determined by the son's father and mother. It involves protracted negotiations. *Asenna* is the marriage conducted based on the free will of the girl and the boy. Abduction /*Buti*/ marriage is arranged by force. This type of marriage is currently practiced rarely due to government intervention and also condemned by the customary rules of *Omo-Nadla* Oromo.

According to 1995 constitution, marriage must be based on the free consent of husband and wife. In the context of Jimma marriage becomes the means by which religious conversion is practiced. When couples agree to become husband and wife from different religious groups, either one of the couple must change his/her religion from one religion to another. However, people of the study area do not feel happy when their adherents convert their religion to another.

### **3.8. An Overview of Religion in Gibe Region**

#### **3.8.1. Oromo Indigenous Religion**

Prior to the introduction of Muslim and Christian religions in to Gibe region, the Oromo practiced their own traditional religion and believed in *Waaqa*. The Oromo believed that

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<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

Waaqa created this world and governs it by his laws. To Oromo, the Supreme Being, *Waaqa* (God) is the source of all life. *Waaqa Gurracha* (Black God) refers to the idea absolute origin and little knowledge of the people about the creator (Gemetchu, 1994:81).

The Oromo have had a religious institution called *Qallu* to interpret the law of *Waaqa* and *Ayyana*. The *Qallu* institution and its relation with *Waaqa* were the core in the Oromo traditional religion. *Qallu* was considered as a high priest who was spiritual leader of Oromo traditional religion (Mohammed 1990:7). The term *Muda* is the name of the ceremony that is celebrated every eight years at *Madda-Walabbu in Bale* until Menelik II banned the pilgrimage to *Abba-Muda*. However, in reaction to the ban and other factors different forms of *Qallu* institution emerged (Dejene 2002:46).

The influence of the *Qallu*, sustained even after the decline of the *Gada* and the emergence of state as well as after the introduction of and spread of Islam and Christianity in Gibe region (Mohammad, 1990: 6). However, both Islam and Christianity gradually replaced the traditional Oromo religion they had a support of the external organized and institutionalized actors, which the Oromo traditional religion lacked kings and Muslim scholars where as the latter lacked (ibid: 77). Currently, only 0.079% of the people of the study area follow traditional religion (CSA, 2007).

### 3.8.2. Islam

Islam predates Christianity in having strong ground in and around the Gibe region. As it is the case in other areas of the country, the course of the expansion of Islam in the region was gradual and peaceful. It was through the *Jebarti* traders of North Ethiopia that Islam spread in the Gibe region. According to Mohammed Hassan, it was a king of *Limmu*

*Enarya* who embraced Islam before all other kings of the Gibe states. It was the king and his nobilities that welcomed Islam before the common people. Gradually, Islam became the religion of the mass of the people due to the strength of the kings who took the spread of Islam as their duty (Mohammad, 1990).

Guluma Gerneda argues as Islam was attractive to the Oromo people of the Gibe states. According to his argument, the people and the rulers of the region were attracted to Islam as a way out from the Social, political, economic and ideological crises caused by the decline of the *Gada* system. The decline of the *Gada*, which was initially caused by internal Socio-political dynamics, was said to have led to deterioration of public moral, loss of social Justice, poor cattle and land productivity, absence of law and order etc. Hence, Islam found its way to the Gibe region at a time when people were hungry of spiritual alternative to substitute the declining *Gada* system (Guluma, 1993). From his argument one can understand that peoples of the area were not fascinated by the new faith from the religious point but by the pragmatic socio-political necessity of the time.

Mohammad (1990) on his part argued that the disintegration of the *Gada* system and the traditional religion helped Islam to get a prominence among the kings of the Oromo in Gibe region. The traditional religion of the Oromo could not fit with the emerging state based on hereditary kingship system. Islam supports a permanent central authority based on hereditary rule of kingship while the traditional Oromo religion favors having a new government every eight years regardless of birth. This made the traditional religion to loss its attraction among the Oromo kings. Therefore, they embraced Islam and even later worked for its propagation among their people.

Currently, Islam is a dynamic religion in *Jimma* woreda. Dynamics in this study implies the presence of two or more religious denominations within the same religion pursuing changes with the change of time. Accordingly, there are different Islamic sects namely *Sufiyya*, *Wahabbiyya*, and *Khawariyya*. Of these, according to informants, *Wahabbiyya* does have more adherents and followed by *Sufiyya*, whereas, *Khawariyya* is not legally recognized and it is perceived as anti-government's policy. Islam is the dominant religion in the study area, with about 95.4% of the total populations of the woreda considers themselves Muslim, regardless of their internal differences.

### 3.8.3. Orthodox Christianity

It is not easy to know the exact time when Orthodox Christianity was introduced into Omo-Nadda woreda. But there are some indications that there were a few followers of Orthodox Christianity in *Jimma* before the early 1930s. Informants mentioned that when Menelik and Abba Jifar II formalized their relationship in 1882, Menelik had agreed not to build churches in *Jimma*. Thus, though Church usually followed Northern settlers into the new territories after conquest, this did not apply in the case of *Jimmaa*, perhaps owing to the provisions of the agreement of 1882 (Yonas, 2005:73).

However, gradually following *Jimma*'s incorporation, however, there had been a slow influx of Orthodox Christians to different woredas of *Jimmaa* including Omo-Nadda. In Omo Nadda woreda, there were a few adherents of Orthodox Church in and around the towns of Bonaya, Aalle, Asandabo, and Nadda. According to the informants, these adherents probably came from Northern Christian highlands. Since the church had strong relationship with imperial regime at the time, the coming of adherents of Orthodox Church guaranteed by the regime could be regarded as an immediate factor for the

establishment of Orthodox churches in the woreda in the first quarter of twenty century (Deressa, 2010). Nowadays, even though Orthodox Christians demographically rank next to Muslims, most of Muslim informants of the study area perceive the adherents as non-Oromo migrants to the area.<sup>12</sup>

#### 3.3.4. Protestantism

The beginning of protestant Christianity in Jimma Zone goes back to the early 1920s. Jimma appears to have been among the first few towns in Southern Ethiopia to have opened its doors to Protestantism. According to Yonas a missionary team from America led by Dr. Thomas A. Lambie, missionary team of the Sudan Interior Mission (SIM) led by Dr. Bongham could be regarded as responsible personalities for the establishment of protestant churches after receiving permission from the government of Ethiopia to preach the gospel. The first SIM station in Jimma was established at Jiren, where the current Jimma Kale- Hiwot Church is situated. The effort of the missionaries was not confined to Jimma town. However, it was not that much successful due to the strong resistance of the Orthodox Church which was supported by government official. Despite the challenges they faced, they managed to penetrate the countryside around Jimma in the 1950s and 1960s (Yonas, 2005:78).

According to the informants, religion in general and Protestantism in particular suffered a setback during *Derg* regime. The military government confiscated lands, schools, hospitals, clinics, residential houses, offices and other properties of the Protestant Churches. The Churches were officially closed while some of the leaders and believer of the Protestant groups were thrown into jail. For instance, Kale Hiwot Church, the first

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<sup>12</sup> Anonymous key informant.

protestant church in Jimma Zone, was closed in 1975 by the regime and reopened after EPDRF came to power in 1991.

In these days, different Protestant Churches of Kaale Hiwot, Makkane Iyesus, Gannet Church, Misgana Church, Mulu Wangel (Full Gospel Church), the Seventh Day Adventist Church exist in Omo Nadda Woreda. According to the informants, rural missionary efforts go along with the spread of modern education, health care programs and other development activities. Indeed, they have significant presence in the development sectors besides evangelization activities.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### DYNAMISM WITHIN ISLAM AND CONTROVERSIES OVER RELIGIOUS RADICALIZATION

#### 4.1. Introduction

In the last two decades restructuring the Ethiopian state based on ethnic principles has been on the agenda of the EPRDF government. In fact a genuine federalism was hoped, especially by the subjugated people, to guarantee equity share of political and economic resources that would bring about peaceful coexistence. Unfortunately, while ethnic based federal arrangement is still under construction, another area of controversy and conflict emerged: religion. The intra and inter religious groups conflict in Ethiopia are new emergent in its degree, dimension and nature that disrupt the long peaceful coexistence enjoyed by adherents of different religions. The focus of this thesis, Omo Nadda Woreda of Jimma Zone, is a case in point.

Islam in Jimma Zone has recently demonstrated great dynamism. Since the introduction of Islam to Jimma in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century, *Sufiyya* had been the only Islamic sect in the Zone. However, this ceased to be the case in recent times. As is the case in other parts of the Islamic world (Ostebo, 2008 and Desplat, 2005:496) the Muslim community in the study area used to practice a hybridized *Sufiyya* (with local custom) which is eventually surrogated by a *Sufi* tradition that comes to be the characteristic feature of their social life in the area.

As the new developments in the last fifteen years reveal, with the emergence of new Islamic sects, namely *Wahabbiiyya* and *Khurwariyya* a fervent religious strife is taking

root. These new groups are taking the floor missionizing with radical doctrinal reforms that diversely challenge the age old *Sufiyya* tradition of the community in the study area.

These new developments are strongly related with the political reform put in place since 1991. As a matter of fact, Muslims in Jimma as their counterpart in other parts of the country have benefited from the new liberalizing policies adopted by the EPRDF government after the down fall of the *Derg* regime in 1991. The new democratic political arrangement has brought about the long sought religious freedom and equality. And this freedom has opened up the opportunity for some religious groups to engage in a concerted activism, triggered by the Islamic radical movements that now a day surge across the Muslim world.

In line with this, Hussein (1994:798) noted "the internal dynamics of asserting and ensuring religious equality in Ethiopia is concurred by the rapidly increasing tendency of some religious groups in associating themselves with the outside world to the extent that could manifestly damage and obscure the achievements gained in the post 1991 period". Hence, those parts of the country, where we have a predominant Muslim communities like Jimma, is manifestly becoming a hub for such Islamic activism and radical reforms movements.

The flow of financial resource, allegedly from agencies based in the Middle Eastern countries, and the proliferation of reform oriented religious publications has made it very easy to instigate radical agendas in and around Jimma. Venders that supply audio-visual materials decoded in Amharic, Arabic and *Afan* Oromo languages are mushrooming at an alarming rate in comparison to the former imperial and *Derg* regimes. According to the

adherents of *Sufiyya*, these press materials with radical contents are increasingly targeting much of the local audience in the town of Jimma and its outskirts and satellite towns.

On the other hand, the number of people going to Saudi Arabia on a *hajji* pilgrimage has unprecedentedly increasing, facilitated by the alleviation of the hustle and bustle of the bureaucracy thereof. The reformists are especially keen building mosques and madrasas. In Ommo Nadda woreda alone in the last two decades the number of mosques has been pushed from 120 in the early 1990s to 680 now.

Thus, in this chapter, I will discuss the intra-Islamic dynamism that has become a burning issue in southwestern Ethiopia, particularly in Jimma. Hence, this chapter comprises three sections. The first section of the chapter discusses the dualistic (unity and diversity) nature of the relationship between *Sufiyya*, *Wahabbiyya* and *Khawariyya*. The second section focuses on disputing issues among the groups. The third section examines the ongoing controversies over religious radicalization.

#### **4.2. Dualism: Ideological Unity and Doctrinal Differences**

We have three competing and conflicting Islamic sects in *Jimma*. Their ideological unity and doctrinal differences is characterized by dualistic nature. The term 'dualism' here implies the existing ideological unity and doctrinal differences among these sects, which makes their relationship very complex. On the one hand, according to informants, there is no fundamental difference between the *Sufiyya*, *Wahabbiyya*, and *Khawariya* in the research setting. In other words, the bases of the teachings of all of them are Qur'an and *Hadith*. All my informants consistently told me that 'all Muslims' accept Qur'an as the word of Allah and *Hadith* as the general rule that guides Muslims on what and how they

perform their religion; those mandatory and optional (*Sunna*) practices to all Muslim communities.

Moreover, they believe that:

*Qur'an and Hadith are inseparably intertwined like the root, stem and branch of a tree. The mandatory practices or rules of conducts, which otherwise called 'the pillars of Islam' are; knowing Allah as an almighty creator and be abided by his commandments, believing that Prophet Mohammed is his messenger, praying five times a day, fasting, helping the needy (Zakat) and practicing hajji once in one's own life time . These things are central to all Islamic denominations. These are universally accepted principles and practices of every follower of the Islamic religion. The instructions in worshipping Allah, in praying as well as in fasting are faithfully followed by every Muslim by emulating the manners and pursuing the precedence set by the Messenger of Allah- Prophet Mohammed.*

The above quoted prescriptions and unanimously accepted normative rules of the religion would indicate the shared value of the members of every Islamic sect. These commonly accepted norms would suffice to forge a strong unity among the sects and to satisfactorily fulfill the expectations of the members of every other sect. This means, all Islamic sects are founded on the same moral percept that emanate from one the Holly Book i.e. the Qur'an. However, the doctrinal differences exhibited among the various Islamic sects have mainly originated from the disparity in the textual interpretation of the Qur'an and *Hadith*, not to mention the influence of the ultraviolent groups in the Muslim world. The difference of the *Wahabbyya* and *Suffyya* textual interpretation that revolve around the Qur'an and the *Hadith* would appear trivial so to say, for a novice in the matter. Doctrinal

issues that render a difference between these two sects have aroused a disparity of meaning in reading some verses in the Qur'an and *Hadith*.

For instance, the informants drawn from the *Wahabbiya* group, explained the problem related with the rendering of verses in Qur'an and *Hadith* as follows:

*When the Islamic religion was introduced to Ethiopia/Jimma, the understanding and knowledge of those who first embrace Islam were very little. Our fathers and forefathers had passionately received the new religion. However, they did not clearly understand the fundamental teachings of the Islamic religion. They rather made a confluent of the traditional cultural belief and the Islamic teaching. Hence, members of the Sufiyya sect held the Qur'an along with the traditional cultural teachings passed on to them. The Wahabbiyyas, on the other hand, argue that it is sacrilege to add up or shred from the original text of the Qur'an and Hadith. They said that blending other traditional practices with Islamic religion is blasphemous or "Shirk." It is blasphemy, in a sense that practicing something other than what is instructed in the Holy Qur'an and the Hadith is against teaching of Islamic religion.*

Each group bent on fulfilling its mission and teaching its doctrine not only based on the version of its Qur'anic truth, but also moving driven by its particular interests and motives. For instance, *Sufism* has a manifested tolerance in accommodating the traditional and customary practices of the Muslim community whereas; the teachings of *Wahabbiyya* gives unwavering attention or focus to the letters of the two Holy Scriptures with uncompromising and stern tendency towards anything they consider as a traditional practice. It rather focuses and emphatically encourages the Arab tradition. According to anonymous key informants from Jimma zone administration, the rivalry of the *Sufiyya*, *Wahabbiyya* and *Kharwaryya* teachings reflect to a large extent political motives rather

than religious. Thus, the heated doctrinal controversies and ultra-religious motives embedded in the two sects disposed their relationships much more complex with a potential to disrupt the existing peaceful relationship between the Muslims themselves and the Muslim and the Christian communities.

#### 4.2.1. *Sufiyya*: Claiming Historical Superiority

It can generally be agreed that adherents of Islam in Jimma are predominantly *Sufiyya*. Particularly before the 1990's political liberalization, the Muslims in the study area used to have similar (closer) theological orientation with other Muslim communities in the country. Adherents of *Sufiyya* take their role beyond mere introduction of Islam and take credit for reforming Islam and fighting religious and political marginalization and dominations at different times in history. Most of *Sufiyya*'s public practices were banned during both imperial regime and Marxist oriented Derg. However, post 1991 the adherents of *Sufiyya* movement can be equated with popular moves for religious equality recognized by the 1995 constitution of the country. For instance, the usually mawlid celebration, veneration of local *qubbaz*, collective *dhikr* and pilgrimage to Bure Sadat in Illu Ababosa and Dire Shekana Husein in Bale is a common practice. Such practices are largely characterized by propagation and public upholding of religious liberalization. So it can be said that such practices are of local initiative and manifestations of long awaited religious rights.

In response to the current challenge from *Wahabbīyya* and *Khawariyya*, adherents of *Sufiyya* are proud of narrating their tolerance or presenting very minimum critique towards other sects/religions. As mentioned above, *Sufism* had played a pivotal role in the expansion of Islam in Jimma. Its success has been very much related to its tolerance to

the pre-Islamic local customs including the traditional religious elements. For instance, traditional voluntary associations and work parties such as *Jigii, Dabo and Idir* had been encouraged.

They (*Sufiyya*) complain that their contribution has been visibly neglected particularly among the young generation. They are labeled as static, traditional and less dynamic category by the adherents of *Wahabbíyya* and *Khawariyya*. In response to this new challenge the *Sufiyya* try to capitalize on their historical contributions and sometimes call themselves as the *Sufiyya* movements.

Currently, controversial Islamic teachings and propagation by different Islamic sects become the central concern of the communities in the study area. In connection to this, let me discuss other two Islamic sects in the following section.

#### 4.2.2. The *Wahabbíyya*: Claiming Authority through Religious Teaching

As mentioned in the previous section, *Wahabbíyya* is another Islamic sect in Jimma. Adherents of *Wahabbíyya* are not interested to be called by that name. Few adherents of *Wahabbíyya* use it alternatively with the term *ahl-al Sunna* and try to define the term from religious perspective. The word *ahl-al sunna* is derived from two words. *Sunna* means a way and *ahl-al* means family. The two words give the meaning, the family or those who follow the way /the road of the messenger of Allah. Informants are not exactly sure when and how *Wahabbíyya* began its reform movement in Jimma. However, they suggest that the movement might have started since 1990s. Probably, people who went abroad particularly Saudi Arabia for Islamic education might have returned and rooted the *Wahabbíyya's* teaching into Jimma both in urban and rural areas. According to my

key informant who seems an attentive follower of events but non-actor in the religious movements:

*Wahabbiyya became more visible locally with the recognition of religious freedom in the 1995 constitution. This opportunity has enabled the few already existing adherents of Wahabbiyya, to attract a number of followers and, externally to foster its linkage with Saudi Arabia in order to raise funds for its movement. It also allowed them to import materials from Saudi Arabia, especially audio-visual and published materials they managed to distribute among the youth. This on the other hand facilitated the dramatic expansion of the Wahabbiyya. As a medium of religious expansion the materials are supplemented by locally arranged congregations. The audio-visual materials mostly transported from Addis Ababa to Jimma (some are also prepared in Jimma) are widely available in three languages: Arabic, Afan Oromo and Amharic.*

For less aware local people, *Wahabbiyya* became noticeable with the appearance of more and more young men growing long beards, turbans (*imama*), and trousers right to their ankles and women wearing a form of black veil (*niqab*) and the casual wearing of *hijab*, in public.

*Wahabbiyya* of Jimma has actively engaged to coordinate its movement with Saudi Arabia to claim its originality probably from which it has been sponsored by. In connection to this Dereje (2011:6) reminds us that "the dominant tradition in *Wahabbiyya* has to do with getting back to the roots of Islam and restoring traditional beliefs and practices." Thanks to technology, audio-video and published materials are distributed among the adherents, particularly the young. All these practices are coincided with the religious freedom that the current constitution under Article 27 which grants everyone to

hold or adopt a religion of one's choice and to worship, observe, exercise, teach and proclaim, either individually or in fellowship with others, in public or private. The practice is, however, different from what is stated in the constitution.

The teaching of the *Wahabbīyya* is simple and precise. It is based on *tawhid* (oneness of God) as indicated in the basic manuals of the *Wahabbīyya* authored by ibn Abd-al-wahhab (Desplat 2005: 498). The most important subject, stressed on by these *kitabs* is about *tawhid*. This basic conception is asserted in contradistinction to polytheism, explained further as the act of associating any person or being with powers that should be attributed only to God. Additionally, the visit to shrines and tombs is considered as an act of *shirk*. The *Wahabbīyya* teaching is thus described as particularly hostile towards *Sufiyya*.

According to key informants from *Wahabbīyya*, the teachings of *Wahabbīyya* focus on the life of the prophet Muhammad and his companions. There is no formal way of conducting teaching in its strict sense. Simply, teaching can also be held within mosques, homes, institutions and others. No specified time and place is assigned for teaching in Jimma. Everyone is expected to be ready to correct or pass on whatever he knows about Islam no matter the depth of his knowledge is. In Jimma, there is a formal program of education held especially during the Ethiopian rainy season by targeting school vacations. In addition to this, weekly program of discussion are organized in mosques.

Next to *Tawhid*, *hadith* is also seen due consideration as discipline, the most important being the *hadith* of course associated with *fiqh*. The *Wahabbīyya* informants justify that

the *hadith* has given due attention because of its significance as one basis of Islamic knowledge. They assert that it was undermined by Orthodox Islam (*Sufiyya*).<sup>13</sup>

#### 4.2.3. *Khawariyya*

*Takfir wal-Hijra* also popularly known as *Khawrij* is also another Islamic sect reportedly operating in Jimma Zone. I use the term *Khawariyya* because that is how it is locally called. According to a scholar the group largely tends to resemble the *Taqfir*, one of Islamic sects in Egypt (De Waal, 2004:10).

One of my anonymous key informants from zonal administration explained the introduction and the teachings of the *Khawariyya* in Jimma as follows:

*Khawariyya has started its activities in different woredas of Jimma zone in the beginning of the year 2000. Khawariyya has a unique Islamic teaching. The group asserts that Muslims have no chief other than Allah and no guidance other than the Qur'an. Obeying the constitution and law the country is incompatible with Islamic principles. The group opposes and discourages the payment of taxes to the government.*

In addition, one of my in-depth interviews with anonymous zonal official revealed that *Khawariyya* rejects the authority of the Qadi (judge) as the adherents of *Sufiyya* solely occupied the *Majlis* from the federal to woreda levels and manipulate its power throughout the country. The group prays separately from any other groups even in a mosque. The group told the Muslim community to stay away from traditional mosques, avoiding *jama'at* (group) prayers. Instead they insist on prayer through dispersed and small groups. They are said to have advised the Muslim communities to do everything possible to weaken the state. Furthermore, anonymous key informants from *Sufiyya* stated that an Islamic state is the only legitimate authority to obey and any form of

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<sup>13</sup> Key informants from *Wahabiyya*

allegiance to any different form of state is equated with *khafir* /desertion/. Even distinguished *ulema* /Islamic scholar/ have indiscriminately suffered from such labeling by this group. This resonates with what Dereje (2011:7) generally stated about the *Khawariyya*. According to him, "*Khawariyya* takes Puritanism and violence a step further than most Islamist groups. It advocates armed battle against Jews, Christians and apostate Muslims to restore the unity of the Islamic world order."

Surprisingly, in my fieldwork, I did not see who says I am an adherent of *Khawariyya* except official discourses and hear sayings. That is, I could not trace anyone who claims to adhere to the *Khawariyya* sect. People widely talk about the existence and Islamic teachings of the *Khawariyya*, but no one even showed sympathy with them. That might be because of the official discourses and allegations that the *Khawariyya* are responsible for the recent violent Muslim-Christian conflicts. In a televised address the Prime Minister accused the *Khawariyya* for instigating violent conflicts in different parts of the country (ETV, 6 April, 2012). Locally, too, security officials are hunting down members of *Khawariyya* sect, and many Muslims are already in prison on the alleged accusation of adhering to the *Khawariyya* sect. Nobody wants to disclose him/herself as an adherent of *Khawariyya* probably in order to escape from liability. The threatening environment might have caused people not to identify themselves with the sect. Next, I will discuss contested issues and practices between the *Wahabbiyya* and *Sufiyya*.

#### **4.3. Contentious issues between *Wahabbiyya* and *Sufiyya***

In this sub-section I will discuss the differences between the adherents of *Wahabbiyya* and the *Sufiyya* by categorizing them into five areas: Contestation over the office of the Ethiopian Islamic Affairs Supreme Council (*ELASC*) popularly known as the *Majlis*,

cultural accommodation versus religious purification, difference over the celebration of *mawlid* (the birth day of the prophet Mohammed), *waliyi/wali* (Muslim saint) and females dressing style.

#### 4.3.1. Contestation over the Office of the *Majlis*

One of my anonymous key informants from administration of Jimma zone responded that “the contentious point between the *Wahabbīyya* and *Sufiyya* is largely a power politics – power to control the administration of the Islamic affairs. This is possible only through domination of the office of the *Majlis*.” The adherents of *Wahabiyya* on their part complain that the adherents of *Sufiyya* control the Office of the *Majlis*. To substantiate their complaint, the *Wahabbīyya* put forth as follows:

*The adherents of Sufiyya solely occupied the Majulis from the federal to woreda levels and manipulate its power throughout the country. Since we are not represented in the Majulis, our activities are watched out, sometimes we have been blamed without committing anything wrong by the Majulis and the state and even we have been considered as religious fundamentalists.*

*The process of election of members of the Majlis has never been according to Shari'a. Representation in the Majlis should have been based on the will of Muslim community. This has never happened in Ethiopia. Muslims have not got the opportunity to elect their representatives. The situation in Jimma is even worse. The members of Majlis administrators of a local mosque have been nominated by government bodies.<sup>14</sup>*

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<sup>14</sup> I noted that Muslim demonstrators in Addis Ababa carried a slogan reads as follows: “We should democratically elect our religious representatives as we elected our political representatives”, which fully resonates with the demands in Jimma.

The issue of election and the demand for legitimate representation in the *Majlis* is a nationwide phenomenon. The *Wahabbīyya* accuse the state of meddling in religious affairs in contradiction to article 11 of the Ethiopian constitution which declare that religious issues are independent and government would not interfere with religious affairs.

For the adherents of *Wahabbīyya*, the manipulation of the office of the *Majlis* by *Sufiyya* officials is one of the major reasons of dispute between the two groups. Moreover, the competition they are making to manipulate the office of the *Majlis* reveals that their dispute is beyond religious doctrine, but pursuit for power.

On the other hand, the *Sufiyya* adherents have contrary views to the *Wahabbīyya* on the fate of the power of EIASC and issues related to the process of the elections of the representatives in EIASC. They clearly said that: "Islam is based on single pillar i.e. Qur'an. All Muslims follow five commandments which are mandatory. Thus, Shari'a also stands for all. Muslims who observe all commandments and knowledgeable in Qur'an and Shari'a can have a right to represent the Muslim communities in the EIASC (regardless of differences in the Islamic sect)."<sup>15</sup>

#### 4.3.2. Controversy over Funds from External Sources

A religious related external influence is not a new phenomenon in Ethiopia. Rather, it has been there since the inception of Christianity in Ethiopia in the fourth century. Among the Muslims, too, such kind of influence has been related with the first emigration of a group of the Prophet Muhammad's early followers from Mecca to Aksum known as the first *hijra* in 615 AD. The geo-political proximity of Ethiopia to the source of these

<sup>15</sup> Anonymous Informant

Abrahamic religions that caused their early arrival would also largely be attributed to its external influence from time to time.

The external linkage of Islamic movements in Jimma is an extension of the long tradition of external influences on the Ethiopian Muslims but with by far great dimension. The major part of this influence could be observed from the financial support the different Islamic sects have been receiving from Saudi Arabia. Informants reported that the affiliation of each Islamic movement of the study area to Saudi Arabia enabled them to gain enormous funds, which, on the other hand, led them partly in to disagreements. They elaborated that the *Wahabbīyya* is visibly dependent on the fund flow from the Middle East through different channels especially from Saudi Arabia for different purposes. One of the purposes of Saudi funds in Jimma is to expand numerous mosques in towns and rural parts. These days, a number of mosques which could not be constructed by the capacity of the local fund are constructed. Statistical information from Omo Nadda Woreda communication office reveals that there are six hundred eighty mosques in Omo Nadda Woreda alone. This extensive investment on the construction of mosques coincided with the finding of Haggai Erlich, who conducted intensive research on Saudi Arabia and Ethiopia. He notes that: "Saudi coordinated with the MWL (Muslim World League) donated money to the construction of new mosques, throughout the country, their renovations, maintenance, and salaries for the staff. It organized and financed seminars, for Islamic preachers and subsidized the establishment of Islamic institutions of religious and educational activities (Erlich, 2007:189)."

Similarly, one my anonymous key informants from *Safīyya* also made clear that, multiple funds have been sent informally with an intended aim of funding tasks like employing

Imams, Qur'an teachers and others. Such finance has been transferred to local agents usually facilitated by Imams (mosque leaders) who returned from Saudi Arabia to take such responsibilities. These Imams and other people who have given their full time to teach Qur'an are permanent employees and hence played a significant role in attracting adherents. Thus, the enormous funds have played an important role in capacitating the power of the *Wahabbiyya* sect in preaching Islam, in constructing a number of mosques and in attracting adherents as compared to their local competitor, the *Sufiyya* sect, within a short period of time. The adherents of the *Sufiyya* sect whose financial and demographic power deteriorated from time to time showed concern over the usage of the money from the external sources. The officials of the *Sufiyya* sect are said to have invited the *Maqta* to interfere. This has triggered disputes from the *Awliya* School in Addis Ababa up to a local mosque in Omo Nadda Woreda where I did fieldwork.

#### 4.3.2. Cultural Accommodation Vs Religious Purification

The new elements of Islamic teaching by the *Wahabbiyya* and *Khawriyya* sects influence some elements of local customs. As mentioned in the previous section, *Sufism* had become popular in my study area for it partly accommodates pre-Islamic culture and some religious elements of the host community. However, *Wahabbiyya* does not accept such practices and even considers cultural accommodation as impurity. These imply that, though all Islamic sects are based on the same fundamental rules (Qur'an and Hadith), they differ in applying the rules. It is to be noted that the various sects of Islam have differing interpretations of *Summa*, ranging from relatively moderate to extremely conservative (religious radicalization). According to one of my anonymous Christian informants:

*One of the good customs of the people of Jimma is supporting each other during difficult situations. Comforting one another during mourning or providing food and coffee for those who are grieving a relative's death is among the deep-rooted good customs among the society. The people also help those who are on mourning by involving practical support like ploughing, weeding and harvesting as a form of condolence. However, all these are considered as shirk (out of religion) by Khwariyya teaching.*

For instance, before two decades, the cultural elements of the inhabitants of Omo Nadda (particularly the Oromo) embodied a long experience of voluntary associations like *Dabo* and *Jigi*. The former is a form of communal work arrangements. It is also work group seasonally organized and flexible both in number and membership. Membership to *Dabo* work group is neither kinship ties nor neighborhood, rather it is drawn from among friends and interested persons that live within a reasonable geographical area. However, these days such elements of culture which serve the people of Jimma area in many ways have become more and more deteriorated partly due to *Wahabbiyya* and *Khawariyya's* doctrinal orientation.

Similarly, *jigi* is established based on neighborhood, geographical location, and sometimes on clan. It is concerned mostly with burial ceremonies of the death of the members in the given neighborhood. In addition, members help when any member or his family face emergency problems. This may give hint how far foreign based religious radicalizations are adversely affecting the cooperation and unity which the community has experienced so far. Among another Oromo group, Ostebo (2008) stated that "what the [Wahabbi] were bringing was a foreign teaching, alien to the Oromo culture and not suitable for the people in Bale. In other words, the two sets of arguments [of *Sufiyyayya*

and *Wahabbīyya*] made were drawn from two different traditions; one referring to a divine law frozen in written form, the other to oral traditions and established customs.”

On the other hand, adherents of *Wahabbīyya* have their own views regarding *Jigi* and *Dabo*. They responded that religion is one thing but *Jigi* and *Dabo* are other things. The *Wahabbīyya* stated that practicing anything without Qur'an is considered as shirk.

#### 4.3.4. Celebration of Mawlid

Another particularly and visibly contentious issue between adherents of *Sufiyya* and *Wahabbīyya* is the issue of Mawlid; whether to celebrate mawlid or not. *Mawlid* is a form of gathering in which the *Sufiyya* Muslims get together and praise the birthday of the Holy Prophet. The birthdays of *Sufiyya* saints are also celebrated with much dedication and enthusiasm. The day of their deaths are also commemorated. According to one of the *Sufiyya* group,

*Mawlid is birth day. Allah sent us Mohammed. We have come to light through him and got life. Believing that Mohammed is the messenger of Allah respecting and living him is the obligation of the Muslim community. Therefore, celebrating the birth day of Mohammed singing for him and remembering him is among the good deeds expected of the Muslim believers. Celebrating the day is to show the love and respect we have for Mohammed.*

Regarding this holy day the *wahabbīyya* adherents have a different idea. They do not believe in celebrating and practicing all these events which are very strongly rooted in Islam. On the other hand, one of the informants from *Wahabbīyya* adherents of Jimma states that:

*Celebrating Mohammed's birth day does not have any ground /evidence from Qur'an. They explain that they believed Mohammed as a messenger of All. They also worship and respect and love Mohammed. However, celebrating the birth day of prophet Mohammed does not show the love they have for him according to what they explained Mohammed himself didn't teach the fathers of the religion to celebrate his birthday.*

*The believers who were following Mohammed before his death used to love him very much more than this generation. Nevertheless they did not ever celebrate his birth day. The former religious fathers also didn't receive any command which ordered believers to celebrate the date of Mohammed's birth. Celebrating Mohammed's birthday is not part of the commandments of Qur'an and Hadith. People began to celebrate the day long years after the death of the messenger Mohammed. Thus, doing what is not ordered by Qur'an and Hadith is transgression of the will of Allah and it is the work of the unbelievers. We call these practices of events as unlawful and wrongful innovations.*

From the above information forwarded by adherents of *Sufiyya* and *Wahabbiyya* one can possibly argue that both groups have developed different understanding regarding mawlid practices. *Sufiyya* adherents are convinced that *Wahabbiyya alim* are knowledgeable in *Qur'an* and *Hadith*. However, they accuse them of giving wrong meaning to it. According to them it is very difficult to give word by word translation for all the ideas in *Qur'an*. Trying to give meaning or translation of one's own on the basis of personal knowledge may distort the original meaning of the words in *Qur'an*.

#### 4.3.3. *Waliya / Wali*

*Waliya / Wali* (literary means Muslim saint), according to my informants, refers to those Muslims who are righteous and who lead a holy life according to the word of Allah.

These believers live according to the order of Qur'an and *Hadith*. These people are thought to have acceptance before Allah and they are also respected among the Muslim society. The attitude of the adherents of the *Safyya* and *Wahabbiyya* towards *waliyi* is not the same.

According to the *Safyya* sect of Islam, *waliyi* refers to those people who abide by all the commandments of Qur'an and those who are holy. This Muslim sect believes that the *waliyi* had done good deeds before their death and if any one prays through them his/her prayer may be heard by Allah. On the other hand, adherents of *Wahabbiyya* say:

*The waliyi, are true believers of Allah. Respecting them is important. However, the good deeds which they accomplished before their death are considered only for them. Their good works count nothing for the other believers. They further emphasize that whatever a person does on earth, be it good or bad, he/she is accountable for it before Allah. They say that Allah is one, he has no children. Therefore neither waliyi nor any angle can intercede between Allah and people. No one can take accountability for any one before Allah for what is done on earth. No one can be a mediator between Allah and people.*

On the other hand, the adherents of *Safyya* have considered the *Wahhabbiyya* opposition to the cult of saints as the most important opposition being directed against the pilgrimage/cult to different shrines. This is because, the cult of the *waliyi* and visits to other Islamic shrines, have been the corner stone of popular Islam. This idea coincides with the idea of Abbas (2002) who notes especially for the Oromo Muslims, this pilgrimage (*Maka*) represented a sort of continuity between the past and the present. In effect, when they abandoned the institutional pilgrimage every eight years to the Great

*Qadli*, the cult of the *Shaykh* became a rallying point and an important factor in their spiritual life and world view.

In the context of the study area, the issue of *wali* is the mismatch interpretation of Qur'an between *Wahabbiyya* and *Sufiyya*. The *Sufiyya* followers believe in the historical precedence of past deeds of individuals embraced in the Holy Qur'an. In contrast to this view the *Wahabbiyya* ignores the aforementioned deeds of these individuals listed in the Qur'an and give direct attention to Allah.

#### 4.3.6. Issue of Modesty

Another such a minor contentious issue involving religious purification and accommodation lie in the Muslim females' wearing of veil and *hijab* as well as females shaking hand with male with whom she has no blood relationship. However, the Qur'anic concept of modesty remains open to varied interpretations among *Sufiyya* adherents. According to *Wahabbiyya* adherents, *Sanna* requires women to wear a veil for their own safety, but if a woman chooses not to wear it, it is her choice and it is between her and her Allah. The assumption behind females wearing *niqab* and *hijab* is *Sanna* and eventually is the belief that women will be protected from sexual annoyance, if they covered themselves from head to toe.

For *Sufiyya* adherent, *Sanna* is not as mandatory as that of Qur'an. Rather it has optional. This sect argues that social experience reveals that no form of dress can protect women from men who are sexually violent. Although, they concede that the Qur'an calls for modesty on behalf of women and men, they argued that, it has consciously left the

injunction very vague so as to allow for dress codes to follow cultural understandings of modesty. Thus, they believe the ideal garments are left to the discretion of the wearer.

In the area under-study, females' wearing of *niqab* and *hijab* based on *Sunna* rules becomes topics of debate among governmental institutions. Since the recent years, particularly few female teachers and students have started wearing *niqab* at schools while teaching-learning processes are taking place. The tendency of wearing *niqab* is not only common at *madrasas* (Muslim school) but also at governmental schools. As far as prayer and veiling are concerned, at least two separate interests are often at stake: freedom of religious practice, and separation of religion from the state along with secularization of education. The principle of religion-state separation and the privatization of religion as a matter of rights of individual and communities have been put forth as the legal solution to the problems of religious plurality and diversity.

#### **4.4. Competition over Attracting Adherents**

*Wahabdiyya*'s doctrine has become the most widely spread Islamic movement initially in urban and then in rural woredas of Jimma zone. The group stresses that *bida'a* (religious innovation or addition) of every kind are acts of *shirk* (polytheism). The group has attracted a number of followers since its introduction to Jimma. According to my informants own assumption of total Muslim residents of the study area more than 85% are *Wahabdiyya* adherents. *Wahabdiyya* attracted a number of adherents in a short period of time focusing on the following premises.

#### 4.4.1. Focus on *Tawhid*

According to my informants, debate over *tawhid* is one of the areas of difference between the *Safyya* and the *Wahabbīyya*. *Tawhid* implies the presence of only one Allah with ultimate power, and this is an area of great emphasis in the Islamic teaching of the *Wahabbīyya* sect. The *Wahabbīyya* exclusively refer to the written corpus of Islam i.e. to the Qur'an and the *hadith*. They strictly argue that the pilgrimage to *Bure sadat* (in *Illu-Ahabur Zone*) and the celebration of *Mawlid* was against the divine message of Islam and equal to *shirk*. This has been one of the topics used to capture the minds of new adherents.

#### 4.4.2. Youth Mobilization and attracting *Shaykhs* from *Safyya*

Since its inception, *Wahabbīyya* in Jimma has successfully mobilized youths. Qur'anic teaching has mainly focused on young generation. Based on this ground, *Wahabbīyya* made the unemployed youth its primary target. The youth have actively participated in Islamic teaching, visited the mosque and expressed a distinct religious enthusiasm.

One of my anonymous *Wahabbīyya* key informants reflected on the strategy of participating the youth in the *Wahabbīyya* sect as follows:

*The youth were given instruction about the marginalization of Muslim community for centuries prior to 1991, particularly during Imperial regimes. Then, they have been given precise missions to mobilize elders, and their peer groups to have and develop Wahabbīyya's ideology. Thus, the youth have effectively managed to spread Wahabbīyya.*

Another area where the *Wahabbīyya* sect has been effective was in attracting the already existing religious leaders. Most of the *Wahabbīyya* Imams in the study area are the

former Sheikhs of the *Sufiyya*. However, the prominent proponents of *Wahabbiyya Imams* got their religious knowledge from Saudi Arabia. Thus, they are supposed to have strong relationships with Saudi in all matters at large and in da'wa (education) in particular. *Wahabbiyya*, thus, becomes efficient in recruiting a number of Sheikhs from "traditional" *Sufiyya* adherents. Having several Sheikhs within a short period of time empowers *Wahabbiyya* to attract enormous followers in two ways. One, the sheikhs are well known and trusted among Muslims, which helps to convince, attract and mobilize the community for the *Wahabbiyya*. Two, in becoming members of *wahabbiyya*, the religious leaders also secure advantages from the fund generated by Saudi NGOs (*ahl-a-Kawo*). The ultimate result of these two factors is the dramatic expansion of *wahabbiyya* and shrinking of the number of the *Sufiyya*.

#### **4.5. Controversies over Religious Radicalization**

These days, religious radicalization becomes such a central issue of debate and topics of discussion not only in Jimma but also across the country. Primarily, Federal and Regional States give wide media coverage and talk about the issue. Different conferences are conducted across the nation by considering religious radicalization as the main agenda. Several panels and forums are conducted on similar agenda. Above all, public meetings are common at every level targeting Islamic sects. In this section, my intension is to examine the controversial issue around religious radicalization in the study area. I will do this by describing the local authorities', Muslims, and Christians understandings of radicalization in Omo Nakhla in particular and in Jimma in general.

#### 4.5.1. Local Authority Understanding of Religious Radicalization

The local authorities are giving enormous attention to the issue of Islamic radicalization as religious related conflicts are emerging in different corners. In Jimma issues related to religion have become everyday agenda among different sections of the community.

The state is widely using mass media under its control: newspapers, magazines, radio, television and internet based websites are widely used to manipulate the information and facts on the ground. This has, in fact, made my fieldwork very tough. Everyone talks about religion, but very few are comfortable to discuss such a sensitive issue with a researcher. Let me start the controversy over religious radicalization by citing materials on religious fundamentalism in general. .

In its discourse on the media under its control and in several meetings, the Ethiopian State associates religious radicalization with any religious based activities which create barriers on the country's democratization process and hindering development efforts. Attempts to impose one's own religion on others by force, hindering others to exercise and promote their religion are manifestation of radicalization in general. Administrative and security officials at different levels use similar official rhetoric. In the context of Jimma

*Religious radicalization is mostly associated with Khawariyya because the group emphasize on themes such as: Muslims should not be governed by Christian government's rules and regulations including country's law and constitution instead be governed by Sharia law. Mobilizing people not to pay taxes and not to buy fertilizers, instead encourage establishing Muslim community self help fund. Muslims must obey only Allah based on the Holy Qur'an and Hadith. Qur'an gives order that Muslim community only obey*

to Allah. Muslim people who obeyed for Christian's government are *Khufra*.<sup>12</sup>

The official targets the *Khawariyya*. However, no one identifies him/herself with the *Khawariyya*. Thus, any Muslim suspected of instigating violence can be labeled as adherent of *Khawariyya*. A document I managed to get from Jimma Zone Police office indicate that the major bases of *Khawariyya*'s operation in Jimma Zone are: Limu-kosa, Shabe Sombro, Omo Niadda, Ximo Afata, Dehdho, Aggato town woredas of Jimma Zone. In this year only, two hundred thirty-seven suspected adherents of *khawariyya* were brought to Jimma high court, and twelve of them were convicted, sixty-four individuals are on appointments; forty-nine individuals were given warning; one hundred twelve were acquitted.

#### 4.3.2. Christians Understanding of Religious Radicalization

My Christian informants raise concerns over what they called a growing local tendency towards religious radicalization. Similar to the officials, Christians also associate radicalization with *Khawariyya*. Christians suspect that the *Khawariyya* are anti-Christian movement sponsored by external forces. For them the *Khawariyya* are the most radical group posing supreme threat and societal frustration.

The Christians argue that there is tangible manifestation of religious radicalization. For instance, firstly, they accuse the religious fundamentalists of instigating the 2006 and 2011 Muslim-Christian violent conflicts which resulted in loss of lives and destruction of churches and a number of houses in the study area.

<sup>12</sup> Anonymous informant from Jimma Zone administration.

Secondly, the Christians in the study area relate the decline of traditional voluntary association such as *Jigi and Dabo* and the growing tendency of some elements of Arab cultures with religious radicalization. Indeed, a number of Muslim women who wear *nipah* and *hijab* have become more and more visible in public arenas including governmental institutions.

My anonymous Christian informants seem very much convinced of the official discourse about the *Khawariyya*. For instance one of the informants told me about a widely heard rumour about the religious teaching of the group.

*The rumour primarily say Muslims should not make any relationships with Christians. Muslims should not obey Christian government and should not pay taxes to Christian state. Above all, the group considers cultures, values, customs and norms of host community as shirk, and instead they want to expand Arabic culture. Furthermore, Khawariyya agitates its adherents not to make healthy relationship with Christians, example, like participating in dabo, jigi, idir, with Christians are prohibited.*

Beyond publicly circulating rumours and official discourses I could not get individuals who were agitated or who were victims of such agitation, other than the aforementioned violent Muslim-Christian conflicts.

#### **4.5.3. Muslims Understanding of Religious Radicalization**

The two major Islamic sects in the study area: *Safyya* and *Wahabbíyya* have different understandings of religious radicalization. At face value, both condemn *Khawariyya* as religious extremists and the most radical group causing major threat and societal frustration. However, the adherents of *Wahabbíyya* also criticize the state media, for associating Islam with religious radicalization as follow;

*Media and few Media men with a biased mind often propagate their personal opinion, using the media as their vehicle. They overlook ethical issues especially when it comes to the question of Islam. The association of Islam and violence is a common misconception that the state Media is promoting about Islam. The People are often misinformed about Muslims through the images of television, magazines, radios, and in newspapers.*

Muslim informants claimed that except few individuals (whom they do not mention) who carry out their hidden agenda in the name of Islam, there is no religious radicalization in *Jamaa*. Such individuals always want to create problems between Christians and Muslims in the name of Islam to attain their personal gains.

The issue of religious radicalization has been entered in to complex perception not only at research setting but also at national level. Different sections have different understanding on the issue. One religious group label another group as religious radicals. The emergence of *Chavartiyat* adherents makes the issue of religious radicalization to have more political forms. Thus, according to most of my anonymous Christian and Muslim informants, in the context of the research setting, religious radicalization is not grounded on strict application that has been written in Holy Bible or Holy Qur'an. Rather it is more politicized by groundless rumours.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### RELIGIOUS CONFLICT IN JIMMA ZONE

#### 5.1. Introduction

Despite the hopes that the 1995 Ethiopian Constitution would guarantee religious freedom and equality, which would contribute to settle religious controversies in the country, the recent religious based conflicts in different parts of the country made religion a hot spot in the country in general and in Jimma zone in particular due to the recent developments of religious conflicts which were happened in 2006 and 2011 between Muslims and Christians. A most pronounced religious conflict that has attracted the attention of the local and international media took place in 2011 in different woredas of Jimma zone particularly in Omo Nadda, Serbo and Tiro Afata woreda.

In this chapter, I will describe and analyze the current religious disputes and conflicts in Jimma Zone by taking the 2011 Muslim-Christian conflict in Omo Nadda woreda as a case. The chapter has four parts. The first part focuses on the year 2011 religious conflict, its triggering factors and the perception of the people and the state about the conflict. The second part of this chapter provides detail information on local and trans-local factors contributing to Muslim-Christian conflict. The third part gives due emphasis to analyzing whether ethnicity and religion complement or compete each other. It also gives brief description on governmental response to religious conflict.

## 5.2. Factors Triggering the 2011 Muslim-Christian Conflict

### Case Analysis 1

My name is Mr. 'X' [for I promised to keep my informant anonymous]. I was born in 1972. I have been living and working in *Asandabo* for a decade now, since 2002. I have my own house in *Asandabo*.

Last year, on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of March 2011, *Qale Hiwot* Church had started to construct another building within its courtyard. The construction workers were not employed based on their religious affiliation, and thus workers at site of the construction of the new church were not homogenous in terms of religion. Therefore, we had both adherents of Christianity and Islam in the workforce.

On 2 March 2011, a construction worker (who happened to be a Muslim by religion) went to one of the toilets in the courtyard of the church, where he found torn pieces of the Qur'an text.

At the time, nobody knew who the perpetrator was. The person responsible for that action was not identified. But the worker who claimed to find the litter pieces of the Qur'an texts came out shouting at the top of his voice. And began telling to everybody what he discovered in the toilet. Then commotion started. Muslims in the workforce started crying. In a moment the news went and spread all over the town. A flock of people, including policemen, came from the town and its environs. Immediately, the police arrested and took us to the police station. The police did that just to control the surge of anger and to ensure peace and stability. Then, we were the only and the immediate suspects.

The offended Muslims continued to march in the town all daylong shouting hysterically. And in the end, late into the night, at about 10:00 pm they decided to go and burn the old church and destroyed the one that was under construction.

We were taken to jail in Jimma town and stayed there for two weeks. After an intensive investigation the police identified the convict. According to the findings of the investigation of the police, the convict was found to be an adherent of Islam. After we spent two weeks under the custody of the police; we were released and returned home.<sup>17</sup>

One can easily assume from the above narrative that the immediate cause for the conflict broke in Omo Nadda in 2011 was the torn pieces of the Qur'an text that alleged to be found in the toilet of a church.

Then, it became the talk of everybody in the towns and villages of the zone. The news that "pieces of pages torn from the Qur'an are found in a toilet of a protestant church in Asandabo town" goes around. It expanded far and wide, like a wild fire, among the Muslim community all across the zone and beyond.

Nevertheless, one of the anonymous research participants from Christian side explained the incident as "it was all meticulously staged, dramatized and planned" crisis. To support this line of his argument, he raised the instant spread of the news in a campaign following the "staged" crisis. According to this informant the fast spread of the news is a good indication for the existence of a strong and coordinated networking among the adherents of Islam in the area. The coordinated action of burning churches all over the woredas of the zone can also be evidence. The day the church at Asandabo town was set on fire (2<sup>nd</sup> of March 2011) the same action was immediately taken in Tiro Afata, Karsa and Limmu Kossa woredas. Offended by the news of a staged crisis "Muslims continued to burn Protestants' churches for five consecutive days (from 2 to 6 March 2011), and in less than a weekly time, 65 Protestant Churches were burnt down" he concluded.

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<sup>17</sup> Anonymous key informant from Christian side

*Table 5.1. Number of Churches Set on Fire*

No	Name of Churches	Number of church set on fire
1	Qale Hirwot Church	43
2	Ethiopian Evangelical Church Makane Iyesus	12
3	Mulu Wangel	3
4	Adventist church	6
5	Harwarist Church	1
	Total	65

*Source: Offices of Qale Hirwot and Makane Iyesus Churches in Jimma Town*

This triggering factor was also more intensified as local authorities of the woreda gave less attention to the matter. One of the key informants reported that:

*These days, majority of Muslims are holding senior posts both at zonal and idifferent woredas in Jimma. That is, Muslim mayors dominated every governmental institution across zonal level. Muslims want to voice their political grievances more openly and want to enjoy a much greater degree of religious freedom to compensate their previous objections. Under these new conditions, it is difficult to deal with internal pressure caused by every Islamic sect. For instance, what worsened the situation happened in Asanabo town was the laissez-fairness of the administrators of the woredas. The mayor of the town did not give due attention for the issue. Due to this, the issue of burning churches was continued in the other towns of other woredas like Nadida, Sarbo, Dimtu, Akko and others. In addition to that there was no attempt made to disclose the information of the tension to the regional state so that the region sends the necessary power to solve the problem. The fact that Media like VOA interviewed officials in the zone and woredas and they considered the matter as it was very easy and manageable. Though it was frustrating to the Christians in the woreda, the*

*woreda officials gave deaf-ear to the problem because they probably took the crisis as simple and could be solved easily.*

According to one of anonymous Christian informants, other than the negligence and the ill motive of the convict, there was a push factor that led others to involve themselves in the burning of churches. These informants claimed that some Muslims had the information about the pretext used to incite the crisis. Thus, some of them were reluctant to be involved but their Muslim friends forced them to burn churches so as to evict the Christians from the area.

### **5.3. Factors Contributing to Socio-Religious Controversies and Conflicts**

As I tried to mention in the previous chapter, conflicts between Muslims and Christians with some religious manifestations have been experienced in different woredas of Jimma Zone such as Gomma, Ommo Naadda, Karsa and Tiro Afata. Though the conflicts have had some clear religious manifestations such as burning religious institutions of the contestant party, my informants have forwarded multiple reasons of the conflict. Even adherents of similar religion have different explanations. Some informants grounded their explanations on various experiences in the past instead of limiting themselves to the latest incidents. Other than religion many informants are of the opinion that competition over resource such as urban space is the basic reason and religion is simply an excuse. Ethnicity has also got its own role in the conflicts. The *Khawariyya* factors, external linkages and religious polarization might have contributed with various degrees. All factors that contributing to Muslim-Christian conflict coincide with the idea of Cunningham (1998), who argues that the roots of conflict stem from group competition and the pursuit of power and resources. This assumption operates on conscious

motivational factors in a material oriented environment. This is of importance to religious conflicts and controversies in Jimma zone because the same concepts are applicable to sectarian conflicts between Muslim and Christian communities. Thus, I will discuss how all these factors contributed to Muslim-Christian conflicts in the following section.

### **5.3.1. Competition over the Physical Space (land)**

Informants of the study area reported that to have more physical space is one of the factors; even the basic momentum to conflicts and controversies between Christians and Muslims. Conflict over the issue of physical space (on which churches would be built) between Muslims and Christians emanates from four dimensions. Firstly, the construction of churches in Jimma is always preceded by opposition from Muslim side with varying degrees. Muslims more and more challenge of the areas in which the churches are intended to be built on. For instance, the 2006 Muslim-Christian conflict at Bashasha of Gomma woreda was the issue of land over which Muslims strongly opposed Orthodox Church. At a time, Orthodox Church had got permission from Gomma administration to construct a church on a certain site. However, Muslims opposed and resisted the construction claiming that the site was traditionally theirs and used to be burial ground for Muslim community in the vicinity.

One of the research participants expressed his opinion bluntly that "Muslims do not want to see the construction of churches in the woreda for two reasons. The first reason is Muslims consider themselves as the host community in the area and consider others as immigrants from somewhere else. Second, the number of Muslims exceeds by far that of

Christians. Using their demographic supremacy, they exhibit a tendency to influence Christians."<sup>18</sup>

The second dimension is proximity (distance between a Church and a mosque). Spatial proximity (nearness of a church to a mosque) is another land related issue which would lead members of the two principal religions to assume a confrontational attitude and get into conflict. Informants reported that a more contentious issue regarding the competition over the physical space among different religious groups is the proximity factor. For example, the 2006 Muslim-Christian conflict in Didessa Woreda of Illu Ababora Zone was a case in point. On the celebration of *Mesqal* (a festival by the Orthodox Church) a smoke flew up from the *Damera* and entered in to a nearby mosque. That was just enough to ignite animosity and conflict erupted. When Orthodox Christians built their *Damera* (on the eve of *Mesqal* September 26) at a square or open space found in front of the Mosque, Muslims requested that the *Damera* be removed to another place far from the gate of their Mosque. However, the Christians refused and responded instead by throwing stones on the Mosque for which Muslims too responded by doing the same. They threw stones towards those who were throwing stone towards them. This escalated into a violent conflict that resulted in a number of deaths and churches and many houses were burned and displacing a number of local residents (Zelalem, 2008: 78).

Third, according to one of anonymous informant from Christian side, the inequitable piece of land allocation or standard for each religious group is another dimension over which the two groups come into confrontation. Research participants explained that Muslims and Christians are still claiming larger physical space for the construction of

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<sup>18</sup> Anonymous Christian informant

mosques and churches corresponding with their demographic size (number of adherents). However, the chances of getting their claims are encountered by various challenges. Regarding these, the Christian FGD discussants put forth their complaints as follows:

*It is not easy for us to get a plot of physical space ( land) to build a church and we also have not enough piece of land to be used as a burial place. It is obvious that majority of the inhabitants of the woreda are Muslims and it is difficult for us to get a plot of land to construct a church. Even when we buy houses from individuals and begin to worship in, we face challenges from different corners.*

*Surprisingly, we are perceived as "unwelcomed" foreigners. We are not equally served or we are disadvantaged in the acquisition (allocation) of land compared to the followers of other religions especially the Muslims. There is a visible inequity in treatment and access to land for churches and cemeteries by local officials.*

Furthermore, one of the anonymous key informants from Omo Nadda administration candidly responded that another dimension of the problem related to land is that, while a private person handed down his/her own residential house for their religious organization, the land transferred to the religious organization would, after a time, be somehow modified or rebuilt and end up to be a church. This is a usual land or ownership transfer method employed by different protestant denominations as they have difficulty to access land. One of the FGD participants from Christian described the issue as follows:

*Even though the government provides us some pieces of land for the construction of churches and cemeteries, what we have at present is insufficient to provide good institutional service in comparison with the number of the adherents. To solve this problem, we have started to*

*purchase buildings and old houses from individuals to refurnish and use as a center of worship.*

For instance, the cause of the 2011 Muslim-Christian conflict at Asandabo of Omo Nadda was the issue of land. According to my anonymous key informants from Omo Nadda administration,

*Qale Hiwot church, a protestant Church with most of its members from SNNPRS requested a piece of land to construct church in Asandabo town. The Church's request was denied. As it could not succeed in getting public land, the church bought a house from an individual resident in the town to use it as a church. A Muslim neighbor also wanted to buy the same house though he was late. As the followers of the Qale Hiwot church started to worship in their new church the neighbouring Muslims raised concern over the establishment of the church in the middle of the town. It was in the compound of this church that the Holy Qur'an was allegedly torn apart and used as a toilet paper. This has raised suspicion of conspiracy by a Muslim who wanted to buy the house, which later turned into church and by the few Muslims who were worried with the establishment of the church in their neighbourhood. Interestingly, several informants, both Christians and Muslims, share this view.*

Rural area inhabitants of the research setting consider land as a primary source of wealth, social status, and power. As land is the foundation for shelter, food, and economic activities, Muslims are not much interested with the spontaneous immigrants from other regional states of Ethiopia. In line with statement, Mamo (2006:1) critically argues that:

*Land and its substantial use are of great local, national and global concerns. Dependence on land as the major sources of survival becomes more and more crucial to those parts of the globe occupying the bottom position in the hierarchy of global socio-economic development. Ethiopia*

*being at the bottom of the scale of development ... depends on land virtually for all of its needs. Besides its economic significances, land entails vital socio-cultural meanings and values. Land is a symbol of identity and entails a religious value.*

### **5.3.2. The Khawariyya Dilemma**

Most of my informants agree that in the context of the recently emerging Islamic sects and a growing tendency of religious radicalism such a dispute between Muslims and Christians could easily transform itself into religious conflicts and controversies. In that regard, both Christians and Muslims accuse the adherents of the *khawariyya* sect of using this incident as an opportunity to instigate a conflict between Muslims and followers of other religions. Some justify the involvement of the adherents of the militant *Khawariyya* sect by citing cases of Muslims being terrified by fellow Muslims for not participating in the attacks on churches, or for hesitating to rise up against Christians. Others justify the involvement of an external force such as *Khawariyya* by referring to the strange characters of the recent conflicts in the area. According to one of the adherents of *Sufiyya* informant:

*In the past there was no problem between Christians and Muslims. Muslims and Christians had been living in peace and friendly way for a long time. But nowadays, such kind of peaceful relationship has increasingly deteriorated. Particularly, the young generation is influenced by the teachings of Khawariyya. However, they do not have separate mosques they use separate teaching materials which is against the peaceful relationship between Muslims and Christians.*

*Khawariyya* is strongly blamed by inhabitants of the study area as religious extremists and threat to peace and security of the society at large. Surprisingly, people extensively

gossip about the existence and Islamic teachings of the *Khawariyya*, but no one even showed sympathy with them. And there is no conclusive evidence whether such kinds of doctrinal marginalization is disseminated by *Khawariyya* as one can hardly find the physical presence of the adherents of the group in the research setting. That might be because of the official discourses and allegations that the *Khawariyya* are responsible for the recent violent Muslim-Christian conflicts.

Some explanations exaggerate the past peaceful relationship between Muslims and Christians in Ethiopia. However, the recent conflict is quite incomparable with the past incidents in magnitude. This is also attributed to the current religious dynamism and the result of the latest Islamic teachings.

### 5.3.3. External Linkages

It is true that the two principal faiths, Christianity and Islam including other minor denominations in *Jimma* have their own linkages with external governmental and NGOs including religious charity organizations. These external linkages, which are the forces behind religious controversies and conflicts in *Jimma*, are not directly observable. Rather they are visible indirectly in a number of ways. Most of these linkages are related with generating funds to deliver "holistic ministries" (serving the people in many ways other than preaching the Gospel) but mainly focusing on religions and supporting their pro-religious institutions by the name of initiating / promoting local developments.<sup>19</sup>

Subsequent to the country's open policy for market economy after the downfall of the Marxist oriented Derg regime, religious institutions and NGOs have claimed permission

<sup>19</sup> Anonymous informants from *Jimma* Zonal administration.

to run projects under the name of investment in addition to expanding their evangelism.

As one of my anonymous research participants puts forth;

*Missionaries in Jimma have been working in development work as well as evangelism. Catholic and Protestant churches like Qale Hiwot, Mekane Yesus, Genet, and Meseret Kristos have been creating linkages with trans-local organizations like World Vision, Compassion International, and Tear Fund have been involved in training and equipping civil servants to work among Muslims. They have been delivering "holistic approach in ministry" to both Christian and Muslim communities. The "holistic ministry" which they call in Amharic "Hullentensawi Agelilot" needs to support new Muslim converts and poor Christians in churches. Helping the needy (poor) and orphans, establishing elementary and secondary schools, health and water projects are a few of these approaches. For instance, Ethiopia Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus runs 'Nonno Integrated Rural Development Projects', and Jimma 'HIV/AIDS Prevention and Control Program'. World Vision runs 'Rehoboth water, sanitation and Hygiene Program for Ethiopia' (RWASHP). Meserete Kristos Church leads 'Ten Meserete Kristos church child Sponsorship Programs'. Qale Hiwot Church has been delivering various services for orphan children and destitute families.<sup>20</sup>*

On the other hand, adherents of Islam are not happy with these "holistic ministry" approach provided by missionaries since it is assumed as the means of expanding Christianity in different woredas of Jimma zone. One of the key informants from Wababbayyu remarked:

*Government has allowed and supported evangelical preaching in stadiums due to these holistic ministries and these in turn have enabled adherents of Protestantism to have open-air venues and to preach against Islam. This*

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<sup>20</sup> *ibid.*

*kind of attempt by Christians has led to resentment and opened the door to Arab Muslim charities.*

On the side of Islam, the external linkage of Islamic movements in Jimma is an extension of the long tradition of external influences to the Ethiopian Muslims but with by far great dimension. The main part of this influence could be observed from the financial hold up the unusual Islamic sects have been receiving from Saudi Arabia. Informants reported that the affiliation of each Islamic movement of the study area to Saudi Arabia enabled them to gain enormous funds, which, on the other hand, led them partly in to disagreements. They elaborated that the *Wahabiyya* is visibly dependent on the fund flow from the Middle East through different channels especially from Saudi Arabia for different purposes. One of the purposes of Saudi funds in Jimma is to expand number mosques in towns and rural parts. The augmentation of linkages of Islamic sects of Jimma with the Middle East particularly with Saudi Arabia challenges the moment spread of Christianity in Jimma.

Surprisingly, the responses of both Muslim and Christian communities revealed that the poverty of the localities of Jimma has forced the government to give permission to foreigners who have a hidden agenda to operate in the local setting of Jimma in the name of investment from the west and the Middle East. This means, inter religious movements and competitions between Christian and Muslim communities have trans-local dimensions, particularly the west and the Middle East perspectives. This idea coincides with the ideas of Dereje (2011) who argued "the rise of extremist ideas and inter-faith tension in contemporary Ethiopia has indeed external dimensions, a manifestation of Ethiopia's participation in global debates and conflicts" and Medhane (2004) who

reminds us the causes of the current religious conflicts and tensions between Christians and Muslims is the involvements of transnational actors.

#### 5.3.4 Religious Polarization through Metaphors

Religious metaphors used to refer to religious organizations have also become factors that cause a strained relationship between the different religious groups in the area and accounted polarization among them. According to my informants, there is a rising tendency of religious polarization. Interviews from the study area revealed that different terms and sometimes phrases are used as metaphors to simply identify one's own religious identity. Members of different religious groups do not tend to define other adherents through the affirmation of positive qualities that are said to be manifested among their group's members. Rather they are contrasting these positive qualities by different metaphors. Some of these metaphors are: *nama keenya*<sup>21</sup> (our people), *Yesinde Haymanot* (literary regarded as religion of wheat) and *Yenafteya Haymanot* (literary regarded as religion of gnat). Of course, it is difficult to find the anthropological concepts of these terms which are widely spread and used for constructing religious boundary in the local community.

##### 5.3.4.1 *Nama Keenya*

Among the inhabitants of Jimma, the metaphor of '*nama keenya*' ('*nya*' is pronounced as '*na*') becomes an attribute to religious polarization recently. The etymology of the phrase '*nama keenya*' is derived from *Afan Oromo* terms. The phrase "*nama-keenya*" literally means 'our person (plural our people)'. Before two decades, the phrase had different meanings based on the context of *Afan Oromo*. First the '*nama keenya*' mainly

<sup>21</sup> *Nama keenya*: *Afan Oromo* term which implies literally our people

implies people having blood relationships. This means, it was based on lineage or blood relationships. The metaphor had symbolized ethnic membership. It was boldly manifested with the common possession of peoples with same ethnic group. For instance, if a man is from Oromo ethnic group, he would be categorized under the 'nama keenya' among the Oromo. This was too for Amhara, Gurage, Dawuro ethnic groups. This means Amhara, Gurage and Dawuro also said 'nama keenya' for their own respective ethnic group.

However, with the passage of time things have been changed currently and the consideration/criteria to be 'nama keenya' are based on adhering similar faith. One of the key informants forwarded that:

*Religion seems to become the springboard for the formation of the 'nama keenya' metaphor in recent time. The Islam adherents began to say "nama keenya" to the Muslims who practice to wear shorter trouser, lengthen their beard, women who practice wearing niqab and hijab; and on the other hand, Orthodox Christians say nama keenya those who having cross in their necks). This means having cross in one's own neck implies an adherent of Orthodox Christianity. This brought the ideal conflicts among different religious adherents. For instance, during Muslim- Christian incident of the 2011, the motto of the reaction was: Nama keenya (Our men) were affected and some of them oppressed, looted and robbed their property by the contestant group.*

#### 3.3.4. 2. Yesinde Haymanot

The term 'Yesinde Haymanot' becomes ordinary metaphor to show religious polarization. The phrase 'Yesinde Haymanot' is originated from Amharic language. 'Sinde' means wheat and 'Haymanot' means religion. These two words together constitute 'Yesinde

*Haymanot*. So, according to the context of *Jimma*, the phrase '*Yesinde Haymanot*' metaphor is given as a name for the adherents of Protestantism.

According to the responses of adherents of Protestantism: In the previous time missionaries from different western European countries had come and provided 'wheat' and 'oil' for people who occasionally suffered from frequent famine, starvations and drought. Because of most of those missionaries were adherents of Protestantism, on one side they preached the gospel, and on the other side, they had offered provisions. The missionaries also made the beneficiaries to participate in developmental work in order to compensate for they had received. At a time, the missionaries had used this open chance to conduct their evangelical activities and most of the beneficiaries probably had converted to Protestantism. Thus, nowadays, the adherents of Islam and Orthodox Church have given the nick-name of '*Yesinde Haymanot*' for the adherents of Protestantism. Protestantism is associated with foreign missionaries. They are considered as the agents of western countries, particularly America. Thus, this kind of tagging would create stereotype and also enhances religious polarization among adherents of different religions.

#### 3.3.4.3. *Yeneftenya Haymanot*

*Yeneftenya Haymanot* is another metaphor used for labeling 'Orthodox Christianity'. The etymology of the term '*neft*' means 'gun'. Accordingly, '*Neftenya*' literary implies the group or the class who ruled the mass by guns or weapons. This means, according to the context of Ethiopia '*Neftenya*' implies the exploitative section of the ruling class, who had played a pivotal role in dominating and ruling the mass by arms (weapons) in the former imperial regime. One of the key informants from Muslim side explained that:

*'Tenafoagna Haymanot'* is used as a metaphor for adherents of Orthodox Church because during imperial regime church and state were strongly interconnected. This means, political power, Orthodox Christianity and being Ethiopian were so intertwined that it was almost unbelievable for one to exist without the other. Ethiopian state was equated with Orthodox Church and Ethiopia was seen as a land belonging 'exclusively' to Church and Abyssinian state. Thus, nowadays, due to the past legacies of imperial regime, the adherents of Islam and Protestantism use the nick-name *'Tenafoagna Haymanot'* for the adherents of Orthodox Church.

From the above quote one can possibly understand that stamping a derogatory marker to religious institutions might develop stereotype among the inhabitants of the study area and also might be potential for intra and inter- religious conflicts and controversies.

#### *3.3.4.4 Rumours and Mistrust*

Recollections about rumours abound in the accounts also become factors of tension in the study area. These rumours exist in verbal forms. One of the key informants stated that rumours surrounding Muslims may be interrelated with local power struggles, religious conflicts and controversies around transnational financial flow from Saudi Arabia. The high number of new mosques under construction in Jimma is usually taken as evidence that local Muslims receive financial support from the Middle East, particularly Saudi Arabia. This massive financial support is also perceived as changing the day-to-day deeds of Muslims. Recent visible modes of dressing of *niqab* and *hijab* by females and shortening trousers and having long beard by males express a more general fear of Arab influence and its impact on local custom.

Another rumour surrounding Muslims is related to inter faith marriage practices between Christians and Muslims. The Oromo of Jimma are very much proud of their religion:

Islam for two main reasons. First, Jimma was one of the places where Islamic culture has been flourishing, next to Harar, Ifat, Wollo and Bale. Second, Muslim community of Jimma had developed stereotype attitude from the former imperial regime when Muslims were not considered as the first citizens but as foreigners and threatened to peace of the country. Interestingly, they are very much resistant to conversion to Christianity, but are open to convert others. According to a recently circulating rumour, males Muslims are encouraged to marry Christian women as much as possible. This is simply to Islamize them. Ethiopian Orthodox Christians are under focus in this effort as Orthodox women are less knowledgeable about religion. This strategy is purposely carried out, based on the assumption that there are many unmarried women both in the Orthodox and Evangelical Christian circles in Ethiopia due to the Biblical teaching on marriage. Such kind of approach serves to increase the Muslim population both now and in the future.<sup>22</sup>

According to the rumour, the *Wahabbi* (as a reformist) are teaching that every Muslim has a responsibility to Islamize non-Muslims as much as possible, and marriage is taken as a strategy.

Another rumour is surrounding Muslim merchants. *Wahabiyu* has been teaching that every Muslim has a responsibility to Islamize non-Muslims through various methods. The merchants are required to share their money for the expansion of Allah's kingdom. They influence others by sharing their exemplary life, money and employing people from other religious groups in their business centers. This impresses particularly jobless youngsters to consider Islam as more accepted than Christianity. They also teach their

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<sup>22</sup> anonymous key informant.

employs the Islamic faith directly or indirectly. Every merchant who loves Allah is required to share his/her wealth and life for the Islamization of non-Muslims.<sup>23</sup>

Research participants also stated that probably few individuals have played a paramount role in creating tension in the social setting through spreading rumours. Such kind of rumours is widely disseminated among the inhabitants of Jimma. These rumours can play a role of widening the cleavage between Muslims and Christians. Additionally, such groundless discourses are likely to have aided in creating fear and hatred in the society across the social divides. In connection to this idea, Brass (2003:361) says that gossip mongering in general may have great role in mobilizing people to act violently.

Mistrust is one of the difficulties the society in the study area experiencing that brought differences among people of different religions. One of my informants puts forth that mistrust among the society is escalating due to many reasons. The major one is the bad trend (bad practice) they had in February 2011 around Omo Nadda. During that time, marginalization upon religion was vividly seen. Muslims (both *Safyya* and *Wahhabiya*) are accused to have profaned churches. They have burnt many churches. Christians (Orthodox and Protestant) had shown some tendency of helping each other. This polarized the Christian-Muslim relation.

#### **5.4. Orthodox and Protestant in the Eyes of Omo Nadda Muslims**

There are diverse religious groups in Omo Nadda. Among these religious groups, Muslims comprise about 85% of the total population. Historically, with the decline of *Gada* system and *Qalla* institution, the Oromo people of the study area were converted to

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<sup>23</sup> One of the key informants.

Islam and adopted some elements of Islamic custom. Actually, the people opted for Islam instead of Christianity. This is because; throughout the history of Ethiopia the Muslim community had developed a hatred for the highland Christian kings. For instance, in the past Muslim officials were often obligated to convert to "Christianity" when they joined the central government. These further pushed the people of Jimma to embrace Islam.

Table 3.2: Omo Nadda Religious composition.

Religious demography	Number of population	percentage	Remark
Islam	236,848	95	
Orthodox	7,273	3	
Protestant	3,683	1.5	
Catholic and others	320	0.5	
Total	248,173	100	

Source (CSA, 2007:341)

In the context of Omo Nadda, Muslims are considered as host community and most of the Christians are 'outsiders' who came to the area from different parts of the country, thus considered as the 'Others'. This assumption is especially widely spread in rural areas where saying Mr 'X' is a Muslim is equivalent to saying he/she is a native of Jimma and Mr 'Y' is a Christian is equivalent to saying he/she is a migrant to the area from somewhere else. Different meanings are also attached to different Christian religions. For instance, Orthodox Christians are associated with the *Amhara* who were favored by the imperial regime and Protestant Christians are mostly migrants from the SNNPRS. According to one of anonymous Muslim informants, the recent rapid expansion of the Protestant Church created a fear that Christians (the same as saying other ethnic groups) might demographically dominate the area in the future. This view

can be further explained by using the context behind the factors triggering the 2011 'Muslim-Christian conflict' at Asandabo.

### **5.5. From Ethnicity to Religion**

Since 1991 ethnic identity has become very important in Ethiopia. According to the 1995 Ethiopian Constitution, ethnicity is taken as a criterion in the endeavor to reconstruct the state as a multi-national, multicultural federal polity. This salience of ethnicity in public life is the result of a history of uneven and conflicted relations among ethnic groups. Federalism was allegedly chosen to respond to the challenge of ethno-national conflicts that stressed the old Ethiopian state from the time it has been built into a multi-ethnic empire often seeking to build one nation out of many. However, these days according to the context of the study area emphasis is shifting from ethnicity to religion. There are different indicators which can depict the visibility of religious identity more than ethnic identity.

Nowadays, religion is very much present in the public sphere and functions as a key structure for the life of religious communities in a number of ways. Religious groups have constructed trans-local relationships with powerful states, NGOs and religious institutions and greatly financed by these trans-local forces. The processes have been directing religious communities to pursue more 'radical' forms of religion and to symbolic power struggles in the public sphere of *Jimma*. Religious groups competition over public space among religious communities has been manifested by a number of ways. Religious institutions are busy to construct (build) more mosques and churches and to attract a number of adherents, to preach Holy Bible and Holy Qur'an, to invite foreign preachers in public sphere. Through these preaching adherents can bring about behavioral

change to construct religious identity. Teaching materials are the key for discipline, teaching and spiritual growth of adherents of any religion. Thus, the productions of such materials have been bringing about a tremendous influence to construct religious identity.

Intra and inter-religious conflicts and controversies also become the salient manifestation of religious identity in Jimma. *Wahabiyya* has been challenging the traditional orientations of Islam Orthodoxy (*Sufiyya*), whereas Pentecostal-Evangelical churches have been contesting EOC. The emergences of these sects have very much pronounced the strength of religious identity.

Finally, the triggering factors of conflicts which have been experienced in different woredas of Jimma are religion. For instance, the 2006 and 2011 Muslim-Christian conflicts in Gomma, Omo Nadda, Qarsa and Tiro Afata were triggered more by religion.

#### **5.6. Local authority response to intra and inter Religious tension**

It is common to see troubles and tensions linked to religion in different woredas of Jimma zone in recent times. As an example, Gomma and Didessa woredas in 2006, and Omo Nada, Tiro Afata and Karsa woredas in 2011 were areas of a great shake in the zone. In both times, inhabitants in the woredas were seriously hurt. People died, Christian churches were burned and residences of innocent citizens were also burned. Related to this problem, resources and different equipments were made out of use. Many people migrated to Jimma and the surrounding areas.

Besides, a number of rumours which have been propagated around an Islamic sect called *Kharwariyya* become more and more disseminated among the people and also become an area of concern. This has led the local government to strictly watch and control religious

related activities. To tackle such rumours and tensions that emanated from religious related and others issues and eventually to maintain cordial relationships among the people, the local government has designed some strategies and mechanisms to control the situations. Especially, more emphasis is given to issues related to Islamic sect at large and *Khawariyya* in particular. Accordingly, among several mechanisms few are put forth as follows:

First and foremost local authorities mainly targeted *Khawariyya* probably based on the assumption that the group is a threat to stability among the inhabitants of *Jimma*. Of course the group has no official recognition. However, the group ideology is widely spread through all woredas of the zone. According to one of the anonymous officials from Omo Nadda woreda administration, the group focuses on young generation and urges Muslim community not to abide by Christian government except for Allah. The group also discourages the cordial relationship existing between Christian and Muslim communities. The group's teaching (ideology) is said to have promoted intolerance in the relationships among people of the study area at large and between Christians and Muslims in particular. Thus, the local authorities are always busy to watch and constantly follow the adherents of the group and bring them before law.

Following the 2011 Muslim-Christian conflict the zonal authority established committees (forums) religious leaders at zonal and woredas levels. The main objective of this committee is to strictly follow religion related problems and to bring together the conflicting parties in any case if possible. If the matter is beyond the committee, the group immediately reports to the nearest local government. The committee members come from different religious groups (mainly Muslims and Christians). The

organizational structure of this committee is not confined to zonal level. The committee is also established at *kebele* levels. However, the committee has no clear rules and regulation on which it depends on in order to implement its mission. It is not a such influential and powerful to handle religious related problems. So far it achieved nothing.

Furthermore, the local government established 'community policing committee' to get more information and to know more about what is going on within the community. It is believed that this committee can follow each and every issue that possibly pose problems to societal peace and security. The committee represents policemen throughout villages and thus acts as police man. The organizational structure of this committee also stretches from zonal up to *sub-kebele* levels. Here, according to the current administrative structure, one *kebele* is divided into three *sub-jigas*. That is one *kebele* has three *Jigas*. Each of this *Jiga* has one community policing committee. Each of this committee has horizontal and vertical relationships by which information can be shared among the concerned bodies (governmental bodies). The committee has strong relationships mainly with zonal and woreda police offices. In comparison with the former committee (forum of religious leaders), this is more effective in providing timely information for the local government.

Interestingly, religion has become an area of great tension and makes administrative issues more complex in all woredas of the zone. The local authorities are busy following up intra and inter-religious issues. Particularly, the *Wahabbiyya* and the *Khawariyya* are the main concerns. Here, surprisingly local authorities have given more attention and strictly watch out intra-Islam controversies more than inter-religious conflicts.

## Summary and Concluding Remarks

Currently, religious conflicts and controversies have become topics of discussion among peoples across Ethiopia, particularly in Jimma zone. This thesis dealt with the emerging dynamics of socio-religious controversies and conflicts in Omo Nadda woreda, Jimma Zone. To examine this issue, qualitative data gathering method was employed. A total of thirty six research participants: from the dwellers, religious leaders, administrative and police offices of woreda and zonal level were purposefully selected and interviewed. Besides, FGDs and Case study were conducted.

The study has specifically examined dynamism within Islam and controversies over religious radicalization. Islam has demonstrated a great dynamism in Jimma Zone recently. The developments within the last fifteen years reveal the emergence of *Wahabbiiyya* and *Khawariyya* with new teachings. These groups have brought doctrinal reform movements and challenged the centuries old *Sufiyya* tradition in many ways.

The 2006 and 2011 socio-religious controversies and conflicts have adversely affected the inhabitants of Jimma zone. The recurrences of these conflicts are ideal conditions for the growth and developments of religious polarization and mistrust among religious groups. Though the conflicts have had some clear religious manifestations such as burning religious institutions of the contestant groups, there are multiple factors leading to the conflicts. Among others, competitions and controversies over the resource such as rural and urban space are the main reason. Clearly, ethnicity has also got a significant role in the conflicts as 95 % of total religious groups in Omo Nadda Woreda of Jimma Zone are Muslims from Oromo ethnic group.

The issue of religious radicalization has been entered into complex perception not only in Jimma but also across Ethiopia. Different sections of the communities have different understanding on the issue. One religious group labeled another group as religious groups radical. The emergence of *Khawariyya*, and what we have been informed about their teachings makes the issue of religious radicalization to have more political forms and orientation. This gave the state a room to intervene with in the matter of religion. Otherwise, in the context of Jimma, it is not possible to identify one religion and label it as radical. One can safely say, from the side of the adherents of reformists (*Wahabbiyya*), there is a tendency of strict application of the *Shari'a* and encouraging customs external to the local people.

Paradoxical to the past imperial regime which had considered Muslim communities of the country (particularly the Oromo) as the second citizens, the initially more liberal political atmosphere in Ethiopia since the 1991 has facilitated the public expression of religion. Therefore, the current open space for publication, translation and distribution of religious materials throughout the country are another area that great change has occurred in. Thus, the delivery of these materials, particularly the Holy Bible and the Holy Qur'an in local languages by the two principal faiths have played tremendous role to religious revivalism which in turn instigate competitions among religious groups.

In the era of globalization no religion is protected from external influence. From the very beginning, the Christian highland community has been influenced by western religious ideology since the fourth century and to the contrary, Jimma had been affiliated to the Middle East countries since the introduction of Islam in Gibe region particularly during the reign of Abba Jifar II after the second half of 19<sup>th</sup> century. Hence, as the current real

situation of Jimma Zone reveals, there is strong relationship between Christianity (particularly Protestantism) and western missionaries which have been working on both development work and evangelism under the name of "Hullentenawi Agelglot". On the other hand, the main propagator of Islam (the *Wahabbiyya*) has been encouraged by Middle East countries. These two parallel linkages of Christianity and Islam from Jimma to the West and Middle East countries, respectively, have brought Jimma under the arena of west-east religious ideology struggling for supremacy.

Above all, the current advanced means of communication and information exchanges technologies, which enable the movement of people and flow of information crossing the boundary, have their own contribution to promote socio-religious controversies and conflicts in the study area.

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## **ANNEXE. 1: Interview Guide**

### **Annex 1.1: Interview Guide for key informants from *Wahabbiyya* adherents**

1. How do you describe religious freedom and equality in Ethiopia in the consecutive regimes of imperial, Derg and current government)?
2. When *Wahabbiyya* doctrine has been started in Jimma? Who are the first propagators of this doctrine in this area? What are the methods employed by the group to attract a number of adherents in a short period of time?
3. What is the central focus that makes the *Wahabbiyya's* doctrine differs from the *Sufiyya* tradition? Is there any significant difference between *Wahabbiyya* and any other Islamic sects in *Jimma*?
4. How do inhabitants of the study area view the current teachings of *Wahabbiyya*?
5. What are the contesting elements among Islamic sects ( *Wahabiyya, Sufiyya and Khawrij* ) in *Jimma* ? Does *Wahabbiyya* have any motives to claim other than religious issues?
6. What role of religious preaching in instigating religious conflict? Is there local tendency towards religious radicalization? How do you and local authorities of *Jimma* understand religious radicalization? What are its manifestations? Who are more resembled as religious radicalization?
7. Do you think that there are factors which threaten Muslim-Christian relationships? What are the major causes of conflict between Muslim and Christian communities? Whom do you think groups behind Muslim-Christian conflict?

### **Annex 1.2: Interview Guide for key informants from *Sufiyya* adherents**

1. How do you describe religious freedom and equality in Ethiopia in the consecutive regimes (during imperial, Derg and current government)?
2. What are the premises that make *Sufiyya* traditions differ from *Wahabbiyya* and *Khawariyya*, the late comers?

3. What is the current status of *Sufiyya* in attracting adherents in comparison with the *Wahabbi's*? Why?
4. What are the major areas of movements that the *Sufiyya* focuses on to claim its historical predecessor?
5. How *Sufiyya* adherents perceive the teachings the two new Islamic sects of the study area (*Wahabiyya* and *Khawrij*)?
6. What are the contesting elements among Islamic sects ( *Wahabiyya*, *Sufiyya* and *Khawrij* ) in *Jimma* ? What are the main actors in the Muslim-Christian Conflict in the study area?
7. What role of religious preaching in instigating religious conflict? Is there local tendency towards religious radicalization? How do you and local authorities of *Jimma* understand religious radicalization? What are its manifestations? Who are more resembled as religious radicalization?
8. Do you think that there are factors which threaten Muslim-Christian relationships? What are the major causes of conflict between Muslim and Christian communities? Whom do you think groups behind Muslim-Christian conflict?

#### **Annex 1.3: Interview Guide for Key informants from Christians**

1. How do you describe religious freedom and equality in Ethiopia in the consecutive regimes of imperial, Derg and current government)?
2. What the challenges in exercising religious freedom in the study area? How Muslims view some of the current practices of Christians?
3. What role of religious preaching in instigating religious conflict? Is there local tendency towards religious radicalization? How do you understand religious radicalization? What are its manifestations? Who are more resembled as religious radicalization? Why?

4. Do you think that there are factors which threaten Muslim-Christian relationships? What are the major causes of conflict between Muslim and Christian communities?
5. Whom do you think groups behind Muslim-Christian conflict? What kinds of consequence have been observed?
6. What are the roles of political and religious leaders to mitigate or instigate the conflict between Muslim and Christian communities?
7. How do inhabitants of the study area view the current teachings of *Wahabbiyya and Khawariyya*?

#### **Annex 1.4: Interview Guide for local authority**

1. How do you treat all religious groups? Are there complaints/claims regarding religious issues either fro Muslims or Christians? What are their main claims? Do their claims lead to religious conflict?
2. Do you think that there are factors which threaten Muslim-Christian relationships? What are the major causes of conflict between Muslim and Christian communities? Whom do you think groups behind Muslim-Christian conflict? How do members of different religious communities participate in religious conflicts? What are the consequences of religious conflicts in the woredas? Which group of religious community is more affected due to the conflict and why?
3. What role of religious preaching in instigating religious conflict? Is there local tendency towards religious radicalization? How do you understand religious radicalization? What are its manifestations? Who are more resembled as religious radicalization?
4. How do you handle religious conflict at different moment?

#### **Annex 1.5: Interview Guide for Christian FGD Participants.**

1. How do you describe religious freedom and equality in Ethiopia in the consecutive regimes of imperial, Derg and current government)?

2. How do you explain Muslim-Christian relationships with respect to three regimes? How do recent developments affect the healthy relationships of Muslim and Christian communities?

3. Do you think that there are factors which threaten Muslim-Christian relationships? What are the major causes of conflict between Muslim and Christian communities? Whom do you think groups behind Muslim-Christian conflict?

4. What role of religious preaching in instigating religious conflict? Is there local tendency towards religious radicalization? What are its manifestations? Who are more resembled as religious radicalization?

#### **Annex 1.6: Interview Guide for Muslim FGD Participants.**

1. How do you describe religious freedom and equality in Ethiopia in the consecutive regimes of imperial, Derg and current government)?

2. Are there any complaints regarding Muslim-Christian relationships? Do the complaints lead to religious conflict?

3. Do you think that there are factors which threaten Muslim-Christian relationships? What are the major causes of conflict between Muslim and Christian communities? Whom do you think groups behind Muslim-Christian conflict?

4. What role of religious preaching in instigating religious conflict? Is there local tendency towards religious radicalization? What are its manifestations? Who are more resembled as religious radicalization?

#### **Annex 1.7: Interview Guide for Religious leaders.**

1. How do you explain Muslim-Christian relationships with respect to three regimes? How do recent developments affect the healthy relationships of Muslim and Christian communities?

2. How Christians and Muslims view some of the current practices of Muslims and Christians respectively?

3. What role of religious preaching in instigating religious conflict? Is there local tendency towards religious radicalization? What are its manifestations? Who are more resembled as religious radicalization?

4. Do you think that there are factors which threaten Muslim-Christian relationships? What are the major causes of conflict between Muslim and Christian communities? Whom do you think groups behind Muslim-Christian conflict? What role do religious leaders play to instigate/ mitigate religious conflict?

## ANNEX. 2: Research Participants

No.	Name of Informants	Age	Date of Interview	Place of interview	Religion	Remarks
1	Abbu Garo	29	10/2/2012	Omo Nadda	Muslim	FGD
2	Alex Biftu	26	17/2/2012	Omo Nadda	Christian	FGD
3	Aliy Abshiru	46	10/2/2012	Omo Nadda	Muslim	FGD
4	Daga Fahu	48	18/3/2012	Jimma town	Christian	Informant
5	Dera Tura	32	16/1/2012	Omo Nadda	Muslim	Key informant
6	Fekadu Tame	26	18/2/2012	Omo Nadda	Christian	FGD
7	Fekadu Tamirat	40	20/3/2012	Jimma town	Christian	Informant
8	Garo Mohammed	26	10/2/2012	Omo Nadda	Christian	FGD+Informant
9	Gojam Arne	37	5/3/2012	Jimma town	Muslim	Informant
10	Gona Tafesse	46	17/2/2012	Omo Nadda	Christian	FGD
11	Haile Mesera	30	28/1/2012	Jimma town	Muslim	Key informant
12	Haile Tamiru	32	20/2/2012	Serbo town	Christian	Informant
13	Jamal Hayira	30	26/1/2012	Jimma town	Muslim	Key informant
14	Jamal Mohammad	40	16/2/2012	Omo Nadda	Muslim	FGD
15	Jamo/Nasiro	35	10/2/2012	Omo Nadda	Muslim	Informant
16	Jelan Ashu	24	7/2/2012	Omo Nadda	Muslim	FGD
17	Jihad Abdula	24	10/2/2012	Omo Nadda	Muslim	FGD
18	Kadija Tomi	38	7/2/2012	Omo Nadda	Muslim	FGD
19	Kadir Nure	46	10/2/2012	Omo Nadda	Muslim	FGD
20	Kalifa Mohad	34	7/2/2012	Omo Nadda	Muslim	FGD
21	Kamal Mulu	24	7/2/2012	Omo Nadda	Muslim	FGD
22	Katambon Tufa	25	17/2/2012	Omo Nadda	Christian	FGD
23	Kebede Shama	40	17/2/2012	Omo Nadda	Christian	FGD
24	Kebede Tura	46	5/2/2012	Jimma town	Christian	Informant
25	Mare Tafese	40	18/2/2012	Omo Nadda	Christian	FGD+ Key
26	Mikael Alemu	35	17/2/2012	Omo Nadda	Christian	FGD
27	Mohammad Tafu	38	28/1/2012	Omo Nadda	Muslim	Key informant
28	Mujahid Fomona	24	25/1/2012	Omo Nadda	Muslim	Key informant
29	Mulatu Habu	32	18/2/2012	Omo Nadda	Christian	FGD+Inf.
30	Nafu Heranu	30	18/2/2012	Omo Nadda	Christian	FGD
31	Tamam Awal	26	7/2/2012	Omo Nadda	Muslim	FGD
32	Tamam Mohamed	27	7/2/2012	Omo Nadda	Muslim	FGD
33	Teshome Tarike	30	17/2/2012	O/Nadda	Christian	FGD+ Key inf.
34	Tola Adugna	30	18/2/2012	Omo Nadda	Christian	Key + FGD
35	Tomi Bogale	44	22/3/2012	Jimma town	Christian	Informant
36	Wajo Bekata	35	18/1/2012	Jimma town	Christian	Key informant

*In order to keep the anonymity of the research participants (informants), all mentioned above were nicknames.*

## DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, declare that this is my original work and has not been presented for a degree in any other Universities and that all sources of materials used for the thesis have been duly acknowledged.

Name: Gemedu Akuma

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Place: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of submission: 25.06.2012

This thesis has been submitted for examination under my approval as a research advisor.

Name: Fekadu Adugna (PhD)

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: 25.06.2012