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A RELIGIOUS HISTORY OF BEGHI, WEST WALLAGGA ZONE,
Ca. 1880s -1991

BY
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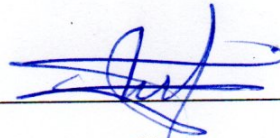
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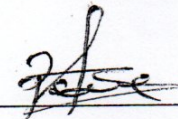
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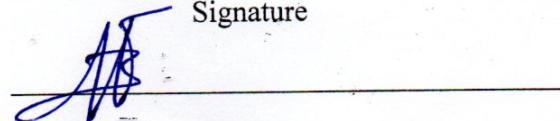
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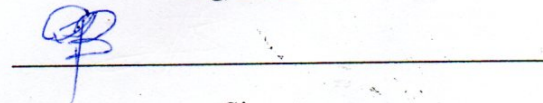
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Abstract

To reconstruct the religious history of the district during the period under study, both primary and secondary sources were utilized. Attempts have been made to unearth a history of the three major religions of Bèghi namely the Oromo traditional religion (waaqëffañña), Islam, and Christianity during the period under study. Apparently the native religion practiced in the Bèghi district as in other Oromo regions was Waaqëffañña, which is based on belief of one Wääqä tokkicha or Waaqaa guraacha, the Bèghi Oromo perceive that the color of waaqa is black. The second major religion and of course the dominant religion in the Bèghi nowadays is Islam. Muslim merchants and shèikhs had played a pivotal role in the introduction of Islam to the region. Christianity is the third major religion prevailed in the Bèghi. Most probably its introduction to the region dates back to the time of Menilik II incorporation of Lëqa Qëllam. It seems that the king of Qëllam was converted to Christianity during the time of Menilik II incorporated the region. Evangelical Christianity has been introduced to the region recently. The research is reconstructed from different sources of both Published and unpublished materials. The data was collected through referring to the literature and theses, collecting maps, figures and photographs and interview from Bèghi district West Wallagga zone and Mao and Komo special warada of BNRS. The need to look back at the historical background of the Bèghi religious history is very crucial. It has dual purpose. On the one hand, the area has long history of Religion and religious processing, still the attention or concern given by scholars and researchers to the issues are very little or low. Indeed, there are few works produced on some aspects of this area merged with other Wällagga state and former Ghimbi and Asossa awurajjas. Nevertheless, these works have no specificity and depth/comprehensiveness on the study. That is why this research work was conducted to address/fill the gap left by different written documents. The carefully gathered data are organized, analyzed, interpreted and reconstructed by using the qualitative methods of research writing. The shortage of archival sources and scantiness of written materials directly related to Bèghi has been a challenge in the writing of this thesis. Many findings belonging to various periods ranging from the scope of the study time were recorded. The research has also underscored the importance of the area for the future relative and archeological research which was considered as the former center of the Islamic state that witness a rich history of harmony, tolerance and co-existence among the many communities.

Preface

This thesis is to make an attempt to reconstruct A Religious History of Bèghi district from ca.1880s- 1991 in southern part of the former Asossa *Awrájä*, present West Wëlëga Zone, based on various historical sources, both written and unwritten. Bèghi district is one of districts in the former Asossa *Awrájä* (sub-province), which is predominately inhabited by the Mëca Oromo clans: the Wayyuu, Gidami, Horro, Jimma, Abbayyi, Badii, Laaloo, Manamoo, etc. Before the coming of Menelik to the area, Beghi was invaded and controlled by *Däjjäzmaçh* Nadhii Konno and the Arabized Mao clan of Kuttu Golja. However; his administration was not last long since Menelik controlled the area following the invansion of the descendant of ‘Witawit’ family in 1903.

Both mark the multidimensional changes that have occurred in the society. The 1880s and 1991 are taken as the beginning and terminal land marks of this thesis. Since the ca.1880s was the time when the different religious leaders and teachers fielded to Bèghi area from the Ethiopia and out side with the new ideological and spiritual overview and The year ca. 1880s was the time when the study area was incorporated by the Šawan forces and the Arabised clan or ‘Kuttu Golja. While 1991 was the time when the *Dërg* regime in Ethiopia and the period when the religious equality and free dom of worship was announced by the new government of EPRDF. Of course, the thesis starts its discussion by throwing light on the conforantation made between the people of the district and the Mahadist force and how the external religious teachers and leaders and how Shèikh Khojole All-Hassen controlled the area and expanded Islamic religion and their impacts on the other religion of the area briefly.

As noted above, the study is based on both primary and secondary sources. This thesis; however, cannot make claim that it is exhaustive and complete, much remains to be done. This is only my preliminary attempt hoping that it would add anelement tothe history of the region. To conduct the thesis, the required information was obtained from the oral sources in the area between August 2019 and July 2021. More than 80 informants were interviewed. While most of them were interviewed only once, some were interviewed several times. My informants came from different walks of life: *Šhëykhs*, Prests, saints“, *imams*, ordinary Muslims, merchants, government employees, members of the Islamic Affairs Supreme Council, teachers, farmers, tailors, and members of different local clans.

Further more secondary written sources include; thesis, dissertations and books collected from the Wollega Museum, West Wollega Culture and Tourism, Beghi, Kondala, and

Mao Komo Special *Warada* Cultural and Tourism Offices, and as well as Wollega University, Jimma University, Asossa Museum, *Ya'a Masara* Shrine Center. The collected sources have been organized, analyzed, interpreted and reconstructed by using the qualitative methods of research. Qualitative Research Method, which is more narrative and descriptive method, has been applied for this study/thesis. This method is also more popular and the most widely used in historical research.

The thesis has four chapters. The First Chapter outlines the geographical settings and historical background of Beghi district. The Second Chapter focuses on the history of Indigenous religion. The Third Chapter deals with a history of Islam in Beghi during the Imperial rule to the coming of the new government of Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia. The Fourth Chapter deals with the history of Christianity (Orthodox and Protestant Christianity) and the Impacts of modern world religion on the socio-political and cultural issues of Beghi since their introduction.

Key to Transliteration System

I. Oromo words

1. All words of Oromo origin are spelled according to the writing and reading system of Oromo alphabet, *Qube. Afaan* Oromoo has basically five short and five long vowels.

Short vowels	Long vowels	Examples	Meaning
A	aa	<i>Walaabu</i>	Place name
E	ee	<i>Ulee</i>	Stick
I	ii	<i>Miila</i>	Foot
O	oo	<i>Obboroo</i>	Morning
U	uu	<i>Muuda</i>	pilgrimage

2. The length of a vowel may result in a change of meaning.

Example: *Lafa*--- land

Laafaa---soft

3. A sequence of more than two vowels is possible only if separated by glottal (?).

Example: *Re'ee*—goat

4. Oromo consonants (phonemes) are stressed (geminated) by doubling similar phonemes.

Example: *Qaallu; Abbaa*

5. There are five paired phonemes that are formed by two different consonants. These are ch, dh, ny, ph and sh. Of these, dh, ny and ph have sounds different from the English consonants.

DH: voiceless, dental, implosive as in 'dhadhaa' (butter) or 'Dhaddacha' (legal court).

NY: voiceless, palatal, nasal- as in 'nyaapha'-enemy.

Ph: voiceless, bilabial, ejective, stop-as in 'kophee'-shoe.

Moreover, (c), (q) and (x) have different sounds from the English consonants.

C: as in *caffee*- assembly

Q: as in *qawwee*- gun

X: as in *xannacha*- gland

II. Amharic words

1. The seven sounds of the Amharic alphabet are represented as follows

Symbol Example

1 st በ= Bā	Kābbāda
2 nd ቡ= Bu	<i>Buñña</i>
3 rd ቢ= Bi	<i>Fitāwūrari</i>
4 th ባ= Ba	<i>Rás</i>
5 th ቤ= Bé	Béghi
6 th ብ= Bi	Birru
7 th ቦ= Bo	Horoo

2. Palatalized sounds are represented as follows

ሸ	= Š	<i>Šum</i>
ኸ	= Ń	<i>Malkañña</i>
ዠ	= Ž	<i>Dajjazmach</i>
ጀ	= J	<i>Jabarti</i>

3. Glottalized sounds are represented as follows

ቀ	= Qä	<i>Qañazmačh</i>
ጠ	= Ṭ	<i>Täqelay Gizat</i>
ጪ	= Ç	<i>Caaccuu</i>
ጸ/ፀ	= Šä	
ጸ	= P	<i>Pä</i>

4. Gemination should always be indicated by doubling

e.g - ደጸጸጽ = *Däjjäzmačh*

Acronoymys

EECMY	Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus
EOC	Ethioipan Orthodox Church
EPRDF	Ethiopian Peoples' Revolutinary Democratic Front
G.C	Geregorian Calander
MAF	Missions Aviation Fellowship
MYC	Mekane Yesus Church
NMS	Norwaign Missionary Service
OLF	Oromo Liberation Front
OTR	Oromo Traditional Religion

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CHAPTER ONE

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY AREA

1. Introduction

A universal religion is believed to have been offered to all humanity. Each universal religion views itself as possessing the full truth about reality, knowledge, and values; above all about super natural being. Thus, its adherents have a sense of mission to all humanity. Among other world religions, the three common universal religions originating in the Middle East are: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.¹ The aspects of religion include narrative, meditation, art, ancestral mythology, codes, values, institutions, ceremonies, scriptures and etc. It involves answer about one's origins, place in world or responsibility to live and act in world in particular ways. It seeks explanation or psychological support for suffering, injustice, wars, famine, quake, accidents, disasters, crisis, strains, stress, depression, uncertainty, and death. It binds believers in one community as glue since belief systems have powerful hold on what people think and how they see world and practices of religion are among the most important influences on people's lives.²

It is not easy to give a single agreed-upon definition to word religion because of the nature it has. The term "religion" was derived from the Latin word, "*religion*", which denotes a link between human beings and Gods.³ On the other hand, according to Fuller, "religion is a word used by linguists and ethnographers meant for a complicated method of faith particularly, ritual".⁴ In the earliest times, it was believed that religions were considered as religions of nature and place and related to particular people confined to small ethnic communities. For instance, for the Middle Eastern people, their gods were gods of the village, ancestors, clans, and towns. However, the increasing contact between peoples gave rise to the emergence of worldwide or universally accepted God.⁵

Based on the closely observed study, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, among the world religions, the top three are Christianity which has around 2.4 billion followers or

¹ YassinAli, "The Development of Islamic Education System in Ethiopia: Its Features, Relevance, and Influence on Muslim Culture concerning South Wallo" (PhD Dissertation, AAU, Department of Curriculum and Teachers Professional Development, 2015), p. 39.

² Badilu Asaffa, "The Expansion of Protestantism and Cultural change among the Sayyoo Oromo, Western Oromia" (MA Thesis, AAU. 2014), P. 76.

³ Margaret L. King, *Western Civilization: A Social and Cultural History Combined Edition*, (New Jersey, 2003), p.168

⁴ Steve Fuller, *Science VS Religion: Intelligent Design and the Problem of Evolution*, (Cambridge, Malden, 2007), p.12.

⁵ Ira M. Lapidus, *A History of Islamic Societies, Second Edition*, (Cambridge University Press, 2002), p.6.

33% of the total world population; the next place is taken by Islam having 1.66 billion followers or 24% of the total world populations and the third is Hinduism having more than one billion followers or 15% of the total populations.⁶

Ethiopia with a population of about 90 million and a land mass of 1,104,300 million square kilometers is home to many diversities. It is known for diversities of identity and identity expressions like diversities of language, culture, history and nation and nationality etc. It is also well known on diversity of religion and beliefs. Ethiopia today enjoys many kinds of religious diversity. Since antiquity our nation is home to currently called indigenous beliefs, Christianity, Islam, and others. All of them, without any discrimination; characterize the new Ethiopia as they are deep expressions of Ethiopia's nations and nationalities.⁷

Religion in Ethiopia consists of a number of faiths. Among these mainly Abrahamic religions, the most numerous is Christianity (Ethiopian Orthodox Christian, Protestant, and Roman Catholic) totaling at 62.8% of adherents from the total population, followed by Islam at 33.9% of adherents from the total populations.⁸ Ethiopia was the only religion of Africa to survive the expansion of Islam as a Christian state.⁹ Moreover, the country is a fine example of diversity in religions, cultures, ethnic groups, and languages. It seems based on this fact that, Teshale Tibebu in his book entitled, *The Making of Modern Ethiopia: 1896 –1974* puts, "this diversified modes of production, religious and cultural makeup of the country as 'a microcosm of Africa.'"¹⁰ Among the many indigenous traditional beliefs practiced by the Ethiopian nations and nationalities, the *Waaqëffañña* of Oromo¹¹ and the *Fandanañô* of Hadiya have been typical examples.¹² Likewise, the Beghi people practiced their own traditional beliefs in the past before they embraced Islam and Christianity. As Braukamper indicates the majority of the traditional folk faiths are so quickly fading up as a result of the spread of the Abrahamic's religions: Christianity and Islam.¹³

⁶ Joseph Runzo. *Global Philosophy of Religion: A Short Introduction*, (Oxford, New York, 2001), pp.20-21.

⁷ J. Spencer Tirmingham, *Islam in Ethiopia* (London, New York, Toronto, 1952), p.15.

⁸ CSA, *The 2007 Population and Housing Census of Ethiopia: Results for Oromia Region Volume I: Part VI Statistical Report on Population Size of Kebele*, 2005, pp. 9-11.

⁹ *Ibid*

¹⁰ Teshale Tibebu, *The Making of Modern Ethiopia 1896 – 1974* (Lawrenceville, New Jersey, 1995), p. xi.

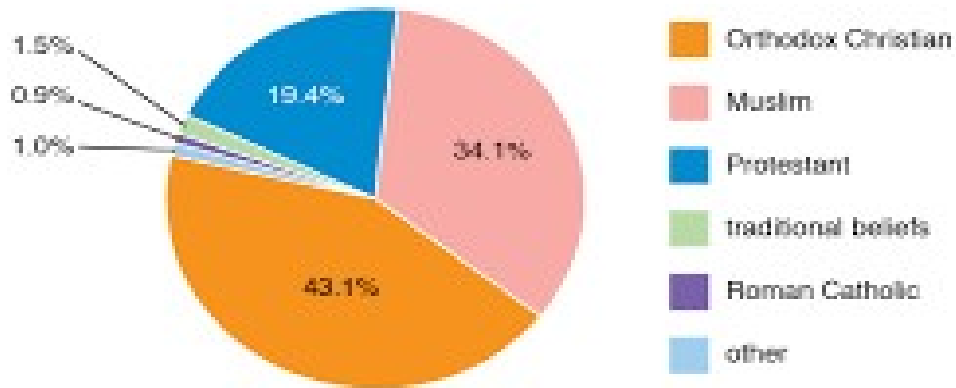
¹¹ Mohammed Hassen, *The Oromo of Ethiopia: A History, 1570-1860* (Cambridge, 1994), p.6.

¹² Bahru Zewde, *A Short History of Ethiopia and the Horn*, (Addis Ababa, 1998), p.32.

¹³ Ulrich Braukamper, *Islamic History and Culture in Southern Ethiopia: Collected Essays*, (Hamburg, 2002), p.2.

Figure 1: Religious Affiliation of Ethiopia

Religious affiliation (2012)



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Source: 2007 CSA *Population and Housing Census of Ethiopia*, Vol. 1 Archived November 13, 2011, at the Wayback Machine, Tables 2.1, 2.5. 3.4 (accessed 13 January 2012), p. 5.

1.1 Geographical Setting and Historical Background of Beghi

The study area is located in the administrative regions of the Oromia and Benishangul Gumuz Regional states, traditionally known as Béghi land or *Shéyk Khojole* land.¹⁴ It stretches from the South Western part of Ethiopia bordering to the west the Republic of Sudan, north east of Dabus River, North West of Bambasi and Asossa *Waradas*, and south of *Laga Haadha Jaarsa* (Qellam *Awrajja*). In the pre-1991 state structure, the Béghi region, known as Béghi *Wărădās* including to days Béghi, Kōndala, and Mao and Komo Special *Wărădās* with in the Asossa *Awrajja* Administrative region.¹⁵

At present, however, although it kept its former with some arrangements, it has become *Wàràdàs* within the Oromia National Regional State. Some parts of the former *Wàràdàs* mainly Kōndala, and Mao and Komo Special *Wàràdàs*. The name Beghi, therefore, is used in the study to designate all the former three *Wàràdàs* before the area was upgraded to a *Wàràdàs* in 1995.

Post 1991, territorial disputes nonetheless emerged and especially the Beghi area continued to be contested. In 1994 the EPRDF called for a referendum. With this referendum Beghi

¹⁴ Informants: Nabbara, Mohammed, and Xafa.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

was given to Oromia and became one of the West Wellega zone administrative *Waradas*. West Wällëgga is one of the administrative zones of Oromia regional state. For the sake of administrative convenience, West Wällëgga zone is divided into 23 districts of which 20 (twenty) are the rural districts and three are urban administration centers.¹⁶ Of these 23 districts Bèghi is one of the vast territories and the remotest land in the south Western parts of the administrative zone Gimbi.¹⁷

Map 1: Former Wällëgga Tēklaj̄ Gizat (Governorate-General) and its Awrajas (sub-provinces).



Source: The map taken from Wellega Museum by the researcher on April, 20/2020

The term Bèghi denotes both the land and the people. However, different arguments flourished on the correct definition or meaning of the term Beghi. Some of them were stated that the term Beghi is drive from the name of Mao clan which is one of the local rulers of the area. But, he does not elaborate the clan of this ruler and from which Mao clan he had been emerged is not mentioned. However, according to Alenssander, the name

¹⁶ Informants: Mathewos Takilu, Jamal Sayid, and Ermias Abera, “Introduction and Expansion of Modern Education in Western Wallagga with Particular Reference to Gimbi Awurajja, 1898-1974,” (MA Thesis, Jimma University, History. 2016), p. 1.

¹⁷ Informants: Kumsa Gassasa and Elias Birane; see Appendix I; Archive from Beghi *Warada* Administrative Office. A letter had written from the Office of FDRE Prime Minister which states about the result of the 1995 referendum on the issues of Beghi and Mao Komo Special *Warada*.

“Beghi” is derived from “Bega” simply.¹⁸ Accordingly, the term Bega is not indicated as one of the seasonal name winter and he also stated that the name Beghi derived from the local rulers of Mao clan “Bek” who lived in the eastern angel of Beghi. However, this writer also does not mentioned when, how, and where this person lived and he does not give the meaning of the term “Bek”. When Allensandro elaborated the term Beghi:

.....Although all these groups belong to the list of Mao clans one can gather today from the people around Begi, the *Sättä* and Issa are said to be basically oromized and not to have Mao identity anymore. Nonetheless they belong to the mosaic of clans, and hence point into the direction of a Mao history. Probably of Funj descent but the name did not arouse any memories during my investigations on the history of Begi. Instead the enigmatic first “Mao king Bek”, “who lived on the mountain besides Begi” is often referred to as the namesake for Begi today.¹⁹

The discussion of Allensadro on the definition of Beghi is highly interrelated with the term given by the *Wéréda’s* Cultural and Tourism Offices. According to local elders and the *Bèghi wèrèdá* Culture and tourism Offices profils shows that, the term Beghi denotes the land and the people of the Wayyu lineage (*balbala*) which is one of the Sayyoo of Mëcha Oromo, which is derived from “Bëkha” which means “Known”.²⁰ However, it’s difficult to reconstruct the correct term and definition of the term Beghi. Sothat, this has been need another researches, and this research is not comprehensive it self.

The residents of Beghi belong to Mächa Oromo groups, who occupy the territory from today’s West Šawä Zone in the east to West Wëllëga Zone in the west.²¹ Mëcha is further divided into Daadhii, Jaawwii and Tum’e clans.²² Particularly, the people in Beghi are descents of Daadhii.²³ Daadhii is further divided into Sayyoo and Lëqaa sub-clans. The majority of the people in Beghi district trace their descendants from Sayyoo, and some of them are trace their descendants from Sibü and Lëqa.²⁴

¹⁸ Allensander VonMeckelburg, "From "Subject to Citizen"? History, Identity and Minority Citizenship: The Case of the Mao and Komo of Western Ethiopia." (PHD Dissertation, Vorgelegt der Fakultät der Geisteswissenschaften der Universität Hamburg. Anthropology. 2016), p. 97.

¹⁹ *Ibid.* p. 100.

²⁰ Informants: Mohammed, Kanarra, Tafa and Beghi Warada Culture and Tourism Office, 2018, p. 13.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² Negaso, p.14, Oromia Culture and Tourism Bureau, *History of the Oromo to the Sixteenth Century* (Finfinne, 2006), p.150.

²³ Informants; Mohammed, Kanarra, Tafa, and Beghi *Warada* Culture and Tourism Office, 2018, p. 13.

²⁴ Amanuel Kitata, *Economic History of Beghi from 1922 to 1991*,” (BA Thesis, Wollega University, 2012), p. 4.

Nevertheless, this does not mean that only the Sayyoo, Sibuu, and Leeqa Oromo inhabits the current Beghi district. The data from the *Wèrèdá* administration shows that because of resettlement schemes in Ethiopia, and other socio-economic factors, there have been flows of population to the area. In 2004 and 2005 Oromo groups, the Ittuu and Humbannaa from eastern and western Hararghe were resettled in Beghi. There are also continuous voluntary migrants to the area.²⁵

Astronomically, Béghi district, where the study focuses, is located 9^o14' 60" N latitudes and 34^o44' 99" E Longitudes.²⁶ Béghi town is the main administrative seat of the district. Béghi town is situated to southwest of Addis Ababa (Finfinnee), the capital of Ethiopia and Oromiyaa National Regional State, at a distance of 662km and 262 km from zonal capital, Gimbi.²⁷ In the present administrative state structure Beghi is bordered in north by Bambasii district (Benishangul Gumuz Regional State), in northeast by Mandi district (West Wèllägga zone), in south by Gidami district (Qèllam Wèllägga Zone), in south east by Jimma Raree district (Qèllam Wèllägga), in east by Qondala district (former province of Beghi district until February, 05/2005), in north east by Babbo Gambel district (West Wèllägga), and in west by Mao Komo Special *Wèrèdá* (Benishangul Gumuz Regional States).²⁸

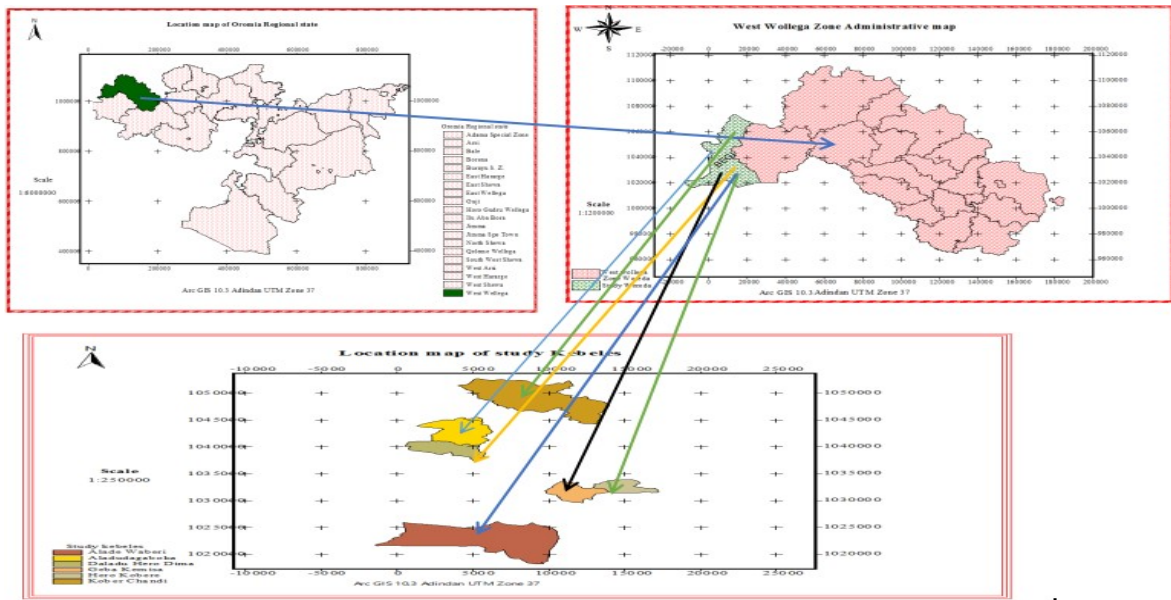
²⁵ Informants: Kumsa Gassasa, Eliyas Birane

²⁶ Muhammed Musa, p. 3.

²⁷ Informants: Dawit Marga, and Hailu Girma the driver of Star Bus from Addis Ababa to Beghi on the journey of 22/04/2012 at 6:43 AM.

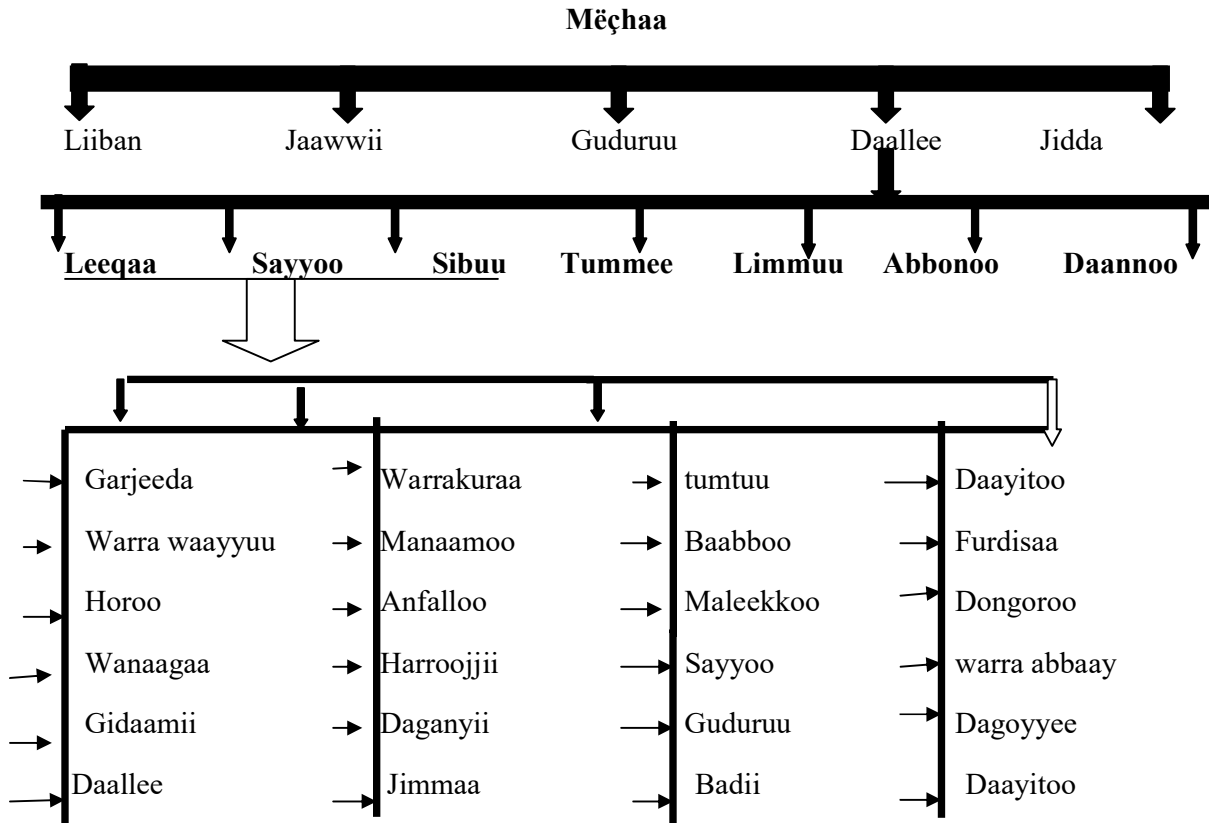
²⁸ Kuspert, p. 5, and Interview with Beghi district Cultural and Tourism Office, and Beghi District Agricultural Office, on 24 Dec, 2019, at 3: 25-4: 08 PM.

Map 2: Present administrative location of Bèghi District (Aanaa, Wèrèdá)



Source: Zonal Statistics and Information Directorate GIS team

The Geneology of Mēçhaa Oromoo of the Study Area



Source: The Source taken from Beghi *Warada* Cultural and Tourism Bureau

1.1.1. Climate of the Study Area

Owing to its physical location between the hot lands of the Dabus River, the climate of Béghi district has been hot. But, has three climatic zones of *Bäddaa* or *Dëga* (temperate zone), *Bädda dilallaa* or *Wurch* (alpine), *Badda Daree* or *Wëina Dëga* (sub-tropical zone), and *Gammoojjii* or *qolla* (Tropical zone) climatic classification. This climatic classification has constituted 13 percent of *Baddaa* or *Dëga* (temperate zone) climate, 22 percent *Badda daree* (sub-tropical) climate, and 66 percent *gammoojjii* (tropical) climatic condition. As a result, the mean annual temperature is fairly high. Due to this fact, the mean annual temperature of Béghi district varies from 18⁰c to over 21⁰c.²⁹ During the period of winter from February to May, all parts of the area experience a mean seasonal temperature of 20⁰c-25⁰c. On the other hand, between October and January, most areas of Béghi have a mean seasonal temperature of over 20⁰c.³⁰

The annual rainfall of the areas is between 1200mm to 2000mm.³¹ The period from March to May is spring (*Arfaasaa*) season which the south easterly winds bring small rainfall into Béghi and the dominant portion of West Wallagga gets mean seasonal rainfall of 200mm-400mm. During the period between June to September with the summer (*Ganna*) season, the eastern high land gets the mean seasonal rainfall from 1200mm-1600mm. Similarly, the period from October to November are the autumn (*Birra*) season, and almost the Béghi area having a mean seasonal rainfall of 400mm.³² It also the period from December till March are the Spring (*Bona*) season, and all the Béghi area never gets rain.

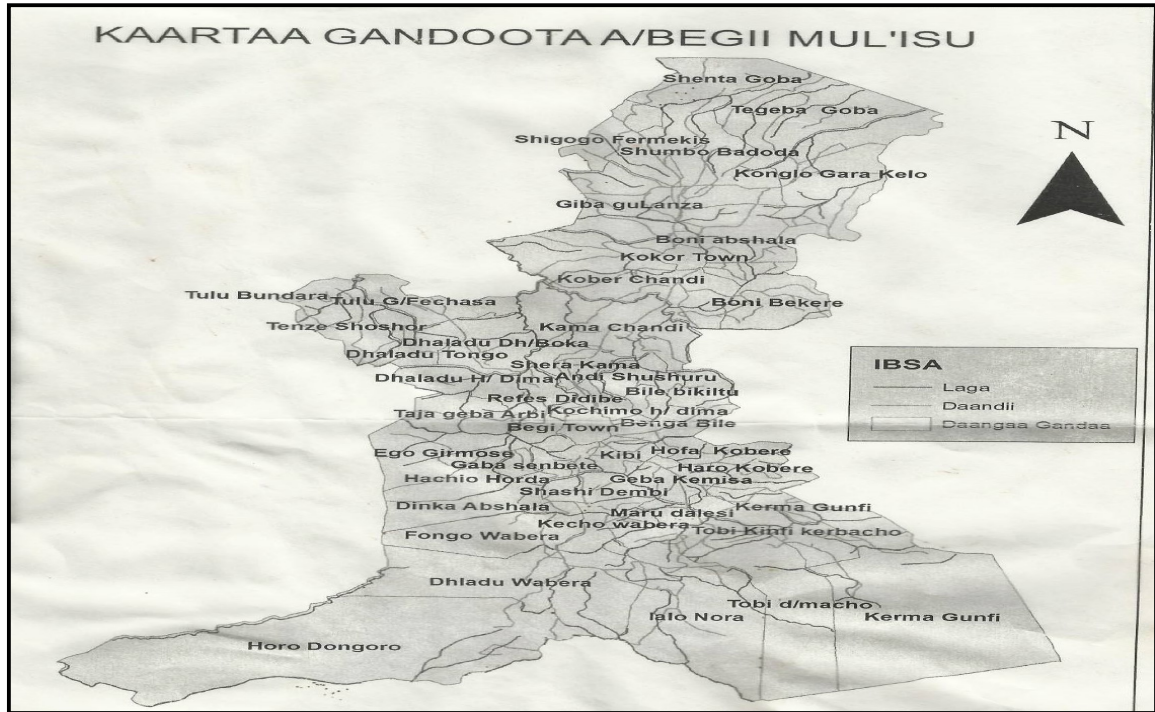
²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ *Ibid*; Amanuel Kitata, “Economic History of Béghi Woreda from 1920-1991,” (BA Thesis, Wollega, 2015), p.1.

³¹ Alemayehu Immiru, “Penetration and Expansion of Islam in Béghi-Gidami Synods,” (BA Thesis, BTR, Addis Ababa, 2010), pp. 2-3.

³² *Ibid*; Béghi District Economic and Finance Office, 2019, p. 7.

Map 3: Recent Map of Beghi district



Source: Beghi district Culture and Tourism Office on February, 10/2020.

1.1.2. Physical Features of the Study Area

Beghi district is characterized by ups and downs; at least 85% of the entire land features. There are many mountains in the district; namely, the *Gaara* Arbaa, Shaamoo, Booni Bakaree, Qamaa Chandii, Waangaa Gittan. There are also plateaus, hills as rising physical features of the district. The altitude range of the district is between 1200 to 2230 meters above sea level.³³ The study area is intersected by numerous streams and water courses, but few have water in them through out the year.³⁴

In terms of soil type, variation in physiographical nature, climate, vegetation, cultural impacts, and the interaction among these factors in the different agro-ecological zone of the area is responsible for soil distribution and characteristic variation from locality to the locality in Beghi district. Clay soil, sand soil, and loom soil found in the Beghi district. From these soils, clay soil and loom soil have been suitable for agriculture.³⁵

³³ *Ibid*, p.6.

³⁴ *Ibid*; Informants:

³⁵ *Ibid*.

Depending on the optimum condition provided by the prevailing natural conditions such as climate, soil and altitude, vegetation can grow to maximum height. The vegetation here was that which grew in the absence of human influence.

Grains such as Maize, different kinds of millet such as *andropogon sorgum (bisingaa)*, *eleusine coracana (daagujjaa)*, and *eragrostis tef (xaafii)* are grown here. Coffee (*bunaa*), peas and beans such as *pisum sativum (atarii)*, *vicia faba (baaqelaa)*, *cicer arietinum (shumburaa)*, different kinds of *dolichos lablab (galabia)*, *phaseolus (lojoo)*, *vigna sinensis (hephoo)*, and different kinds of food and oilseed plants such as sunflower (*suufii*), and *guizota abyssinica (nuugii)* also find suitable conditions for cultivation.³⁶

1.1.3 Demographic feature of Beghi

There exist no pertinent statistical data and survey records of the number of Beghi population by the time the area was incorporated into the Ethiopian Empire. However, the 1994 national census reported, a total population of Béghi *wéréda* to be 137,614 from this 25,738 households. Of this population, 68,204 were male and 69,410 were women; 6,526 or 4.74% of its population were urban dwellers.³⁷ The three largest ethnic groups reported in Beghi were: the Oromo (91.91%), the Mao (6.42%), and the Berta (0.93%); all other ethnic groups made up 0.74% of the population. Afaan Oromo was spoken as a first language by 93%, 6.27% Mao, and 0.4% Berta; the remaining 0.33% spoke all other primary languages reported. The majority of the inhabitants embraced Muslims with 77.03% reporting that as their religion, while 17.48% were the followers of the Ethiopian Orthodox Christianity, and 5.31% Protestants.³⁸

Based on Pictures published by the Central Statistical Agency in 2005, Beghi had an estimated total population of 191,790, of whom 97,154 were males and 94,636 women; 11,672 or 6.09% of its population were urban dwellers, which was less than the Zone average of 10.9%. With an estimated area of 2,522.50 square kilometers, Beghi has an estimated population density of 76 people per square kilometer, which is less than the Zone average of 91.7.³⁹

According to 2007 national census, the population of Beghi was 119,722; of this 59,374 of them were males and 60,348 females. Residentially, out of the total population of the area,

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ CSA, *The 1994 Population and Housing Census of Ethiopia: Results for Oromia Region Volume I: Part VI Statistical Report on Population Size of Kebele*, 2005, p. 9.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, and Muhammed Musa, p. 4.

³⁹ CSA, 2005, *National Statistics Archived* July 31, 2008, at the Wayback Machine, Tables B.3, and B.4.

the rural population accounted for 111,827, while the urban population consisted of 7,895.⁴⁰ The majority of the inhabitants practised Islam, with 75.65% or 90, 574 of the total population reported that as their religion, while 14.93% or 17, 869 of the total population were Ethioan Orthodox Christians, and 9.3% or 11, 137 of the total population were Protestant followers, and the remaining were indigenous religion followers.⁴¹

1.1.4 Economic and Linguistic Aspects of the Study Area

According to Tesema Ta'a, the Oromo were quite familiar with highland environment and agricultural practices long before the 16th century. However, it is essential to stress that even in the early face of the sixteen-century expansion; the Oromo did not rely exclusively on animal husbandry.⁴² Therefore, the economic life of the Beghi Oromo as sub-group of the Mécha was primarily based on livestock herding and crop production.

The economy of Beghi land is based mainly on subsistence agriculture by cultivating small plots of land.⁴³ Within the study area Beghi have similar agro-ecology. The dominant economic activity of the Bèghi people activities are the cultivation of coffee, Chat, and other cereal Crops. However, in Bèghi besides coffee, high amount of the cereal crops like barely wheat, pulses (beans and peas), vegetables such as onion, cabbage, are cultivated. Within the zone, chat and coffee are produced on large scale, accounting more than two third of the total cultivated land.⁴⁴

To the Beghi peasants, coffee based agricultural practice is their survival strategy. In addition, maize and different types of fruits likes mango, papaya, banana, are grown. As informants stated that, chat, and tobacco was one of the agricultural products cultivated on large scale in the earlier times.⁴⁵ It seems probable that following the advent of protestant missionaries among the Beghi in the 1950s and its subsequent religious influence, the cultivation and using of tobacco declined at large.⁴⁶ Before the incorporation of the Beghi land into the modern Ethiopian Empire, the Beghi people consumed coffee which was grown naturally. However, the economic importance of coffee as a means of income

⁴⁰ Population and Housing Census of Ethiopia: Results for Oromia Region, Vol. I.,2007, p. 7,

⁴¹ Beghi *Warada* Economic and Finance Office, 2019, p. 5.

⁴² Tasama Ta'a, 2014, p. 145.

⁴³ Beghi *Warada* Economic and Finance Office, 2019, p. 9.

⁴⁴ *Ibid* and Amanuel Kitata," Economic History of Beghi District from, ca. 1922-1991," (BA Thesis, Wollegga University, History, 2012), pp. 13-15.

⁴⁵ Informants: Mathewos Takilu Nabara Achol, and Marga Nado.

⁴⁶ *Ibid*, and Informants: Yadasa Barki, Eliyas Birane.

generation was begun later on.⁴⁷ It was after 1920s that the the Beghi's economy started to be dominated by coffee.⁴⁸

In relation to commercialization and trade within the study area, the Italians contributed a lot for its development. They tried to organize merchant groups who created a new phase in the commercial culture of the Beghi.⁴⁹ According to Amanuel, during their short-lived occupation, the Italians supported Muslim Merchants who had Italian background to perform trade in the study area.⁵⁰ However, number of amount mostly Arab and Bërtha merchants started to participate as caravan merchants (long distance traders) between Sudan and Beghi crossing the Beghi land.

By doing so, coffee production emerged as an important source of cash crop income for the country in general and for the Beghi in particular. It seems that the availability of coffee in some area, and its commercial value attracted many people from Ethiopian territory which in turn helped for the revival of commercial towns which later evolved as *wèrèdá*.⁵¹

Like wise, with the growing number and involvement of settlers from the Sudan into coffee marketing centers together with the rising coffee price created favorable condition for the emergence of additional commercial centers in the Beghi land. As a result, new commercial towns like Tongo, Gaba Dafino, and Kobor, Tenze, Haro Dima were established since the 1950s. In addition, small markets which feed the above commercial towns were emerged within the Beghi which constituted about thirty in number until 1960s.⁵² In addition, in the post Italian period, a number of Yemeni and Sudan Arabs and also the Oromo, Guraghe involved in small scale business particularly in bakery and *shaybēt*, or tea house, in the different parts of the area.⁵³

Beghi is one of the livestock rich areas in West Wëllëgga zone Oromia Regional state and the rearing of this livestock playing important role in the livelihood for the people of the area. There is considerable number of cattle, goat, sheep, donkey, horse, and etc. Livestock and their products are among the major source of income and food for the dwellers of the area. However, various animal disease and the parasites cause severe damage on the animal production, productivity and great reduction in number of animals. For instance, internal

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ Informants: Qanna Gammachu, Olana Galata, and Rekalign Tekula.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ Informants: Mohammed Abdisa, Buli Wayyu.

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ *Ibid.*

and external parasites are prevailing against the livestock production in the area. In order to tackle the problem of the livestock production, there are many veterinary clinics and health posts as well as veterinary personnel (Doctor and health assistance) in Beghi district.⁵⁴ The rearing of animal and the production of crops were conducting side by side in almost all areas of Beghi district along with the production of honey⁵⁵.

Linguistically, the Beghi people speak, Afaan Oromoo, a language that is categorized under East Highland Cushitic,⁵⁶ and the Nilo-Saharan Super family which includes languages of Mao, Komoo, and Bërtha.⁵⁷ The above mentioned languages a speaker has close cultural, social and linguistic similarity.

1.2 Inter-Ethnic Integration of Oromo of Beghi with Non-Oromo People

According to tradition and written sources, there were different ethnic groups in the Beghi area.⁵⁸ Some of these peoples may have belonged to non-Oromo linguistic and ethnic clusters and some may have even been the ancestors of the present-day Oromo.⁵⁹ The linguistic and ethnic classification of these peoples is far from clear, as are their relations with the peoples found north, south, and west of the Mëçhaa regions nowadays. The Oromo had two basic ways of confronting the non-Oromo people they met on their way. Either they fought them or they tried to integrate and absorb them in their society through the *MeedëÇha* and *GuddiffäÇha* systems⁶⁰.

In this sense many of the present-day the Oromo Mëçhaa clans of the western Wëllëgga generally and the Beghi particularly may be descendants of these autochthonous people. The main groups mentioned in Beghi land in connection with the expansion and settlement of the Oromo people in the Beghi area are the Mao and Komo, the Bërtha, the Bussase, and some little of the Šëmitic speaking family such as; the Amhara, the Tigrea, and the

⁵⁴ Beghi *Warada* Culture and Tourism Office, *Seena Aanaa Beghii*, 2016, p. 34, Informants: Maatiwos Takiluu, Hashim Yaaqob, Addunyaa Naadoo, Iyasu Hikaa, and Caaqaa Waloo.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ Abraham Alemu, "Ethnicity and Local Identity in the Folklore of the South-Western Oromo of Ethiopia: a Comparative Study," (PHD Dissertation, VU University Amsterdam, Social Science. 2006), p. 11.

⁵⁷ Triulzi, Salt, Gold and Legitimacy, p. 185.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, Tekalign Etefa, p. 8, and Informants: Mohammed, Xafaa, and Nabbara.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ Negaso Gidada, "History of the Sayyoo Oromo of South Western Wallagga, Ethiopia from about 1730 to 1886," (PHD. Dissertation, Frankfurt University), 1984), p.62, and Abreham Alemu, "Ethnicity and Local Identity in the Folklore of the South-Western Oromo of Ethiopia: a Comparative Study," (PHD. Dissertation, Faculty of Social Science, Amsterdam University. 2015), p. 100.

Guraghe.⁶¹ These different ethnic groups have their cultural practices and socio-economic formations, despite their long period of intensive cultural and socio-economic interactions.⁶²

According to the written documents and local informants, long before the arrival and settlement of other ethnic groups, the low land and Dabus and other rivers mouth of Beghi likes; Shonboo, Kongloo Gaara Keello, Kobor, Wetsee Waddeessaa, Watta Gittan, Gemii Gabbaa, Shuuraa Maaramoo was occupied by the Mao and Koma peoples and the central and high land of Beghi like; Wabaraa, Shaashii, Eegoo, Billee, Boonii Bakaree, Gabaa Dafinoo, Beghi town, Gabaa Kamisaa, Maaruu Dallasii, Aandii Qilxuu Jafee and others is dominated by the Oromo⁶³. The Mao (*Maayicco* or *Maya*) are perhaps the most important non-Oromo people in the history of Oromo. Historians assume that the Mao originally lived on both sides of Dhidhessaa River, their area of settlement extending far to the west of this river⁶⁴. According to Bender which is Negaso cited, the linguistic and ethnic classification of Mao is not yet sufficiently clarified. Accordingly, the Northern Mao (Mao of Beghi and Bambasi) belong to the Jamjam linguistically, while the south (Anfillo) Mao form part of the northern Kafa language group⁶⁵. According to Bender's investigation, the term Mao is used by *Gallas* [Oromo] to refer to the very dark-skinned people of the area, much as the general Ethiopian term "*Shanqilla*" is used. Accordingly, the meaning of "Mao" in the languages of some of the people concerned is simply "People"⁶⁶. However, Bender said that today in Beghi or northern Mao have spoken eighteen different dialects⁶⁷. According to the oral informants, the Mao peoples have had their own indigenous religion before the introduction and embraced of monotheists' religion of Islam and Christianity. After the introduction and arrival of Islam in Beghi and the surrounding areas majority of the Mao of Beghi is accepted Islam religion. Before embraced Islam, the Mao peoples worship the supernatural being called *Yere*⁶⁸. Also, political system centered on monarchical institution using the symbolic manifestation was characteristics. Their

⁶¹ Bender, *The Beginning of Ethnohistory in Western Wellegga: The Mao Problem. Patterns in Language, Culture, and Society: Sub-Saharan Africa*. OSU WPL 19.125-141 (1975). Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, p. 128.

⁶² Informants: Mohammed, Kanarra, Tafa and Nabbara.

⁶³ Tekalighn, pp. 68-72, and Informants: Nabbara Onchool and Tekalighn Bonsa.

⁶⁴ Negaso.P.78.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ Bender.P. 128.

⁶⁷ *Ibid*

⁶⁸ Informants: Merga Nado and Tafa Shagadri.

supreme king was called *Taaroo* and subordinate “Kings” were known as *Qedderaashoo*. Below the *Qedderaashoo* were the *Niho* or clan representatives⁶⁹.

Another ethnic group that has been living in the same area for the centuries is Bärtha.⁷⁰ It is clear that the written sources and oral traditions are the most significant sources to reconstruct the history of illiterate society; according to this their origin was traced outside Ethiopia. Bärtha people are one of the five indigenous ethnic groups which are located in Bēnishangul Gumuz Regional States. Originally the Bärtha of Bēla-Shangul came from southern Sinnar, today’s Blue Nile of Sudan particularly from *Jabel Gerri*. The Bärthas claimed that they were led to the Ethiopian ridge by their spiritual leader Bartu (Father of Bärtha), who is said to have settled at *Jabal Sud* (Black Mountain) south west of the present border town of Gisan in the *Tumet* valley⁷¹. Some historical sources indicate the advent of the Bärthas to the present western Ethiopia was by the late 17th century and they pushed the Komo and Mao peoples which have been said to be 1st settlers of *Tumet* valley from the border⁷².

The name of the area (*Tumet*) seems to have been the Mao word. In Mao language “*Tumet’obe*” means to drink water.⁷³ But Erku Asseffa argues the coming of the Barthas in the 17th century to the present Bēla-Shangul. He raised the coming of the Funji to the Bärtha lands in the before 16th century⁷⁴. The Bärtha which were called by derogatory name [*Shanqila*] were first mentioned in the Ethiopian documents beginning from the period of king Yishaq (1412-1427). Erku concluded the arrival of Bärthas was before the coming of the Funji i.e. prior to 17th century⁷⁵.

The new settlers (the Bärtha) first inhabited with the Mao and Koma. However, in the new influence of migrant Bärtha came, Mao and Koma left the region. The Bärtha refers to both Mao and Koma as *Homa* who are not familiar as *Umma dudu* (“*Umm*,” slave, “*dudu*,”

⁶⁹ Negaso, p. 79.

⁷⁰ Informants: Mohammed Abdisa, Tekalighn Tekula

⁷¹ *Ibid*, and Erku Asefe, “A History of Gold Mining in Belashangul 1898-1991” (MA Thesis Jimma University, 2017), p.5.

⁷² *Ibid*.

⁷³ *Ibid*.

⁷⁴ *Ibid*.

⁷⁵ Tekelign Etefa, “A Survey history of the Bartha people-ca.1821-1991” (MA Thesis Jimma University, 2017), p. 5.

leaves) or “slaves of the leaves.” When the Bärtha initially come face to with them, they are said to have had tree bark and grass as their only item of clothing⁷⁶.

As a result of population pressure around the *Jabal Sud*, Mao and Koma were derived further south and east in to Beghi, Fadashi, Gidami, and Anfillo to keep a way themselves from domination. According to the informants’ indication, when the Mao, Koma, and Bärtha immigrated to Beghi area, the area had been occupied in mass by the Oromo people.⁷⁷ And then he well comed by the Oromo people and embraced them. This retreat helped the majority Maos and the Kommas to preserve their identity. However, in the later times, the Mao and the Kommas were pushed back by the Oromo from the East and the Bärthas from the west because of the demographic pressure and the scarcity of grazing and cultivation land.⁷⁸ After the second half of the 19th century slave raiding actions were accountable for the interruption of the Mao’s and Koma’s with their proto type distinctiveness⁷⁹.

Linguistically, the Bärtha belong to the group of Sudanese branch in the Nilo-Sahara language family⁸⁰. Additional legendary sources affirm that the Bärtha descend from one father, *Bärthu*, and a Mother *Endili*. From these people they originated, multiplied and scattered. Politically for a long period of time the region has been under the *Sheikdoms* whose home land was slaving site and, traditional trading routes with the other Ethiopian territories, the Sudan, Egypt, and Turk⁸¹.

The Bärtha who predominantly settled in Beghi and Assosa zone are dark in color and their cultural appearance life style and way of dressing is similar to Sudanese. Almost all of the Bärtha are the followers of Islam because the region had been ruled in the past by Muslim *Shayks* and the ruling elite were mostly Islamized in the earlier times. The Bärtha people constituted the largest part of the region. These people occupied both side of the present Ethio-Sudanese border in the south-west part of Ethiopia⁸². The great majority of the Bärtha attacked to the principles, norms, and beliefs of their community administered by

⁷⁶ Erku Asefe, p.5.

⁷⁷ Informants: Tekalighn Tekula, and Olana Galata.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹ Adinew Abatew, “Political and Socio-economic History of Assosa,” (MA Thesis, AAU, History, 2011), p.19.

⁸⁰ Ahland, p. 18.

⁸¹ Fentaw Dejene, “Relationship between Bertas and Settlers in Assosa Area: 1960s to 1990s” (MA Thesis, Bahar Dar University, 2013), p.29.

⁸² Bahru Zewde, pp.69-71.

religious and community leaders who justify their tasks through the traditions of their religion. Polygamous marriage is common among the Bärtha in which a husband may have more than a wife. The descendants of the earlier ruling family, the wealthy peoples, the spiritual leaders, the bilinguals and the educated groups are the influential in the day to day socio-economic life of the people⁸³.

Other ethnic group which is inhabited in Beghi is the Bússäse people⁸⁴. The Bússäse were originally one of the non-Oromo groups⁸⁵. In the original home lands of Bússäse, oral informants and written sources were argued different indications. For this justification Lange traced the origin of Bússäse was Yemenites and came to Ethiopia settled the area of today Kafa later distributed in different place of Ethiopia⁸⁶. Fiixe Birri and oral informants were argued that the origin of Bússäse was connected with the Portuguese. According to view of Fiixee, and oral informants, during the war of Ahmed Giragn with Christian's king of the Abyssinia Gelawadewos, the Abyssinian king asked military support to the Portuguese king to fight against the warriors of Ahmed Giragn or Sultanate of Adal in 1543. At this battle field, the Portuguese military force clashed and defeated the army of Giragn⁸⁷. After the battle field, the soldier of Portuguese who lived in life is stayed in Ethiopian empire and search new lands for the permanent settlement regions. However, they came and settled in south western region and settled in Kafa. Then gradually, because of the population number increase they started to penetrate in different region crossing the Gojeb River.⁸⁸ On the other hand, there is no reason why they release kafa and migrated in south west is not known. According to Girma Mangistu, Bússäse was an Omotic speaker people from Kafa, were two brothers Yebbi Bússäse and Kafa Bússäse were lived in Kafa and gradually *Yebbi* Bússäse was driven out from Kafa and settles around Tullu Walal area later, during Oromo expansion the Bússäse inter to the land of Beghi and start to establish their ruling dynasty in Anfillo.⁸⁹

⁸³ Erku Asefe, p.22.

⁸⁴ Informants: Tekalighn Tekula, Olana Galata, and Ramatalla.

⁸⁵ Antene Wasihum, "A Religious History of the Kingdom of Gumma, south western Ethiopia ca.1855-1970," (MA Thesis, Jimma University, Department of History, 2018), p. 8. Negaso Gidada, p. 78. and Informants: Iyasu Hika, Mosisa Caqa and Nabbara Onchol.

⁸⁶ Lange, pp. 4-7, and Informants: Mikael Qadida, Jombor Fite, and Niftalem Nabbara.

⁸⁷ Fite, P. 40, and *Ibid*

⁸⁸ *Ibid*.

⁸⁹ Girma Mangistu, "Busase of Anfillo Historical study," BA thesis, (Addis Ababa University), department of history, P.2.

According to oral informants and written sources, large number of Bússäse people migrated to Beghi during the last second half of 19th and first half of twenty centuries from Anfillo, Dambi Dollo, and Gidami. During this time, King of Qellam *Déjjazmäch* Birruu Waldee Mikaa’el asked much annually tribute after them conquest the ruling dynasty of Anfillo⁹⁰.

However, they came to be highly intermingled with the Oromo nations. They trace their origin back to the *Kaffichoo*, one of the Omotic language speaking ethno-linguistic groups in the southwestern part of the Ethiopian region⁹¹. Oral informants indicated that, “The Oromo of Beghi is highly intermixed with the people who those lived in the area after the coming of Beghi Oromo through adoption, and assimilation”⁹². Most probably the Bússäse were among the peoples who lived in the Beghi after the Oromo settlement⁹³. Supporting the idea of oral informants, Deresaa Debu in his enlightening thesis indicates that in their sudden conquest of the non-Oromo the Oromo of Gumma were forced to make considerable socio-political concessions to their clients (*gabaro*). They adopted many of the defeated people as members of their own clan with all the rights to share equally in the benefit of any triumph. The Oromo easily personalized to the new environment and coalesced with the indigenous people by imparting their language⁹⁴. The Oromo genius for assimilation quickly claimed any non-Oromo.

This was made possible by the fact that the Oromo were well-equipped with flexible qualities which made the adjustment of their culture to new conditions easy. The Bússäse in Beghi were fundamentally intermingled with the Oromo and adopted Islamic and Christian culture. Today it is very difficult to distinguish some of the Bússäse from the Oromo since they speak the same language, Afaan Oromo and profess the same religion, Islam and Christian.

As I already discussed earlier, the Beghi Oromo are one of the sub – Mēḥa Oromo groups that together constitute the south western Oromo of the region. Similar to the Oromo of other regions, the Oromo of Beghi have their religion on which they built their world outlook and conceptualize creation. The first religion to emerge in the region under discussion as it did in other Oromo regions is the Oromo indigenous religion. It is neither

⁹⁰ Informants: Nabbaraa Achool, Jombor Fixee, Xafaa Shagirdi.

⁹¹ Anteneh, p.8.

⁹² Informants: Nabbara Achol, Xaafa Shagadri, Iyasu Hika, and Jombor Fite

⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴ Dheressa Dhebu, “Agro-Ecological History of Omo Nada,” MA Thesis in History, AAU, 2008), P.

possible to give the exact date of the beginning of this religion nor when had it been crumbled, due to a scarcity of written documents.⁹⁵

⁹⁵ Mohammed, p.107

CHAPTER TWO

2. INDIGENOUS RELIGION (*WAAQQEĀFFĒÑÑA*) OF THE BEGHI OROMO

2.1 Introduction

Before the incorporation of Beghi into the Ethiopian Empire, the people of Beghi were predominantly adherents of indigenous religions.⁹⁶ The Oromo people had their own indigenous religion prior to the coming of Islam and Christianity to the area, which is called *Waaqeffēñña*.⁹⁷ Today, the majority of the Oromo are predominantly the followers of Islam and Christianity. Before starting to discuss a history of indigenous religion in Beghi, I have tried to show the views of one of the scholars on indigenous religion. Bahru Zewde has presented his view about the indigenous region as follows:

[Traditional belief] includes a variety of beliefs and practices indigenous to the region. Its distinctive mark is the belief in different natural phenomena such as the sun, the moon, the sky, mountains, rivers, lakes, trees, and animals. Special powers over people and society are attributed to these phenomena. Because of this, people worship, pray, and make offerings to them in elaborate rituals. The functionaries who officiate over these rituals are held in a lot of respect and fear as intermediaries between society and these powerful phenomena.⁹⁸

Unlike Bahru's definition, the Oromo indigenous religion is not a religion or belief that tends individuals to worship different natural phenomena rather to worship or belief in the Supreme Being which they called *Waaqa*. For the Oromo, *Waaqa* is the ultimate creator of the universe, with its living and non-living inhabitants, including humans, animals, trees, mountains, rivers, and everything else that exists in the world. Bartel states that *Waaqa* is regarded as the source of all forms of life and only he has the power to endow life.⁹⁹ This is what the Oromo refer to as *uumaa* which means Creator. The Oromo say "*waaqa* is the one above us." The Oromo believe that all forms of life belong to *waaqa* and man has no right to destroy what *waaqa* has created. As to the animals they kill and the plants they cut as food items, the Oromo explain that *waaqa* allows these for them"¹⁰⁰

This indigenous religion is called *Waaqeffäñña* and the adherents of that religion are called *Waaqeffätoota* or *Waaqeffätaa/tuu* if it is singular. They have been practicing it

⁹⁶ Alemayehu, p. 6; informants: Mohammed Abdisa and Yadasa Tesso.

⁹⁷ Mohammed Musa, "A History of Islam in Beghi Districts from 1880s to 2006," MA Thesis, Wollega University, 2020), p.9.

⁹⁸ Bahru, *A Short History of ...*, p.108.

⁹⁹ Bartels, p.91

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid*, pp.91-92

since antiquity. Likewise, different ethnic groups in Beghi have their own indigenous religions prior to Christianity and Islam.¹⁰¹

The term *waaqqeffännä* is derived from *waaqa*, concerning the origin of the term *waaqa*, Gamachu outlines that “*waaqa*, is omnipotent, omnipresent, and omniscient; hence *waaqqeffännä* is a primal Oromo religion that the earliest Oromo inherited from *waaqa*”.¹⁰² In *Afaan Oromo* (Oromo language) the term *waaqa* has two different meanings, its first meaning is to call the sky which stands without pillar and its second meaning is to call the creator of everything“s on the earth¹⁰³. Workineh in his work explain *waaqa* as follow:

Waaqa, is he who is before everything else *Waaqa*, is *uumma*, a creator of everything on the world... *waaqa* is *hunda beeka* (omniscient) He knows everything; he is all-wise all-knowing, all-seeing and all-hearing *waaqa*, is *hundaa tolaa* (omnibenevolent) *Waaqa*, is kind ... *Waaqa*, is *hunda danda'aa* (omnipotent). Noting is impossible with *waaqa*; *waaqa*, is intolerant of injustice, crime, sin, and all falsehoods.¹⁰⁴

Before the Oromo of Beghi people were converted either to Christianity and Islam in the first three decade of 19th c, the communities of Beghi had been they believed in one God whose color is black "*waaqa guraacha*" to mean the black God.¹⁰⁵ Because of this, the Oromo nation recognizes the supremacy of the black over all other things.¹⁰⁶ The Arabic word *Rabbii* is also used by Muslim Oromo, *Yërëë* of the Mao and Bussase and *Yëroo* in Gaanqaa¹⁰⁷ and others had been also used to refer to their supreme being in Beghi indigenous belief, the concept of *waaqa* could also be used to refer to the expanse of the sky as seen from the earth, a supreme being and also could be understood to mean the heaven, as the abode of the supreme being.¹⁰⁸

2.2 The *Gädaa* System

The socio-economic, political and religious lives of the Oromo were highly intertwined, which would be incomplete without investigating the *Gädaa* system. This is the reason why reconstructing and understanding the life requires understanding the essence of *Gädaa*

¹⁰¹ Muhammed Musa, pp. 9-11, and Informans: Tafa Shagirdi, Kanarra, and Mohammed Abdisa.

¹⁰² Gemachu Megaresa, “*Oromumma: Tradition and Consciousness and Identity*”: (Larenceville: The Red Sea Press, 1996), p.34

¹⁰³ Informants: Tafari Tasisa, Jombor Fixe.

¹⁰⁴ workineh Kalbessa, *Traditional Oromo Attitudes to wards Environment*, (Addis Ababa: OSSRE, 2001), p. 92

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid*, and Muhammed, p. 9.

¹⁰⁶ Barruulee Waaqeffanna, *Jildii, II lkb, 1*(Finfinnee, 2001), p.25

¹⁰⁷ Negaso, p. 79, and Informants: Adugna Nado, Nabbara Achol.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid*, p.107

itself.¹⁰⁹ Though the term *Gädaa* has different contextual meanings, as a system it is an organization, which directs every aspect of the Oromo life: politics, economics, social, religious and cultural activities. Asmarom Legesse explains *Gädaa* system as a variety of democratic political organization that the Oromo have investigated and practiced at least for the last five hundred years.¹¹⁰ It is a system of sections of generation (*Gädaa* classes) that succeed each other every eight years in assuming political, military, judicial, legislative and ritual responsibilities.¹¹¹ Asafa state that on definition of *gädaa* as three interrelated meanings: ‘a grade during which a class of people assumes politico-ritual leadership, a period of eight years during which elected officials take power from the previous ones and democratic institution of Oromo people’.¹¹²

The history of the *Gädaa* in the Beghi Oromo traces back to the sixteenth century Oromo expansion. *Makko Bili* headed the expansion towards the western part of Oromia.¹¹³ He amended law that is known as ‘*Seera Makkoo*’ meaning ‘laws of *Makko*’ around the year 1589.¹¹⁴ The laws of *Mako* played a significant role in the mass movement. *Makko* declared laws and established the *gadaa* centre for the Mëcha Oromo group at Oda Bisil.¹¹⁵ Negaso also states that Mako was the *Abbaa Bokkuu* of all the mecha Oromo Group.¹¹⁶ It was located in the upper Gibe basin between Gedo, Bilo and Gibe River. Even though, the area was used as a strategic place for further expansion to the areas they finally dominated, the place no longer served as a common *gädaa* center for the group. Instead, different local *bokkuu* centers were established with the advance expansion of the Mëcha group. *Makko*’s laws served as the foundation of the different *gädaa* centers for the Mëcha Oromo group.

According to my informants, the laws were derived from the basic fundamentals of Oromo worldviews and the people understood the laws orally. Therefore, the life and works of the people of Sayyoo also was generally guided based on the laws of *Makko*.¹¹⁷ Until the collapse of the *gädaa* system following to the arrival of World religion Christianity and

¹⁰⁹ Dereje Hinaw, 2012, p. 82.

¹¹⁰ Asmarom Leggasse, 2000, p. 30.

¹¹¹ Ibid, pp. 30-31.

¹¹² Asafa, 2012, p. 131.

¹¹³ Beghi Warada Cultural and Tourisem Office: Seenaa Aanaa Beghi (History of Beghi District), 2010, p. 15.

¹¹⁴ Asmarom, 2000, p.241.

¹¹⁵ Dejene Gemechu, 1999, p. 26.

¹¹⁶ Negaso, 2001, p. 31.

¹¹⁷ Informants: Xaafa Shagirdi, Mohammed Abdisa, and Marga Nado.

Islam, ca. 1860s and 1880s, *tumaa Makkoo* (*Makko's law*) was a source of essential cultural principles by which each activities of the society were governed.¹¹⁸

Among the Beghi Oromo, there are some evidences that show the Beghi were practicing *gädaa* system before the further expansion of Abrahamic religion around 1900 on wards.¹¹⁹ Asmarom states that the great law maker of Mëcha, *Makko Bili* have reestablished the system of ten *Gädaa* classes, the eight years duration of term in office, the forty years generation intervals and rules governing the Borana-Gabaro relationships.¹²⁰ In this regard, Negaso states that *Makko Bili* was given the role of an instructor; he was said to be the *Abbaa Bokkuu* (father of the scepter) and some argued he was *Abbaa Duulaa* (war leader), further some regarded *Makko* as the founder of the Mëcha *Gädaa* system.¹²¹ It should be stress that *Makko Bili* did not spontaneously make the law for the Mëcha Oromo; he re-proclaimed what his predecessors had formulated.¹²² Even though, it seems to have been forgotten, my informants are aware that the Beghi Oromo was ruled by the system for the long time until it was collapsed in last two decades of 19th century. According to my key informants, the place for *Jila Gädaa* i.e. centres of the *Gädaa* was located in Beghi Gunfi *Kébélé*.¹²³ This could be one evidence that justifies the Beghi was ruled by the Oromo indigenous political institution, *gädaa* system before the incorporation to the modern Ethiopian empire in 1886.

The informants further added some of the processes of *jila*, (*gädaa* ritual) of the Beghi. *Abbaa bokkuu*, head of the *gädaa* classes had gathered there at the end of every eight years to declare new laws and to amend the old laws. The law includes and concerns all corners of the people's life. Everything has laws; there was *seera uumaa* (laws of creator), and *seera namaa* (laws of human beings).¹²⁴ Gemetchu Megerssa, in his discussion of knowledge and identity, classified the Oromo knowledge of society and the world in to two: customary knowledge known as *beekumsa aadaa*, and knowledge of laws known as *beekumsa seeraa*.¹²⁵ This knowledge helps them understand their cultural identity, relation to nature and existence of powerful force that regulates the connection between nature and society. The laws are further sub divided into *seera Waaqa* (the laws of God), and *seera*

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹²⁰ Asmarom, 2006, p. 222.

¹²¹ Negaso, 2001, p. 32.

¹²² *Ibid.*

¹²³ Informants: Xafaa, Kanarra, Mohammeds, and Jombor.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*

¹²⁵ Gemechu, 1993, pp. 20-23.

namaa (the laws of human beings). The laws of God are unchallengeable, and the laws of human beings can be changed through democratic means. Oromo customary knowledge is a public and common knowledge that guides and regulates the activities of members of society; some elements of this customary knowledge can develop into rules or laws depending on the interest of society.¹²⁶

My key informants shared similar idea and gave some features of the laws. According to them, laws of God, which regulates the relationship between God and human beings, are related to the Oromo traditional religion. It deals with religious ritual responsibilities such as *irreecha, yaa rabbii, ateetee*.¹²⁷ Laws of human beings are associated with the issues of social life, which includes individual ethics, family and neighborhood relationships and responsibilities, respecting social orders, customs, norms and values, participating in social organizations and so on. It also regulates wise uses of natural resources that consist of taking care for communal properties, respecting the rights of animals, caring for plants and water bodies and the like.¹²⁸ Asmarom also argued that contrary to many Africans, where customary laws are taken for granted and handed down from generation to generation and rare deliberate tradition of law making, in the Oromo culture laws are known as ‘*seera*’ and customs as ‘*aadaa*’ and they are subjected to deliberate change.¹²⁹

However, according to Mitiku, some times before 1886, the system weakened and faded out through gradual process and in this year, the system is out dated for good among the Sayyoo.¹³⁰ According to my informants and available secondary sources, the main reason why the *gädaa* system declined was protracted conflicts within and with neighboring people that preceded subjugation of the Sayyoo in general and Beghi in particularly under Menilik.¹³¹ According to my informants, the land acquisition in Beghi and maintaining its possession was the matter of conflicts from the beginning. The Mëcha groups such as Sayyoo, Leeqaa and Tumme considered one another as *fira* (friends), free and *birmaduu* (equal) and cooperated in their military actions to deliver the land from the control of the *diina* (enemy or aliens).¹³² For instance, they fought with Mao and Komo and delivered the land from their control.¹³³ After they delivered the land from the control of the *diina*, the

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*

¹²⁷ Informants: Nabara, Marga, Jombor, and Tafari.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*

¹²⁹ Asmarom, 2006, p. 208.

¹³⁰ Mitiku, 1999, p. 3.

¹³¹ Informants: Tekalign, Xafaa, and Mohammed.

¹³² *Ibid.*

¹³³ *Ibid.*

different clans of and regional groups began to fight each other. For instance, Sayyoo against Leeqaa, garjeedaa against Laaloo, Wayyuu against Laaloo fought one another.¹³⁴ The disputes became more violent as more individuals, lineage and clans came to the region from outside. Negaso further described the consecutive periods as follows:

Beginning from the 1780s, individual families tried to expand their recourses, increase the number of their members and enhance their sphere of influence. Thus, those who were physically strong, experts in fighting, who had political wisdom were successful both in surviving and in expanding their power and wealth. In the period between 1780 up to 1830, an administrative and military hierarchy and enforced order were established in different areas of Sayyoo. The Sayyoo describe this period as *jabana gaalamootaa fi jabana eeboo* (the age of lawless and the age of the spear).¹³⁵

These individuals were mainly the *Abbaa Duulaa's* (war leaders) whose main responsibility was assisting the *Abbaa Bokkuu* during the time of war.¹³⁶ They stayed on their position more than allowed time and later the war leaders declared themselves as *mootii* (kings) and became clan leaders in different areas of Beghi.¹³⁷ For example, Jote Tullu of Gidami, Ashanaa Jotte of Wabara, Nadhi Konno of Shaashii, Kuttu Golja of Wetsee Waddessaa, were local rulers of the Beghi before the Menilik conquest 1886.¹³⁸ However, after the year 1886, these local rulers paid tribute to the central government through Gobana, Menilik's general, and was enjoying relative autonomy up to the coming of *Dajazmach* Biru Wolde Gabriel in 1896 when Sayyoo in general and Beghi in particular lost its autonomy completely.¹³⁹

Without the knowledge of the *Gëdaa* system, it is difficult to appreciate a religious history of the Oromo. Because the *Gëdaa* system is an institution which governs and governed religion, economy, and politics of the Oromo society. The Oromo of Beghi like other Wëllëgga Oromo groups had been practicing the *Gëdaa* system for ages. According to the manuscript which is entitled '*Seenaa Aanaa Begii*' ('A History of Beghi District'), after they settled the Oromo of today's Beghi had established their own *Gëdaa* center and they

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*

¹³⁵ Negaso, 2001, pp. 168-177

¹³⁶ Asafa, 2012, p. 135.

¹³⁷ Informants: Kanarra, Xafaa, Mohammed, and Marga.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*

had also practiced the *Gëdaa* system at *Odaa* Konno for a long period of time.¹⁴⁰ The following list shows the well-remembered *Gadaa* centers, where *Gëdaa* assembly (*Caffee*) was held in West Wëllëgga generally and Beghi in particular before the expansion of Christianity and Islam. Such as; *Odaa* Konno at Beghi, *Odaa* Kaarraa at Laaloo Assab, *Odaa* Dillaa Kobbii Warqee at Noolee Kaabbaa, *Odaa Simbir Wacaa Malkaa Oogiyoo* at Mana Sibuu and etc.¹⁴¹

In addition to *Odaa* Konnoo, there was also another place in Beghi where they practiced the *Gëdaa* ceremonies. Oral informants state that, for a long period of time, the Oromo of Beghi practiced the *Gëdaa* system at Tuullu Daaqaa *Abbaa* Hooloo.¹⁴² The Beghi Oromo were also active participants of the *Irreçhaa* (thanks giving) ritual during the temporal scope of this study.¹⁴³ There are two types of *Irreçha*: *Irreçhaa Malkaa* (*Irreçhaa* by a River\water body) and *Irreçhaa Tulluu* (*Irreçha* on the mountain).¹⁴⁴ The *Irreçha* ceremony of the communities of Beghi had been taking place at *Mälkaa Araara*. The participants of *Irreçha Mälkaa Araara* performed various rituals, such as immersing the green grass and the flowers they are carrying into the lake and sprinkling themselves with water as well as others around.¹⁴⁵

2.2.1 The *Qaalluu* Institution in Bèghi

Original Oromo religious leaders, *qaallus*, have had a moral authority and social obligation to oppose tyrants and support popular Oromo democracy and *gädaa* leaders, and to encourage harmonious and democratic relations based on the principles of *safu*, *Waaqa*, and *uuma*. The *qaallu* “is thought to possess sacred characteristics that enable him to act as intermediary between the people and . . . [God],” and “he had no administrative power, but could bless or withhold blessings from *gädaa* leadership, and had an extraordinary power to curse anyone who threatened the wellbeing of the entire community by deviating from [God’s] order”.¹⁴⁶

The *qaallu* institution has been committed to social justice, the laws of God, and the rule of law, and fair deliberation; the *qaallu* “residence was considered politically neutral ground, suitable for debating controversial issues and for adjudicating highly charged disputes,

¹⁴⁰ Beghi Warada Culture and Tourism Office, *Seena Aanaa Begii*, 2016, p. 23.

¹⁴¹ Informants: Tafari Taasisa, Akkati Abara, Mohammed Abdisa, and Qanna Gammachu

¹⁴² *Ibid.*

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, and Oromia Cultural and Tourism Bureau, *Seenaafi Sirna Gadaa Oromoo Maccaa Hanga Jalqaba Jaarraa 20ffaatti*, 2015, *Jildii Iffaa*, p. 194.

¹⁴⁵ Informants: Tafari Tasisa, Yadasa Tesso, Jombor Fixe, and Ahmed Musa.

¹⁴⁶ Kelly, 1992, p. 166.

although he himself might not take a prominent role in proceedings”.¹⁴⁷ The *qaallu* institution has played an important role in protecting original Oromo culture, religion, worldview, and identity. When those Oromos who were influenced by this institution kept their Oromo names, most Oromos who were converted to Islam or Christianity willingly or by force abandoned their Oromo names and adopted Muslim or Christian names depending on their borrowed religion. The *qaallu* can be credited with having played an indirect role in the preservation of the Oromo identity and the Oromo political system. The criteria to be a *qallu* included seniority in lineages, respectability in the community, expertise in ritual practices, moral qualification, and respect for cultural taboos, sound social status, and other leadership qualities.¹⁴⁸ The leader of all *qallus* was known as *Abbaa Muuda* (father of the anointment) who was considered to be the prophet and spiritual leader of Oromo society. Oromo pilgrims traveled to the residence of *Abbaa Muuda* to receive his blessing and anointment to be ritual experts in their respective regions.¹⁴⁹

Abbaa Muuda served as the spiritual center and symbol of Oromo unity and assisted all Oromo branches to keep in touch with one another for several centuries; “as the Jews believe in Moses and the Muslims in Muhammad, the Oromo believe in their *Abbaa Muuda* [sic]”.¹⁵⁰ *Abbaa Muuda* like other *qaallu* leaders encouraged harmonious and democratic relations in Oromo society. According to the *qaallu* mythology, *Abbaa Muuda*, the original Oromo religious leader was descended from heaven.¹⁵¹ Oromo representatives traveled to the highlands of the mid-south Oromia to honor *Abbaa Muuda* and to receive his blessing and anointment that qualified them as pilgrims known as *jilas* to be ritual experts in their respective areas.¹⁵² When Oromo representatives went to him from far and near places to receive his blessings, *Abbaa Muuda* commanded them “not to cut their hair and to be righteous, not to recognize any leader who tries to get absolute power and not to fight among themselves”.¹⁵³

In its modified form, the *qaallu* institution exists in some parts of Oromia, such as in the Guji and Borana areas; it still protects an Oromo way of life, such as dispensing of local

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁸ Knutsson, Karl, Eric, *Authority and Change: A Study of the Kallu Institution among the Macha Galla of Ethiopia*. Goteborg: Elanders Boktryckeri Aktiebolg, 1967, pp. 66-67.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 148.

¹⁵⁰ Hassen, 1991, p.79.

¹⁵¹ Knutsson, p.67.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 148.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*

justice based on Oromo customs and providing solutions to problems created by a changing social condition.¹⁵⁴ The *qallus* of Guji and Borana are ritual leaders, advisors, and ritual experts in the *gädaa* system. The *qallus* “possess the exclusive prerogative of legitimizing the different *gädaa* officials, when a new *gädaa* group is initiated into the politically active class”.¹⁵⁵ The Oromo still practice some elements of Oromo democratic values in the areas where the *gädaa* system was suppressed a century ago.

According to Mohammed, there were three traditions for the origin of *qaalluu*. The first tradition affirmed that *qaalluu* fell from the sky, while the second tradition asserts that *qaalluu* was found with the first black Cow. And the third tradition indicates that *qaalluu* was the eldest son of the Oromo.¹⁵⁶ Furthermore, Dirribi also describes the origin of *qaalluu* by stating, “*Qaalluu waaqatu muude*” which means *Qaalluu* was anointed by God.¹⁵⁷ The tradition which indicates *qaalluu* was the eldest son of *ilma Oromo* and *Qaalluu* was anointed by God appear plausible, where as the traditions about the fall of *Qaalluu* from the sky and it was found with the first black Cow see incomprehensible.¹⁵⁸

It said that after the Bèghi *Qaallus* were deceased their spirit (*Qaalluus*) or *qaallumma* was inherited by their family or clans. Traditionally after the death of *Qaalluu*, a man who inherited the spirits from his predecessor arranged a special ceremony at his residence in which all members of his clan took part. After they ate and drank the feast prepared for the ceremony they gave recognition to the new *Qaalluu*. At the same time, they also got his blessings.¹⁵⁹

The new *Qaalluu* not only inherited the spirits (*Qaallumma*) of the former *Qaalluu* but also he inherited all of his spiritual material. A *Qaalluu* of Bèghi might have had more than one wife but only the first wife got the recognition from his followers. There was also a distinct hierarchy of prestige, between women who had born children, and those who had remained childless women who gave birth to boys were much more esteemed and honored than those who gave birth to girls.¹⁶⁰ The major activities performed by the wife of a *Qaalluu* were preparing of the ritual food for the *Qaalluus* and well-coming peoples who came to the

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid*, pp. 133-135.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid*, p.142.

¹⁵⁶ Mohammed, The Oromo of Ethiopia.....p. 6, and OCTB, P. 205.

¹⁵⁷ Mohammed, pp.5-8, Dirribii, Damusee, *Seenaa Eenyummaa Oromoo* (. Finfinnee, 2015), p.28

¹⁵⁸ Asmerom, *Oromo Democracy*....., p.120, and BATO, pp. 205-206.

¹⁵⁹ Informants: Mohammed, Nabbara, Kanarra, Jombor

¹⁶⁰ Nagaso Gidada, p.130

house of *Qaalluu* for different purposes.¹⁶¹ *Qaalluu* was also called *Abba Muuda* i.e. father of anointment; he got this name from the ceremony named *Muuda*.¹⁶² In the ceremony, the *Qaalluu* gave his blessing and anointed the *Gēdaa* officials who ruled the Oromo for eight years.

As a result, *Qaalluu* was highly respected by the Oromo people and could exercise great influence in the economic, political, and social life of the Oromo people.¹⁶³ Many *Qaalluu* have existed also in the Beghi in particular and in the western Mächaa land in general until recent times. Most of them are known in areas even outside Beghi area in western Mächaa. But some of them are only known by the local people. The famous *Qaalluu* in the western Mächaa were: the *Qaalluu of Warra Qananii* of Ga'aa (*Abbaa Olii*), *Qaalluu* of Dillaa Koobii Warqee in Noolee Kaabbaa.¹⁶⁴ In Beghi they were: *Qaalluu Abba Holoo*, *Qaalluu Abbaa Yamboo*, and *Qaalluu Abbaa Hunduma* of Gidami this three *Qaalluus* are very well known in the neighboring areas of the study area. For this reason, other local *Qaalluu* visited them with their followers twice a year.¹⁶⁵

2.2.2. Major and Minor *Qaalluus* of Beghi

One of the renowned *qaalluus* among the Beghi Oromo was *Qaalluu Abba Holoo*. *Qaalluu Abba Holoo* sometimes collected tribute from his clan, oral informants explain about *Qaalluu Abba Holoo* as follows, “*Holoo koo! Galata kee natuu siif fidee gabbare kee*” when we roughly translated it to English, *Qaalluu Holoo* it is I who brought you tributes. Gifts are also given to *Qaalluu* from his clan, the livelihood of *Qaalluus* in Beghi was based on the gifts he received from his followers; the *Qaalluus* of Beghi did not farm the land. Different types of gifts are given to *Qaalluus* by the name of *galchaa* and *kenna*.¹⁶⁶ The local elders listed some major *Qaalluus* which were in the Beghi as follows: *Qaalluu Haadha Maaram* from Oromo clan of Tarko and Babane, *Qaalluu Waggaa Gammachuu* from Oromo clan of Kaabbachee, and *Qaalluu abbaa Gimbi* from Oromo clan of Bille.¹⁶⁷

Until the harsh persecution of *Dërg* regime had been happened and the strengeth of the protestant region in the area around 1960s, 1970s respectively, the Oromo of Beghi took

¹⁶¹ Informants; Daggafu Tabo, Fiqadu Amde, Tesfaye Baqqala, Hamba Haile.

¹⁶² OCTB, *Seenaafi Sirna Gadaa*.....p. 20.

¹⁶³ Mohammed, pp.6-8

¹⁶⁴ OCTB, P. 208, Gadaa Journal, *Indigenous Oromo Religion: The Case of Noolee Kaabbaa District, West Wallaggaa, A Bilingual Journal of the Insitute of Oromo Studies (IOS) Jimma University, Vol.1 No. 2, June 2018, p. 79.*

¹⁶⁵ Informants: Daggafu Tabo, Shorro Wayyu, and Alemayehu, p. 8.

¹⁶⁶ Informants: Jombor Fixee, Hailu Kibabu, and Tafari Tasisa

¹⁶⁷ Informants: Baacaa Nagari and Daggafu Taboo,

the newborn babies to the house of *qaalluu* to get his blessing.¹⁶⁸ The tradition of taking children to the house of *Qaalluu* is known as *ulmma ba''u*, during this time all the children were blessed by the *Qaalluu* turn by turn and also get new names. Before the *Qaalluu* of Beghi gave new names to them he asked in which day he/she was born. Accordingly, for instance, those who were born on Sunday, Saturday, Friday and Wednesday were named *Sanbato*, *Jarso*, *Jimato*, and *Arbi* respectively, however, after the introduction of Islam to the area after 1880s these names replaced by Islamic or Arabic names like Mohammed, Shafe, Kadir, Ahmed...and so.¹⁶⁹ On the other hand, the taking of the newly born children to the house of *qaalluus* in the Beghi was also known as *Ammáchiisää* or *Moggaasáá*. During this time *galchaa* and *wareegaa* (gift and vow) were given to the *Qaalluu* both by the family and the children those are taken to his home.¹⁷⁰

According to Lewis, the process of naming was carried during what is known as *kud'är fan* (which meant every fortnight), to borrow his words, "...*kud'är fan* generally occurs every two weeks and lasts for several days. On these occasions, people gather to speak to the spirits to name their children to Cary on litigation and resolve disputes to meet others and sing and dance".¹⁷¹

The Beghi Oromo also took their cattle to *hora* i.e., to the mineral water once a year. There are several *horras* in the Beghi, among the *horras*, *horra Agamsa*, *Hora Danki*, *Hora Ulfée*, and *Hora Machii* is very well- known. Cattle are also taken to this *horras* from different territories of Beghi. When *Abba ulle*, herdsman back from the *horra* he sang the following traditional song:

Afaan Oromo	English
<i>Horaa gala</i>	are returning from horra [mineral water]
<i>Dhibbaan dhaqinne</i>	we have hundred when we go
<i>Kumaan gallaa</i>	and we have thousand when we return
<i>Hoolaa adii yaa cooma ishee</i>	the white sheep is extremely fatty
<i>Har'a mitti</i>	it is not to day

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁹ Benti, p. 98. and Informants: Jombor Fixe and Milkyas Kabbada

¹⁷⁰ Informants: Daggafu Tabo and Tarreqeny Mazgabu

¹⁷¹ H.S, Lewis, "Kud Arfan: A Multi-function among the Western [Oromo]", in: *Proceeding of the Third International Conference of Ethiopian Studies*, Vol, XXX, p.100.

<i>Gaaffaa Arbitti</i>	But on Wednesday
<i>Kan Koo mitti</i>	you are not mine
<i>Kan Rabitti</i> ¹⁷²	it belongs to God

Since the *huraa* were often far from the settlements it provided suitable opportunities for raids, so Protection had to be provided day and night. There was no punishment if cattle coming back from the *huraa* damaged crops and food plants on the way.

2.2.3 Concept of *Maraam* and *Atetee*

Maraam is believed to be the divinity of women.¹⁷³ *Maraam* was created by *Waaqa* and addressed as *haadha baar* (the mother of ocean).¹⁷⁴ I think this is to indicate that *Maraam* came to the Oromo from outside. The Oromo believe that *Maraam* is the mother of a child.¹⁷⁵ On this idea, Bartels indicate that, *Maraam* is the mother of all mothers and she is virgin.¹⁷⁶ The Oromo women perform traditional ceremonies in respect of *Maraam*. It is believed that *Maraam* will help barren women to beget a child, and help pregnant women to give birth to a child.¹⁷⁷ When a woman gives birth to child Oromo women will gather and *ululate* (say *ilili ilili*). They also prepare porridge, and splash butter. It is normal for the Oromo to sacrifice an animal during this ceremony.¹⁷⁸ Moreover, *Maraam* is worshipped for the health of the environment, animals, human beings and crops.¹⁷⁹

The Oromo *Qaalluu* leaders pray to *Maraam* every two weeks for the continuation of offspring of humans. *Maraam* has her own ritual house. Ritual goods include *Jaaloo* (earthen caldron), and *Qoloo* (traditional shirt). It has also *madabii* (raised platform of Earth). The dancing ceremony is performed on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays.¹⁸⁰

Among the Beghi Oromo *Atete* is also considered as women's religious celebration. The occasion of *Atetees* celebration is commonly known as *guyyaa Maraam* to mean the day of *Maraam*. Some writers have explained the nature of *Ateetee* and *Maraam*. Knutson stated

¹⁷² Beghi *Warada* Cultural and Tourism Office, 2012, p. 38. and Informants: Mathewos Alemayehu, Eebba Gammachu,

¹⁷³ Bartels Lambert, *Oromo Religion: Myths and Rites of the Western Oromo of Ethiopia. An Attempt to Understanding*. Berlin: Dietrich Reimer Verlag. 1983. p. 124.

¹⁷⁴ Workineh Kalbessa, p. 28.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁶ Bartels, p. 124.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, and Workineh, p. 28.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, and Informants: Qannaa Gammachuu, and Tekalign Tekula.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

the name *Attetee* and *Maraam* are used interchangeably.¹⁸¹ Daniel also perceived the concept, *Attetee* as the name of the ceremony where women gathered and danced to invoke *märäm*, *ayyoole* and *waaqa* for thanks giving and the well being of their families.¹⁸² The view of the Beghi Oromo is at variance with Knutsson's argument. According to the Beghi Oromo, *Ateetee* and *Maaram* are different and have different functions in Oromo religion. The materials used during their ceremonies are different. But both *Ateetee* and *Maaram* are believed to be females.¹⁸³ He also stated that it was a ceremony where women were gathered and made public, grievance they had with their husbands. They could sing as follows:

Afaan Oromo	English
<i>Ittuman maram ta''e</i>	If I were Maram
<i>Marami gifti ta''e</i>	Maram our great lady
<i>Dhabdudhaafan ilma kenne</i>	I would give a son to the childless women
<i>Dhirsaa hadorsiftu</i>	let him be her boast before her husband
<i>Yaa maram yaa marame</i>	O! Maram, my dear Maram,
<i>Dhabdudhaf ararami</i>	have pit on the childless women,
<i>Yaa Maram godetti Koo</i>	O! Maram, displaying to us, women your
	beauty,
<i>Yaa dhiga tolleti ko</i>	full of sympathy for us women
<i>Yaa Maram marmartuko</i>	O! Maram between me and
<i>Waaqa Yaa hika garartuko.</i> ¹⁸⁴	My helper when giving birth ritual,
	Women of the neighborhood singing birth-
	songs.

¹⁸¹ Knutsson, Karl Eric, *Authority and Change: A Study of Kallu Institution among the Mecha Galla of Ethiopia*, Gthenburg, 1967, pp.53-55

¹⁸² Daniel, p.111

¹⁸³ Informants: Qannaa Gammachuu, Tekalign Tekula, Darartu Ahimed.

¹⁸⁴ Bartels Lamert, p.124-127

Figure 2: A birth ritual, Women of the neighborhood singing birth-songs



Adopted from; Lambert Bartels, *Oromo Religion...*, p.208

Atteteete is believed to be female spirit The Oromo women perform special ceremonies in respect of this spirit who in its turn would help barren women beget a child and assist during labor to safely give birth to child as perceived by the Oromo women.

According to informants and literature, the Oromo women's have celebrated different forms of *atteete* for different reasons.¹⁸⁵ *Atteetée haraa* to mean the new *attete*, the reason for the celebration of *atteete haraa* was thanks giving or to praise *waaqa* (God) who enabled them to see the New Year.¹⁸⁶ In the Beghi *atteete haraa* was celebrated during harvesting time. *Atteetiyyoo waggaaatuu ga'e* was the best traditional Beghi Oromo song during the celebration of *atteete haara*. This is to mean *atteetiyyoo* the New Year is approaching. *Atteete Gunfii*: Gunfii is the place where the Oromo of Beghi by tradition stored their crops after harvesting. *Atteete Gunfii* was celebrated during the rain time. Its celebration was for three reasons, for thanks giving, for fertility, and accomplishment.¹⁸⁷

According to our informants, the *Atteete* ceremony has two functions; one is regulating women's morality. The other is to enable women to challenge male domination as a group. *Atteete* ceremony is seriously endangered, like others Oromo culture.¹⁸⁸ The Muslim Oromo women are abandoning the *Atteete* rituals, and thus long a significant mechanism

¹⁸⁵ Informants: Qanna Gammachu, Darartu Ahimed, and Shitta Fufa.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

of solidarity and resistance.¹⁸⁹ The gradual expansion of Christianity, has directly or indirectly contributed towards the decline of the value of the Oromo women's *Atteetee* ritual over the last century with the recent resurgence of the competitive religions, their religious influence on the communal practices of the people has gained maximum momentum.¹⁹⁰

2.2.4 Time and place of prayers in *Waaqeffannaa*

A *Waaqeffätaa* (follower of *Waaqeffännäa*) can pray and praise *Waaqa* any time and any where but most preferably on mountains, by water bodies such as rivers, lakes and springs, and in his home and compound as well.¹⁹¹ There are two types of prayers in *Waaqeffännäa*. The first one is done at home on daily basis early in the morning before leaving the house and late in the evening. This prayer is done to ask *Waaqa* to help them in their daily life, to praise him for giving them a healthy night, to ask him to do the same for the day, to give health for their family, their cattle and for the reproduction of the stock, and to make their farm productive. The Oromo also pray for *Waaqa* to give them health, and to give them harmony between children and their fathers as well as between husbands and their wives. They also pray for understanding among themselves and to abolish hatred.¹⁹²

The other type of prayer in *Waaqeffännäa* is done when the Oromo are faced with various types of catastrophes such as drought and its consequences, such as: death of cattle, hunger, conflict, flooding, and other personal problems such as bareness, poverty, and sickness of oneself or family members. Under these circumstances the Oromo climb on hills, mountains, and other elevated grounds because they believe that a mountain and other elevated grounds are The Pillars of the Earth and they are closer to *Waaqa*.¹⁹³ According to informants, mountains have played significant role in religious symbolism in different ways all over the world. Some mountains have been viewed as 'cosmic mountains' while others have been accepted as 'places of revelation and vision', as 'divine residence places', as well as 'geographical manifestations of the divine'.¹⁹⁴

The Oromo also travel to water bodies and pray for *Waaqa*. In Oromo tradition, water represents calmness, pureness, life, and fertility. This view of the Oromo tends to be a

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁰ Informants: Yadassa Tesso, Mohammed Abdisa, Xafa Shagirdi

¹⁹¹ Badilu Asaffa, 2014, pp. 95-96.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, and Badilu Asaffa, p. 96.

¹⁹⁴ Informants: Olana Galata, Tafa Shagirdi, Tafari Tasisa and Jombor Fixe

universal view in most religious beliefs. According to informants ‘it (water) bathes, dissolves, and purifies. Essential to human life and necessary for the growth of plants, it symbolizes a generative of life-giving quality, very similar to creative power’.¹⁹⁵ Whenever a *Waaqeffätaa* goes to a river and mountains for prayers, he/she always takes with him sacrificial animals of black colour (so as to resemble the presumed colour of *Waaqa*) and five people (*shanëë*) and s/he slaughters the sacrificial animal and says ‘the black *Waaqa*! May you listen to me! (*Gurraacha Waaqa naa dhagahi*).¹⁹⁶

2.3 The Decline of the Oromo Indigenous Religion in Beghi

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, monarchical states have emerged in Oromo settled areas of Gibe valley and Wëllëgga. At the time of the Oromo population movement and expansion, the Gibe Basin and Wëllëgga were occupied by various clans of the Mëçhaa Oromo. At the time of their expansion, the Mëçhaa Oromo mainly followed the *waaqqeffäñña* religion and they were governed by the *Gäda* system.

At about the 19th century, however, the Oromo of the Wëllëgga region had undergone a profound religious, social-cultural, and political change.¹⁹⁷ Several factors led to the decline of the Oromo traditional religion in Beghi Particularly in Wëllëgga generally. These factors can be classified as internal and external factors as we shall see below.

2.3.1 The Transformation of *Qaalluu* to *Qallicha*

Waaqeffanna among the Oromo is officiated by high ranking “priest” known as the *Qaalluu* for male and *Qaalliitti* for female. The *Qaalluu* and *Qaalliitti* are sometimes referred to as the guardians of the laws of *Waaqa* on earth. During ceremonies *kallacha* is a sacred religious symbol held by Oromo men while *caaccu/callee* (beads) is the symbols used by women. The *Qaalluu* institution is the preserver and protector of the Oromo culture. The traditional Oromo ritual hall of the *Qaalluu/Qaalliitti* is known as *Galma* and the ritual activity of the *Qaalluu/Qaalliitti* is called *dalaga*. The *Muudaa* and the *Jila* are also important concepts associated with the *Qaalluu* institution.¹⁹⁸ The term *Muudaa* independently refers to the name of the ceremony that is Celebrated once every eight years in honor of the *Qaalluu*. The *Qaalluu* itself is sometimes known as the *Abbaa Muudaa*, the spiritual father

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁷ Mohammed, pp.58-61,118-121; K E Knutsson, pp.180-182

¹⁹⁸ Melba, 1988, pp. 12-24.

of the traditional Oromo religion since the ceremony is undertaken for his honor. The *Jila* refers to those who paid visits to the *Abbaa Muudaa* and received his blessings and anointment. As the Mecca pilgrims were called *Haji* among the Muslims, the *Muudaa* pilgrims were called *Jila*. The *Jila* functioned as the link between the spiritual father and the nation. Such religious and cultural practices of the Oromo must be clearly understood to bring them on board for integration and peaceful coexistence with other peoples.¹⁹⁹

Owing to the strong relationship between the Oromo religious and political organizations, almost all the sources on the indigenous Oromo religion put emphasis on the *Qaalluu* institution in bringing and holding the Oromo religious, social, Cultural and political lives together.²⁰⁰

It is quite significant to underscore that the *Muudaa* pilgrimage is the point of intersection for the *Qaalluu* and the *Gädaa* system. According to Legesse, “It [the *Qaallu*] is one of the critical foci of the Oromo polity.”²⁰¹ It is also important to note here that there is a clear distinction between the *Qaalluu* of the Oromo and *Qaallicha* (Amharic). As Knutsson put it:

.....a similar and overlapping term, *kallicca* which is in contrast to the word *kallu* is found all over Ethiopia. The term *kallu* is connected with possession only in Šawa and Wollega;... In Borana... *kallu* always designates the few traditional ‘high priests’ while *kallicca* represents a mainly anti- social or at least anti-traditional, ritual role.... In Mächa *kallicca* has a very different and much lower social status than a *kallu*.... Even culturally a *kallicca* is considered foreign or partly foreign to Mächa tradition.²⁰²

In fact there are Oromo songs which defy or undermine the *Qaallicha* (Amharic) as follows:

Afaan Oromo	English
<i>Namni qaallicha nan jettee</i>	Someone (a man/ a woman) who calls me <i>qaallicha</i> .
<i>Ofii ketii qaallomii</i>	Be a <i>qaallicha</i> yourself.
<i>Hintala qaallicha fuudhii</i>	Mary a <i>qaallicha</i> daughter.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁰ Knutsson, p. 94, Asmarom Legesse, 1973, p.44, Hassen, 1990, p. 6, and Bartels, p. 114.

²⁰¹ Asmarom Legesse, pp. 43-45.

²⁰² Knutsson, p. 66.

Ilma qallicha dhalchii

Give birth to a *qaallicha* son.

Qaallumma hinbitu mitii

One cannot become a *qaalluu* buying it.

*Yoo dhufe hin didu mitii.*²⁰³

If it comes one cannot say no!

The *Qäälluus* of Beghi who became the religious fathers, who blessed their followers and their clans at the end of the 19th century changed into *Qäällicha*.²⁰⁴ Before the period mentioned the *Qäällichaas* are not known among the Oromo. In Mäçhaa a distinction is made between the *qäälluus* and *Qäällichaa* role even through both display possession elements. The latter word is said to have been introduced by the Amhara.²⁰⁵

Do not apply it to a traditional [*Qäälluu*]... a [*Qäällichaa*] has a very different and much lower social status than a [*Qäälluu*] ... [*qäällichaa*] is often accused of social behavior, resorting to conjuring and black magic for his benefit. In comparison, the [*Qäälluu*] is regarded as the most senior person in his lineage and clan. Socially he is the most respected member of both the local and the descent group, a great [*Qäälluu*] to ask his ritual elements for gifts or payment.²⁰⁶

Knutson also stated that the existence of terminological confusion, for instance, the Amharic speaking people who do not know the difference between the two types call them both [*Qäällicha*]. So, the distinction between the two concepts; *Qäälluu* always designates the few traditional high priests, while *Qaallichaa* represents a mainly anti-social, or at least anti-traditional ritual role.²⁰⁷

The transformation of Oromo *Qäälluu* to *Qäällichaa* not only enhanced the decline of the *Gäda* System however, it also paved the way for the Oromo traditional region of *waaqqeffännä* to loss its social and religious values.²⁰⁸ During this time the *Qäällichaas* robbed the people, particularly in the areas in which the *Gädaa* officials became weak they went to their home and forced their followers to pay taxes.²⁰⁹

In the Beghi the strong holders of *Qäällichaas* were areas like Shagga, Horoo Dongoroo, Shaashii and Dhaladduu Haroo diimaa, Kaabbachee, Tarkoo, Baabanee, the like. In these areas it was not only males however, women's also started to act as *Qäällichaas*. Among

²⁰³ Informants: Jombor Fixe, Abdisa, Kanarra, and Xafaa.

²⁰⁴ Informants: Yadasa Tesso and Mohammed Abdisa.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁶ Kuntsson, pp.66-67

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁸ OCTB, *Seenaa fi Sirna Gadaa Oromo Maaccaa ...*, pp.210, 211, Regarding the Origin of *Qaallichaa* see also Gustave, Arein. *Evangelical Pioneers in Ethiopia, Origin of the Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus* (Uppsala, Uppsala Press, 1978), and p.394

²⁰⁹ *Ibid*

the Oromo of Bèghi *Qäällichaas* sometimes called as *Waa beektuu* or *Hoodduu* for female *Qaallichaas* and *waa beekaa* or *Hoodaa* for male *Waa himaa* or *Waa himtuu* were also other names of the *Qäällichaa* in Bèghi.²¹⁰

In the Beghi most of the time peoples are departing to the house of *Qäällichaas* for many purposes, to know their futures, or to know the sources of evil things that attack them and how to save from harm themselves in the future. Sometimes the *Qäällichaa* also advises his followers how to attacked enemy"s through magic, after all this advise a person who got his/her advice pay to him, the payment for *Qäällichaa* or *Waa bëekaa* became in cash and also in kind most of the time salt or *Amolë* and coffee became common payment, foods are also taken to his house as a gift. All these payments are given to him in secret; it was sandwiched by *coqorsa* grass. *Coqorsa* grass is an important symbol in every religious ritual of Beghi Oromo.²¹¹

When the earnings of *Qäällichaas* decline following the introduction and spread of Islam and Christianity into the area, in different parts of the region they started to terrify the people, they show black magic, eat the fair started to send an ultimatum to their followers by saying, "If you do not send gifts or payments for me I will kill your wife, your children, your cows and ox". They became a vagrant who resorts to co insuring and black magic for their own benefits.²¹² The *Qäällichaas* were running for their benefits and their acts were full of lies. So acts of *Qäällichaas* in Beghi has been forced some of the people who were formerly the followers of the Oromo traditional religion rehabilitated to Islam and Christian without any doubt.²¹³

2.3.2 The Side Lining of the *Gädaa* Officials.

Following the weakness of the *Gädaa* officials, particularly in the Western Mächaa regions, the well-known and powerful *Qäälluus* started to act as religious and political leaders, more than religious issues they gave attention for politics. The powerful *Qäälluus* rose upto seize the political powers in a place where the *Gädaa* officials became toothless. For instance, in the Beghi *Qäälluu Abba* Hunduma started to collect tributes from his clan. Likewise, *Qäälluu* of Bussase began to assume religious and political functions and emerged so influential.²¹⁴

²¹⁰ Informants: Daggafu Tabo, Tasfaye Baqqala, Aduugna Nado, and Hamba Hailu.

²¹¹ *Ibid.*

²¹² *Ibid.*

²¹³ *Ibid.*

²¹⁴ Informants: Nabbara, Marga, Mohammed, and Daggafu.

2.3.3 The influence of major religions

As they did else where, Christianity and Islam looked down upon indigenous religion in Oromo lands. As I have documented elsewhere,²¹⁵ the number of Christians and Muslims increased in the various regions of Oromia by leaps and bounds within a short period of time, particularly in West Wällägga. They divided the people into two camps the converts who looked down upon the old indigenous religion, and the devotees of indigenous religion. The acceptance of modern religions was conceived as the acceptance of civilization.²¹⁶

In particular, the influence of Christianity has become serious in Oromo lands since the last quarter of the nineteenth century when the Šäwän forces conquered the Oromo and other Southern ethnic groups of the present day Ethiopia.²¹⁷ The Šäwän rulers regarded the Oromo religion not as true but as superstition and the Oromo were expected to accept the new religion. In Borena the new rulers tried to force the *Gädaa* leaders and the people to be converted to Christianity. They went to the extent of shaving the heads of the *Gädaa* leaders.²¹⁸

In spite of these harsh measures most people opposed the new religion. However, many *Qäälluu* leaders became Christians due to the fact that the Šäwän rulers offered them valuable feudal titles in return for their cooperation. They were given a semi-equal position with the Šäwän and used to establish their rule over the Oromo people. The Šäwän forces cut down *Dakkii* trees, burned *Galma*, (ceremonial hall) and they threw ritual beads into the river. They cut down trees from traditional graves. In short, borrowing their faith from the Judaeo-Christian tradition, Šäwän forces came to revere a White God [sic] and reduced the Oromo Belief in *Waaqa Guraacha* to a form of devil worship.²¹⁹

Benti has also argued that the systematic approach of the Swedish trained Ethiopian Protestants enabled them to win the confidence of the local chiefs in Wällägga.²²⁰ They translated religious books into the Oromo language. Village schools were established by Protestants to propagate their religion. These schools were open to all children of local

²¹⁵ Informants: Yadasa Barki, Kumsa Gassasa, Mohammed Abdisa, and Yadasa Tesso.

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*

²¹⁷ Benti Ujulu, "Some of the consequences of the Christian Mission Methods and Contextual Evangelism among the Oromo of Ethiopia with Special focus on the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus 1880-1974", MA Thesis, Natal University. Theology, 1999), pp. 28-29.

²¹⁸ Workine, p. 16.

²¹⁹ Gemetchu Megersa, "*Oromumma: Tradition, Consciousness and Identity*", in Baxter, P. T. W. *et al.* (eds.). *Being and Becoming Oromo: Historical and Anthropological Enquiries*. Lawrenceville, NJ.: The Red Sea Press, pp. 92-102. 1996, p. 97.

²²⁰ Benti, pp. 29-30.

chiefs and peasant farmers. They also provided medical facilities to the local people. This attracted a large number of followers.²²¹ On the other hand, the south western and western Mäçhaa Oromo, such as the Wëllëgga, Jimma, Illu Baabor was converted to Islam during the eighteenth century owing to the influence of Muslim merchants, in the mid-nineteenth century.²²²

During the *Därg* regime as stated by Waqqari, the *Qaallu* Institution ceased its function as it was seriously opposed by the system on the pretext of socialist ideology²²³ One of my informants supported this idea to confirm that during the *Därg* regime such institution was discouraged by the policy of the then government and some *Qaallus* were even considered as supporters of the old feudal regime.²²⁴ The known *Qaallu* of Beghi of the time, *Abba* Hooloo and Hunduma was harshly treated by the *Därg* officials of the area and he repeatedly captured, imprisoned and released.²²⁵ To the worse, to eliminate of the institution the then governor of Asossa *Awraja*, Dajj, Abdurahim Khojole marched to burn down the known *Galma* located there in 1975. As a result, the *Galma*, which had been served as the depositories of Oromo cultural materials, was destroyed.²²⁶ My informant, Hunduma who was the owner of the burnt *Galma* told me that in addition to burning the *Galma*, Abduraman and his force had stolen different religious materials such as *kallacha*, and many other properties.²²⁷ Despite their exposure to other cultures, the Oromo retain the essential features of their ancient religious and philosophical system of thought. In spite of all the attacks, the *Qaallu* institution has uprooted in Beghi. Even at present, it is serving, even though, it has lost the majority of its followers because of the newly introduced various religious practices in the district.²²⁸

Although the *Därg* government has not backed Islam, it has had damaging impacts on Oromo religion especially in Wëllëgga. Indigenous religion was uprooted from its foundations. Muslims have subverted many aspects of Oromo indigenous religion. For this reason, in Wëllëgga, it is hardly possible to argue that Islam and Oromo indigenous religion coexist together although some individuals have followed both the indigenous religion and the modern religion.

²²¹ *Ibid* pp. 72-74.

²²² Informants: Yadasa Tesso, Mohammed Abdisa.

²²³ Waqqari Mosisa, "AHistory of Horro Guduru District, ca. 1910-1991,"MA Thesis AAU, History, 2015, pp. 35-36.

²²⁴ Informants: Jombor, Marga, and Olana Galata

²²⁵ *Ibid.*

²²⁶ *Ibid.*

²²⁷ Informants: Mohammed, Xafa, and Olana

²²⁸ *Ibid.*

CHAPTER THREE

3. HISTORY OF ISLAM IN BEGHI

3.1 Introduction

In Beghi, societal traditions do not offer a neat chronology and comprehensive historical coverage of Islamization. However, the societies have its own perceptions on the coming of Islam and its spread in the area. The introduction of Islam and the emergence of Muslim communities in Wällägga are too late when we compare it with other regions of Ethiopia. It was introduced into West Wällägga region through Asossa in the 19th century. In West Wällägga, there are a substantial number of Oromo Muslims to day; most of them in Beghi, Kondala, and Babbo Gambel. The Oromo of West Wällägga, however, never turned en mass to Islam as a reaction to imperial Ethiopia's conquest, in the way that the Oromo of Arsi and other Islamic regions of today did.¹ A few of Ethiopian and expatriate researchers and writers touched directly or indirectly in their works the introduction of Islam into West Wällägga in general and Beghi area in particular. Even the works of these limited scholars and writers developed entertained different views on the Islamic history of the study area.

From these researchers and writers, Alessandro Triulzi, Fixe Birri, Alessandro Beckberg is the major ones. The local theology school students have been filled with the ideas on the introduction of Islam and their communities in the Beghi area. From the Theologian school students; Alemayehu Emiru, Daniel Biranu, and Faduli Melaku are those worth mentioning here. Some of history students of the study area such as Muhammed Musa, recent MA graduate of Wällägga University and Fufa Olani studied at Bahir Dar University have tried to investigate the ways of introduction and consolidation of Islam in West Wollaga in general and Beghi in particular.

All of the above researchers, oral informants, and writers except Alessandro Beckberg has related that, Islam and the first Muslim communities as introduced to Beghi by the *Ansar* around the 1860s.² According to Triulzi, Islam was introduced to Western Wällägga generally and Beghi particularly, through the active engagements of long distance traders and clerics in the first half of the 19th-century.³ Accordingly, the first Islamic religion

¹ Oyvind M. Eide, "Revolution and Religion in Ethiopia: The Growth and Persecution of the Mekane Yesus Church 1974-1985". (Addis Ababa, 2000), p. 48.

² Faduli Melaku, "Developing Contextual Strategies to Evangelizing Muslim in Beghi Gidami Synod," (BA Thesis, Theology, Addis Ababa MYS, 2014), p.5, Daniel Biranu, 2019, p. 8. Fixe, p. 47, and Informants: Mohammed Abdisa, Abdusamed Tucho.

³ Triulzi, *Salt, Gold and Legitimacy, Prelude to the history of no-mans-land, Belashangul, Wallagga ca-1800-1898*, (Naples 1981), pp. 139-145.

penetration in Western Ethiopia was into Benishangul in the 1820s through the main centers of trade and the traders during the 19th century. However, Fixe Birri and oral informants opposed the idea of Triulzi. According to them, Islamic religion was introduced to Beghi and Wëllëgga with the arrival of the *Ansar* (the followers of Mahdi) in the 1860s.⁴ But, the recent researcher, Allensander Bechberg, said that Islam and the first Muslim communities were first introduced to Beghi before the coming of the *Ansar* around the 1830s and 1840s by the two brothers of Islamic clerics *Hajji* Dawud Said and Issa Said of the Arabised person.⁵

It is also added that, Islamic religion was introduced to Beghi in the 19th century through different directions. As mentioned in the work of Triulzi, and Allensander, it is commonly assumed that Islamic religion came to Asosa during the first quarter of the 19th century by a group of traders and Islamic teachers from the neighboring country, Sudan.⁶ According to oral information, in 1824, the first Qur'an school was established in Asosa and some teachers came from Sudan.⁷ When I concluded on the introduction of Islam in the study area, I agreed that on the explanation of Triulzi and Allensander Which is the Islamic religion enter to the study area with the arrival of group of traders and Islamic teachers from the neighboring of Sudan during the second and third decade of the 19th century.

Several factors had created favorable conditions for the easy penetration and rapid expansion of Islam among the population of the areas under discussion. There are geographic, economic, political, and social factors.

3. 2 Some Favouring Factors

3.2.1. Geographic and Economic Factors

The border area between Ethiopian and Sudan is traditional hiding place for refugees and fleeing peoples from both sides of the borders, and a seeting ground for diffirent ethnic groups like the Bertha, Koma, Burun, Gumuz, and Mao. It also the region is famous in slave and gold. Because of this, like other border peoples of the Western Mach as of the Ethiopian empire, the ethnic groups of Bela-Shangul or Beni Shangul were subjected to heavy slave raiding by the Funj, Turks, Mahdists and Ethiopians likes.⁸ Geographically, Beghi is situated in the western part of Ethiopia near the border of the Republik of Sudan.⁹

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ Alexsandro Mechberg, pp.97-102, and Informants: Abdalla Sosso, Muzambir Sosso.

⁶ *Ibid* and Triulzi, pp. 139-145.

⁷ Informants: Yadesa Barki and p. Triulzi.

⁸ Triulzi, p.1.

⁹ Alemayehu Emiru, pp.8- 9, and Informants: Mohammed Abdisa and Mohammed Abdalla.

From early 19th century onwards, sheikhdoms or Islamic enclaves began to emerge in the Ethio-Sudan frontier areas.¹⁰ Among them the Sheikhdoms of Assosa or Aqoldi, Bela-Shangul and Khomosha were established to the south of Blue Nile and the Sheikhdom of Gubba emerged to the north of the same river in Western edge of Gojjam.¹¹ The four sheikhdoms were founded by Muslim leaders of Sudanese origin who consider themselves as ‘watawit’. The term Watawit refers to Arbaized Bertha People who had entered and settled in Benishangul as traders and Islamic religious teachers in the late 19th and early 20th century.¹²

To the north of Abay (Blue Nile) river within the Ethiopian territory predominantly inhabited by the Gumuz, a similar imposition was made and the Islamic state of Gubba was established. These Muslim leaders intensified the propagation of Islamic religion. Moreover, Islam had been freely propagated in the region along the Sudanese and Ethiopian border lands by itinerant Islamic teachers and Muslim merchants. As a result, Islam was deep rooted in the area.¹³

The territory under study is included half parts of this gold and slave raiding border area. From the administrative point of view the region corresponds roughly to the pre 1991 *Awrájjá* or sub province of Asossa in Western Wälläggá Beghi *Wárádá*,¹⁴ or present day of the province of Bēnishangul-Gumuz and Oromia Regiona State West Wälläggá zone. This *Wárádá* is composed to day of three districts namely, Beghi, Kondala, and Mao Komo Special *Wárádás*. Beghi or the study area shares with the Republik of Sudan and in the southwest by Bēla shangul (Assosa), which was overrule under the Muslim rulers of the Funj, Turko-Egyptian, Mahdist, and the Ethiopians like.¹⁵ Later on, Beghi became part of the administrative area of Assosa under the leadership of Khojole who had played a significant role in the expansion of Islam in Beghi.¹⁶ How the rise of Khojole helped the spread of Islam in Beghi will be discussed later on. According to oral traditions because of Beghi is location sharing boundary line with the Sudan, different Islamic religious preachers and teachers entered Beghi through the Asossa region and the northern and north east, west and north west parts of Beghi was embraced Islamic religion with out any

¹⁰ Ahmad Kalid Abdella, 2010:99

¹¹ Bahiru,2012:19; 433, and Tesema Ta’a, 1990:278

¹² Bahiru, 2002:19

¹³ Erku Asefa, "A History of Gold Mining in Bela sangul 1898-1991" (MA Thesis, Jimma University, History, 2017), p. 68.

¹⁴ Triulzi, p.2

¹⁵ *Ibid*, p. 1.

¹⁶ Alemayehu Emiru, pp.8- 9, and Informants: Mohammed Abdisa and Mohammed Abdalla

enforcement during the first phase of expansion .¹⁷Forexample; Kobor, Hophá, Shomboo, Kongiloo Gaara Keello, Zeebe, Kondala Zengaa, Dhalaaduu Gabaa Facáasa, Wetsee Waddessa, Dhalaaduu Haroo Dimaa, Ya'a Masara and etc.¹⁸ According to Triulzi's the introduction of Muslim brotherhoods furthered inturn the spread of Islamic teachers (*fuqará*) and Missionary activities in the border areas.¹⁹We will see the preachers and teachers who are entered Beghi for the propagation of Islam and their roles in the next sub-topic.

In general, Beghi is a free region before its incorporation into the Ethiopian rule of the late 19th century; and had good commercial and religious relationships with the Sudanese people through Assosa. This could be the main factor for the early penetration of Islam into Beghi from the Sudan.²⁰

3.2.2. Assosa as Commercial and Religious Route

As already mentioned above, Islam was introduced to Assosa in the early period of the 19th century through trade and Muslim missionaries who had accompanied the traders to spread Islam in Assosa and beyond. The Sudanese and Arab trades came to Assosa and established their commercial houses and stationed agents in Assosa proper and later on in the surrounding areas like Kurmuk, Gizan, and Fadasi (Bambasi). Fadasi was the main trading center where Arab traders, Bërtha people, and the Oromo of western Wëllägga were coming together for their merchandise. In this regard, Triulzi stated the following:

The traditional trade routes which connected the Sennar region in Sudan with the Oromo of western Wëllägga were marked by a series of well-attended markets. Among these were Gizan, Komosha, and Fadasi. In each of these places, the migrant traders would come exchange their goods with local was the main trading center where Arab traders. Bertha and Oromo of west Wëllägga were coming together for their merchandise.²¹

He also mentioned about a brisk trade between Sennar and the Oromo people of western Ethiopia which had been carried on during the Turko-Egyptian occupation of southern Sudan (1821-1881).²² The Oromo traders were regularly coming to all markets in Bela Shangul to meet with their Sudanese counterparts, with which they were exchanging their

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ Informants: Mohammed Abdisa, Haruun Usma'eel, and Abdalla Sosso.

¹⁹ Triulzi, p. 89.

²⁰ Informants: Bulii Wayyuu, Mohammed Abdisa, and Tekalign.

²¹ Triulzi, 1981, pp.210-21

²² Erku Aseffa, p.35.

commodities. The main items of the merchandise from the Oromo people were: coffee, ivory, Musk, Gold, and Cattle, etc. On the other hand, the items brought from the Sudanese merchants were: clothes, soap, salt, etc.²³

The Bërtha people in Assosa are said to have been mediators to connect the Sennar region in Sudan with the Oromo of west Wëllëgga.²⁴ The rules (*shéikhs*) of Bela Shangul had maintained law and order in the respective territories so that the Oromo traders could come to their areas without problems. Through this commercial relationship, some Oromo traders had even managed to go up to Khartoum for this trading purpose. The smooth relations and continued interactions with the Muslim traders could have led the Oromo traders to lose their traditional religion gradually in facthe of the religion of ther counterparts, i.e. Islam.²⁵

Atieb in his paper on the biography of *Sheik* Khojole al-Hassan discussed the commercial link between Bela-Shangul (Assosa), and Beghi. According to him, the trade relationship between these areas was started at the beginning of the 1840s. Beghi had been used as a source of slaves and other commercial items like coffee, crops, cattle, ivory, and iron. The Oromo people in Beghi had also engaged in supplying slaves from the Mao clans of Beghi to the Arab traders.²⁶

Though trade had played a significant role for the introduction of Islam in Gibe states, too this Islam was introduced to Beghi in the economic form of war between the Oromo's of Beghi and the Funji or Arab of the Sudan, the Mahdist, and Khojole of Bëla Shangul.²⁷

One of my key informants from a Muslim community sayid that, a Muslim who is involved in business activity must be aware of two basic tenets in Islam, which are as follows: First *Allah* the creator owns and controls all his creations on this earth. A Muslim who deals in business is allowed to utilize all these creations for their business activities as long as they obey his commands. Second, all man's actions are accountable to *Allah* who has promised that even the smallest good deed will be recognized and rewarded.²⁸

However, from the period before the incorporation of Beghi under the king of Lëqa Qëllam, Jote Tullu in the 1880s, Beghi became ruled under the independent local rulers

²³ Triulzi, p, 147.

²⁴ Tekalehn Eteffa, "A Survey History of Berta people 1821-1991" (Jimma University, History, 2017), p.35.

²⁵ *Ibid.* and Alemayehu, p.11.

²⁶ Atieb, p.19.

²⁷ Triulzi, P. 139-45.

²⁸ Informants: Mohammed Abdisa, Mohammed Abdalla, Harun Usmael, and Habib Abdulqadir.

called Kuttu Golja of the Arabised Mao clan warriors.²⁹ According to oral informants claimed that, around 1882, the Western Sudan Islamist militant and the propagators of Islamic religion invaded Beghi and Jote Tullu's territorial land. Yet, in the period, king of Qëllam Jote positively and friendly well come the Mahdians and also accepted their religion Islam and became Muslims.³⁰ During this occupation, Beghi and the neighboring lands also embraced Islam forcefully and peacefully in mass.³¹

Hence, according to oral informants noted that, before the occupation of Mahadist in Beghi and Jote Tullu's territory, the peoples who lived in Beghi land are received and worship the Islamic faith.³² Because, before the arrival of Mahdist in Beghi and beyond, the long-distance caravan traders became arrived and crossed Beghi and contact the market centers of Fadasi, Assosa, Gojjam and goes to Sudan, and the merchants who came from different parts of the country via Anfillo, Dambi Dollo, and Gidami, and the merchant who came from the northwestern region (Wallo, Tegray, Gondar) through Assosa, and Fadasi and stand the market centers of Qumbabi, Dambi Dollo, Anfillo, Mocha in Illu Babor, Jimma, and Kafa were crossed and settled Beghi.³³ Accordingly, to this informant's indication, those caravan merchants are the followers of Islam. When he settled in Beghi we saw the *Qûrân* and *Hâdith* on their hands.³⁴

Melkamu noted that the caravan trade was, for instance, an important factor in the rise and fall of many kingdoms of the savanna. Caravanners did not only carry trade goods, they also carried new ideas and cultural features as well as technical knowledge. The long-range caravan trade being in many cases monopolized by Muslim merchants was an important tool in the diffuse of Islam in Africa.³⁵ Also, Triulzi indicated that Trade was intrinsically tied up with the spread of Islam and probably contributed to its spread.³⁶ At the same time, it limited the sphere of influence to the trading settlements. Yet, the *fûqarâ* teachers were probably not as inefficient as Triulzi believed.³⁷

²⁹ Von Allensador Beckherg, p. 104.

³⁰ Atieb, p. 27, and Triulzi, p. 208.

³¹ Informants: Mohammed Abdisa, Xafa Shagirdi, Nabbara, and Kanarra.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ Melkamu Demeksa, "Trade in West Wallaggaa" (MA Thesis, Jimma University. Department of History, 2019) pp. 14-23; Amanuel Kitata, "Economic History of Beghi Woreda from 1920- 1991," (BA Thesis, Wollegga University. Department of History, 2015), p. 5; and Informant: Xaafaa Shagadri, Mohammed Abdisa, and Mohammed Abdalla.

³⁴ Informants: Xaafaa Shagadirii, and Mohammed Abdisa, and Mohammad Abdalla

³⁵ Melkamu, p. 15.

³⁶ Triulzi, 1981, p. 147.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 142.

Alessandro Truilzi by citing the report of Masajja stated that, western Ethiopia had trade relations with the Muslim merchants from Wollo, Tigre, Gojjam, Basso, and from other northern regions. In 1859, the merchants from Anfillo and western Wällëga met with Muslim merchants at the market of Assendabo with their commodities. In addition to this, merchants from Jimma also brought coffee, ivory, and slaves to these caravan merchants, that attended different markets in the north, Wällëga, Enariya, and Kaffa.³⁸ Trimmingham also explained, beginning in the early 19th century; many Muslim merchants were able to penetrate southwestern Ethiopia.³⁹

3.2.3 Socio-Cultural Factors

Marriage has had a remarkable place in the life of the Beghi Oromo during the period under discussions. It has been a means of creating social interrelation. It is also considered as a way of getting significant place in social responsibility among the community; for a married person considered as having reached full development stage or matured age. According to written and oral evidences, marriage has played a pivotal role in the spread and expansion of either Islam or other universal and indigenous religions of the world.⁴⁰ In our study area, Beghi district and beyond, like other areas, Islam had further spread in the area through the mechanism of marriage during the scope of my study.⁴¹

The marriage system of the Beghi's communities is not extensively different from other Oromo people living in other parts of the region. Hence, before all, what every Oromo boys and girls do if they have an idea to form a marriage relation is that they start to count the ancestral background of each other. If it goes beyond their capacity of knowledge and both seek assistance from their respective families.⁴² Then also, family from both sides whether the boy or the girl side study about their genealogical kinship relation counting back up to at least seven ancestors starting from father and mother of children going to get hitched each other.⁴³ According to the information from elders among the local community and religious leaders, and Beghi district Cultural and Tourism Office, here are about more than seven types of marriage systems practiced among Mächa Oromo in the study area.

³⁸ *Ibid*, p. 53

³⁹ Spencer Trimmingham, *Islam in Ethiopia*, (London, 1956), p. 109.

⁴⁰ Tekalign, 2017, pp. 40-41, and informants: Guddina Qixxessa, Haaruun Usmaa'eel, Yaadessaa Teessoo, Margaa Naadoo.

⁴¹ Tekalign, p.41 and Informants: Mohammed Abdalla and Raggasa Akkayyu

⁴² Informants: Guddina Qixxessa, Birhanu Waaqayyo, and Beghi Waereda Cultural and Tourism Office, History of Beghi district, 2008, p. 34.

⁴³ *Ibid*, and Benti Ujulu, "Some of the Consequences of the Christian Mission Methods a Contextual Evangelism among the Oromo of Ethiopia with Special Focus on the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekene Yesus (EECMY) 1880-1974." (MA Thesis, University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg, Anthropology. 1999), p. 16.

Having all as indigenous traditional marriage system, the Mächa Oromo also classify these marriage systems into formal and informal marriage systems based on their practices.⁴⁴ These include *Naqata (kadhata)*, *Aseennaa*, *Dhaala*, *Buttaa*, *Isgota*, *Sokkaa*, *wal garaa (wal jijjirraa)*. While the first one is a formal traditional marriage system in which all the requirements are believed to have been fulfilled and had got a full acceptance, the remaining are considered as informal marriage systems as they are considered not to fulfill the public cultural expectations and also they are differently administered to fill the criteria of formalness.⁴⁵

In Beghi district, there are also other informal many types of marriage which had been contributed for the spread of the Abrahamic religion and creating social interaction between the communities.⁴⁶ Cousin marriage is one of the marriage systems in Beghi. This type of marriage was and still is to marry the daughter of one's uncle or aunt.⁴⁷ Cousin marriage was forbidden before three or two decades even among the Oromo Muslims in the region. It was rather common among the Mao and Bërtha ethnic groups in the region.⁴⁸ However, by now it is becoming a common practice. This is becoming familiar especially in urban areas influenced by the teachings of the *Salafis* since cousins are not listed in the *Qûr'añ* as forbidden for marriage.⁴⁹

Polygamy has been also a common practice among the Muslim communities of Beghi people.⁵⁰ In the past, having many wives was seen as a prestigious phenomenon among the Oromo communities. One wife may look after the cattle properly, while the other wife takes care of the family. It is a fact that Islamic teachings allow Muslim men to marry more than one wife, which has been similar to the Beghi culture.⁵¹ As a result, a person may have a large number of children and all children become Muslims automatically. Thus, bigamy was one of the contributing factors that encouraged Beghi people to embrace Islam and for the further numerical growth of Muslims throughout the reach of the lessons.⁵²

According to my informants, the communities of Beghi made marriage alliance with the neighboring Sudanese people. Accordingly, Islam and Sudanese culture spread over the

⁴⁴ Informants: Raggasa Akkayyu, Guddinaa Qixxessa, Qannaa Gammachu, and Beghi district Cultural and Tourism Office, pp. 34-39.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ Informants: Qannaa Gammachuu, Guddinaa Qixxessaa, Elsabet Kappitaanoo.

⁴⁷ Informants: Raggasaa Akkayyuu, Mammad Sharif, Ahmed Musa, and Biranu Waqayyo.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ Informants: Takalign Bonsaa and Mohammed Abdalla.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² *Ibid.*

Beghi region and its surroundings with out much resistance from the local people.⁵³ After making marriage alliance with the local ruling families, the Sudanese merchants started to build mosques, and strengthened encouraging and supporting religious teachers.⁵⁴ In the western Ethiopian region, the first Mosques was built in Khomosha, next to Khomosha, Mosques were built in Asossa town. From Asossa, the building of Mosques gradually expanded further south of Asossa into Beghi area at Gaba Sanbata in 1870s; a small village, located five kilometers from Beghi town.⁵⁵ On this mechanisems the demographic figures of the Muslim communities in the study area have been high rocketed. Still to day, the Muslim boys and girls had been encouragable to made marriage alliance with the Christian's brothers and sisters to evangelize them to Islam.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ *Ibid*, pp. 142-143, and Informants: Abdalla Sosso and Muzambir Sosso.

⁵⁵ Informants: Abdalla Sosso, Muzambir Sosso, Mohammed Abdisa.

Figure 3: The first Mosques of Beghi build by the *Ansars* at Gabaa Sanbata



Source: Photo taken by the Researcher on May 12, 2020

3.2.4. Political Conditions

3.2.4.1. The Rise of *Sheikh Khojele al-Haassen*

Atieb stated that *Sheikh Khojole* had lived from 1825-1938.⁵⁶ His father, al-Hasan Muhammed, was a member of the ‘Wat Wit’ family (Arab descendants from Sudan), who started the Muslim dynasty in Alqodi, one of the tributary regions of Assosa. He ruled Assosa from the beginning of the 1870s up to 1886. In the latter year, he was deported to Omdurman in Sudan by the Mahadists because of his objection to their rule and his reluctance to join them in their *Jihad* against the Oromo of western Wëllëgga.⁵⁷ Being in a prison, al-Hasan authorized his son, Khojole to succeed him. Khojele’s coming to power, also market the beginning of the unification of Bëla shangul under one Muslim ruler.⁵⁸

Due to the economic exploitation and religious expnsions, descendants of the ‘Watawit’ family began expansion south wards from Khomosha proper to Beghi. During the Mahadist period, a ‘Watawit’ born trader, Mohammad Wad Fadlah moved from Khomosha and settled in Aqoldi. In Aqoldi, he had a son named Al-Hassan from the Bërtha

⁵⁶ Atieb, p.19.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.* and Erku Aseffa, “A History of Gold Mining in Bela Sangul 1898-1991,” (MA Thesis, Jimma University, History, 2017), p. 48.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p.54.and Rashid, p. 2.

women.⁵⁹ Al-Hassan became the first ‘Watawit’ born to bring the existing traditional Bërtha ruling line under his own family.⁶⁰

From early 19th century onwards, *sheikhdoms* or Islamic enclaves began to emerge in the Ethio-Sudan frontier areas. Among them the *Sheikhdoms* of Assosa or Aqoldi, Bela Shangul and Khomosha were established to the south of Blue Nile and the *Sheikhdom* of Gubba emerged to the north of the same river in Western edge of Gojjam. The four sheikhdoms were founded by Muslim leaders of Sudanese origin who consider themselves as ‘watawit’. The term Watawit refers to Arbaized Bertha People who had entered and settled in Benishangul as traders and Islamic religious teachers in the late 19th and early 20th century.⁶¹

The Oromo lands to the southeast of Asossa became source of complaint to Emperor Menilek II by Khojole and Jootee Tulluu. The latter subjugated Beghi from 1885-1903 while Khojole was arrested. Due to his secrete negotiation with the British who were eager to bring Bëla-Sangul under their control.⁶² After Khojole was realeased from prisom, Emporer Menilik II, gave Beghi to him. Two years later, the *Shéikh* transferred his capital from Asossa to Beghi in 1910.⁶³

The rise of Khojole had brought significant changes in the social, political, and religious lives in Bëla shangul and Beghi. Soon after he came to power as chief of Alqodi, Khojole started fighting with local chiefs of Komosha and Bëla Shangul proper, other tributary regions of Assosa.⁶⁴ In 1897, he defeated the forces of those local rulers by allying with forces of *Rás* Mekonnen which had been sent by Emperor Menilik II to incorporate Assosa into imperial rule.⁶⁵ Finally, Khojole and his forces were submitted to *Rás* Mekonnen and Assosa was subjected to imperial rule. The submission of Khojole to Emperor Menilik II who was eager to bring Assosa under his domain to overrule the gold deposits of the region, laid foundation for Khojole to have a peaceful relationship with the royal princes of

⁵⁹ Tekalighn, p. 69.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ Binayew Tamrat, *Periphery Relations in Ethiopian Empire: The Case of Benishangul Gumuz, 1898-1941*, An article, Adama Science and Technology University School of Humanities and Law, 2014, p. 2.

⁶² Adinew, p. 28.

⁶³ Tekalign, p. 69.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, pp 48-55.

⁶⁵ Rashid, p. 4.

Ethiopia and to extend his territory to Beghi area.⁶⁶ According to oral information, Khojole had included Beghi under his territory through giving bribes.⁶⁷

Moreover, Jootee had claimed the restoration of Beghi to his governoship. The question of Beghi was actually a bone of contention between Jootee and Khojole for a long period. Beghi was inhabited by the Oromo who had moved to the region from Jootee's territory in mass because of economic exploitation.⁶⁸ Some of them were Muslims and the majority of were Christians. Khojole's slaving activities seemed to have grown steadily and in the years "between" 1909-1911, he introduced a tax system called *Lij Gibir* (Child tribute) in to his newly acquired territory of Beghi. Mainly, the primary victims of the *Lij gibir* were the Mao as well as the Komo of Beghi.⁶⁹ Besides, his slaving activities had drawn the attention of the Oromo of Qëllam who according to traditions, flocked into Beghi to become slave owners.⁷⁰

Right after he returns from prisom to his administrative land Asossa him dominion in 1908, the *Sheik* for his part developed strong relationships with the imperial court in Addis Ababa. Even the death of Menelik in 1913, and the resultant confusion over imperial succession did not affect *Shéikh* Khojele's position. Khojele maintained his position during *Lij Iyasu* (1913-1916) he visited Beghi in 1912 and 1914 and provided lavish tribute in gold, ivory and slaves to those who were in charge of the imperial government in Addis Ababa.⁷¹ During the period of the Dual rule (1916-1930), in 1924, Khojole also expanded his territory and got Wabaraa, southwest of Beghi town from Osanaa Jootee.⁷²

When Beghi was a capital of Khojole's administrative domains, Khojole greatly propogated and expanded Islamic religion and culture through a diplomatic and economic form i.e. he give an incentives for follow up of the converts from Christian and indeginous religion background communities.⁷³ Khojole enforced his land lords (*Balabat*) to encourage the non- Muslim communities as to embrace Islam. According to oral tradition, a person or family members who accepted Islam were give an incentive of lands, protection and did not pay tribute and tax. While if the individual is converted to Christianity, he/she will be

⁶⁶ Fiixee Birrii, p. 46.

⁶⁷ Informants: Nabara Achol and Xaafaa Shaagirdii.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ Alemu Shuie, p.20.

⁷⁰ *Ibid*, p. 21.

⁷¹ See Apendix III: A Letter written from the Ministry of Economy on *Hidar*, 1946; on the issues of the animal skins to Asosa Awrajja.

⁷² Fiixee, pp. 53-55.

⁷³ Alemayehu, p. 34.

rejected by the family and the whole Muslim community.⁷⁴ Khojole not did only on the Islamization of the area; he constructed Mosques or place of praye in Beghi town, Kobor, Tobbi, Shagga, Tongoo, Teenze, and Hopha. On the one hand, he had strong tie with leaders of the imperial government in Addis Ababa for maintaining his autonomy.⁷⁵ To that end, he had to fulfill all which they demanded from him; tribute in gold, ivory and slaves. Moreover, Khojele al Hasen and his large family members deeply involved in hunting and enslaving their own kinsfolk and expanded Islamic religion and cultures in the study area.⁷⁶ Different scholars wrote their own suggestion about why the central government decided to come closer to *Shéikh* Khojole than the rest in the region. Accordingly, most of them agreed on similar ideas. The first factor was related to his secret contact with the central government during the campaign of conquest. Secondly, Minilik's suspicion as if Khojole was not well handled, it might have brought crisis to the southwestern border areas of the Ethio-Sudan peripheries, by persisting negotiation with the British, at other times he found interesting with the British to offer Benishangul to be colonized by them and to maintain good relationship with leaders of the central government and to satisfy his trust for power.⁷⁷ Thirdly, Khojole's diplomatic approaches to the central government through different gifts like gold and human commodities,⁷⁸ and finally, Khojele's own success against his economic and political neighboring rivals.⁷⁹

⁷⁴Informants: Nabbara, Xafaa, Yadassa, and Mohammed.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷Etana Habte Dinka.2012 "Integration and Resistance in the Ethiopian Empire State: The Case of Qellem, 1886-1941", *Journal of Florida Conference of Historians*, PP.87-100.

⁷⁸ See Appendix III: A Letter written from the Central government to the administrative province of Asossa Awrajja on the issues of different animal skins.

⁷⁹ Tekalign, p. 70., and Rashid, p. 35.

Figure 4: Picture of *Sheik* Khojole All-Hassan



Source: Photo taken from *Sheikh* Mohammed Abdisa, on April 23/2020

2.2.4.2. *Sheikh* Khojole and the Mahdists

The coming of the Mahdists, the rapid Muslim religious groups from Sudan to Assosa had brought profound changes upon the religious life of *Sheikh* Khojole and his subjects. Khojole was appointed as *Sheikh* (Spiritual leader) and traditional religious practices teachings of the Qur'an and Hadith were expanded.⁸⁰ The aim of the Mahdists was not only to control Assosa (Bëla-Shangul) region but also to bring under their domain the territory of Jote Tullu *Mootii* (King) of Qellam. In 1885-86, the Mahdist Commander Khalil al-Huzani called for a *Jihad* to be waged against Jote and challenge the local Bëla-Shangul

⁸⁰ Triulzi, p. 207.

leaders to join him in this expedition. However, most of the rulers were reluctant to do so because of the commercial relationship between Bēla-Shangul and the domain of Jote.⁸¹

Some oral informants claimed that Khojole was one of the rulers who had combined his forces with the Mahdists, because of his ambition to expand his territory and spread Islam to the Oromo land.⁸² This idea seems reasonable since some written sources make clear that, this specific period was known by the fierce competition between Jote and Khojole. At the end of 1886, the Mahdist forces marched to the domain of Jote and took the territory under his governorship.⁸³ However, the religious influence of the Mahdists on Jote and his subjects is not clear since both oral and written sources differ on this issue.

Oral informants argue that, the coming of the Mahdists played significant role in the spread of Islam in Beghi. According to the majority of them the Mahdist whom they termed as "*ansar al-din*" it means "the helpers of the religion", were the warriors who had used force to convince people and abolished the worship of idols and other indigenous practices. Some even claim that even the *Mootii* (King) of Qellam, Jote, was converted to Islam and called his subject to embrace Islam.⁸⁴

There are also some literary sources, which support this idea. Atieb stated the total submission of Jote to the Mahdists, his conversion to Islam, and taking the Islamic name Ibrahim. The Mahdist had changed the title of Jote from *Mootii* (King) Jote to *Sultan* Jote and assigned for him the Muslims, teachers, and firearms.⁸⁵ Alessandro Triulzi on the other hand narrates the issue as follows:

Jote seems at first to have accepted the Mahdist overrule to have nominally converted to Islam to avoid the worst, and to have used the Mahdist soldiers (Ansar) in his expansion drives against his traditional enemies (Sanyo and Infill)...but reacted against the Mahdist and appealed to Raps Galena for help.⁸⁶

According to this story, *Räs* Gobena, Menilek's general, had come to rescue Jote and the Mahdists are said to have left the land of Jote without battle because of the fear of the combined huge force.⁸⁷ Bahru Zewde has different view on this invasion of the Mahdists.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² Informants: Takalign Bonsa, Xaafaa Shagadirii, and Danuu Koomoo.

⁸³ Triulzi, p. 208, and Alemayehu, p. 14.

⁸⁴ Informants: Mohammad Abdisa, and Ahmed Sima.

⁸⁵ Atieb, p. 27.

⁸⁶ Triulzi, p. 208.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

He questioned the collaboration of Jote with the Mahdists and his conversion to Islam.⁸⁸ The Mahdists did not come back again to western Wallagga until 1888, when they were defeated by the combined forces of *Ras* Gobena, Jote Tullu of Qellam, and Moroda Bakare of Leqa Naqamte on October 14, 1888, at Gute Dili, east of Nedjo town.⁸⁹ From all the above happenings, it is very reasonable to take the attempted invasion of the Mahdist to Western Wallagga as one of the factors for the penetration of Islam into this region, particularly in the Beghi area.

There were also other factors for the introduction of Islam into Beghi. Mahadist influence could be cited as one factor. According to Negaso, Mahadist forces invaded the whole Sibuu, Leeqaa Sayyoo, and Anfillo up to Noolee Kaabbaa.⁹⁰ The Mahadists were also supported by local Oromo leaders who revolted against the rule of Jote of Gidami and Kumsa of Nekemte. During their invasion, Mahadists had begun to enforce some Islamic laws to the local peoples. For example, they ordered people to abstain from alcoholic drinks and smoking water pipes, also known as *gaayya*. This was at C1887. Kuttu Golja one of the rulers in Beghi gives *mudaa* to the Mahadists. Kuttu Golja of Beghi may have defected to Mahadist.⁹¹ This implies that the Mahadist were influenced by the people of the region with the ideology of Islam.

Another important factor for the introduction and expansion of Islam into Beghi was the migrants that came from Guumaa kingdom to the region of Qellem Wallaga and Beghi area when the Gibe state of Guumaa declared Jihad against the Gojjame army. In the late 1870s and 1880s because of Emperor Yohannis's religious policy, many Muslims were migrated to different regions. These migrants had settled permanently in the state of Guumaa. But at the end of the 19th century, they faced another challenge, the war against the Gojjam invaders. When the *Jihad* was declared by the state of Guuma, some of them were fought against the Gojjames, and others were also migrated to Qellem Wallaga and Beghi.⁹²

After Guuma was defeated, others also followed the footsteps and migrated to Qellem by fearing the domination of the Christians and they established the Muslim community at Ogio. After a few years, many of them fled to other places in Qellem, into Beghi. Others also passed to Jimma Horo, Gidami and through Garjeda they went to Anfillo.⁹³

⁸⁸ Bahru, 1969, pp. 17-18.

⁸⁹ Triulzi, p. 209.

⁹⁰ NegasoGidada, p. 240 and Baharu, Biography of Jote..., p. 29.

⁹¹ Negaso, History of Sayyo..., p. 242.

⁹² Informants: Muhammed and Haruun.

⁹³ Informants: Abdurhaman and Hussien

Abba jifar II also played a significant role in the expansion of Islam into Beghi district by sending many *Ulamas* (Muslim scholars) to the region. *Haji Umar* was one of these *Ulamas*. *Haji Umar* first settled in Beghi district at a place called *Ya'aa Masara*. Subsequently, he moved to *Gidami*, then to *Gawo Dale (Qaqe)*, and went to *Sayyo* at the end of the 19th century. He established a mosque and had started to teach the principles of Islam. According to Bahru's explanations, in his thesis "A Biography of Jote," the Oromo of western Ethiopia had an important relation with Jimma around 1881 but there were no substantial members of Oromo converts. A Muslim teacher known as *Abba Sori*, who lived in *Sayyo*, used to bring *Shaiks* from Jimma. One of the *sheiks* that brought by *Abba Sori* was *Sheik Alfaki Umar Ahmed*.⁹⁴

3. 3 Agents of Islamization of Beghi from 1880s to 1991

During the reign of *Menilik II* Beghi people have gradually been converted to Islam by the influence of Muslim merchants in trading coastal centers and the local rulers.⁹⁵ Therefore, the commercial and diplomatic contact of the Beghi people with the Mahadist of Sudan in the west, which were strong followers of Islam influenced the region and resulted in the wide spread of Islam in to Beghi provinces. As I discussed earlier, the geographical proximity and commercial ties of Sudan with the study area have significant contributions in the spread of Islam in the study area.⁹⁶

Now let us turn to the agents who facilitated the process of conversion. Three groups of people can be identified in this regard. These are: merchants, clerics, and local rulers. Beginning with the early nineteenth century, many Muslim merchants were able to penetrate into western Ethiopia.⁹⁷ Some of these merchants came from Gondar, Gibe region, Wallo, Arsi, the Red Sea coast, Harar, or even from Sudan and Arabia.⁹⁸ As most of the highly sought trade items - ivory, civet, gold, and coffee were found in the Bēla-Sangul and Beghi region, these merchants visited the market centers of the Bēla-Sangul, Qumbabi, and Fadasi. While doing business, they spent several days or months at the major market places in the Bēla-Sangul, Qumbabi, and Fadasi. Some temporarily or permanently settled at Asossa, Fadasi, Beghi, and Bēla-Sangul.⁹⁹

⁹⁴ Informants: Dhaba Mohammad and Baharu, Biography of Jote..., p.29.

⁹⁵ Mohammed Musa, p. 14.

⁹⁶ *Ibid*, and Informants: Mohammed Abdalla, Harun Usmael.

⁹⁷ Faduli, p. 23.

⁹⁸ *Ibid* and Informants; Mohammed Abdisa, Tafa Shagirdi, and Itafa Fido.

⁹⁹ Amanuel, pp.14-16.

Gradually, through intermarriage with local people, they formed a nucleus of the first Muslim communities in the area. Even though merchants were primarily concerned with business, nineteenth-century travelers emphasize their role in the process of Islamization of the region. Major Harris, which Guluma cited as British political envoy to the court of King Sahle Selassie of Šāwā in the early 1840s, for example, portrays a close relationship between the slave trade and the process of Islamization.¹⁰⁰

Although the role of merchants is unquestionable, their active influence, as suggested by Guluma, appears to be exaggerated.¹⁰¹ Merchants contributed to the spread of Islam rather indirectly. As they were largely dependent on the local people for their safe conduct, they were always prudent enough not to antagonize their hosts by preaching a new religion. Initially, their contact with the local people was limited to business transactions. At the market places, they usually camped separately and attended primarily to their businesses.

Although very little can be ascertained about mystical clerics, some names and their works of miracle are often mentioned in oral traditions during the reign of emperor Menilik II. Such *shéiks* lived the nineteenth and twentieth century.¹⁰² Except for their alleged miraculous deeds; the mystical clerics do not seem to have played a major role in the Islamization of the Beghi and beyond. Some are remembered for their miracles and highly severe lives. Some of these clerics who lived in Beghi before the twenty century were: David Sa'id and his family, *Sheik* Sharif Waddal Hindi of Hophā, Alfaki Seleman Khojole of Qondaala Zenga and his Son Hajji Abduljalil Alfaki Seleman of Gaba Dafino, Alfaki Ahmed Umar (*Abbul Abbas*) of *Ya'aa* Masara, *Hajji* Abdurahim of Iggi.¹⁰³ *Shéiks* and *Hajji's* were also played an important role in the expansion and introduction of Islam in Beghi district particularly, and West Ethiopia generally. According to some informants, these *Sheiks* mostly came from Nigeria and Yemen and Sudan during the 1880s, 1890s, 1900s.¹⁰⁴

Accordingly, those *shéiks* and *hajj's* were introduced and spread Islamic religion in the different period. In Beghi, the *Tijjaniyya* Order was first introduced by the Arabic clan known as Dawid Said around 1830s and 1840s. The most widely remembered traveling cleric around Beghi is *Sheikh* Dawid Sa'id. According to written sources, Dawid was coming to Beghi and Bēla-Shangul region for the means of preaching Islamic religion and

¹⁰⁰ Guluma, p. 68.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid*, p.69.

¹⁰² Alemayehu, p. 16, and Informants; Mohammed Abduljalil, Adam Abduljalil.

¹⁰³ *Ibid*.

¹⁰⁴ Informants: Haaruun Isma'el, Habib Abdulqadir, and Kadir Yasin.

he is the first person who was arrived and reached at Ya'a *Masara* probably around 1840s.¹⁰⁵

According to local religious elders, those religious leaders were came from Nigeria through crossing the desert of Sudan and entered to Asossa and Beghi before 1900.¹⁰⁶ Especially, *Sheik Sharif Waddal Indi* and *Alfaki Seleman Khojole* had reached to Beghi land on the foot steps of the *Ansar (Darbush)* around 1870s.¹⁰⁷ Those Islamic leaders have been built many *Khälawäs* in their compound and teaching the Holly Qür'án and did miracles by using their magic power.¹⁰⁸ Those religious leaders, when they arrived to the region they had started to preach the rules of Islam and established their own centers known as *Bakka Salataa* or *Dirree Salataa* (Praying Compound).¹⁰⁹ Then *Bakka Salataa* or *Dirree Salataa* became the center for teaching the principles of Islam. The most famous *Bakka Salataa* or *Dirree Salataa* is the *Bakka Salataa* or *Dirree Shéékötää* of Hophä, *Bakka Salataa* or *Dirree Shéékötää* of *Gabaa Dafinoo*, and *Dirree Shéékötää* or *Dirree Salataa* of Iggi is the well known ones.¹¹⁰

The reign of *Lij Iyasu* (1913-1916) He was the designated as Emperor of Ethiopia. He was not anti-Muslim like the preceding rulers (his father, *Räs Mikael*, was a convert from Islam).¹¹¹ He tried to accommodate both followers of Christianity and Islam. He married into families of both religions. He founded Churches and built mosques.¹¹² Nevertheless, *Lij Iyasu* in 1909 leaned towards Islam and accepted the Arabic language as an official language in the Empire. He also support from Muslim countries.¹¹³ However, the Church resented his toleration towards Muslims and the clergy would use it as one of the main reasons to reject him from the position in 1916. Menelik's daughter, *Zewditu*, came to power in 1917. At the same time, *Dajazmach* *Tafari Mekonnen* was named successor to the Throne.¹¹⁴

¹⁰⁵ Alessander Meckherberg, PP.103-105.

¹⁰⁶ Informants: Mohammed Abdisa, Tafa Shagirdi, and Nabbara Achol.

¹⁰⁷ Informants; Haaruun Isma'el, Mohammed Abdisa, Mohammed Abduljalil.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁰ Informants: Getacho Qana'a, Amad Abduljalil, Mohammed Abduljalil.

¹¹¹ Informants: Mohammed Abdisa, Tafa Shagirdi, Anteneh Wasihun, p., and Muhammed Musa, p.19.

¹¹² *Ibid.*

¹¹³ Teshome, p.40.

¹¹⁴ Ali, p. 118.

Oral informants noted that, the friendly and commercial relationship between Khojole and *Lijj* Iyasu were one of the main reasons, for the further growth of Islam in Beghi.¹¹⁵ In this regard, the people go on and assert that Khojole continued his usual communication mechanisms with those kings who came after Menilik II and surprisingly won the attention of *Lijj* Iyasu to come up to Beghi in order to settle border issue between himself (Khojole) and Jote Tullu.¹¹⁶

The precise date for the coming of *Lijj* Iyasu was not specifically identified by the informants. However, all of them agree that it happened one year before the death of Menelik II (1913), thus this might have been in 1912.¹¹⁷ According to these people, *Lijj* Iyasu had included Wabara (was one of the territory of Jote where his brother Ashana built the first Orthodox congregation in Beghi) in to the domain of Khojole.¹¹⁸ The relationship between Khojole and *Lijj* Iyasu cannot be confined only to commercial and political purposes. The situation must be perceived in light of the general motive and inclinations of *Lijj* Iyasu towards Islam faith.

Historically, *Lijj* Iyasu was known for his adoption of Islamic faith and favoring the spread of Islam over all parts of Ethiopia.¹¹⁹ From this general observation it can be strongly suggested that the close relationship between *Lijj* Iyasu and Khojole which the former favored the later to expand his territory at the expense of the Christian rule, Jote Tullu, might have been from his strong desire to propagate Islam over the area.¹²⁰

The Fascist Italian period in Ethiopia (1936-1941) can be referred as the golden age for the Ethiopian Muslims. All the available sources agree that, the Italians had favored Muslim population of Ethiopia and brought many changes for the growth of Islam in many part of the country.¹²¹ The Italians invaded Ethiopia and occupied it for five years. The Fascist government's declared pro-Islamic policy further exacerbated the tension between Christians and Muslims.¹²² In order to secure the loyalty of Ethiopian Muslims, the Italians took a number of concrete steps boldly to promote Islam: the construction of over two

¹¹⁵ Informants: Nabara Onchol and Xaafaa Shaagirdii, Mohammed Abdisa, Raggasa Akkayu and Tekalign, p. 72.

¹¹⁶ Erku Aseffa, p. 73.

¹¹⁷ Informants: Nabara Onchol and Xaafaa Shaagirdii.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁹ Tekalign, p.73.

¹²⁰ Informants: Mohammed Abdisa, Tafa Shagirdi.

¹²¹ Workineh Shiferaw, "A History of Leeqa Qellam ca. 1840s to 1941" (MA Thesis, Jimma University, History, 2013), P. 135.

¹²² Hussein Ahimed. "Coexistence and/or confrontation? Towards a reappraisal of Christian-Muslim encounter in contemporary Ethiopia," *Journal of Religion in Africa* 36, 1(2006), pp. 4-22, pp. 8-9.

scores of new mosques (including the Grand Anwar Mosque in Addis Ababa and the Arab Ganda Mosque in Dessie), the Highest *Shēriā* Court was officially established in Addis Ababa. The restoration of over a dozen of old mosques, the financing of the pilgrimage to Mēcca and allowed the teaching of Arabic in Islamic schools. Because of such provoking opportunities provided by the Fascists but denied by ruthless monarchs, a considerable number of Muslims might have shown support to the Italians as it is embedded in the existing literature. They also encouraged Islamic expansion into areas untouched by Islam before, or where Islamic presence had been superficial.¹²³

Informants claim that, Abbul Abbas (Alfaak Umar) or *Abba Qoricha* arrived in Beghi Ya'a *Masara* during the Italian occupation. During this time in Beghi there was no even one mosque. However, the local sheikhs and others of the area had been built a *khāluwää* or *galmaa* (small hut) on their garden individually. In this *khāluwää*, a member of family or individuals made *duwaa'ii* (prayer) ever Thursday night. The Muslim elders of the communities also came together every Thursday night and did the same *duwwaa'ii*. One of my informants said, the sheikhs of Gabaa Dafinoo, Kaabbachee Dumme, Shagga, and Benguwaa would come together every Thursday night in the *khāluwääs* of Shēik Amad Tibbe at Shagga and make *duwaa'ii*.

Thus, the period also played a significant role for the expansion of Islam in Beghi during the first half 20th century.¹²⁴ The Sudanese merchants also came to this region. During this period, many Muslim settlers came from Wallo, Arsi, Harar, Gojjam, and Jimma to Beghi for trade and for Coffee production because as the region was favorable for coffee production. According to Muhammed, the Italians greatly facilitated the pilgrimage of Hajj for the Muslim communities of Ethiopia generally and Beghi particularly. Accordingly, from Beghi district, 400 Beghi Muslims with Alfaki Ahimed Umar made pilgrimage to Mecca via Sudan by their private budget.¹²⁵

¹²³ Trimmingham, p. 184.

¹²⁴ Bartles, p. 26 and Informants: Adam and Dhaba.

¹²⁵ Muhammed, p. 20.

Figure 5: Picture of Alfaki Ahimed Umar (*Abul Abbaas*) or *Abbaa Qoricha*



Source: Photo taken from Individual Person Sheikh Mohammed Abdisa, on April, 23/ 2020

3.4 Islam in Beghi from 1941-1974

The re-establishment of the monarchy in 1941 was followed by harsh measures taken by the state against Muslim leaders who were accused of sedition on account of their collaboration with the enemy “although they had nothing to do with the coming of the invaders in the first place”.¹²⁶ In fact, some Muslim clerics had also resisted the occupation from its inception,¹²⁷ other Muslim clerics also refused to be appointed as a *qádi* (lawyer)¹²⁸ many Muslim partisans were killed along side their Christian brothers and some Islamic Shrines were also bombed by Italian warplanes while mosques were serving for sheltering partisans.¹²⁹ Moreover, the pro-Italian stance of native Muslims was justified

¹²⁶ Hussein, “Coexistence and/or confrontation? Towards a reappraisal of Christian–Muslim encounter in contemporary Ethiopia”, *Journal of Religion in Africa* 36, 1 (2006), p.9

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*

¹²⁸ Muhammed, p. 21.

¹²⁹ Endris Abarra. “The Biography of Sheikh Ahmed Said (Dabat),” (B.A Essay, Department of History, Addis Ababa University, 2003), p. 33.

since the Italians promised and granted a greater measure of freedom of worship than did the previous Ethiopian regimes.¹³⁰

After 1941, the Ethiopian Orthodox Church launched an aggressive missionary policy to undermine Islam in Southern Ethiopia. “A conversion of nearly 20,000 people took place in Arsi at a time”.¹³¹ Even though in 1944/45 Emperor Haile Sellassie declared religious equality, political, socio-economic and cultural discrimination against Muslims continued.¹³²

Like other Ethiopian Muslims, the oral traditions of Muslims in Beghi area remember the post-Italian times as unpleasant and the period of experiencing serious persecution from the government of Ethiopia. According to the informants the major persecutions were restriction up on the Muslims to build their Mosques and to practice their religion publicly (e.g public celebration of the holy days).¹³³ Fore instance, In Beghi area, the place where the Muslim clergies prayer come to gether every Thursday night; the compound of Sheik Amad Tibbe of Shagga¹³⁴, prayer center of sheekota Hophaa and Iggi were enforced to close by the central governments. In general, the administration system of the emperor Haile Sillase was severely exploiting for most of Ethiopian peasants in general and the Muslim of Beghi in particular. They were forced to pay heavy taxes and harshly treated by their feudal system.¹³⁵

According to oral traditions, under this harsh treated of the emperor, during the period of post liberation in Beghi new mystic orders were introduced and the Islamic religion doctrine of Beghi was revived by the contribution of the new mystic, and the former orders tijjaniya cult was became too weak.¹³⁶ During the time the eastern and norther clerics were fledged to Beghi in mass. These events caused for the revival of Islamic religion and the further expansion and consolidation of Islam in Beghi and beyond.

Then at the first four decades of the 20th century on words other many well known Islamic leaders and preachers are also reached to Beghi. From these Islamic leaders, Alfaki Ahimed Umar, *Hajj* Mohammed Sharif, *Hajj* Mohammed Said, and *Sheik* Kabir Abshiru are the major one. Those leaders and preachers had been come from Nigeria, Sudan and northen

¹³⁰ Hussein, p.9.

¹³¹ Braukamer, U. *Islamic History and Culture in Southern Ethiopia*, Munster – Hamburg, 2003, p. 159.

¹³² *Ibid*, and Hussein, p. 12.

¹³³ Informants: Nabara Onchol, Xaafaa Shagadrii, Mohammed Abdisa, Haruun Usmael.

¹³⁴ *Ibid*.

¹³⁵ *Ibid*, and Muhammed, p. 21.

¹³⁶ Informants: Haaruun Isma’el, Mohammed Abdisa.

Ethiopia Dëira Bégëmidir respectively. Historically, during this time, Christianity was taken as the dominant religion while Islam was considered as religion of the minority Ethiopian and was opposed by the ruling class.¹³⁷ However, one important preacher of Islam was arrived Beghi through the eastern Sudan in 1941 G.C. This person was known as Alfeki Ahimed Umar.¹³⁸

According to local elders Alfaki Ahimed Umar had come to Beghi area and call the people to embrace Islam by using his miraculous did. Alfaki Ahimed succeeded in converting some of poor people to Islam, who have no power to lead the people to the way of Islam.¹³⁹ The coming of Alfeki Ahimed Umar to Beghi is the major factors for the further expansion and consolidation of Islam in Beghi area.¹⁴⁰ These *sheiks*, when they arrived to the region they had started to preach the rules of Islam and established their own centers known as *Masara* and *Bakka Salataa* (Praying Compound).¹⁴¹ Then *Masara* became the center for teaching the principles of Islam. The most famous *Masara* is the *Ya'aa Masara* and *Bakka Salataa* of *Gabaa* Kamisaa or Konchii, *Bakka Salataa* of *Gabaa* Dafinoo, *Bakka Salataa* of Tongoo, and *Bakka Salataa* of Kabbachee Dummee. *Ya'aa Masara*, of Alaku Akkayyu found in Sayyo and *Ya'a* Minko was established some 12km from the town of Dambidollo, by *sheik* Alfaki Ahmad Umar in the beginning of 20th century. Other *Masara* is *Ya'aa* in Beghi near to Tongoo¹⁴² (We will see further later on). It was founded by same person. Many sub branches of *Masara* were founded in rural villages.

It also on the foot steps of Alfeki Ahimed Umar one deced later, other Islamic leaders and preacher had been arrived to Beghi from 1950s to 1970s. The religious leaders and preachers had been played a pivotal role for the religious revival of Islam and they had been teaching the five pillars or the spiritual life of Islamic religion in the study area. Islam has got five pillars: performing prayers (*Salahat*) at least five times within twenty-four hours, giving *Zākah* (the poor's due right from the rich), fasting the month of Ramadan, Ablution (*wadu*) and performing pilgrimage (*hajj*) at least once in a life time.¹⁴³

The *Shéiks* were come from the internal regions of Ethiopia through the Sudan. The *sheiks* are *Hajj* Usmael Ahimed, and *Hajj* Ibrahim Zakkariya come from Harar (Eastern Ethiopia), *Hajj* Mohammad Ali from Arsi (southern Ethiopia), and *Hajj* Muftz Rashid Kamal from

¹³⁷ Haggai Erlich, 2007, p. 329.

¹³⁸ Informants: Mohammed Abdisa, Harun Usmael, and Mohammed Musa, 2020, p. 29.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴² Jibril, 2018, pp. 72-73, and Informants: Mohammed Abdisa and Adam Abduljalil.

¹⁴³ Faduli, p. 28, Teshome, p. 43, Ali, p.254, and Informants: Haaruun Usmael, Habib Abdulqadir.

Wallo in 1980s (Northern Ethiopia).¹⁴⁴ Before the arrival of those Shéikhs and *Hajj's*, the Muslim communities of Beghi had the followers of *Sufi* Islamic orders. However, the internal sheiks have been reached to Beghi with the new Islamic order *All- Sunna all-Jama'a (Tawhid tariqa)*¹⁴⁵ (We will see further on the Islamic Order of Beghi later on).

The local Shéikhs have emerged as respected teachers and advisers to rulers.¹⁴⁶ Although details of their life histories are not available, fragments of their activities are remembered in the oral traditions. The first generation of local sheikhs established their own centers of Islamic learning in the Beghi area. One such center is, for example, Islamic center in Shagga, Kabbachee, Gabaa Dafinoo, and Gabaa Kamisaa (Kibbii) which was established by *Shéikhs* Usmael Ahimad and Ibrahim Zakkariyya. Together with other *shéikhs* who arrived from eastern Ethiopia in the late 1950s, local clerics were responsible for the consolidation of Islam in the region by the end of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.¹⁴⁷

Those Islamic clerics are teaching and preaching the *Qúr'án* and *Hádith* to the local communities. It also established Mosques in different village and town with the Muslim communities and it started to pray *Juma'a*. Before the coming of those Islamic clerics, in Beghi and beyond, praying of *Juma'a* is not had be gave a recognition. According to the religious elders gave the information, the *Tijjaniyya* mystic sheikhs and clerics were didn't practice and participate the Muslim followers of the area for praying of *Juma'a*. They did only practicing *Sadaqaa*, ----. However, when the *Sunni (Tawhid)* order followers come to the area, they were teaching and preaching the forbidden of *Sadaqaa* and they guided praying only a single *Allah*. Yet, because of this, the new mystic followers were harsh persecution by the former order Tijjaniya followers.¹⁴⁸ According to informants, during the period of Haile Sillassie I, especially from 1958, the *Sunni (Tawhid Aqiida)* are built many Mosques in Beghi town, Gabaa Dafinoo, Gabaa Kamisaa, Kabbachee Dummee, Tobbii, Kibbii, Dhalladduu Haroo Diimaa, Tulluu Dhoqonuu (Gabaa Facaasaa) Shoonboo, Shoongee, Kongiloo Gaara Keelloo, Hoophaa, Koboora, Shaashii, Carphaa¹⁴⁹, etc.

¹⁴⁴ Informants: Harun Usmael, Mohammed Abdisa, Abdu Bushura, Mohammed Abdalla.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁸ Informants: Harun Usmael, Mohammed Abdisa, Mohammed Jaleta.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

3. 5 Islam in Beghi during *Dërg* Regime 1974-1991

Dërgue was a military junta that came to power in Ethiopia following the ousting of Haile Sellasie. *Dërgue* is the short name of the Coordinating committee as a provisional Military Administrative Council (PMAC) who seized the country after overthrew of Haile Sellasie autocratic feudal rule in 1974.¹⁵⁰ After the upsurge of the revolution, the *Dërgue* Socialist ideology separated church and State.¹⁵¹

In December 1974, Ethiopia declared itself as a Socialist State with a program of revolutionary reform called, “*ETHIOPIA TIKDEM*” (Ethiopia First) as a slogan and creed.¹⁵² During the *Dërgue* period, thousands of innocent people were either tortured or killed as anti-revolutionary elements.¹⁵³ The 1974 Ethiopian Revolution brought a profound impact on the economic, cultural and political life of the entire people in the country.¹⁵⁴ According to Andargachew, the military forces, students and Civil servants were the major bodies who took the leading role in the 1974 Ethiopian Revolution which led to the overthrow of the imperial regime of Haile-Sellassie I.¹⁵⁵ Nevertheless, several portion of the Ethiopian society came on the side of the armed forces that succeeded in the deposition of the emperor.¹⁵⁶

Besides, the revolution not only brought the so called Solomonic Dynasty and the then prevalent social order to an end but also changed the country’s international relation.¹⁵⁷ Citing Samuel P. Huntington Gebru writes, “.....A revolution is a rapid, fundamental, and violent domestic change in the dominant values and myths of a society, in its political institutions, social structure, leadership, government activity and policies.¹⁵⁸” Therefore, the revolution could be considered as one of the turning point in the the history of the country in general and in religious sphere in particular.

It’s easy probably, from 1974-1977, in which the *Dërg* gave some recognition for Islam and Christianity the remaining period of its regime was known by the harsh attitudes and

¹⁵⁰ Ali, p. 124, and Anteneh, p. 69.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵² Teshome, p. 48, and Muhammed, p. 32.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁴ Mohammed Musa, pp. 32-33

¹⁵⁵ Andargachewu Tiruneh, *The Ethiopian Revolution 1974-1998: A Transformation from an Aristocratic to a Totalitarian Autocracy*, (Cambridge, 1993), p.37.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁷ Gebru Tareke, *The Ethiopian Revolution: War in the Horn of Africa*, (London, 2009), p.6.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

persecution against all religions.¹⁵⁹ The 1974 Ethiopian Revolution had a deep impact on popular Islam.¹⁶⁰ Although it guaranteed religious equality, the *Dërg* vigorously attacked some popular *Sufi* practices as anti-revolutionary and „backward cultures“. *Dërg* officials arrested and executed some important local holy men.¹⁶¹ Moreover, the land proclamation (March 1974), villagization and the social dislocation that followed seriously undermined the economic potential of the local *abbaa qoros* and wealthy cultivators who had been the patrons of Islamic education and propagation throughout the first half of the twentieth century.¹⁶²

The Muslims in Beghi also claim that they had undergone serious persecution during the socialist regime of Ethiopia (1974-1991).¹⁶³ The *Dërg* treated the Muslim as those who were the enemies of the revolution and persecuted them. As my informant gave suggestions about the situation as follow: “The *Dërg* was much worse than Haile Sillasse’s government were at any time.” One of my informants also stresses that, “The *Dërg* was harsh persecutor of Islam”.¹⁶⁴ According to this person Muslim in Beghi were denied from public celebration of their religious festivals and visiting the Shrine of *Ya’a*. Many sheikhs of the Mosques were imprisoned without committing ant crimes.¹⁶⁵ According to Muhammed Abdisa one of my key informants in Beghi and Muhammed Musa who had been done a research on the history of Islam in Beghi recent time confirmed that, due to oppressive rule of *Dërg* regime the house and six year daughter of *Hajj* Abdusemed Tucho were burned and hundred of the Muslim followers and clergies were live their home and migrated to Sudan until the down fall of the regime. Among the clerics Shéikh Mohammed Abdisa *Hajji* Musti Rashid Kamal, *Hajji* Ibrahim Zakkariya, *Hajji* Usmael Ahimed were taken to imprison and seriously persecuted by the regime and after released from prisome they migrated to the Republik of Sudan from 1985-1992, and they returned to their family in 1992/93.¹⁶⁶

¹⁵⁹ Alemayehu, p. 27. Eide Oyvind, *Revolution and Religion in Ethiopia: The growth and persecution of the Mekane Yesus Church 1974-85*. Oxford; James Curry, 2000, p. 114, And Informants: Haaruun Usma’el, and Nabbaraa Achol.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁶¹ Shuma Gammachuu, “Origin and Growth of Evangelical Christianity in Beghi Gidami Area, 1932-1992,” (BTH. Paper, MYS, Addis Ababa, 1993), p. 18.

¹⁶² Aman Seifedin, “Islam and the Muslim Community of Gommaa: A Historical Survey (1886-1974)”, (MA Thesis, AAU, History, 2006), P.96.

¹⁶³ Alemayehu, p. 27, and Informants: Haaruun Usma’el, and Nabbaraa Achol.

¹⁶⁴ Informants: Ali Waggaa and Abdul wab Dubballa.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁶ Informants; Muhammed Abdisa, Nabbara Achol, Harun Usmael, and Muhammed Musa, p. 34.

3. 6 Islam in Beghi after the down fall of Derg Regime.

In May 1991, the military autocracy, which had ruled the country ever since 1974 under the iron-fist rule, was overthrown and Islam witnessed not only institutional rehabilitation and religious and cultural revival, but also visibility and prominence in the public sphere. The Constitution of 1994 Articles 14-28 explicitly enumerated the basic and fundamental rights of citizens.¹⁶⁷ The people were granted the right to exercise their religions. The Muslims in Beghi also enjoyed benefits granted to the Muslims in Ethiopia. One of my informants says, “I had been serving the Muslim community as *Kadi* during the reign of Haile Sellasie and Mengistu Haile Mariam, but I have not seen such freedom during EPRDF”.¹⁶⁸

As the result of this, we see many changes among the Muslim communities. This government gave the possibility to organize all activities of Muslims. The EPRDF Regime has given the following freedom for the Muslim community in Ethiopia.¹⁶⁹

The current government introduced extensive reforms which went some way to satisfying the aspirations of Ethiopian Muslims (and other faith groups as well) because of its federal and democratic leadership.¹⁷⁰ Other equally significant indications of Islamic religious, institutional and cultural revival included: a manifold increase in the number of Ethiopian pilgrims traveling to Mēcca and Mēdina, an end to the ban on the import and circulation of Islamic literature, the holding of election at district, provincial and national level for the re-invigorated, though still internally divided, council; a considerable program of mosque construction (with single as well as double long minarets) largely financed by local contributions and foreign assistance (the latter provoking hostile remarks about outside Arab Islamic influence) even in conventionally Christian areas; the visibility of Muslims as reflected in the extensive use of Islamic forms of address and greetings, exhibition of Islamic discipline and the wearing of the veil (*hijab*) in urban and even certain rural areas; the emergence of a new and dynamic forms of Islamic preaching (*da'wa* movement); and the opening of Islamic Schools and Colleges, bookshops and travel agencies in the capital, as well as regional cities, the latter catering to those traveling on the lesser and regular pilgrimage (the *Umra* and *Hajj*, respectively) and the adjustment of office hours to Friday

¹⁶⁷ The Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, 1994

¹⁶⁸ Informant: Haaruun Usmaa'el, Muhammed Abdisa, Muzambir and Abdalla Sosso.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁰ Hussein, p. 15.

prayers. These expressions of Islamic identity aroused subtle and popular reactions from some Christian quarters.¹⁷¹

Dërgue restricted the distribution of religious literature in the country. Nevertheless, EPRDF has ended censorship on religious literature. As a result, much literature is printed in the country and imported from outside. This helped the Muslims to distributed literature written in the country. We have the establishment of printing presses for promotion of Islamic literature. Various magazines, audio and video production have been produced and sold especially in the cities. We have also seen the establishment of Muslim organizations at country level like the Ethiopian Youth Muslim Association and others.¹⁷²

On 28 November 1995, a Muslim demonstration demanding that the *Shëria law* should be one of the bases of the Ethiopian Constitution. This is a major trend and it tells us that Ethiopian Muslims are feeling more confident to change even the policy direction of the country, and to influence the Government.¹⁷³

3.7 Islamic Orders in Beghi District

Source indicated that there are two major factors (external and internal) for the expansion and consolidation of the mystical orders in Ethiopia in general, and Beghi in particular.¹⁷⁴ Accordingly, there are two external factors must be taken in to account at the outset. First, the general weakening of Islam in the Muslim world beginning from the late 18th century, which was partly related to the decline of the Ottoman Empire and partly a reaction to the apparent stagnation of established Islam.¹⁷⁵ The period witnessed the emergence of vigorous fundamentalist movements such as *Wahhabiyya*, the emergence of new mystical orders, and the revival of old ones.¹⁷⁶ The second factors was the revival of Islam in the Muslim world which was partly attributed to the rise of new mystical orders and revivalist movements such as Wahhabism (named after its founder, Muhammad ibn Abd-al-Wahhab, 1703-1787) seems to have a useful effect on the expansion of Islam in the western region.¹⁷⁷

Since, Ethiopia is not far from the major Islamic centers, new Islamic ideas introduced by the religious orders and revivalist movements were easily disseminated mainly by pilgrims

¹⁷¹ Hussein, pp. 16-17.

¹⁷² Ali, pp. 129-130, and Informants; Muhammed Abdisa, Muhammed Abdalla.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁴ Alemayehu, p.14, Hussein, p. 47.

¹⁷⁵ Aman Seifedin, p. 44.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, and Hussein, pp.47-48

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

and traders.¹⁷⁸ Relative safety in the Red Sea coast and the interior of Ethiopia including the Western Ethiopia might have been responsible for the increase of the pilgrims from the Western Ethiopia.¹⁷⁹ There is a reference to pilgrims from the Western region as early as 1840s. Since the middle of the nineteenth century there seems to have been a steady rise in the number of pilgrims for whom the kings and rich merchants partly covered their expenses.¹⁸⁰ Of the mystic orders the one with long-lasting impact on Beghi and Bēla shangul is the *Sunni* Order.¹⁸¹ *Sunni's* role in the Islamization of Beghi will be discussed in a subsequent chapter.

The other major factor was internal factors. Among the Internal factors, different writers have noted that favorable internal conditions were responsible for the nineteenth-century large scale Islamization of the Beghi in particular South Western Ethiopian region in general.¹⁸² Internally the decline of the *gādaa* system and the breakdown of the traditional Oromo religion on the one hand, and the subsequent rise of monarchical rule which promoted Islam for political reasons, on the other, became a stimulus to the growth of Islam.¹⁸³ Islam filled the religious vacuum created by the collapse of the *gādaa* system and the rituals centered on it.¹⁸⁴

The external factors which contributed to the dissemination of Islam in other parts of Ethiopia in the nineteenth century seem to have been partly responsible for the large-scale Islamization witnessed in the South Western Ethiopian region in general and Beghi in Particular during the same period. One was the revival of the Red Sea trade and the other the reawakening of Islam in the Muslim world.¹⁸⁵ The emergence of Egypt under Mohammed Ali (1769-1849) brought relative safety to the Red Sea littoral which encouraged the revival of long-distance trade around the region.¹⁸⁶ This new development in the Red Sea littoral seems to have had direct impact on the Ethiopian trade in general and that of the Beghi region in particular.

The revival of trade led directly to the increase in the volume of commerce and the number of merchants visiting the Beghi and Bēla shangul region.¹⁸⁷ The Bēla shangul and Beghi

¹⁷⁸ Teshome, p. 43.

¹⁷⁹ Aman, p.44.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁸¹ Alemayehu, p. 14.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*

¹⁸³ Benti, p. 54.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁵ Hussein, pp.32-33, and Aman, p.44

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁷ Alemayehu, p. 17.

region and the areas south of it supplied the Red Sea region with valuable export items such as slaves, gold, ivory, musk, spices and later coffee.¹⁸⁸ Generally, despite occasional conflicts among the Oromo rulers which adversely affected the trade temporarily, the long distance caravan trade enriched the Oromo rulers, the *Jabarti*, and the *Afkala* (local Oromo merchants)¹⁸⁹ who in one way or another favored the cause of Islam.

In the last topic reference was made to the introduction and distribution of the mystic orders in Beghi district. The oral evidence from Beghi and the neighboring areas strongly suggested that the development and diffusion of *Sufism* in the region were brought to Beghi district in the second quarter of the 19th century, and began spread widely in the beginning of the 20th century through the agency of scholars and traders of the Sudan to propagate the order.¹⁹⁰ Before the introduction of the mystic order of *Sunni* in Beghi district in particular, the Muslim communities of the region was the followers of the *Khatamiyya* or *Mirghaniyya* mystic order which was first introduced and settled into Khomosha by Bidari trader 'Ummad' in 1240 A.H (1824-5 A.D).¹⁹¹ The founder of this order, Muhammad Uthman al-Mirghani (1793-1852), was sent by his master Ahmad Ibn Idris in to Egypt and the Sudan as a propaganda agent and preached amongst the Bani Amir in 1817.¹⁹² However, to day in Beghi district, the *Khatamiyya* mystic order is disappeared.

While, according to Triulzi, the *fuqāra* were also responsible for the introduction of *Sufi* religion as orders (*tariqa*) in the *Sa'id* and Beghi. The first professional teachers were Al-Faki Sayyid, A- Khatmi, and Al-Faki Hamid, A-Qadiri most probably around 1870s. The most important among these *Sufi* disciples was probably Al-Sharif Wad al-Khojole, a *Sammaniyya* from the Sudan, who settled in Khomosha and Fadasi towards the mid-century. *Sufi* Muslims, as they believed in the ability of the saints to intercede with *Allah*. *Sufi* believed that the saints of God die not; rather they merely depart from one habitation to another. Consequently the excessive honour paid to the saints in their life time is continued to them after their death.¹⁹³ A few Muslim communities in Beghi district are the followers of the *Tijaniyya* mystic order.¹⁹⁴ The *Tijjanyya* is the most influential order among the communities of Benishangul area.

¹⁸⁸ Melkamu, p. 38, and Informants: Buli Wayyu, Mohammed Nagari, and Kasim Kalifa.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁰ Informants; Harun Usmael, Mohammed Nagari

¹⁹¹ Triulzi, p. 143.

¹⁹² Trimmingham, 1952, p.244.

¹⁹³ Seyoum Merga, "An Archaeological Survey of Islamic Shrines in Jimma Zone, South Western Ethiopia," (MA Thesis, AAU.Archaeology. 2012), pp. 9-10.

¹⁹⁴ Informants: Abdala Sosso, Muzambir Sosso, and Mohammed Abdisa.

The first Islamic orders introduced to Beghi before the diffusion of the *others* orders was known as the *Tijaniya* mystic order. According to few written evidences, the *Tijaniyya* order is introduced in Beghi district by which the first Islamic preacher Dawid Said of the Arab descendants around 1830s on word.¹⁹⁵ However, few writers of the region such as Triulzi, Fixe Birri, and Muhammed Musa even Aman Seifed who did his MA These on the Islam and the Muslim Communities of Gomma were doing not confirm this idea. According to Aman Seifed is noted that, the *Tijaniyya* mystic order introduced in Gomma from Dambi Dollo by *Alfaki* Umar Nijera in descendant.¹⁹⁶ However, the recent writers of the region Alexander Bekchen noted that, before *Alfaki* Ahimed Umar was introduced and settled in Beghi around *Ya'a Masara* Shrine, the Arab descendant Dawud Sayid was introduced and settled in Beghi through Shërkolë, to Wanta Gittan, to *Ya'aa Masra* and preach the Islamic religion five generation ago before his grand fathers Harun Sosso.¹⁹⁷ Dawud obviously belonged to Muslim traders who entered Ethiopia on the *hajj*.¹⁹⁸

The most prominent example is the highly venerated *Alfaki* Ahamd Umer who eventually settled in *Ya'a* and whose shrine today is a centre of the *Tijaniya* cult in western Ethiopia Beghi district as well as a centre for ecumenical pilgrimages that attracts thousands of Muslim pilgrims but also Christians. Pilgrims seek spiritual blessing or are attracted by healing qualities e.g. of the holy water of *Ya'a* (we will see later). But, *Tijaniyya* is weakend in Beghi area because of the active involvement of the *Sunni al- Jama'a tariqa* or *Twahid*.¹⁹⁹ The *Twahid tariqa* fiercely rejected pirgrimage to the shrines as well as other practices irreconcilable with the *Tijaniyya* orders.²⁰⁰ And also it emphasizing strict adherence to the principles of God's singularity.²⁰¹

According to the local informants noted that, the *Tijaniyya* Islamic orders were flourished in Beghi district in active ways until the coming of the new mystical clerics of the *Al Sunn al Jama'a (Twahid order) ulmmaas* from the northern and eastern edge of the country through the border of Sudan during the last of the second half of 20th century.²⁰² These *ulama's* are *Hajj* Mammad Sayid, *Hajj* Mammad Xahir, Muftz *Hajj* Rashid Kamal from

¹⁹⁵ Alexssander, p. 101.

¹⁹⁶ Aman, pp. 63-64.

¹⁹⁷ Alexssander, pp. 101-102.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁰ Seyoum, p.9.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*

²⁰² Informants: Mohammed Abdisa, Harun Usmael, Habib, and Mohammed Abdalla.

Walloo, and other sheiks like *shéik* Isma'el Ahimad, *shéik* Ibrahim Zakkariyya from Hararghe, and also some sheiks came from Arsi like Hajj Mammad Ali, and the like.²⁰³

According to the religious elders claimed that, these the *Al Sunn al-Jama'a* mystical clerics were came to Beghi and arrived to the area in to different directions. Fore examples, *Hajj* Mammad Sayid and *Shéik* Ibrahim Zakkariyya wanted to Konchee (Gabaa Kamisaa, south of Beghi town far to 10kms), *Shéék* Isma'el Ahimad arrived Gabaa Dafinoo (Kondala district), *Hajj* Maammadnur Xahiir arrived to Shoomboo (north west of Beghi town far from 30kms), Muftz *Hajj* Rashid Kamal settled at Beghi town, *Hajj* Mammad Ali Kongiloo Gaara Keello, *Shéik* Abdulmannaan Shaashii, *Hajj* Kadir Kobor and etc.²⁰⁴ After that he teaches the *Qúr'än* and *Hádith* effectivilly and established Mosques at rural and urban centers. It also practiced the communities the doctrine of the *Al Sunn al-Jama'a's* order and the ways of Islamic *sĕlat* (daily pray) and *Juma'a* pray. Because, according to the informant's notifications, until the introduction of the new mystical order of *Al Sunn al-Jama'a* (*Twahid* order), the Muslim communities of Beghi were they could not know about the daily Ismalic pray and *Juma'a Salat*. Accordingly, the Muslim communities of Beghi are not deeply known the word of *Allah* through *Qúr'än*.²⁰⁵ They were simply called the name of Islam and drunk and prepared diffrent local Alchol (*Aräqé* and *Färsó*). However, after the *Tawhid* mystical clerics were arrived their, the Muslim communities of Beghi forgotten from the bad thing, drunk and prepared *Aräqé* and *Farsoo*, and also start to pray five times a day and *Juma'a*. They also build many Mosques in different areas.²⁰⁶

3.8 The Islamic Shrine of Ya'a Masara

The establishment of shrine at *Ya'a*, south west of Beghi town was said to have been a major important factor for the progression of Islam religion in Beghi area.²⁰⁷ This shrine was found by a person called Dawud Sa'id and his brother Issa Sa'id around 175 years ago, and reformed by a person called *Alfaki* Ahmed Umar, to who lack clear historical information concerning his origin and exact date for his coming to Beghi.²⁰⁸ Based on the oral traditions, and few written sources *Shéik* Alfeki Ahmed Umar had come from Bontu in

²⁰³ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁷ Oyvind M. Eide, "Revolution and Religion in Ethiopia: *The Growth and Persecution of the MekaneYesus Church 1974-1985*". (Addis Ababa, 2000), p. 45, and Alenssadro Triulzi, *Salt, Gold and Legitimacy, Prelude to the history of a no-man's land, Belashangul, Wallagga ca-1800-1898*, (Naples1981), p.148.

²⁰⁸ Alenxander, pp. 101-102.

northern Nigeria to Gomma near Jimma from where he proceeded to *Ya'a*.²⁰⁹ But, written sources indicated that, *shéik* Alfeki Ahmed Umar came to Gomma from Dambi Dollo for the Islamic religion propagation.²¹⁰

All of my informant and written sources agree to the idea that *shéik Alfeki* Ahmed Umar was a Nigeria. He was born in 1891/92 in Bornu (present day Nigeria).²¹¹ When he was nine years old, he finished his Quranic education in four months, and went to study *ilm* and *ma'rifa*. He loss his family when he was nineteen years' youth, and he need set off for Mëçça. After completing the *hajj*, he must to firm at Khartoum, where he conducted the mystical retreat many times. During one such practice, he heard a voice ordering him to go to Ethiopia. He entered Ethiopia and settled at Asossa in Bënisangul.

According to Mohammed Musa's work, Alfeki Ahimed Umar was received the *tijaniyya* cult cult when he was arrived Asossa.²¹² According to oral traditions, Alfeki Ahimed Umar entered to Asossa *Awräjjä* and Beghi in particularly with the *tijaniyya* mystic cult during the end of Italian occupation around 1939.²¹³

However, they have different idea from that of Ahmed Umar on the process of his coming to Beghi. They claim that, he had come through Assosa at the beginning of 20th century. According to this tradition, sheik Ahmed was a traveling missionary who had been known for his *bäräkah* (blesing) and miraculous healing of the patients.²¹⁴ After working in Beghi for about a year, he went to Gawwi in Gidami, were he didn't get much success in his mission, because of the dominance of Orthodox Christianity. This situation forced him to leave Gidami and he traveled to Minko in Dambi Dollo. In Dambi Dollo, he attracted the attention of the people through his miraculous work and this resulted in conversion of a dozen of people to Islam and establishment of many Mosques.²¹⁵

The tradition continues and states that, in Minko, the sheikh received much popularity throughout the area. Even Mardasa Jote, who succeeded his father (Jote Tullu) to be the king of Qëllam *Awräjjä*, recognized his work because of the miraculous healing of his wife by the medicine and prayer of the sheikh.²¹⁶ Sheik Ahmed left Dembi Dollo and went to

²⁰⁹ Informants: Nabara Onchol and Ibrahim Waaqwayyaa.

²¹⁰ Aman, pp. 63-64.

²¹¹ Mohammed Musa, p. 24, and Informants: Mohammed Abdisa, and Xafa Shagirdi.

²¹² *Ibid.*

²¹³ Informants: Mohammed Abdisa, Jombor Fixe.

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*

²¹⁵ Workineh Shiferaw, "A History of Leeqa Qellam ca. 1840s to 1941", (MA Thesis, Jimma University, History, 2013), p.129.

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*, and Informants: Yadasa Tesso and Fajii Fiixee.

Jimma where he continued his missionary work for a year and managed to go to Mēçça for pilgrimage. Soon after his return from Mecca with a new title (*Hajji*), he came back to Beghi, thus the establishment of Ya'a as the religious (spiritual) center.²¹⁷ The *Hajji* made his settlement in *Ya'a* and many people regardless of their religious difference started to visit the place in order to receive blessing from home and to get solution for their problems. According to written and oral evidences *Shèik* Ahmed Umar was dead in 1945.²¹⁸ Therefore, all local traditions of Beghi mention the shrine as a crucial in Islamization of Beghi area, and even beyond. Today *Ya'a* is a place of worship and prayer. Thousands of pilgrims flock to the shrine at the time of the great Islamic religious festivals, seeking health and blessings.²¹⁹

In Beghi *Tijaniyya* order is dominated order among the Muslims of the area. The *Qaderiyya*, the second order, had a strong following in former times, but is weakened now. *Sammaniyya* and *Khatmiyya* have also had an influence in Bēni shangu.²²⁰

Another informant and written evidences also gave credit to Ahmed Umar as an important consolidation of Islam in Gibe region (Jimma). The informant identifies him as a west African religious and follower of the *Tijaniyya Sufi* order who came to the region in the early 20th century, and played significant role for the spread and consolidation of the *Tijaniyya* order in the Gibe valley.²²¹

²¹⁷ Oyvind M. Eide, pp.49-50.

²¹⁸ Fiixee Birrii, p.47.

²¹⁹ Alemayehu, p.21.

²²⁰ Oyvind M. Eide, p.141.

²²¹ *Ibid*, and Informants: Nabaraa Onchool and Abdulwab Dubballa.

Figure 6: Picture of Alfaki Ahimed Umar of Ya'a Masara



Source: Photo taken by a researcher on April 5/ 2020.

CHAPTER FOUR

4. HISTORY OF CHRISTIANITY IN BEGHI DISTRICT

4.1 The Beginning and Expansion of Orthodox Christianity in Beghi

Orthodox Christianity which has been deeply rooted in Ethiopian history, social life and ethnics. Although it was never the faith of all Ethiopians it has long been the dominant faith of highland Ethiopian partly due to the imperial rulers. Indeed, it played a significant role in state formation in the Ethiopian highlands. Ethiopian Orthodox Church (EOC) has traditionally attracted the attention of historians, theologians, students of religion and philologist because of its long and complex history, its being natural phenomena for comparison with Western Christianity and its long written tradition, as evident not only in royal Chronicles, theological works, poetry (*Qinë*) and hagiographies of saints and holy men.²²²

However, lack of the written sources makes difficult to know the exact time of the introduction of Christianity to Wëllëgga in general and Beghi in particular. However, a few sources mention that Orthodox Christianity was introduced following the arrival of the *Näftäñya* governors and settlers.²²³

The current dominant religions in the Oromo land are Islam and Christianity. Following their influential socio-political expansion movement in the area, the Oromo had contact with Islam before the 19th century. Soon after the expansionist pressure from the Christian Ethiopia became strong, some of the Oromo groups adopted the religion as an ideology of resistance against the anticipated disintegration of their social structure and identity.²²⁴ As such it would be logical to argue that some of the other groups, particularly, the Mäçhaa and the Tulama were forced to accept different forms of Christianity.

According to Benti, Christianity arrived and introduced to Wëllëgga with in a period from 1882 to 1900. This period is therefore recognized as particularly important in the history of the expansion of the EOC in Wëllëgga.²²⁵ Accordingly, the first Church of Christianity that

²²² Marcus, Herald. *A History of Ethiopia*, California, (University of California Press, 1994), p.244, p.277, and Haggai, Erlich. *Islam and Christianity in the Horn of Africa: Somalia, Ethiopia and Sudan*, (Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2010), p.2, J. Abbink, *A Biography on Christianity in Ethiopia* (Leiden: African Studies Centre, 2003), p.7 and Trimmingham, p.22-24.

²²³ Sergew Hable sellassie, *Ancient and Medieval Ethiopian History 1270*, Haile Sillase I University, 1972, P.115

²²⁴ Benti, pp.27-28.

²²⁵ *Ibid.*

got into Beghi was the Ethiopian Orthodox Christianity.²²⁶ Scholars state that the Ethiopian Orthodox Church established itself in Wällëga in general during Menelik's conquest of the Oromo people. Negaso and Crummey argue that the introduction and expansion of Orthodox Christianity in Wällëga was part of the incorporation of the area into the modern Ethiopian empire state.²²⁷ Thus, the defeat of the Oromo and the introduction of Orthodox Christianity into Wällëga went hand in hand jointly.²²⁸ Aren also states that Orthodox Christianity was introduced to the Wällëga in 1882.²²⁹ The first Church to be founded in west of Wällëga was founded by a monk from Gojjam in 1890.²³⁰ After the death of Moroda, the *Mootii* (governor) of Wällëga, in 1889, his son, *Dajjazmäch* Gebre-Egziabher or Kumsa, succeeded to his father's position and became loyal to Minelik, and enjoyed local autonomy. Thus, he began to establish Orthodox Churches in other parts of Wällëga, where he appointed his local governors and six Ethiopian Orthodox Churches had been built in Wällëga by the year 1900,²³¹ similarly, right away as conversion to Orthodox religion started to take place, church planting went hand in hand. The first Orthodox churches built in the area of Beghi were: 'Saint Mary church of Gidaamii, St. Gabriel in Burii, and St. Sillase Church of Wabara (Beghi) by *Dajjazmäch* Jote Tullu in 1882, 1885, and 1886, respectively.²³²

According to Badilu, As such it would be logical to argue that some of the other groups, particularly, the Mecha (mainly Wollega, excluding Jimma and Ilubabor), and the Tulama were forced to accept different forms of Christianity.²³³ In this regard, Negaso and Crummey and Badilu state that the governor of Qëllam, Jote proclaimed that all his subjects should come to Gidami and Wabara or part of Beghi (his administrative center, where the first Orthodox Church was planted in Beghi) to be baptized.²³⁴ Furthermore, my key informants argue that the expansion of the religion and the conquest were interrelated and supported each other by numerous methods. These were forbidding burial land if not Orthodox Christian, occupying spiritually important places where the people celebrate traditional rituals, deceiving the local rulers and awarding them political title whenever they accept the religion and convert the society. Above all, miserably there were cases when imposing the

²²⁶ Alemayehu, p. 7, and Informants: Yadasa Tesso, Mohammed Abdisa, Milkiyas Kibbabu, Jombor

²²⁷ Negaso and Crummey, 1972, p.104.

²²⁸ Benti, 1999, p. 27.

²²⁹ Aren, 1978, p. 394.

²³⁰ *Ibid*, p. 373.

²³¹ *Ibid*, p. 394.

²³² Badilu, p.59, and Informants: Hailu Kibabu, Yadasa Tesso, Yared Naggasa.

²³³ Alemayehu, pp. 7-8.

²³⁴ Negaso and Crummey, p. 106. and Badilu, pp. 58-59.

Orthodox Christianity was accompanied by murder during the time.²³⁵ Benti stated, “The Abyssinian conquerors killed those who refused to be baptized.”²³⁶

According to oral sources, the propagation of Orthodox Christianity in the Beghi and its surrounding were very weak during and after the conquest of Emperor Menelik this was due to the natives of Beghi were predominantly Islamized before and after conquest. Harold Marcus indicates, unlike the process of forceful conversion to Christianity in the areas of the followers of traditional religion Menelik did not practice it in the strong Muslim areas of south western Ethiopia, including the Beghi Oromo areas.²³⁷ To borrow Marcus’ words:

While the “pagans” who were forcefully converted to Christianity had only a superficial commitment to the new faith. For some of them the act of conversion seems to have marked the beginning of the acculturation and accommodation... in the strong Muslim countries which had traditions of statehood and were not adjacent to Christian areas, however, Menelik allowed no attempt at conversion and put no obstacles in the way of local religious practices.²³⁸

The foundation and the expansion of churches in the Beghi were also the parts of Emperor Menelik’s religious policy. It is achievable to say that except a few churches those mentioned above, those churches founded in the Wëllëgga region particularly in the Beghi were founded during the region of Emperor Menelik II.²³⁹

The first Church which was built in Beghi is Wabbara Sillase Church in 1886. Next to Sillase Church the second church to be founded in the Beghi Were Abbune Tekelahayimanot Church in 1935, St. Mikael of Bille in 1947, Wanja Medinalme 1949. The first three Churches in Beghi were erected by Jote Tullu and his descendant son *Dajjachmäch* Ashana Jote of Qëllam and Wabara. A priest whose name was known as *Mëmèhër* Tëwaba a native of Gojjame was reputedly mentioned with the foundation of st. Sillase of Wabara church. According to oral informants, it was *Mëmèhër* Tëwaba who

²³⁵ Informants: Jombor Fixe, Nabbara Achol, Yared Nagasa, Marga Nado

²³⁶ Benti, p. 98.

²³⁷ *Ibid* and see also the work of V. Stütz, “Distribution and Foundation of Church in Ethiopia” *Journal of Ethiopian Studies*, Vol, 13, No I (1975), PP.11-36

²³⁸ Marcus, Harold G. “Motives, Methods and some Results of Unification of Ethiopia during the Region of Menelik II”, *proceeding of the Third International Conference of Ethiopian Studies*, 1969, P. 275.

²³⁹ Informants: Milkiyas Kabbada, Hailu Kibbabu, Yadesa Tesso, Nabbara Achol, Guddina Qixxessa.

brought the Holy Arks from Gidami to Beghi. This entails that the founder of st-Sillase church of Wabbara was *Abba Tëwaba*.²⁴⁰

Figure 7: Wabara St. Sillase Chuch; the first Orthodox Church in Beghi district



Source: Photo taken by the researcher, on 18/05/20

Fitawüräri Yohannis Tullu was also another person who had immense contribution for the foundation of this church; he gave two gasha lands to the church.²⁴¹ Yonas cited that the Italian occupation of Jimma shows the further expansions of mosques construction and an attempts for the foundation of Islamic based learning institute. In addition to the above points, during their occupation (1935-1941) Italians wanted to intensify the tensions between Christians and Muslims. They want to form an alliance with the Muslim in the anticipation of weakening the Ethiopian opposition; aware of the long oppression of Muslims by their Christian rulers they declared a pro-Islamic policy.²⁴²

Orthodox Christianity could not very widely expand in the Beghi district compared to the Islamic religion. There might be several factors that delayed its further expansion. Among

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁴¹ *Ibid.*

²⁴² Yohans Sefu, „A Historical Survey of Jimma Town (1936-1974) “, (M, A Thesis in History AAU, 2002), P. 47

these factors; the inability of the Ethiopian Orthodox church to use the local language was the most important one. While the Beghi the Protestant churches were using mother tongue educations in their respective religious institutions while the Beghi Orthodox churches and Islam were not applying and supporting for the uses of mother tongue (*Afaan Oromoo*).²⁴³ According to oral informants, from the introduction of Orthodox Christianity to this day the church is using Ge'ez and Amharic languages.²⁴⁴ This is due to the fact that Orthodox was introduced at a time when Ge'ez was the principal church language. Subsequently, many religious books were written in Ge'ez and Amharic languages.²⁴⁵

Among the books that are found in Beghi Orthodox Christianity churches which were translated from Arabic to Ge'ez was the *Wèddásë Māräm*. Most of this religious books condemned magic and “pagan” worship, church music and doctrinal studies are instructed by Ge'ez.²⁴⁶ Perhaps some attempts were made by European travelers and missionaries to translate the Orthodox Christianity religious manuscripts into *Afaan Oromoo* from among these travelers, in the middle of seventeenth century, Hiob Ludolf, in his linguistic wrote few Oromo words with their parallel translation in *Geez* and Latin.²⁴⁷ Next to Hiob, James Bruce, who visited Ethiopia did some work related to translation of the Orthodox Christianity manuscripts.²⁴⁸

The act was religiously condemned and became immoral. In addition to the language that the church followed, the churches of Beghi did not have clergymen who served churches in the earlier years of its establishment. Main churches services like mass and Christian (*kristiña* in Amharic) *qèddásé* (prayers) including *fétéhät* and the communion service were not provided for the churches of Beghi, except in the churches of Gidami and Buri during the period covered in this study.²⁴⁹

On top of these the churches of Beghi also lost some of its important manuscripts and the Holy Arks (*tabotat*). The Holy Arks and the manuscripts were stolen by unknown groups or individuals, for instance from the Holy Arks that were found at St Mary of Tarko, the Ark of St. Kedhane Meherat was stolen in 1972.²⁵⁰ According to oral informants, some of

²⁴³ Informants: Hailu Kibbabu, Jombor Fixe, Bariso Shuma, and Dagim Jiot, and Tigilu Warata.

²⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁵ Tekel Tsadik Mekurya, *Ya-Itiopia Tarik; Ke Atseyikunno Amlak Eske Lebena Dengil*, 1951 E, C, PP.129-133

²⁴⁶ Informants: Hailu Kibabu, Yared Nagasa, and Jombor Fixe.

²⁴⁷ Anteneh, p. 78.

²⁴⁸ Bruce, James, *Travels to Discover of the Nile in the Years 1768-73*, V, III, P.1770-73

²⁴⁹ Informants: Hailu Kibabu, Fufa Biranu, Dawit Tesfaye, Adunga Jallata.

²⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

the priests were engaged in stealing of the churches manuscript. The local people are also burnt the church in order to express their grievance against the Amhara or the *näftänyas* rule, consequently one of the oldest churches of St. Abbune Tekehaymanot was burnt to the ground around 1933 and 1944 in Beghi town by the unknown persons or individuals and later on it has been rebuilt in a new forms by the contributions of the EOC followers of the study area.²⁵¹

It also the influence of the Arab Sudan native descendants rule and regulation was a major challenged factors for the further consolidation and expansion of Christianity in Beghi until the restoration of emperor Haile Sillase I (1941).²⁵² As I discussed earlier under chapter one, from the first half of 19th century up to all territory of Beghi district which means east of Dabus river, south of *laga Haadha* Jaarsaa or Gidami district, north of Bambasi district (Bënishangul Gumuz), and west of Sudan) was taken to *Däjjachmäch* Yohannis Jote in 1937,²⁵³ all my study area was governed under the ‘Watawit’ dynasty Sheikh Khojole All-Hassen and Dawud Said Family and his descendants. These Arab descendant rulers were come to Beghi from 1840 for the propagation of Islamic religion and they could not have ambition for the propagation of anti-Islamic religion on their territorial lands. So, through this challenges the EOC was introduced to Islamic land or the local communities said that the “smallest Mēdina” Beghi.²⁵⁴

According to a few of written materials and oral informants confirmed that, the descendants of ‘Watawit’ dynasty Sheikh Khoje All-Hassen greatly challenged the EOC Christianities and their followers. And they became forced to embraced Islamic religion by force.²⁵⁵ A person who refused to accept Islam is leaving their territorial lands and their *qābiyyä* was taken from them and they refused from the communities.

According to oral informants, during the reign of Sheikh Khojole All-Hassen was the governor of Beghi, they have been a Christian followers but, no more EOC in Beghi except St. Sillase Wabbara Church which is erected before the incorporation of Beghi under the ‘Watawit’ dynasty.²⁵⁶ Then the Christian followers in Beghi have been worship on Sunday at St. Sillase Wabbara after they journey three to four days on foot. It also they made different religious celebration such as, baptism, funeral ceremony, and gave *Qurbän* after

²⁵¹ *Ibid.*

²⁵² *Ibid.*

²⁵³ Alemu Shui, p. 48, and Fixe Birri, pp.45-50.

²⁵⁴ Informants: Mohammed Abdisa, Mohammed Abdal, Yadasa Tesso.

²⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, and Alemayehu, pp. 17-19.

²⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

they paid great challenges. Fore instance, when some one died, they did burial ceremony at St. Sillase Wabbara after they carried deid person for three to four journey on foots.²⁵⁷

However, after Beghi was liberated under *Fitawüräri* Yohannis Tullu in 1937,²⁵⁸ St. Abbune Tekile Hayimanot Church was erected at Beghi town.²⁵⁹ And also, after withdrawal of Italy, St. Mikael Church of Bille was also established by the contribution of *Abba Qoros* in 1947.²⁶⁰ According to oral informants and a manuscripts which is explain about the formation and foundation of St. Abbune Teke Hayimanot Church of Beghi town; The *Abba Qoro's* who had been made a pivotal role for the expansion of St. Abbune Tekle Hayimanot Church in 1937 and St. Mikael Church of Bille in 1947 were *Baranbaras* Ittafaa Fidoo and *Baranbaraas* Dawwit Foggi of Benga. This *Abba Qoro's* contributed their own money and encouraged the Christian followers of the district for the plantation of churches.²⁶¹

4.1.1 The Orthodox Church and its Second Phase of Expansion from 1941-1991

The restoration of Emperor Haile-Sellassie in 1941 and the subsequent decision made on religious affairs heralded the beginning of the second phase of the expansion of Orthodox Christianity in Beghi area.²⁶² In addition, it was during this period that the Protestant missionaries got permission to preach their religion in Beghi and its environs.²⁶³ Therefore, the period marked not only the beginning of the second phase of expansion of the Orthodox Christianity but also the beginning of the expansion of the Protestant in the Beghi as a result of their organized missionary activities as we shall see in the next section.

Before 1941, during their occupation, the Italian followed a subversive policy. Italians initially tried to quiet down the Beghi people who suffered from the *gabbar-naftagna* system by restoring their land right which they lost after the conquest of Menilek's forces. The Italians cancelled the *gäbbär-näftägña* system.²⁶⁴ As a result, the Beghi welcomed the Italians.

Therefore, after 1941, the restored emperor took a measure so as to redress the Italian divide and rule system and the effect influenced the Ethiopian society.²⁶⁵ Emperor Haile-

²⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁸ Alemu, p. 48.

²⁵⁹ Informants: Tigilu Warata, Milkias Kabbada, Yared Nagasa, Hailu Kibabu, Abayya Itana.

²⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁶¹ *Ibid.*

²⁶² Informants: Milkias Kibabu, Yadasa Tesso, Tafa Shagirdi.

²⁶³ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁴ Melaku, pp. 9-10.

²⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

Sellassie seemed to have determined to uphold societal assimilation by Christianizing the indigenous people.²⁶⁶

Hence, between 1941 – 1974, large numbers of Orthodox Churches were constructed unlike the preceding periods.²⁶⁷ The idea seems to have been in line with the Ethiopian kings who believed that religious uniformity could result in political unity and integrity in the country.²⁶⁸ The emperor was strongly committed and implemented his plan by using the church as integral part of his government. As George A. Lipsky clearly indicates “... the church is like a sword and the government is like an arm: therefore, the sword cannot cut by itself without the use of arm”.²⁶⁹

It seems partly because of this strong belief that the restored emperor decreed mass baptism. As a result, in 1942²⁷⁰ the clergies, land lords and government agents held a wide campaign and enforced the emperor’s decree of mass conversion among the Beghi. The Beghi people were baptized in mass on the bank of great rivers around Qamxoo after having shaved their hair and they received the Holy Communion.²⁷¹ As a common practice of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, they were given baptismal names and tied at their neck a *matëb*, a chord which identified them as member of the Ethiopian Church. The people were, therefore, forced to be converted to Orthodox Christianity.²⁷²

Nevertheless, the Christianization process was not accomplished by subsequent religious teaching. The Beghi remained Orthodox Christians at least nominally until the arrival of the first Protestant missionary in the area.²⁷³ In the mean time, those who removed their *matëëb* (chord) were considered as *gantuu*, or *aramanëë* wicked persons, as a result ostracized by members of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church.²⁷⁴

In the post liberation period, the Orthodox Church witnessed only expanding churches and also the returning of the exiled Holy Arks and the church treasures in to their respective localities in Beghi. On the other hand, during this second phase, some fifteen churches

²⁶⁶ McClellan, *State Transformation and ...*, p.144.

²⁶⁷ Informants: Hailu Kibbabu, Yared Nagasa, Jombor Fixe.

²⁶⁸ Eyayu Leulseged, “*Why Do the Orthodox Christians in Ethiopia Identify their Faith with Their Nation?*” in *The Proceedings of the First National Conference of Ethiopian Studies* Addis Ababa, April 11-12, 1990, Ed. Richard Pankhurst, Ahmed Zakaria. *Etal.*, (Addis Ababa, 1990), p.6.

²⁶⁹ Lipsky, p.101.

²⁷⁰ Informants: Milkias Kabbada, Hailu Kibbabu.

²⁷¹ Mana Kirsitaanaa Begii Dirree Araaraa Abune Takile Haayimanot, 2018, p. 8.

²⁷² Informants: Jombor, Yadessa, Ayyanaa, Tafa, Abbayya.

²⁷³ *Ibid.*

²⁷⁴ *Mana Kirsitaanaa Begii Dirree Araaraa Abune Takile Haayimanot*, 2018, p. 7, and Informants: Baqqana Ariti, Tasfaye Baqqala.

were erected in Beghi between 1942–1974 and five of them were built within the first four to five years.

Apart from the construction and expansion of Orthodox Churches, some of the clergies came to implement the second phase of Christianization of the area attractiveness to *Awrajä*, Office of Diocese. They were appealed by compare and contrasting the reality within their parish which stayed for eighteen years with out any development in temporary church building, with those churches erected in the mean time out of Beghi. In addition, the clergies stated the competition that they faced from the Protestant Church that had been succeeded in converting the native peoples into their church followers.²⁷⁵ As a result, they were established some twelve *manneen kadhata*, house of prayers, with in a very short period of time around Beghi *Wërëda*).²⁷⁶

As earlier, the churches founded during the pre- Fascist occupation times were established by local rulers. On the contrary, the churches founded in the post-liberation period (after 1941/2) were established by the Christian settlers of the respective regions Wabara Sillase, Beghi town Takilehayimanot, and Bille Mikael.²⁷⁷ One of the earliest churches of the post-liberation period was founded in Kondala *Wërëda*, some six kilo meters west of the town, in 1940/1 and it was named Bille Kidus Mikael.²⁷⁸

On the other hand, there was no church in Mao and Komo Special *Wërëda* or Tongo town until the establishment of Kidus Gabriel in 1987/88.²⁷⁹ The reason seems that, before Tongo, Dhalladu Haroo Dimaa was the earlier center of Orthodox Christian where Dhalladuu St. Mariyam was established in 1947/48.²⁸⁰ As a result, the Christian settlers of Tongo, though their number was significant, were forced to go to Dhalladu St. Mariyam to their religious practices and to bury their deceased.²⁸¹ Sources indicate that, the distance between the town and the church and also the growing number of settlers who were attracted by the commercial activity in the area created conducive condition for a church to be erected in the town and villages in 1987/88.²⁸²

In Beghi except those churches located in Wabara, Beghi town, Bille, and Dhalladu Haroo Dimaa, Abboo Baabane others were not self sufficient economically. For instance

²⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷⁷ Informants: Jombor Fixee, Yadasa Tesso.

²⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁸⁰ Informants: Bariso Shuma, Tigilu Warata.

²⁸¹ *Ibid.*

²⁸² *Ibid.*

St. Gabriel of Carpha, one of the oldest churches having a long history in the foundation of churches in the Beghi district could not get maintenance or not rebuilt in new form for more than one hundred years or above²⁸³.

The 1974 Ethiopian Revolution brought a profound impact on the economic, cultural and political life of the entire people in the country.²⁸⁴ According to Andargachew, the military forces, students and Civil servants were the major bodies who took the leading role in the 1974 Ethiopian Revolution which led to the overthrow of the imperial regime of Haile-Sellassie I. Nevertheless, several portion of the Ethiopian society came on the side of the armed forces that succeeded in the deposition of the emperor.²⁸⁵ Besides, the revolution not only brought the so called Solomonic Dynasty and the then prevalent social order to an end but also changed the country's international relation.²⁸⁶ Citing Samuel P. Huntington Gebru writes, A revolution is a rapid, fundamental, and violent domestic change in the dominant values and myths of a society, in its political institutions, social structure, leadership, government activity and policies.²⁸⁷ Therefore, the revolution could be considered as one of the turning point in the the history of the country in general and in religious sphere in particular.

The Orthodox Church, as already noted, had inseparable link with the state which existed for about one thousand six hundred years. As a result of this new phenomenon, the Orthodox Church began to lose its prominent position in the sphere political, cultural and economic affairs.²⁸⁸

In Beghi, hundreds of gasha land controlled by the church under different names as *sāmon* land, (Church land) *ya mäsqäl mērēt* (land of cross)²⁸⁹ were expropriated following the land proclamation of 4 March 1975. This event marked the end of Orthodox Church economic supremacy.²⁹⁰ Besides, according to Oyvind, the nationalization of land left some two hundred thousand clergies and church personnel devoid of earnings²⁹¹.

²⁸³ Informants: Jombor Fixe, Abbayya Ittana, Yared Nagasa.

²⁸⁴ Bahru Zewde, "The City Center: A Shifting Concept in History of Addis Ababa", in *Society, State and History: Selected Essays*, (Addis Ababa, 2008), p.498.

²⁸⁵ Andargachew Tiruneh, *The Ethiopian Revolution 1974-1998: A Transformation from an Aristocratic to a Totalitarian Autocracy*, (Cambridge, 1993), p.37.

²⁸⁶ Gebru Tareke, *The Ethiopian Revolution: War in the Horn of Africa*, (London, 2009), p.6.

²⁸⁷ *Ibid.* P, 14.

²⁸⁸ Oydnd M. Eide, p.111.

²⁸⁹ Informants: Jombor Fixe, Marga Nado

²⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁹¹ Eide, p.111.

Throughout the *Dërg* period, a number of churches were founded in Beghi, Orthodox Christianity also became the religion of peoples who lived in urban areas, and Christianity could not spread to the remote areas during our period.

Table 1: The number and names of EOC in Beghi during the temporal scope of the study

No	Name of Church	Year of establishment	Particular site of location	Founder
1	Sillase Church	1886 G.C	Wabara	<i>Dajj. Ashana Tullu</i>
2	Tekile Hayimanot Church	1935 G.C	Beghi town	<i>Fit. Yohannis Jote</i>
3	Qidus Mikaeel Church	1947 G.C	Bille	<i>Ato Baqqala Kaftemaar and Shambal Fayisa Dikko</i>
4	Qidus Mariyam	1951 G.C	Tarko	Community
5	St. Medan Alem	1952 G.C	Wanja	<i>Balabbat Hunduma Bati</i>
6	St. Gabriel	1957 G.C	Carpha	<i>Balabbat Fayisa Dikko</i>
7	Iyyesus	1957 G.C	Shera	<i>Abba Qoro</i>
8	St. Mariyam	1955 G.C	Dhalladu Haro Dima	<i>Abba Qoro</i>
9	St. Abboo	1965 G.C	Babane	<i>Abba Qoro</i>
10	St. Gyorgis	1979 G.C	Kabbache	Community
11	St. Gabriel	1963 G.C	Kobor	<i>Abba Qoro</i>
12	Lideta Mariyam	1989 G.C	Guma	Community
13	St. Gyorgis	1974 G.C	Kobor	<i>Abba Qoro</i>
14	St. Kidane Mihiret	1959 G.C	Tobbi	Community
15	Amanuel	1992 G.C	Shonge	Community
16	Iyyesus	1991 G.C	Shagga	Community

17	Raguel	1994 G.C	Gabba	Community
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Source: Beghi and Kondala *Warada* EOC Office

4.1.2 Factors for the Expansion of Orthodox Christianity in Beghi

Negaso and Crummey clearly pointed out two factors that were contributed to the expansion of Orthodox in Wällägga in general. Firstly, the two interrelated Oromo traditional institutions, the *gädaa* system and the Oromo indigenous religion were already weakened to resist the introduction and expansion of Orthodox Christianity religion. Secondly, the *qaalluu* institution could not able to adequately control over the people to form the basis for common resistance to Christianity. Generally, the weakness of the indigenous religion, together with conversion of the ruling class, help realize the expansion of the Orthodox religion up to 1928 the year more complex socio-economic factors were involved.²⁹² Thirdly, the translation of Bible to vernacular languages has been played a pivotal role especially after the expansion of Protestant religion in Beghi from 1960s, and 1970s respectively.

According to my key informants from Orthodox Christian preachers and priest suggested me, the translation Bible of *Abba* Gammachis or Onesmos Nasib which is written by Sabeen language is helped and saved the EOC in Beghi. Because, when the Protestants further expanded in Beghi during 1960s, 1970s, and respectively, many of the Orthodox followers were embraced the new religion Protestant in mass, because of the Protestant have been preaching and worship by the local language Afaan Oromo.

4.2 Introduction and Expansion of Protestantism in Beghi

Protestant Christianity was very late comer compared with Islam and Orthodox Christianity in Beghi. It was introduced to Beghi at the beginning of the three decades of the twentieth century.²⁹³ The root of Protestant Christianity in Beghi, according to written and oral sources was from Presbyterian Church in Dambi Dollo. Gidada Solan, the father of late President of Ethiopia, who later became ordained Pastor (1939), came with Mr. Buchannan to Gidami and Beghi in 1928.²⁹⁴

In summer 1928, I was preaching the Gospel in Begi and Gidami, where Jote was living. One day together with a missionary known as Mr. Bukanin, I went to *Fitäwurar* Osana's home, *Däjjazmäh* Jote's son. He received and welcomed and

²⁹² Negaso and Crummey, pp. 107-108.

²⁹³ Alemayehu, p.29, Fixe, p. 247. and Informats: Yadasa Tesso, Eliyas Shiferra.

²⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

offered us foods and drinks. He gave us permission so that we could preach Gospel to the people, and he too attended the lesson we delivered. Next to that, we proceed to Begi and again preached to the Muslim society.²⁹⁵

At Gidami, they were well received by *Fitäwurari* Hossana Jote, the governor of the area and got permission to preach the Gospel. By using the chance they preached the Gospel in many villages.²⁹⁶ After some days work in Gidami, they traveled to Beghi, where they met the Muslim governor. This Muslim ruler could have been Khojole, since he was the ruler of Beghi during this time (1910-1937).²⁹⁷ In the writing Beghi was referred as a “strong Muslim center”. Gidada and Buchannan went to the Muslim ruler, probably in his court to report to him the purpose of their coming in to his territory and there began the first interaction with Muslims. The interaction between the Christian preachers and the Sheikh was reported as follows:

We greeted him warmly, but he coldly asked us what we wanted. When we said we were preaching the word of God he said that was good, but that they had their own religion. Mr. Buchannan said, “I know that you have your own religion, but some would like to hear”. The *Shéikh* said, “Oh! All right”. Mr. Buchannan asked for *Abba* Kajela of Beghi, a leper who had come to the mission hospital to be treated for his sickness. The Sheikh directed the way to *Abba* Kajela’s house where we stayed about one week while many people came to hear.²⁹⁸

We can draw some conclusions from these initial contacts between the Protestant Christian preachers and the Muslim governor who had his own religious conviction. According to the speech of *Shéikh*, he and the Muslims of the area had their own faith (Islam) and preaching of the Gospel to them was unnecessary. However, the peaceful relationship and conversation between the ministers and the man can be mentioned as a good model for evangelism among the Muslims. Although he was not willing to hear the gospel, he directed the preachers and allowed them to preach in his territory. Gidada and Buchannan approached the *Shéikh* in a diplomatic and respectful way.²⁹⁹ Respecting the Muslims as our fellow brothers and sisters as well as approaching them without despising their faith is the core and important point in Muslim preachers.

²⁹⁵ Gidada Solan, *Dukkanaan Duuba*. Translated by Mitiku Tucho. Dembi Dollo: Western Wallagga Bethel Synod, 1972, pp. 25-27.

²⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁹⁷ Tekalign, pp. 69-73, Informants: Yadasa Tesso, Mohammed Abdisa.

²⁹⁸ Alemayehu, pp. 29-30.

²⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

Even though no further interaction was reported in the book; it seems that the preachers could have met some Muslims among many people to whom they were preaching. Unfortunately the evangelism work in Béghi was not continued for uncertain reasons until the 1950s, when the work was started in an organized way.³⁰⁰

According to oral informants noted that, after a few years Protestant Christianity arrived to Béghi, the Italian government invaded to Beghi and the western region.³⁰¹ During the Italian invasions the Protestant Christianity was suffered challenged, because of the Italian was the followers and supporters of the Catholic Christianity doctrine.³⁰² However, in Béghi the Catholic religion was unfortunately could not be introduced and expanded it as either other Christianity or Islam.

The Italian authorities treated the Ethiopian Orthodox Christians with great hostile. To this end; they successively adopted two policy of suppression and a policy of moderation and conciliation. In dealing with the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and Christians, the main objective of the Italian authorities at first was to punish and destroy the church there by weakening its great influence. One obvious method employed by the Italians to weaken the Orthodox Church was to encourage Islam in the country. When the Muslims enjoyed the support of the Italian colonial authorities and consequentially were given better treatment, the Christians became frustrated and hopeless.³⁰³

Any way the interruption helped Islam faith to get more chance to spread over the area without many challenges. According to a few of formal and all oral sources confirmed that, no single church was built in Beghi before 1960s.³⁰⁴ If the Bethel people could have managed to continue their evangelistic outreach over the areas, they could have won many people to the Gospel, since the oral evidence tell us that a large number of people converted to Islam not more than forty or fifty years ago.³⁰⁵

Some documents and the oral informants indicate that the evangelism work of Beghi area was started in active way from 1957 on wards.³⁰⁶ The work revived in Beghi through individual government workers and the indigenous believers of the area. Fore instance in 1957 the native Beghi district man his name is Mallasa Danuu converted to Protestant

³⁰⁰ *Ibid*, and Informants: Qalbessa Oliqa, Baqqana Ariti, Yadasa Tesso.

³⁰¹ *Ibid*.

³⁰² Workineh, p.114.

³⁰³ Informants: Qalbessa Oliqa, Nabbara Achol Miliyon Baqqala.

³⁰⁴ Shuma, p. 14, Almayehu, p.30, and Informants: Nabbara, Qalbessa, Yadasa, Baqqana, Guddina.

³⁰⁵ *Ibid*.

³⁰⁶ *Ibid*.

religion at Bēthēl Dambi Dollo and he returned to Beghi and preaching the gospel at their brothers house Tafarra Danuu at Kobbare.³⁰⁷ After a few days later, his relatives and neighbors communities were embraced to protestant Christian. Among them Obbo Qalbessa Oliqaa from Karma Shoroo, Obbo Nabbaraa Achool from Karma Shoroo, Obbo Tolaa Waggaa from Kobbare, Obbo Biraanee Qadiidaa from Kobbare, *Obbo* Oliqaa Gamtessaa from Dhalladuu Haroo Dimaa, Teacher Horaa Kuusaa (A Vice direstor of Beghi Primary School at that time).³⁰⁸

In 1958 *Obbo* Qalbessaa Oliqaa and *Obbo* Nabbaraa Achool they have been preaching the gospel at Kolli at the house of his relatives *Obbo* Abdisaa Hurcaa. At this place many other relatives and friend of Nabbaraa and Qalbessaa became embraced Protestantism. Some of them were; *Obbo* Ayyanaa Waloo, Caaqaa Waloo, Biraanuu Waloo, Kibbabuu Oliqaa, Ebbisaa Achool, Mitikkuu Tafarraa, Maammadee Yaadaa, Fufaa Qeerroo, Bayyanaa Simaa, Shifarraa Barkessaa, Ofga'aa Burqaa and so on. And also *Obbo* Oliqaa Gamtessaa became preaching the gospel at Dhalladduu Haroo Dimaa and teacher Horaa Kuusaa was preach at Beghi town and the surrounding areas.³⁰⁹ In 1962, the good news of gospel became diffused from Kolli to Shaggaa by the contributions of Nabbaraa and Qalbessaa. For the first time, from the communities who lived at Shaggaa Abbabee Aagaa and his mothers became converted protestant religion.³¹⁰

However, according to oral informants claimed that, in 1960 on wards, *Obbo* Mallasaa Danuu a former preacher who played a great role for the revival of Mission or Protestant religion at Kobbaree, he became returned to Dambii Dolloo and he meet with the Bēthēl Mekane Yesus Church and made a decision to evangelizing Beghi's communities. The Bethel Church sends the evangelist man Tafarra Fayisaa with Mallassa Danuu to Beghi. Then Tafarra and Mallassa meet their fellow brothers and sisters and started to evangelism of Beghi people in the new forms. According to all of my infrmants agreed, The Bēthēl Synod in Dambi Dollo assigned evangelists for the area until 1964. Then the Western Synod through Mandi Congregation started to work in Beghi area. However, the Bethel Synod stayed and worked in Gidami until 1976, when the two Synods, Bēthēl and Western

³⁰⁷ Informants: Qalbessa, Nabbara, Baqqana, Miliyon, Yadasa.

³⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

³¹⁰ *Ibid.*

made an agreement to include the work in Gidami under Western Synod. Then after, Beghi and Gidami organized as one Parish under the leadership of Western Synod.³¹¹

According to oral evidences, the Western Synod sends the evangelist through Mandi Congregation Rev. Mathewos Ciibsaa and preacher Dhaabaa Heddee to Beghi. After a few weeks Rev. Mathewos Ciibsaa became returned to Mandi and Dhaabaa Hedde only left at Beghi. Accordingly, Dhaabaa Hedde and the local evangelist and followers meet together and starting to preach the gospel at different villages of Beghi.

According to my informants, Dhaabaa Hedde preaches the gospel at the private houses at Shaggaa the house of *Aadde* Caaltuu Salbaan. At this house many local followers and new converters attend the program attentively. From the followers some of them were *Obbo* Abbabee Aagaa and his mother, *Obbo* Biraanee Dinqaa, *Obbo* Mikael Raagaa, and so on. During the time of Dhaabaa Hedde preaching the gospel at Beghi, many Mission or protestant churches were built. Accordingly, the first Church which is built at that time is at Kolli in 1964. Next to Kolli Mission Church at Kobbaree in 1965, Shaggaa in 1966, Beghi town, Dhalladuu Haroo Dimaa, Shongee, Liqixii Mekane Yesus number one, Boonii, Laaloo Nooraa, Dhalladuu Gabaa Dafinoo. According to local informants gave a clue, from 1960s to 1980s around 18'n mission or Mekane Yesus Churches were erected by the contributions of external and local missionary agents.³¹²

As to information gathered from different stockholders at Beghi-Gidami Synod workers and oral informants confirmed me; different foreigner evangelical missionaries were greatly involved on the evangelism of Beghi district communities with their full efforts. These foreigner missionaries were come from Norway from 1960s on wards. Among these missionaries the well knows evangelists were Re. Ulaaf, Rev. Heven Hedy, Rev. Hans, Rev. Runey, Sister Budily Retedar, and Sister Karli. These Missionaries had been not only preaching the gospels they had gave a medical treatments for the Beghi peoples communities neither Protestant followers nor others EOC and Islam followers.³¹³

However, after the down fall of Emperor Haile Sillase I in 1974, the Military Junta government *Dërg* came to power and the protestant religion followers and preachers harshly persecuted greatly in particularly Beghi district.³¹⁴The *Dërg* has declared on 20 December 1974 that Ethiopia including *Wëllëgga Tëklay gizat* would follow socialism and

³¹¹ Alemayehu, p.28, and Informants: Qalbessa Oliqa, Yadasa Tesso.

³¹² Informants: Baqqana Ariti, Miliyon Baqqala, and Yadasa Tesso.

³¹³ *Ibid.*

³¹⁴ *Ibid.*

Marxism.³¹⁵ It was declaration attentively stated unity of the country without “ethnic, religious, linguistic or cultural difference.”³¹⁶ But it continues to take effort to show that it is not hostile to religion. Because, he had suspected mostly many heroes of the revolution have been buried to the rites of the church. The declaration contained socio-economic reforms of February and March 1975.³¹⁷

The Protestant Christians persecuted during the military regime, though the extent varies. The persecution during the military junta began with the confiscation of the Beghi; Mekane Yesus mission Center where to days Beghi-Gidami Synods Compound is located. It was well known that the military government began to follow Marxism. Marxism had an ideology that clearly contradicts religion and its teaching. Therefore, a community that refused to follow Marxist ideology, that undermined religious teaching had been followed by terrifying harassment, arrest and even killing.³¹⁸ The reason for this seemed that, atheism, the belief that God does not exist, was the main challenge not only for Protestants but also for the other religious groups to accept it. Nevertheless, the ideology was imposed and spread into different parts of the country during the military junta.³¹⁹

In addition, to the above ideology of Marxist government the administration was plotted to take an arranged different anti-religious measure took place in between 1975 - 1978. Nevertheless, persecution continued in the country as a whole by all possible means so as to weaken different religions and their respective institutions.³²⁰ It seems following this government decision from the capital that one of the major obstacles to the Beghi Protestant Churches happened in 1983/4; the Church members were hunted down and remained under arrest. The provincial administration left the challenge unsolved.³²¹ Some of the reasons for their arrest are explained here under.

To sum up, the *Dërg* period was one of the challenging times for several religious groups including the *Waaqeffännä*.³²² This resulted from the fact that the military regime, which followed Marxist ideology, had anti religious stand. Despite such challenges, Protestant

³¹⁵ Badilu Aseffa, P.76.

³¹⁶ See Appendix IV: Dispersing of using Again Oromo for writing in Birhanina Salam News Paper from the Central government because of the expansion of Protestant religion on April, 1967.

³¹⁷ *Ibid.*

³¹⁸ Informants: Nabbara Achol, Tola Wagga, Qalbessa Oliqa, and David W. Shenk, *Journeys of the Muslim Nation and the Christian Church: Exploring the Mission of two Commiunities*, (Addis Ababa, 2005), p.227.

³¹⁹ *Ibid.*

³²⁰ Eide, p.126

³²¹ Informants: Mohammed Abdisa, Nabbara Achol, Tola Wagga, Mikael Kadida.

³²² See Appendix IV: Dispersing of using Again Oromo for writing in Birhanina Salam News Paper from the Central government because of the expansion of Protestant religion on April, 1967.

followers of the Beghi succeeded in extending their activities within Beghi and the neighboring Oromia Regional State and Bēnishangul Regional State where Mao and Komo people inhabited at large like Tongo. It was only after 1991 that Protestantism in Beghi came to be institutionalized and organization by a combined effort of those churches founded by its surroundings, despite the resistance the missionary faced from the religious police of *Dërg*, the local communities who followed Islam and Orthodox Christianity, remarkable attempt was made to spread Protestantism in the study areas. Thus at the end of the *Dërg* period, the member of the churches and believer's progressive increased in Beghi. Compared to the two religions (Islam and Orthodox) in Beghi in particular it seems appropriate to comment that its adherents are too small under the period of the study covered, intolerance was also observed by the *Dërg* towards this religion. One of my oral informants of Kondala stated the general situation of the Beghi protestant church as follows:

There were not only a handful of converts nor were things easy for these converts. They faced severe pressures from their communities including threats to their lives. Religion in general and Protestantism in particular suffered a set back in the 1970s and 1980s in Beghi. As a result there were very few people who risked joining the protestant church in Beghi during the *Dërg*.³²³

Generally, until 1976, the church had freedom. Hence, believers worshiped God freely in open air allowed Protestantism and equal rights with other religions. The important agents of Marxist ideology began approaching smoothly to the church. However, within a few years' condition were changed and the Marxist ideology took tedious measure in Wēllēgga and their areas particular, Ethiopia in general. The cadres of the revolution to half the Gospel's expansion in various places. Because, first they began to visit the prominent church leaders.³²⁴

Starting from 1976, preaching Evangelical religion was prohibited. Due to that, church leaders and believers were under surveillance by the *Dërg's cadrës*. Many Evangelical churches were closed. Many Protestant preachers serving the church were not allowed to serve full time. However, preacher and followers of Protestant religion did not stop their activities. Instead, the persecution and challenges emboldened them.³²⁵

³²³ *Ibid.*

³²⁴ *Ibid.*

³²⁵ Fiixee Birri, *Seenaa fi Aadaa Oromoo Wallaggaa*. (Finfinnee, 2012), p. 267.

During the communist regime (1973 – 1989) in Ethiopia, the regime closed churches and imprisoned pastors and evangelists. In July 1979, six Pastors, among them Nabbara Achol, together with 36 Evangelists and congregation leaders were imprisoned for some time in Asossa. In November 1979, three priests and 45 rest members of the congregation in Assosa were arrested. And also Oliqa Gamtessa on June 1981 was imprisoned for six months until November 1982 in Assosa.³²⁶ The most visible aspects of the action were the closing of the churches and preaching places. In September 1981, in Beghi from 17 number of Congregations 14 closed and 3 opened. The churches remained closed for years. In April 1989, in Beghi all churches had been reopened.³²⁷

The imprisonment of followers of the church seemed to have been associated with their belief. Besides, the followers of Protestantism were categorized as “*pěntě*”, may be from *pěntě costal*. On the other hand, Protestants were associated by political cadres of the military government, with “*měttě haymañot*” or foreign religion or imported religion. Even they assumed that, the Church had connection with occidental capitalist countries and considered as spokespersons of the imperialists.³²⁸ Nevertheless, the representatives of the church appealed to the central government describing that, the arrest of Protestants was not followed by the due process of law and their imprisonment forced to interrupt some of church’s development works.³²⁹

On the other hand, the churches development program that was financed by the donors of the western states and probably this idea helped the government to connect the local churches with imperialists as the *Děrg* members talked then. The government officials harassed and tried to stop them from their religious activities. Despite, the expectation of government agents, the MYC believers grew stronger and stronger and subsequently resisted the challenges they faced. As a result, the number of church leader prisoners and followers increased from time to time.³³⁰

³²⁶ Informants: Nabbara Achol, Qalbessa Oliqa, Yadasa Tesso, and Baqqana Ariti.

³²⁷ *Ibid.*

³²⁸ *Ibid.*

³²⁹ *Ibid.*

³³⁰ *Ibid.*

Figure 8: Beghi MYC which is closed by the Dërgand it gave service from 1986-89



Source: Photo taken by the researcher

4.2.1 Factors for the Expansion of Protestantism in Beghi Area

Several studies report evangelical Christianity as a growing force, actively increasing the number of its followers in the world³³¹ and particularly so in Africa. This sub-title is dedicated to issues of adaptation to evangelical Protestantism in the land of the Beghi district. In Beghi, Protestantism could expand through two interrelated dimensions: donation and social and economic services.

4.2.1.1 Conversion

Though conversion could be seen from different angles, I looked at conversion from the point of view of people's religious change in the context of this paper. The people of Beghi were converted from indigenous religion, Orthodox Christianity, Islam to Protestantism. For analyzing the conversion of the people of Beghi, the stage model theory coined by Rambo is useful.³³² I believe that the stage model can serve as a framework in which the nature of the converting processes of the Beghi district can be seen more adequately.

³³¹ Badilu, p.59.

³³² Rambo R. Lewis and Farhadian E. Charles, 'Converting: Stages of Religious Change' in Lamb C. and M. Bryant D. (eds) 1999. *Religious Conversion: Contemporary Practices and Controversies*. London and New York: Cassel, 1993, p. 23.

Rambo used the assumption that conversion is a process; a stage model is helpful in portraying phases of a process that takes place over time and useful as a map of the features of change over time.³³³ Similar to the proponent's assumption, my data also exposed that conversion is a process both for an individual or a group and for a particular religion. Conversion into Protestantism started as soon as it arrived at Beghi; and still people are converting into the religion at individual level.³³⁴ During my fieldwork, I have seen few people witnessing coming to church for the first time and converting to be protestant Christians. Churches are also inviting peoples to be Christians, and conversion is an endless project that Christian churches are carrying out.

On the other hand, a conversion of individual or a group is not something happened at a time; it is through gradual process and takes time. For instance, a person who comes to church cannot be a Christian immediately after the day he/she joined the religious group, because, there are stages to pass over to be converted fully. In some churches, at least the person is not a Christian until baptized.³³⁵

4.2.1.2 Donation

Donation played a great role both in the arrival and in expansion of Protestantism among the Beghi inhabitants. The two have had a hand and glove relationship. At Beghi town and Kobbare, medical service that resulted in the establishment of some of the first modern health institutions could be cited.³³⁶ The medical work and school services officially started in the year 1960s. Five clinics in Beghi paved the way for the missionaries to begin their mission. Prayers and the Bible studies accompanied the medical and school services in their daily activity. A Sunday service was also held in the clinics and schools.³³⁷ As such, evangelism became a part of medical and school services, which later on contributed to the rise of the 'Mëkanë Yësus Church' in Beghi and within Ethiopia in general.³³⁸

Daniel and oral informants explained that, those who were first converted to Protestantism were people with low social status: beggars, the sick, the poor who were daily laborers.³³⁹ Here, one could well understand the converts' low economic status forced them to follow the missionaries and to accept their objectives by becoming convinced through the donations. However, this does not mean that all the first local converts were people with

³³³ *Ibid*

³³⁴ Informants: Yadasa, Eliyas, Tafari Banti.

³³⁵ *Ibid.*

³³⁶ Informants: Yadasa Tesso. Nabbara Achol.

³³⁷ *Ibid.*

³³⁸ Mitikku, 1995, 5, Benti, p.69, and Daniel, 1984, p.88.

³³⁹ Daniel, p.89, and Informants: Qalbessa Oliqa, Tola Wagga.

low social status. Rather, according to many of my informants, the donation, especially the medical services and the school acquired the attentions of other members of the society, who also had a good social status, because whoever they were, they did not have any other options to teach their children and to attend medication.³⁴⁰ Therefore, they were clearly forced to go to the station where the missionaries preach and teach the Bible. One thing among others that actually win their attentions mostly was the language in which the Bible was taught. *Afaan* Oromo was a preaching language of the area. In fact, though the entire church members preferred the preaching in *Afaan* Oromo, it should be translated into Amharic language, because of the then regime's policy to do so.³⁴¹

Those who taught the Bible in the clinic and school and Sunday services began to go out to the countryside for preaching gospel. Up to 1974, eighteen preaching stations were established outside of the mission compound at Beghi town, in different parts of Beghi district.³⁴² Alemayehu explained that it was after the 1960s, the first missionary church was established in the area.³⁴³ Nevertheless, my informants show that it was during that time the first missionaries' church was established in Kolli. The first local converts established 'Beghi Mēkanē Yēsus Church'. Generally, the convincing pressure of donation paved the way for the growth and expansion of Protestantism in Beghi district.³⁴⁴

4.2.1.3. Translation of the Bible to Vernacular Languages

It also the translation of Bible in to Vernacular language is greatly accelerated for the further expansion and consolidation of Protestant religion in general and Beghi in particularly. Most scholars agree that Bible translation is a crucial step in accelerating evangelization so that each group of people has the opportunity of finding Christ in their own language. Sanneh indicates that "each people must be afforded the opportunity of discovering Christ in its own idiom".³⁴⁵ One of the ways each group of people gets the opportunity of discovering Christ is by translating the Bible into its language. There is no language specially designated for God. Every language is God's language. That is why Sanneh says "God has no linguistic favorite".³⁴⁶

The Ethiopian Orthodox Church (EOC) neither translated the Bible into the Oromo language nor used the Oromo Bible which Onesimos translated to evangelize the Wēllēga

³⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

³⁴¹ Benti, p.58.

³⁴² Informants: Baqqana Ariti, Yadasa Tesso, Qalbessa Oliqa.

³⁴³ Alemayehu, p.28.

³⁴⁴ Informants: Qalbessa, Nabbara, Baqqana, Yadasa.

³⁴⁵ Sanneh Lamin, *Translating the Message*. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis, 1989, p. 170

³⁴⁶ *Ibid*, p.174.

Oromo. The liturgy was in *Geez* (an old Ethiopic language) and Bible reading was in Amharic throughout the Oromo country. Some scholars alleged that the use of *Geez* and Amharic languages in the EOC among the Oromo people was a means of promoting the language of the colonizers. Tippett,³⁴⁷ notes that "the use of Amharic Bible in the Orthodox Church throughout the Galla (Oromo) country is the latest strong factor in the process of Amharaization". Eide also agrees with Tippett and says "the spread of the Amharic language was an integral part of the process of cultural transformation in the Oromo society".³⁴⁸ Some scholars have concluded that Christianity was not only alien to the Oromo people but was also the promoter of the culture of the colonizers and suppressed of the Oromo language. The EOC failed to translate the Bible into the Oromo language and imposed the Amharic language on the Oromo people.

While they were waiting for the chance of penetrating the Oromo country, the SEM missionaries translated the Bible into the Oromo language. They involved indigenous missionaries like Onesimos Nesib and Aster Gano, who played a significant role in the translation.³⁴⁹ This translation work had a great impact on the Oromo people's response to the Gospel. According to Aren, it was Onesimos and Aster who had furnished the team at Bojji with the tools for their work: the New Testament, the reader, and the Hymn. II book - all of them in Oromo.³⁵⁰ These books appealed to the feelings of the people everywhere and much contributed to the response to the gospel. It also contributed toward the promotion of the Oromo language and Oromo consciousness. Eide puts it very well: "The vernacular Bible was a monumental achievement and laid the foundation for an indigenous interpretation of the Gospel. Scarcely any other external factor has had the same impact on Oromo ethnic consciousness, or on the Oromo religious experience."³⁵¹

The Wällëga Oromo were reluctant to accept Christianity for many years mainly because of the Orthodox missionaries' use of the *Ge 'ez* and Amharic (Amharic) languages in the Church. They regarded the two languages as instruments of Amhara culture and Shoaan domination.³⁵² But they responded faster and more enthusiastically to Christianity when the SEM missionaries used the Oromo Bible and hymn books.

³⁴⁷ Tippett, 1970.p. 243.

³⁴⁸ Eide, 1996, p. 28.

³⁴⁹ Tesfaye, pp. 162-190.

³⁵⁰ Aren, 1978, p.398.

³⁵¹ Eide, p.89.

³⁵² Aren, p. 398.

Some scholars argue that the translation of the Bible into the Oromo language makes evangelical Christianity indigenous among the Oromo people. For instance Eide argues that the use of the Oromo Bible and indigenous preachers such as Gidaadaa Soolan and Ahsanaa Nagaadee implies the continuity of Oromo world-views.³⁵³ Language is the vehicle to understand the culture, and can not represent the entire culture. Translating the Bible into vernacular is recognizing the language of that particular society.³⁵⁴

4.3 Impact of Protestant Religion in Beghi District

The Abrahamic religions of Béghi district have been making great contribution for the communities of Beghi in different aspects of life. From the Christian faith, Protestant or missionary or locally called *Pënxë* made pivotal roles in the social, economic and other societal life of the study area. From the contributions of the protestant religion the major one were discussed as the following context.

As in many parts of Africa, the introduction of modern education in Ethiopia coincided with the arrival of missionaries, who saw the provision of modern education as prerequisite for winning converts. These missionaries were the Jesuit (Catholic) missionaries, and protestant missionaries. The Protestant started to spread the evangelical work in Ethiopia in the second half of 19th with the arrival of their missionaries. Educational activities began in the same period by their evangelist missionaries who opened a school at Massawa, Eritria.³⁵⁵

In Beghi area, for further expansion, the Protestant missionaries greatly contributed on the developmental works of Beghi district to further consolidation of evangelism. According to my informants claimed that, the Protestant missionary agents to conventions, they had been funding budgets on the build schools and clinics in different villages of my study areas like in Kolli, in Kobbare, and in Tarko, in Shagga, In Karma Gunfi, in Dhalladu Waabaraa, in Dhalladu Haroo Dimaa in 1964, 1965, 1966 respectively.³⁵⁶ And they improved the quality of drinking water they build water canals and hand pump whole water to distribute in the villages.

³⁵³ Eide, p.89.

³⁵⁴ Benti, p. 87.

³⁵⁵ Ermias Abera, Introduction and Expansion of Modern Education in West Wallagga with Particular Reference to Gimbi *Awurajja*, 1898-1974” (MA Thesis, Jimma University, 2016), p.14.

³⁵⁶ Informants: Yadasa Tesso, Qalbessa Oliqa, Nabbara Achol, Baqqana Ariti.

The Protestant religion also played a great role for the development of Oromo folklore³⁵⁷. According to a written material and local elders confirmed that, the protestant missionary of the SEM, arrived to West Wällëgga in generally and Beghi district in particularly with the good news they had been carried religious books on their hand which is written or translated by a vernacular languages in *Afaan Oromo*.³⁵⁸ A father of Oromo literature, Onessmos Nasib translated the whole Bible with Aster Ganno in 1899. Before this he wrote different articles such as *Galata gooftaa Maccaa*, *Jalqaba Barsiisaa* in 1894, and translated the New Testaments in 1893 in to vernacular language *Afaan Oromo*.³⁵⁹ Besides to this, different introductory notes of Aster Ganno's love songs published in 1899. According to Tesfaye states that:

Nonetheless, in the introductory notes of Aster Gannoo's Love Songs published 1899, Fufa Ambacha states that *wëdduu tiksituu* (shepherds' song), *ururuu* (babies' song), *wëdduu jaalalaa* (love songs), *makmaaksa* (proverbs), *durdurii* (stories), *hibboo* (riddles), *tapha Ijoollee* (children's games), *wëdduu Atetee* (women's spiritual songs), *sagada Oromo* (Oromo prayers), *geerarsaa* (warriors' songs), *faaruu gaddaa* (lamentations) and *wëdduu hëeruma* (nuptials) in the *Calqaba Barsiisaa* (The [Oromo] Spelling Book) exist in the records of Hylander under Aster as the collector.³⁶⁰

The Protestant missionary also greatly involve on the healthy ministry through *diakonal* works. This part of the service includes all aspects of Christianity that easily changed the life an individual. It has a spiritual, physical and emotional concern for the person for whom the service is rendered. They established Human Healthy clinics like at Kobbare, in Beghi town (to days Beghi Health C enters) and respectively. To conserve environmental conservation they plant different species tress like Mango, Abukado, Papaya, and etc.³⁶¹ They created awareness about the transmission and preventing methods of HIV AIDS, Sexual transmitted disease, family planning and on the dangerous of female

³⁵⁷ Tesfaye Tolasa, A History of Oromo Literature and Identity Issues (c. 1840-1991)", (PHD Dissertation, AAU, History, 2019), p. 160.

³⁵⁸ Dagitu Nigatu, The Impact of Culture, Social Selling and Religion on the Status of in the Church and Society in the Western Synods of the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus", (MA Thesis, AAU, 2014), pp. 38-42. And Informants: Hailu Kibbabu, Yadasa Tesso, Nabbara Achol.

³⁵⁹ Eide, pp. 45-46.

³⁶⁰ Tesfaye, pp. 180-181. and Beghi Warada Culture and Tourism Office, p. 78. and Informants: Yadasa Tesso, Amsalu Taddase, Elsabet Kappitano.

³⁶¹ *Ibid.*

mutilation.³⁶² And they also adopting old names for Supreme being like *Waaqayyoo*, equivalent to God.³⁶³

One of the most difficult but important parts of the work was that of those women who were fistula victimized. These are women affected during delivery and cannot control urine or feces or both. They cannot come close to anyone because of the bad smell. In most cases their husbands send them to their parents and they stay indoors at their parents' home. In Western Synod, it was NMS whom started with the treatments of such women both in Beghi and Valley areas where they were working.³⁶⁴ The total expense and transportation to the hospital and back home was covered by NMS. They were taken care of until they were back at home to their family or parents. It is very recently that the Western Synod acknowledges it in to its service and many women now get service in the project funded by NMS-NORAD (Project funded by Norwegian government Development through NMS).³⁶⁵ Most of those who got treatment by the project regained their full health and reestablished their family life.

The other disgusting work but needs love and care to treat was those affected by the leprosy. It is not easy to touch those whose fingers and toes were lost and sore wound could be seen. But the nurses treated them with love and concerned and even made follow up at their homes when they did not appear to continue their monthly treatments. Budly Karly is still remembered among the Beghi for her care and support.³⁶⁶ She is also still in the memory of many as the iron lady for her strong conviction. Sometimes she rebukes the parents or families for their ignorance of not bringing their children or any members in the family to the clinic for treatments. Both Rev. Mathewos Cibsa and Preacher Dhaba Hedde mentioned that NMS missionaries lived with the Beghi people and solely absorbed with their services that they could win the favor of the Beghi for the Gospel.³⁶⁷ These services continued even when there was no possibility of preaching the Gospel. When the possibility of road was available cars were used, after MAF plane stopped, to take those seriously sick to hospitals.

³⁶² *Ibid.*

³⁶³ Badilu, pp. 87-93

³⁶⁴ Tarressa Qanno, "The Ministry of Norwegian Missionary Society (With in EECMY) Among the Gumuz Tribe of Western Ethiopia," (MA Thesis, Theology, Stavanger, 2011), p.53.

³⁶⁵ *Ibid*, p. 54.

³⁶⁶ Informants: Nabbara, Yadessa, Baqqana, Qalbessa.

³⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

Throughout all the difficulties, setbacks and recoveries, the work was done that it brought change in the life of Beghi people. Emmanuel Abraham acknowledges the endurance of the NMS during the hard years and states:

Although the work has repeatedly been disrupted in the course of the revolution both in Abbai Valley and at Beghi, the Missionaries, in conjunction with their Ethiopian co-workers, had been able to surmount the trials and troubles with confidence and practice. They are still (in 1993) rendering commendable service to the “*Shanqilla*” [Gumuz] community and the Oromo population living in and around Beghi town in evangelistic, educational, health care and community development work. They have helped many to attain faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and for all this we are deeply thankful to the Lord of the Church.³⁶⁸

Besides these, they built Animal Healthy Centers at different villages of my study area like in Shagga and Hofa Fargashi and respectively.³⁶⁹ When the Socialist government of Ethiopia was overthrown by the EPRDF, there were young women and men who were educated to certain extent taking part in the new government.

4.4 Inter-Religious Interactions in the Study Area

There are different religious groups and peoples in Ethiopia. These peoples have had long relations of peaceful coexistence among themselves in time of peace and conflicts. In Beghi there was long time peaceful relation that could exist among the different communities. This was because of the strong socio-economic and political interaction of both Muslim and Christian community for a long time.³⁷⁰

Generally speaking, many people believe and know that Islam in Ethiopia has co-existed with Christianity peacefully for centuries. There has been good social interaction between the adherents of the two religions. On other hand, some factors contributed for the religious tolerance between Christians and Muslims. These were blood relationship, friendship and neighborhoods. This social relation binds the relation together in spite of the religious differences. In Beghi, the condition is not different. The people of Beghi were interconnected themselves by bloody relationship, friendship, neighborhood, and social interactions.³⁷¹

³⁶⁸ Tarressa, pp. 54-55.

³⁶⁹ Informants: Yadessa Tesso, Baqqanaa Aritii, Nabbara Achol.

³⁷⁰ Mohammed Musa, p. 52

³⁷¹ Informants: Sh/ Habib Abdulqadir, Sh/ Kadir Yasin, Nabbara Achol, Galataa Raggasa.

In chapter 2, I have already discussed the people's social relationship. The first way of ministering to such people is to develop personal relationships. To develop a relationship, you need to participate in the social life of the society. Every day Muslims and Christians are meeting each other in many different places.³⁷²

There are many ways to create friendships and relationship between Muslims and Christians: eating meals together, participating on weddings and any of their festivals, participating on burial and any of their celebration and inviting them to Christian holidays like Christmas, Easter etc. It also during the Muslim holidays like *Eid al-Adha*, *Eid al-Fatir* and the like. This commandment tells us to love anybody without condition. Showing love for Muslims breaks the barriers between Muslims and Christian.³⁷³

As a local elders noted that, before the introduction of *tawhid* Islamic orders in Beghi district, between the Muslims and Christians they can not have any differences. The differences between them were only the Muslims are wearing the cape on head which is show as a Muslim and the Christians wearing the cross on their neck. Unless both of them were drunk alkolic, chewing chat, smoking sigarate, and during the religious holidays and group labore work or *déboo* and *daadoo*³⁷⁴ they had been prepared meals on one pots and slaughtering cows, sheep, or any animals by coming together in their respective faith. Rural farmers, Muslims and Christians, work cooperatively during tilling the land and harvesting crops in a practice called *déboo* (team work).³⁷⁵ Just like the *idir*, the people of the faith groups also work with teams during tilling, weeding and harvesting periods. In the highland areas, it is customary to prepare food and alcoholic drinks for the people working in *déboo*.³⁷⁶ Muslims, who have not made up their minds to stop alcoholic drinks, enjoy drinking just like their Orthodox Christian colleagues.³⁷⁷

Also to the information obtained from informants, The Muslim followers and Christian followers of Beghi gave refuge for themselves during the time of crisis and war that took place in the area at different times. Therefore, in the Beghi areas Muslim and Christians has been living peace and love for long time to these days. Informants also narrate, during the

³⁷² *Ibid.*

³⁷³ Informants: Kassahun Marga, Bacha Dube, Mika'el Kadida, and *Olana* Guta.

³⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁷⁵ Informants: Jombor Fixee, Margaa Naadoo, Birhaanu Waaqayyoo.

³⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

Dërg War Muslims of Beghi gave protection for the Christians of the area from the attack of *Dërg* by hiding them as Muslims.³⁷⁸

It also Interfaith marriage relation was made between Islam and other universal or indigenous faith, which is also traditionally called mixed marriage, refers to marriage between partners professing different religions, Islam and Christianity, in this case. Interfaith marriage typically indicates a marriage in which both partners remain adherents to their distinct religion, and as such it is distinct from concepts of religious conversion.³⁷⁹

Neighborhoods are one of the major social values that are given credence and high importance in Islam as in other religion.³⁸⁰ Muslims are constantly warned not to strain their relationships with their neighbors irrespective of differences in their religion, social status, ethnicity and language.³⁸¹ Islam allows even to allow his/her neighbor to fix a wooden peg on his/her wall [whenever constructing a house]. Islam also orders Muslim women not to look down any gift from their neighbors even if the gift is as small as the trotters of a sheep [flesh less part of the legs].³⁸²

Neighborhoods are irrespective of their differences in their religion. Both urban and rural Muslims and Christians participate in holidays, weddings and burial ceremonies and other festivals. During a Christian wedding, the host prepares feast for both Christian and Muslim neighbors slaughtering animals in their respective faiths. Similarly, during a Muslim wedding, the host prepares the feast for both Christian and Muslim neighbors. Otherwise, the wedding or any other ceremony appears to be incomplete and disgusting for the host.³⁸³

The same is true when someone dies in the neighborhood. There are many *idirs* that constitute both Muslims and Christians especial in the rural and urban areas. Observing Muslims wearing huts and *Hijjabs* crying their eyes out during the death of a Christian neighbor is very common. Christians also do the same whenever a Muslim dies in their neighborhood.³⁸⁴

The socio-cultural influence of Islam on Muslims in the region is immense. This is exhibited in their personal lives such as dressing codes, dietary rules, marriage practice and

³⁷⁸ Informants: Yadesa Tesso and Ibrahim Waaqwayyaa.

³⁷⁹ Informants: Mohammed Abdisa, Tafa Shagirdi

³⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

³⁸¹ *Ibid.*

³⁸² *Ibid.*

³⁸³ *Ibid.*

³⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

even business transaction rules despite the existence of certain exceptions as in every culture.³⁸⁵ The overall personal and social related rulings of the faith, from neighborhoodliness to business dealings are trust, mutual respect, tolerance and peaceful coexistence. The teaching of Islam as well as the practice of Muslims is toward developing the hospitable and generosity of the Ethiopian people but not disintegration of the culture. For this reason, both Muslims and Christians cooperate in times of not only prosperity (such as weddings and holidays) but also during adversity.³⁸⁶

This brief analysis of the socio-cultural condition of the people in the region shows that the two faith groups have got many common agenda to in areas of nurturing collaboration towards development, solving personal conflicts, and combating diseases and poverty. Their collaboration, for instance in areas of interfaith healing practice, however, need to be supported by modern biomedical practices through creating integration between the traditional and the modern approaches.³⁸⁷

The strong socio-cultural integration, mutual respect and mutual tolerance, love and affection of the two faith groups is also manifested through the practice of interfaith marriage despite the fact that clergy men from both faith groups deny recognition for such couples. Of course, if properly interpreted Holy Scriptures from both faith groups allow interfaith marriages with certain restrictions, of course. That needs to be addressed and developed for better mutual understanding.³⁸⁸

Similarly, poverty reduction projects could also be integrated with faith through the teachings of interfaith scholars in order to curb the ongoing deception and corruption in the field of business transaction and any other means of earning income. This could begin with joint efforts to safeguard the young generation from addiction in alcohol, hashish, chat and other illicit sexual relations, if a really genuine and indigenous development strategy that springs from within the culture is sought for.³⁸⁹

As the religion of Christianity, Islam has also played an important role in developing the beliefs values and cultures of each ethnic group and had shaped the ethnic interaction as well as played an important role in uniting several ethnic groups in Ethiopia. Islam was also a religion that united the Beghi people and Oromo in Wällägga particularly, and all Oromo people generally under one ideology and this brought an interaction between these

³⁸⁵ Informants: Mohammed Abdisa, Buli Wayyuu and Bashir Seleman.

³⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁸⁷ Informants: Abdala Aliyyi, Jamal Sayid and Anuwar Nuraddin.

³⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

people. The period when and ways of introduction of Islam also determined the interaction of the people in the region.

However, Until 2005 G.C, religious war and conflicts did not ever carried out in the Beghi areas.³⁹⁰ Unfortunately, in 2005 a religious war carried between Muslim and Christians in Beghi areas. In this war and conflicts large number of people lost their life. Large amount of property also destroyed from both sides no matter how the Picture is not mentioned due to scarcity of sources.³⁹¹

4.5 The Effects of Abrahamic Religions in Beghi District

The new world religion either Islam or Christians had made positively or negatively impact on every day life of their followers' ideology, culture, tradition and religion even on their worship religious materials. On this sub title I will discuss the impacts of the Abrahamic religion on every day life of the Beghi communities themselves, and other religious faith. It also their impacts on the cultural, traditional, other ways of the communities of Beghi district.

The impacts of Abrahamic religion reflected on the personal and social life of their followers. I discussed my observation backing up with my research informants own voice and textual quotations on issues related to cultural, economic, social, and ideological and other related traditions of the Beghi communities.

The major contribution of the Abrahamic religion in Ethiopia generally, and the study area in particularly were on the socio-cultural cosmology and ideology of the communities. For instance, before the introduction of Abrahamic religion in Beghi the area, the community of the area has been their own socio-cultural cosmology. However, with the introduction of Abrahamic religion, their indigenous socio-cultural cosmology has been changed in to the new ideological expression. Fore example, the Islamic religion has been introduced to Beghi area with the Middle East cultural life. Fore instance, Language, culture, the dressing code, greeting mode, eating style, and other religious and religious festival ceremony of the Middle East have been greatly expanded with Islamic religion.³⁹²

As I have already discussed in Chapter Two, the Oromo and other peoples of Beghi's indigenous religion has its own cosmology: unique creation myths that define creation of human beings, the universe and all things on the earth. Gemetchu states, "The Oromo has

³⁹⁰ Informants: Habib Abdulqadir, Nabbara Achool, Tafari Bantii, Yadessa Tesso.

³⁹¹ *Ibid.*

³⁹² Informants: Ahimed Musa, Abdulwab Dubala, Mohammed Abdisa, Tafa Shagirdi.

been conscious of its cultural identity, its relation to nature and the existence of a powerful force that regulates the connection between nature and society.’’³⁹³In the Oromo and other peoples of Beghi indigenous religion, the organization of spiritual, and physical, human worlds are considered as inter linked. *Waaqa* or *Yërëë*, the creator, regulates their existence and functions in balanced ways. *Waaqa or Yërëë* directs the world from above and controls everything from within. The Oromo cosmology has important consequences for the Oromo vision of the universe as a whole. It has influenced aspects of its traditional culture, its political and economic thoughts, and determined its customary system of administration and forms of production.³⁹⁴

However, in today’s Beghi the Oromo and other people indigenous cosmology and its concepts we have seen in chapter two, such as the concepts of *Waaqa* (God), *qäälluu*, worshipping, medium ship, *ayyaana* (spirits) and sacrificial rituals have been replaced by Islam and Christian cosmology.

In the Oromo indigenous religion, the concept of medium ship is very noticeable; they used mountains, rivers, lakes, trees, plants as a medium through which they appreciate and glorify the almighty God. The traditional concepts such as appreciating the works of God through his creations, water bodies, mountains, trees through which they make prayers that are never important in their contemporary religious life. Some of informants argued that this all are unnecessary after the arrival of the Abrahamic religion.³⁹⁵

In Oromo indigenous religion/belief system, a woman who gives birth to a baby, have to conduct birth rituals called *shanan* (fifth day after giving birth to a baby). The woman, when she goes to fetch water, the first time after she conducted a birth ritual, she holds ‘*coqorsaa*’ in her hand and put it into the water saying “*yaa Waaq бага madda kanatti na deebifte, yaa madda nana bagan nagaan sitti deebi’e*” meaning, ‘*Oh God, thank you! You helped me see this spring again. You spring, I am happy to come back to you!*’³⁹⁶ This symbolizes the woman’s acknowledgment of God for he passes her through such difficult situation and back to her daily activities in normal life. However, in today’s Beghi Oromo birth rituals are did not conduct in accordance. More over, Islamic and Christian religion

³⁹³ Gemmechu, 1993, p. 20.

³⁹⁴ Asafa, 2012, p. 141.

³⁹⁵ Informants: Tarekeng Mesgebu, Tafari Tasisa, Jomborr Fixe, and Nabara Achol.

³⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

has been attacked the indigenous religion with its various elements such as; the *qäälluu* institutions.³⁹⁷

It also because of the influence of universal religion the Oromo or other ethnic peoples of Beghi communities name were also changed the names of the people of the Arab, Israel, or Europeans. Fore instance, the Oromo name of Onesimos was "*Hika*" meaning translator. Coincidentally this name later matched his job as Bible translator, however, the Protestant had changed his name at baptism and he was given a Christian name.³⁹⁸ This means the Protestant assumed that the Oromo names could not be Christian. Today there are numerous Oromo Christians including theologians who gave Jew's or European names to their children thinking the Oromo names are secular. This could be the reason why the Oromo child naming ritual became a thing of the past in Wollaga. Fore instance one of my friends his father was born from the Muslim family background. My friend name is Xahaa. After he embraced a Protestant religion he changed his name and calls the name of Lalisa. And also one of my friends was born from the Christian religion family background. My friends name is Yohannis. After he accepted to Islam he changed his name to Fuad.

The universal liturgy and worship could not have adopted this important Oromo heritage such as prayer rituals during birth of calf, wedding, child birth and rearing. However, because of the modern universal religious legacy all of important Oromo heritage such as prayer rituals during birth of calf, wedding, child birth and rearing which are called *Dhaaba* were totally neglected.³⁹⁹

Islamic, Orthodox, and Protestant Church doctrines or their teachings had brought a number of changes in the cultural and religious life of the local people. Fore instance, following the advent of Meneik's forces into the present Beghi Orthodox Christianity was introduced and this can be taken as a new chapter in the religious history of the society. Then, the people were baptized and became Christian nominally. Following their baptism as Negaso writes, the local people were forced to deny some of their cultural and traditional beliefs.⁴⁰⁰ Some of the cultural practices like polygamy and inheritance of one's brother's wife locally called *dhalaa*,⁴⁰¹ were among the practices against Orthodox doctrine which favored only a monogamous marriage. Among the Beghi, the people followed a tradition of

³⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, and Aren, p. 165.

³⁹⁹ Informants: Marga Nado, Shukkare Etafa, Amsalu Taddase.

⁴⁰⁰ Nagaso Gidada, "The Introduction and Expansion of Orthodox Christianity in Qellem Awraja", BA Thesis (HSIU, History, 1972), p.18.

⁴⁰¹ Informants: Marga Nado, Jombor Fixe.

marginalizing a widow for sometime following the death of a marriage partner which is locally called *Dhaala*.⁴⁰² The practice began to be eroded and nowadays it is almost non-existent. This can be observed from the fact that the doctrine of Christianity had a positive impact to raise the status of women.⁴⁰³

Before the introduction and establishment of Mosques and Churches in the area, the Beghi ethnic groups buried their deceased at the traditional burial land locally called *hiirrëssa*.⁴⁰⁴ In addition, they had their own ceremony of *awwaala*, cultural feast or banquet held in commemoration of a deceased relative which is followed by the ceremony of *hiirressa* which was held once unlike the Orthodox Church practice of frequent commemoration.⁴⁰⁵ After the incorporation, the above mentioned burial and traditional feast ceremony changed along the orthodox pattern. According to the Orthodox doctrine, before the funeral ceremony is held, the body of deceased person is taken to the church yard. Then, the clergies offer prayers for the deceased called, *fétéhät*. *Fithat* took place before the funeral ceremony held.⁴⁰⁶

Besides, after the funeral ceremony, a number of commemorations feasts referred to as *tezkar* would be prepared. It included, *sëbat*, held a week after the funeral, *sëlasa* (a month later), *arba* (a month and ten days later), *mëñfëq* (six months later) and *amët* (a year) after the death of a Christian member feasts prepared. However, it had great economic pressure on the side of the deceased relative.⁴⁰⁷ Therefore, both the burial ceremony and the commemoration of the Beghi district Christians held for their dead relatives were influenced by the recently introduced Orthodox religion. However, the traditional Beghi district society tried to follow their former practice.

Above all, the Orthodox doctrine is strict on fasting. Here, before the advent of Orthodox followers into Beghi district, the local people followed their traditional belief which demanded no fasting days. On the contrary, citing Ludolf as Pankhurst writes, other than Ethiopian church there is no part of the world in which more fasting duration is observed throughout the year.⁴⁰⁸ According to Teshale, there are at about one hundred sixty five and

⁴⁰² *Ibid.*

⁴⁰³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰⁴ Informants: Qanna Gammachu, Milkiyas Kabbada,

⁴⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰⁶ Mahtema Selassie Wolde Meskel, *Zekra Nagar* ('*Recollection of Things Past*'), (Addis Ababa, 1962 E.C. (1969/70), p.594; Pankrust, Richard, *A Social History of Ethiopia*, 1990, Addis Ababa, p.196. and Informants: Hailu Kibbabu, Jombor Fixe, Yared Nagasa.

⁴⁰⁷ Teshale Tibabu, *The Making of Modern Ethiopia 1896-1974*. Lawrenceville, New Jersey, 1995, p.97. and *Ibid.*

⁴⁰⁸ Pankrust, p.43.

two hundred fifty days of fasting for ordinary and pious Christians respectively within a year.⁴⁰⁹ On the other hand, sources reveal that the days of fasting within a year range from one hundred eighty days for an average person to two hundred fifty.⁴¹⁰ As a result, the traditional local people were exposed to observance of fasting. Moreover, the local Beghi *gäbbars* began to pay the expected church tax *tieth* or *ašrat* to the Orthodox Church,⁴¹¹ and *Zäka* for the Muslim followers. According to my key informants noted that, *Zäka* was pay to the expected Mosques for the service for the individual ones according to the guide line of Shrine laws. Therefore, the Islamic religion and the Orthodox Church and its doctrine had brought many impacts on the Beghi district followers economically.⁴¹²

Concerning resources given to the Ethiopian church, following the 1891, Menelik II decree made to regulate the administration of church and the clergy that decided to allocate *Madëriä* or church land called *Sämon* that could be distributed for the clergy.⁴¹³ Similarly, churches erected in Beghi granted with considerable amount of church land, *Sämon mëriët*, together with *gäbbars* who gives labor service to these churches.⁴¹⁴

This *sämon* land would have been distributed among the clergies for those religious functionaries, composed of *mërgieta*, *qes*, *däbtära*, *deacon* etc as, *Madëria*, land grant until they give a service to the church. Therefore, it is possible to say that the advent of the Orthodox Church in the Beghi and the practice followed had brought socio-cultural, economic and religious impact on the indigenous Beghi people who were exposed to this religion.

It also with the coming of the Islam EOC the Oromo calendar was replaced by the Islam and EOC calendar.⁴¹⁵ The Oromo calendar is helpful for the Oromo society in many ways including period of *Butta* ritual (when the new *Gädaa* leaders are elected and given authority) and other Oromo festivals. Non educated Oromos were unable to use the new calendar that was in Amharic and Arabic.

⁴⁰⁹ Teshale, p.12; George Lipsky, *Ethiopia: its People, its Society, its Culture*, Washington, 1962, p.100

⁴¹⁰ Tadesse, Sergew (Ed), p.70.

⁴¹¹ Informants: Milkias Kabbada, Hailu Kibbabu.

⁴¹² Informants: Mohammed Abdala, Ahimad Musa, and Habib Abdulqadir.

⁴¹³ Mahtema Sellassie, p.535.

⁴¹⁴ Informants: Hayilu Kibabu, Yared Nagasa, and Takile Abdisa.

⁴¹⁵ Gemechu J. Geda, "Pilgrimages and Syncretism: Religious Transformation among the Arsi room of Ethiopia," (PHD Dissertation, University of Bayreuth, Germany. Philosophy. 2013), p. 31.

Conclusion

The purpose of this thesis is to make an attempt to reconstruct A Religious History of Beghi from ca. 1880s to 1991 in southern part of the former Asossa *Awrajjä* and the present province of West Wällëga Zone. Further more, it has dual purpose. On the one hand, it explains the current general background information of the contemporary Beghi land. On the other hand, it gives the overall information about the Beghi communities before and after the arrival of the Abrahamic religion. Before the Oromo people were converted either to Christianity or Islam they believed in one God whose color is black „*waaqa Guracha*“ to mean the black God. Without the knowledge of the *Gädaa* system it is difficult to appreciate a religious history of the Oromo because the *Gädaa* system is the conglomeration of religion, economy and politics of the society. The Oromo of Beghi like other Wällëga Oromo had been practiced the *Gädaa* system at the center of *Odaa Kaarraa* and *Konnoo Gunfi*. They were also active participants in the the Irrecha or thanks giving. The irrecha ceremony of the state of Beghi celebrated at Mälkaa Konno.

Qäällu was a spiritual leader who was chief priest of the Oromo traditional religion. He served as an intermediary between the *waaqa* and the Oromo. It is said that after the Beghi *Qäällu* died their spirit was inherited by their family or clans.

A number of *Qäälluus* were existed in the Beghi district until recent times. The most famous *Qäälluu* in the Beghi district were *Qäälluu Hooloo* and *Qäälluu Abbaa Hundumaa*, this two *Qäälluus* are very well in the neighboring parts of the region. *Qäälluu Haadha Maaram* was also the renowned *Qäälluu* in Beghi. Women have their own role in Beghi Oromo traditional religion. They involved in local *Qäälluus*. Among the Beghi Oromo traditional religion *Attete* is considered as women’s religious celebration. The occasion of *Attete* celebration is commonly *guyyaa Märäm*. There are factors that led to the decline of Oromo traditional religion in Beghi, the transformation of *Qäälluu* to *Qäällicha* which also paved the way for the *waaqqeffännä* religion to lose its social and religious values.

The Beghi district was the first to be formed and the second to accept Islam next to Bëla-Shangul in the western region of Ethiopia. Islam emerged in Beghi area in the first half of the nineteenth century through Asossa, the nearby town in Bënishangul Gumuz region, which was under the Islamic clergies. It is commonly assumed that Islamic religion came to the area from the first quarter of 19th century with the group of traders and Islamic religious teachers from the neighboring country Sudan. It is apparent that the Beghi district played gigantic role in spreading Islam in the areas. According to oral sources, the first mosque in

the district was built by the *Anasar*. During the 18th and early 19th centuries the teaching of Qúrān and other religious texts was dominated by the itinerant clerics know as *Näggädé*. There were certainly many personalities in the religious history of the Wëllëgga in general and that of Beghi in particular but not all of them are remembered.

At the early expansion of Islam to this area, Muslim scholars who came from Arsi, Bale, Harar, Wallo and Jimma did not enter to criticize the preexisting culture. They called the people to the fundamental elements of Islam. At the beginning, most of the people did not fulfill even the five pillar of Islam. One of the five pillars of Islam is praying five times per day. However, only few people practiced this and most of them pray only on Friday and during holidays. Most of the time it was educated Muslim that attempted to fulfill Islamic law even five pillars of Islam.

The consolidation of Islam in Beghi district has been the cultural tolerance of Islam enabled the Beghi people to easily embrace Islam. The people of Beghi mixed some of the indigenous practice with that of Islam. Islam tolerated much of the culture of the people of the study area.

In Beghi area particularly, and western Wëllëgga generally, Orthodox Christianity was one of oldest universal religion, and introduced to the study area on the foot steps of the *Näftäga* (Šäwān forces) in the end of the 19th century next to Islamic religion. For the introduction and expansion of this universal religion different internal and external factors have been played a pivotal role. From this factor, the weakness of the *gādaa* system, and the Oromo and others ethnic peoples' indigenous religion are the major one and the revival and the incorporation of the western Ethiopia under the *näftägña* rulers were other major factors.

The Orthodox Christianity was further consolidated in the study area after the liberation of Ethiopia under the invasion of Italian government of 1941. During this time the government of Ethiopia Emperor Haile Sillase was launched different rules and regulations which is greatly favored for the further expansion and consolidation if Orthodox Christianity in Ethiopia generally and Beghi particularly. And also the weaknesses of the 'Watawit' dynasty from the region were also another great factor for the consolidation and survive of the Orthodox Christianity in the study area.

The Orthodox Christianity have been greatly affected the economic and Oromo and other ethnic groups of Beghi through their secret doctrines. And also they were facilitated for the development and spread of the *naftagna* language and cultures greatly. However, the

introduction and expansion of Protestant or Missionary or locally called *Pëntë* was greatly challenged for the expansion of Orthodox Christianity and the Islam it self in Beghi district especially after the liberation of Ethiopia in 1941. According to Beghi context, post liberation was known as the religious competitions between the universal religions.

The last but not list other Christian religion which is introduced to Beghi district is the Protestant religion. Their is the early late to introduced in Beghi. This religion was introduced to the study area in 1928 by the engagement of Rev. Gidada Solan and Mr. Buchannan of the Norwegian natives. From the protestant religions branches Mëkanë Ýësus Church was the first Protestant Church who is introduced to Beghi. During the Italian invasion of 1935/36-1941, the protestant and the Orthodox Christianity were greatly persecuted. However, after the liberation the protestant Christianity expanded and spread in the study area with in new chapters.

Now a day, the protestant Christianity had been greatly strong next to the Islam in the study area. The major factors for the consolidation of protestant Christianity which is the least one to introduce Beghi are the way of donation, conversation, the translation of Bible to the vernacular language and the way of worship were the major one, and also their social, economic, and other related works have been facilitated and encouraged for their strong and expansions in the study area. To further expand and consolidated the protestant Christianities, different foreign and local missionaries were highly involved.

In generally, the entire universal world religions have been greatly and highly affected the cultural, social, economic, and cosmological life of the indigenous people of the study area. However, those universal world religious were live with them for a long year with out any interruption and conflicts. Their inter-religious relation was based on their cultural and religious doctrine.

The significance of the paper is to developing the knowlegde of the reader and the frontier generation as they understand about the religious history of Beghi as they have their own culture, language, political organization, economic activities and the people of the area were Cushitic Super family, Nilo-Sahara and the Omotic super families. Generaly, this study was under taken with strong belief that need careful study and analysis of the religious history of Beghi district would have creat a better understanding of the economy, political, social, and religious process in the region. Further more, the thesis lights the major challenges that had faced the researcher in the district during the period under study.

In this study, to get full information and to reconstruct a religious history of Beghi, the researcher paid different sacrifice, because they think, searching the history of Beghi people raise political issue. Another challenge is the population of the area is scattered and it needs effort to get oral informations home to home. Transportation problem is another great challenges following to the declaration of state emergence of 2020 epidemic disease of Covid 19 or Corona Virus. And also the political instability of the area is another major challenge. More over, this research would serve to provide additional materials for the construction of the history of the ethnic group. Lastly, the final out come of the study would be important for historians, researchers and students of history.

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III. List of Informants

No	Name of Informant	Sex	Age	Place of Interview	Date of Interview	Remark
1	Abaya Itana (<i>Obboo</i>)	M	65	Kabbache	02/07/20	He gave me about the history of EOC in Beghi, especially the history of Kabbache Gyorgis Church
2	Abdu Bushura (<i>Obboo</i>)	M	42	G/Dafino	13/01/20	He explains about the agents of Islamic religion in Beghi district.
3	Abdulwab Dubballa (<i>Sheikh</i>)	M	62	G/Dafino	11/01/20	He provide me about the the factors that contributed for the consolidation of Islam and Protestant religion in Beghi.
4	Abdalla Sosso (<i>Hajji</i>)	M	66	Tongo	22/03/20	He is gave me the information on the introduction of Islam and the contribution of the Watawit dynasty on the expansion.
5	Adugna Jallata (<i>Obboo</i>)	M	51	Tarko	11/07/20	He explain about the history of EOC in Beghi
6	Adugna Nado (<i>Obboo</i>)	M	50	Qama	14/02/20	He provides me on the Qaalluu institution and the role of Protestant religion on the destruction of the Qaalluu and their religious materials.
7	Ahimed Musa (<i>Obboo</i>)	M	35	G/Dafino	12/01/20	He gave me about the contribution of Islam and the agents of Tawhid orders in Beghi.
8	Akatti Abarra (<i>Obboo</i>)	M	36	G/Dafino	24/04/20	He is Afaan Oromo teacher at Kondala Preparatory school and he gave me the clues on the types of marriage in Beghi district and about the Oromo indigenous religion of Beghi and their roles.
9	Allasan Dirriba (<i>Sheikh</i>)	M	47	Hopha	25/04/20	He explains about the history of Sheikhs of Dirre Salataa Hophaa and their contribution for the expansion of Islam in Beghi district.

10	Amsalu Taddase (Aadde)	F	34	G/Dafino	23/07/20	She provides me on the contribution of Protestant and their major factors for the expansion in the Beghi district.
11	Amad Abduljalil (Obboo)	M	43	G/Dafino	29/05/20	He is one of the descendants of Sheikh Alfaki Seleman Khojole of the dirre Salataa of Qondala Zeenga, and he gave me the information on the contribution of their descendants on the spread of Islam in the study area.
12	Baca Nagari (Obboo)	M	50	Kabbache	11/06/20	He explains about the names and their works of Qaalluu in Beghi.
13	Baqqana Ariti (Obboo)	M	56	G/Dafino	19/07/20	He gave me the information on the works, introduction, and the major factors for the expansion of Protestant and their agents in Beghi district.
14	Bariso Shuma (Obboo)	M	35	Dhalladu	12/07/20	He explains me on the history of Dhalladu St. Mariyam Church briefly.
15	Biranu Waqayyo (Obboo)	M	70	Shagga	27/02/20	He briefly explains on the Oromo clans of Beghi and on the definition of the term Beghi.
16	Buli Wayyu (Obboo)	M	54	G/Dafino	03/05/20	He is one of the investor in Kondala district and he is greatly contributed on the border extrading activities during the regime of Derg and he gave me the information on the Beghi-Sudan inter border relations.
17	Caqa Walo (Obboo)	M	72	Kolli	17/2/20	He briefly explains about the Oromo clan of Beghi and the history of Protestant.
18	Darartu Ahimed (Aadde)	F	47	G/Dafino	21/01/20	She is one of Haadha Siqqee in Kondala District and she gave me the information on the role of Women in the Gadaa system and their contributions.

19	Dagim Jiot (<i>Obboo</i>)	M	36	G/Dafino	20/07/20	He is the diacone of EOC in St. Mikael Church of G/Dafinoo and he provide me about the the history of EOC and their inter-religious relation and their effects on the societal life.
20	Daggafu Tabo (<i>Obboo</i>)	M	39	G/Dafino	15/07/20	His father is one of the major Qaallu's in Beghi district until 1987, and he is one of the regents of his father. And he gave me the information on the role of Qaalluu and their works.
21	Daniel Biranu (<i>Qess</i>)	M	43	Beghi town	06/04/20	He is one of the preists of MYC in the Beghi town and he gave me the ideas on the history of Protestant Church and the definition on the etymological term of Beghi.
22	Danu Komo (<i>Obboo</i>)	M	65	Tongo	09/05/20	He explains me about the the history of Islam during the Emperor Haile Sillase regime and the factors for their expansions.
23	Dawit Tesfaye (<i>Qess</i>)	M	45	Tarko	11/07/20	He provides me the ideas on the Church history of St. Mariyam Church of Tarko.
24	Eba Gammachu (<i>Obboo</i>)	M	37	G/Dafino	20/16/20	He works on the Kondala <i>Warada</i> Culture and Tourism Office and He shared me on the historical place of Beghi and their contribution on the contributions and he narrates me about the <i>Qaalluu</i> of Beghi.
25	Elsabet Kapitano (<i>Aadde</i>)	F	45	G/Dafino	23/07/20	She is one of the women who is greatly affected by the festula victimized. And she narrates on the contribution of the Protestant religion on the healthy ministry in Beghi.
26	Eliyas Shiferra (<i>Qess</i>)	M	44	Beghi Town	23/06/20	He works on the Beghi-Gidami Synods and he gave me information on the history of religion in Beghi district and their inter-relation.
27	Fajji Fixe (<i>Obboo</i>)	M	56	Dhalladu	22/04/20	He narrates me on the contribution of protestant, clans of Oromo and the types of

						marriage in Beghi.
28	Fiqadu Amde (<i>Obboo</i>)	M	37	G/Dafino	14/16/20	He gave me ideas on the <i>Qaalluu</i> of Abba Holoo; his family was the descendants of this <i>Qaalluu</i> and their works.
29	Fufa Biranu (<i>Qess</i>)	M	45	Wanja	11/07/20	He narrates on the history of Wanja St. Medan Alem Churches.
30	Guddina Qixessa (<i>Obboo</i>)	M	64	G/Dafino	12/07/20	He narrates on the history of ethnic people in Beghi and the religious history of the study area.
31	Habib Abdulqadir (<i>Sheikh</i>)	M	35	G/Dafino	13/02/20	He provides me about the history and the agents of Islamic religion in Beghi
32	Hailu Kibbabu (<i>Qess</i>)	M	69	Karma	11/07/20	He narrates on the history of religion in Beghi and their major factors for their expansion and their inter-religious relations.
33	Hamba Haile (<i>Obboo</i>)	M	46	Babane	13/07/20	He was born on the family of <i>QaalluuHaadha</i> Maaramii of Baabane and his mother was one of the major <i>Qaallitti</i> in Beghi district and he gave me information on the roles and works of <i>QaalluuHaadha</i> Maaram of Baabane.
34	Hashim Yaqob (<i>Obboo</i>)	M	38	G/Dafino	14/02/20	He narrates on the types of agricultural activities in Beghi and their climatic conditions.
35	Harun Usmael (<i>Hajji</i>)	M	76	G/Dafino	11/2/20	He narrates on the history of Islam and their agents and their inter-religions relations.
36	Ittana Fido (<i>Obboo</i>)	M	78	Benga	21/02/20	He provides me on the history of Beghi Oromo and their inter-ethnic relation.
37	Ibrahim Nuguse (<i>Sheikh</i>)	M	56	Beghi	27/03/20	He gave me the informations on the history of Islam in Beghi and their contributions.

38	Ibrahim Waqwayya (<i>Sheikh</i>)	M	47	G/Dafino	30/03/20	He narrates on the history of Islam, their daily works, their contribution among them selves, and their major factors for their spread.
39	IyyasuHika (<i>Obboo</i>)	M	36	G/Dafino	27/01/20	He is one of the Bussasee clan. He narrates the original home lands of Bussasee and their cause for the migration to Beghi district.
40	Jombor Fixe (<i>Obboo</i>)	M	76	G/Dafino	11/07/20	He narrates on the history of Oromo and religion of Beghi and their agents and factors for their expansion.
41	Kadir Yasin (<i>Sheikh</i>)	M	64	Kabbach e	21/03/20	He gave me informations on the history and agents of Islam.
42	Kasim Kalifa (<i>Obboo</i>)	M	53	G/Dafino	24/04/20	Who knows about the Oromo culture and Beghi Oromo clans briefly.
43	Kumsa Gassasa (<i>Obboo</i>)	M	54	Beghi town	05/05/20	He is one of the admnistration of Beghi and Kondala district and he narrates about the contributions of the protestant religion the societal change of life.
44	Marga Nado (<i>Obboo</i>)	M	63	Qama	13/1/20	He is narrated on the original home land of Mao and the culture of Oromo. It also provide me about the contribution of Ya'a Masara for the further expansion of Islam in the study area.
45	Mathewos Alemayehu (<i>Obboo</i>)	M	36	G/Dafino	24/06/20	He is the head of Culture and Tourism Office of Kondala district and he narrates on the ethnic inter-relation and the clans of Oromo of Beghi and Beyond.
46	Mathewos Takilu (<i>Obboo</i>)	M	35	G/Dafino	11/01/20	He works on the Kondala district agricultural Office. He narrates on the types f agricultural activities of Beghi peoples and their climatic conditions.
47	Mohammed	M	46	G/Dafino	24/04/20	He is the head of G/Dafinoo Anuwar Mosque.

	Abdalla (<i>Sheikh</i>)					He learned a religious book at Jimma Sigimo from 1987-1990. He narrates on the factors that facilitated for the expansion of Islam and their every day activities and their haram and halal works.
48	Mohammed Abdisa (<i>Sheikh</i>)	M	68	Beghi Town	23-24/03/20	He is the elders of Beghi. He works for a long year on the Beghi district Shrine Courts. He narrates on the history, factors, and contribution of Islam in Beghi district briefly.
49	Mohammed Abduljalil (<i>Obboo</i>)	M	56	G/Dafino	19/04/20	He is the elder son of Sheikh Hajj Abduljalil Alfaki Seleman. He narrates on the contributions of his family on the expansion of Islam in Beghi, Assosa and even Jimma.
50	Mohammed Nagari (<i>Hajji</i>)	M	78	G/Dafino	17/05/20	He is the elder at G/Dafino. He played a great contribution for the independence of Beghi under 04 in 1995. And he is a merchant via Sudan during the Derg regime. And he narrates me about the inter-border relation of Beghi with Sudan, the history of religion in Beghi.
51	Mikael Qadida (<i>Obboo</i>)	M	75	Kobbare	23/04/20	He is one of a Bussase clan. He is one of the elder at Beghi and Kondala. He participated as elders during the meeting held on the issues of referendum of 1995. And he gave me information on the referendum of 1995, and the history of Protestant Church.
52	Miliyon Baqqala (<i>Obboo</i>)	M	46	Shagga	19/07/20	He gave me ideas on the agents of protestant religion and their contributions.
53	Mosisa Caqa (<i>Obboo</i>)	M	37	G/Dafino	15/03/20	He provides me about the clan of Oromo, <i>Qaalluu</i> institution, and the contributions of protestant.

54	Milkiyas Kabbada (<i>Qess</i>)	M	74	Beghi town	24/06/20	He is one of the head of EOC of Beghi for a long year. He played a great role on the expansion and survives of EOC. And he narrates on the history of EOC of Beghi and their agents briefly.
55	Muzambir Sosso (<i>Hajji</i>)	M	73	Tongo	09/04/20	He is one of the descendants of Kuttu Golja. He is a brother of <i>Abbaa</i> Haaruun Sossoo (the father of Mao and Komo people). And he narrates on the contribution of his family on the introduction and expansion of Islam in Beghi and beyons.
56	Nabbara Achol (<i>Preacher</i>)	M	76	G/Dafino	26/02- 04/20	He is one of the Bussase clan; he is the local agents of expansion of protestant. He narrates on the etymological terms of Beghi, the original home lands of Bussase clan, the history of religion in Beghi, and their contribution and their impacts.
57	Niftalem Nabbara (<i>Obboo</i>)	M	41	G/Dafino	29/03/20	He explains on the original home land of Bussase clan and the factors that contributed for their migration to Beghi.
58	Olana Galata (<i>Obboo</i>)	M	69	Beghi Town	29/02/20	He narrates on the history of Beghi Oromo and their settlement. The clans of Beghi Oromo, and the impacts of Sheikh Khojole All-Hassan on the Oromo identity and religion.
59	Oljirra Raga (<i>Obboo</i>)	M	77	Shoro	18/05/20	He gave me the information on the clans of Oromo and the history of St. Mikael Church of Bille.
60	Qalbessa Oliqa (<i>Obboo</i>)	M	74	Karma	24/07/20	He is the first converter to protestant religion around to days Kondala district. He has played great role in the expansion of protestant in Beghi. He also built many schools in Beghi

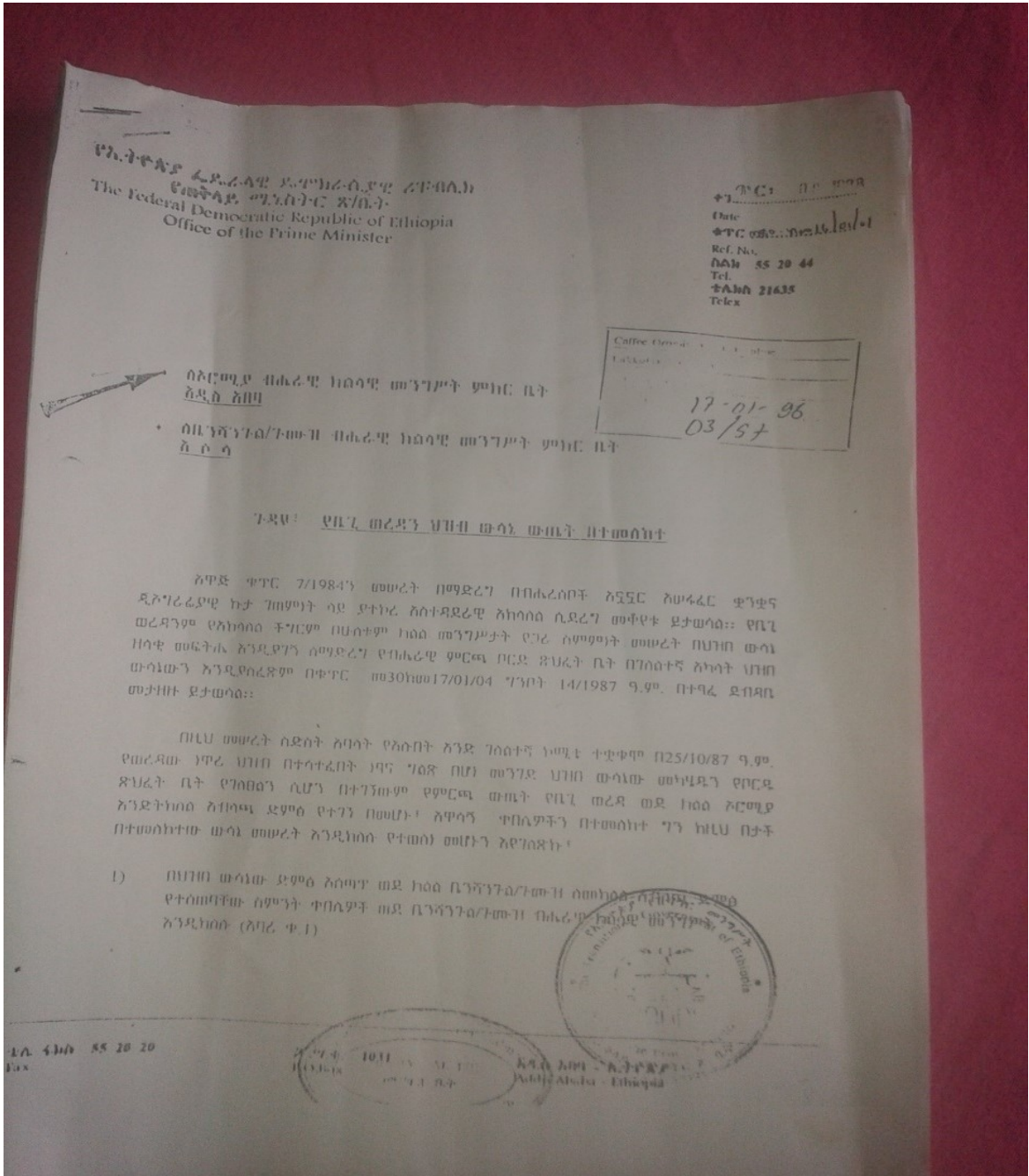
						under the financial contribution of NMS. And he narrates on the history of protestant, their role, and their agents.
61	Qanna Gammachu (<i>Obboo</i>)	M	56	Karma	23/04/20	He explains on the Oromo Culture and the role of women on the Oromo indigenous religion.
62	Raggasa Akkayyu (<i>Obboo</i>)	M	82	Shooro	20/02/20	He narrates on the history of Oromo Beghi clans and their inter-ethnic relation, and explains on the history of religion in the study area.
63	Samuel Raga (<i>Obboo</i>)	M	61	Shagga	01/05/20	He explains on the history of the descendants of Sheikh Khojole All-Hassan, and the agents of Islam in Beghi.
64	Shorro Wayyu (<i>Obboo</i>)	M	54	Karma	25/06/20	He is participated on the ex trading activities via Sudan. He gave me information on the economic and social relation of Beghi and Sudan peoples.
65	Shukkare Yosef (<i>Aaddee</i>)	F	39	G/Dafino	23/06/20	She gave me on the contribution of protestant on the healthy ministry.
66	Solomon Nigatu (<i>Obbo</i>)	M	45	Beghi town	23/07/20	He gave me information on the types of soil, climate and agriculture of Beghi.
67	Tafari Banti (<i>Qess</i>)	M	47	Beghi town	29/06/20	He is the head President of Beghi-Gidami Synods. He narrates on the statistical Picture of MYC and their followers in Beghi, Kondala, and Mao and Komo Special Warada's. And the contributions of protestant on the life social change.
68	Tafari Tasisa (<i>Obboo</i>)	M	57	Carpha	28/03/20	He is <i>Abbaa Gadaa</i> of Kondala district. He narrates on the Oromo indigenous religion, the role of modern religion on the destruction of Oromo indigenous religion and role of women

						in the Oromo.
69	Tasfaye Baqqala (<i>Obboo</i>)	M	43	G/Dafino	19/07/20	He gave me ideas on the history of <i>Qaalluu</i> of <i>Haadha</i> Maarami, and protestant religion.
70	Takilu Kabbada (<i>Obboo</i>)	M	46	Beghi town	19/03/20	He provides me on the Oromo Beghi culture and clans.
71	Takale Tekolla (<i>Obboo</i>)	M	59	Beghi town	23/02/20	He works in the Beghi district Culture and Tourism Office. He narrates on the Meaning of Beghi, ethnic people in Beghi, Oromo clan of Beghi briefly.
72	Tekalign Bonsa (<i>Obboo</i>)	M	64	Beghi town	02/02/20	He narrates on the history of Islam in Beghi, contribution of Sheikhs and local elders.
73	Tarraqeng Mazgabuu (<i>Obboo</i>)	M	62	G/Dafino	23/05/20	He narrates on the history of the major <i>Qaalluu</i> 's of Beghi, and their works.
74	Teferra Danu (<i>obboo</i>)	M	61	Beghi town	29/03/20	He explains on the religious history of Beghi and ethnic peoples.
75	Tigilu Warata (<i>Obbo</i>)	M	40	Beghi town	21/06/20	He is one of the diacone and commite of EOC of Beghi. He narrates on the history of EOC of Beghi, their agents.
76	Tola Wagga (<i>Obboo</i>)	M	66	Shagga	29/06/20	He narrates on the history of Protestant Church of Beghi, their agents, contributions, and the major challenges that faced
77	Ummad Abdurrahim (<i>Obboo</i>)	M	65	Hopha	24/05/20	He is the descendants of Sheikh Khojole All-Hassan. And he narrates on the contribution and expansion of Islam in the study area.
78	Yadasa Barki (<i>Obboo</i>)	M	64	Beghi town	29/05/20	He is the former head of Beghi district Culture and Tourism Office. He narrates on the history of ethnic people of Beghi and the religious

						history.
79	Yared Nagasa (<i>Qess</i>)	M	76	Beghi town	23/06/20	He is the head of Beghi district EOC. He narrates on the history of Beghi district EOC, their agents, and their inter-religious relation.
80	Yadasa Tesso (<i>Qess</i>)	M	43	Beghi town	29/06/20	He is the secretary of Beghi Gidami Synods. He narrates on the religious history of Beghi, their factors that contributed for further spread, their agents, and contributions briefly.
81	Xaafa Shagirdi (<i>Obboo</i>)	M	90	Shagga	02/03/20	He is the elder of Kondala and Beghi district and he is knowledgeable elder. He knows about the history of Beghi district very well. And he narrates on the religious, political, cultural, and social history of Beghi district.

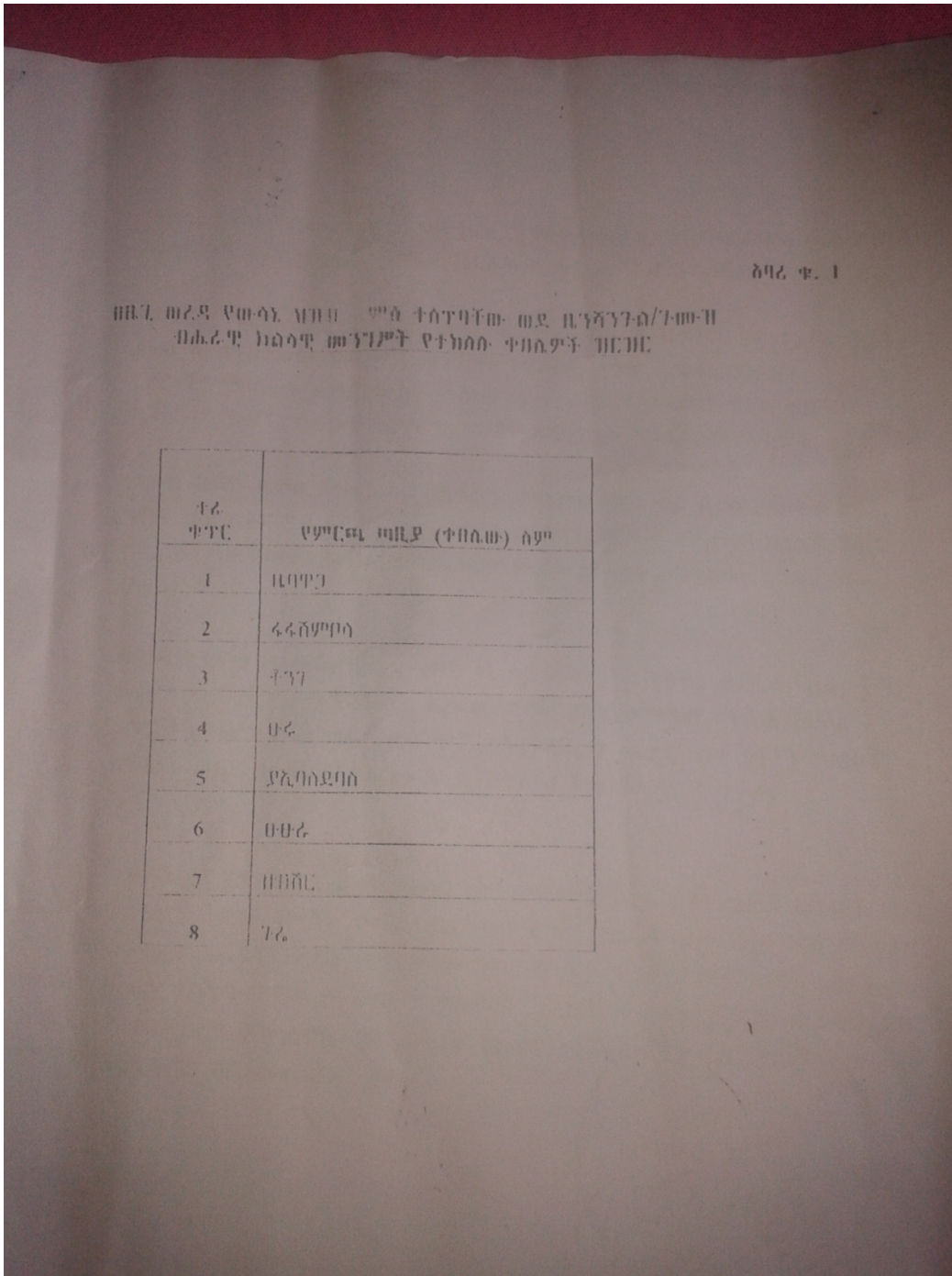
Appendix

Appendix I A: Letter shows the decision of the FDRE on the demarcation of the 1995 Referendum on the issues of Beghi District

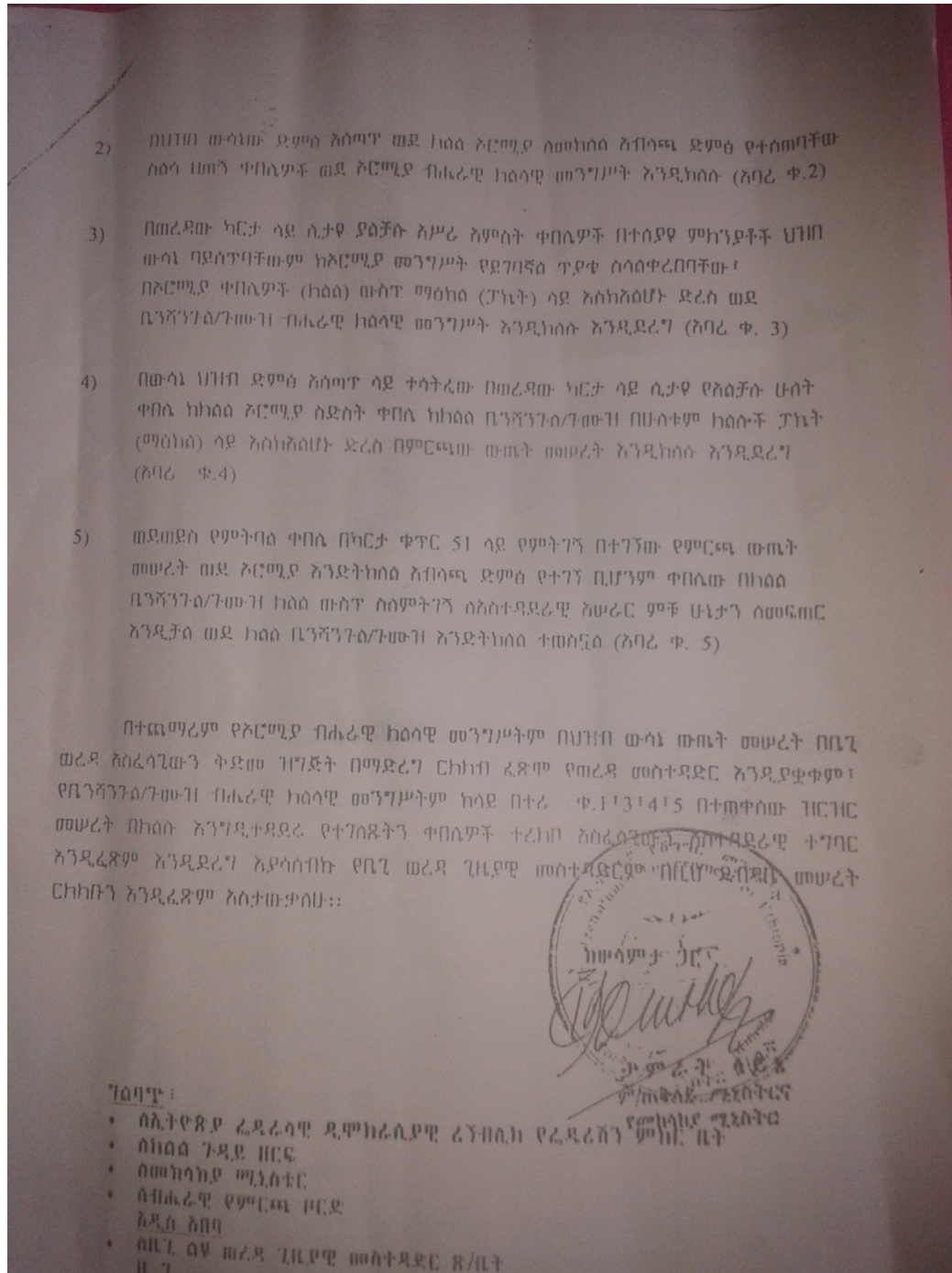


Source: Scanned from Beghi Warada Administrative Office, on April 28/ 2020 by Researcher

Archive I B: Letter shows as the decision of the FDRE on the demarcation of the 1995 referendum on the issues of Beghi



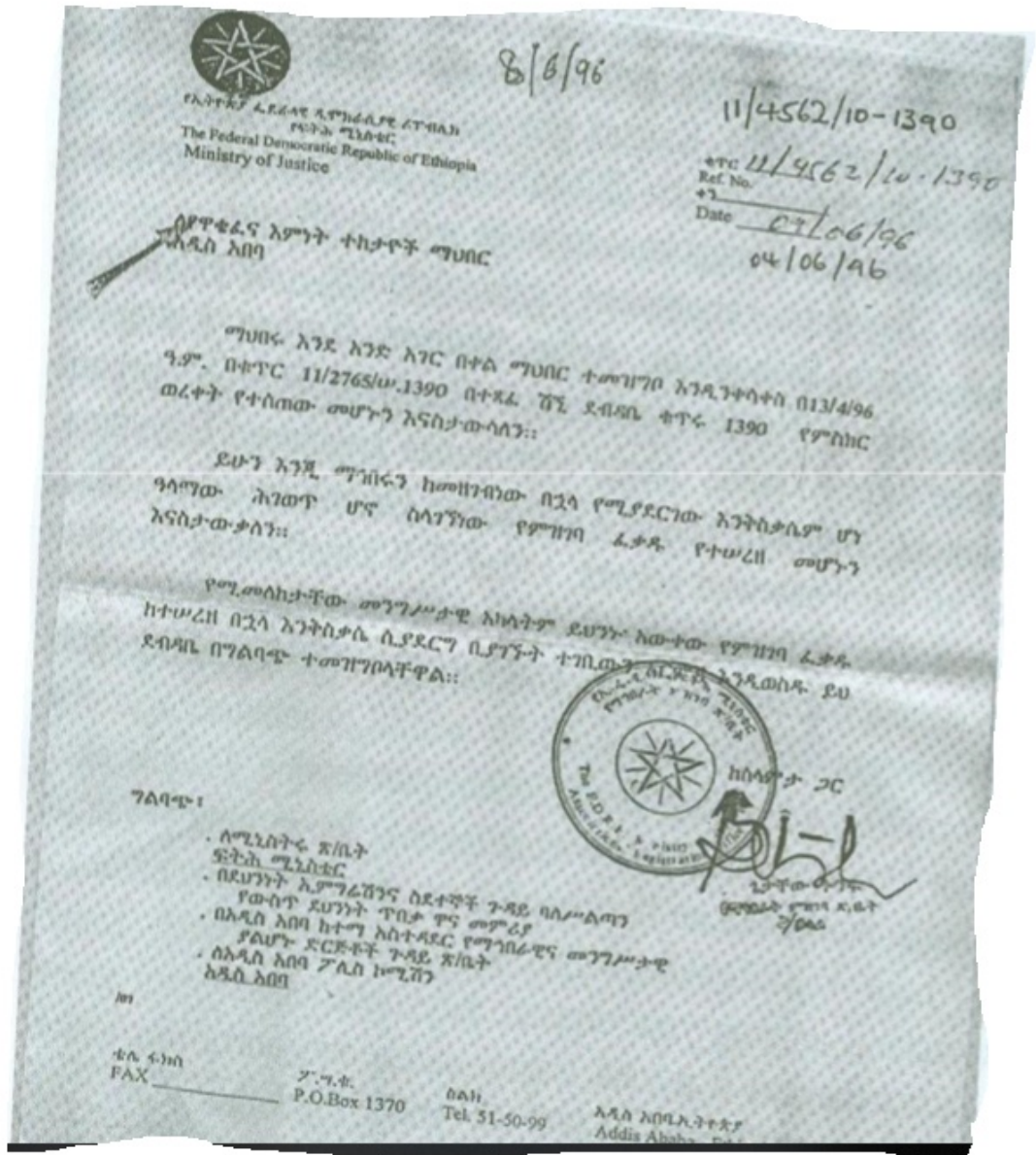
Archiev I C: Letter shows as the decision of the FDRE on the demarcation of the 1995 referendum on issues of Beghi



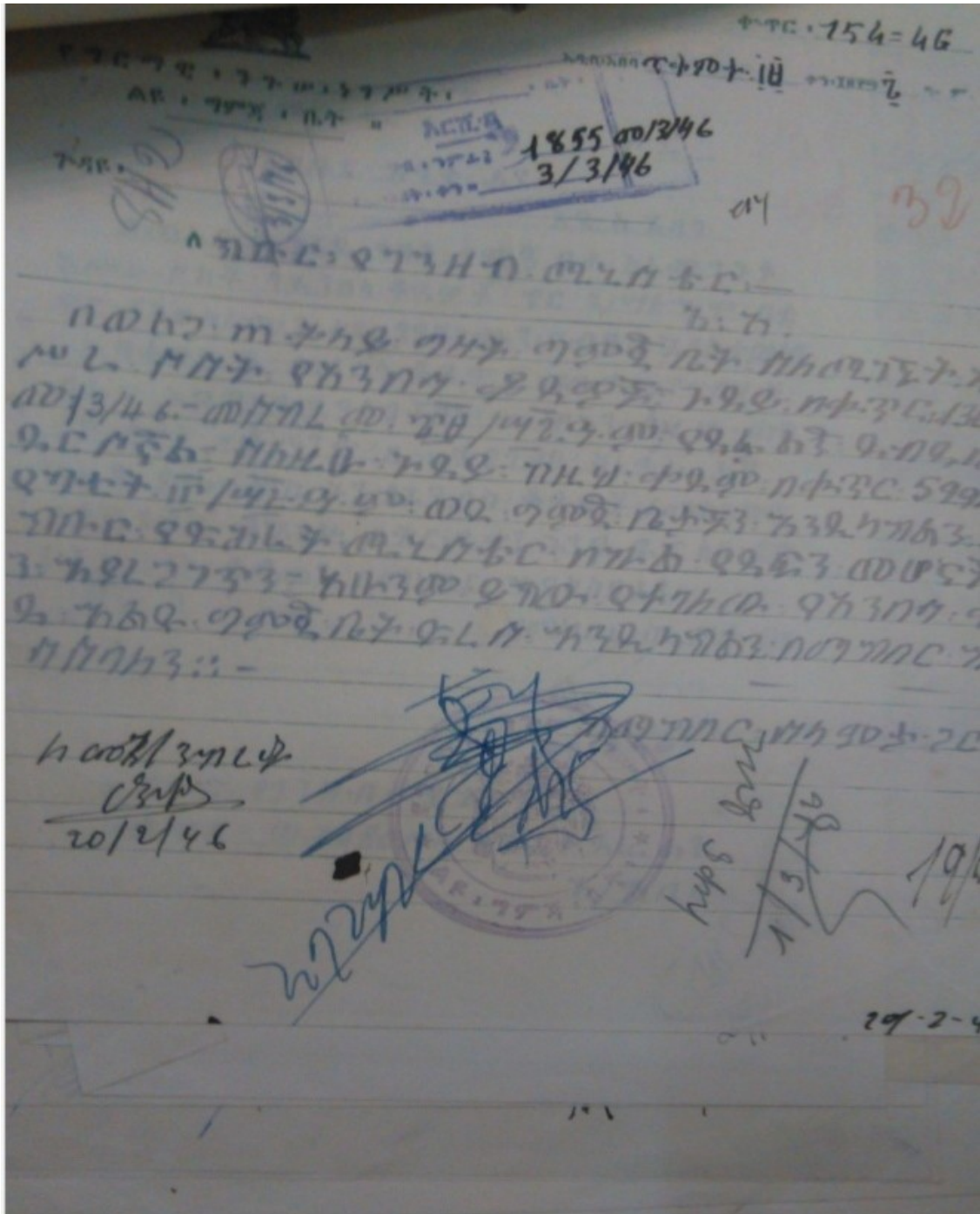
Archive I D: Letter shows as the decision of the FDRE on the demarcation of the 1995 referendum on issues of Beghi

በዚህ ወረዳ የውሳኔ ለዘዘዘ ደምስ ተሰጥቶባቸው ወደ ኮረማያ
ገዢራዊ ክልላዊ መንግሥት የተከሰሱ ቀበሌዎች ዝርዝር

ተራ ቁጥር	የምርጫ ማዘያ(ተዘል) ስም
1	ቆንዳሳ ዘንጋ
2	ሸንቦ
3	ካባቹዳማ
4	ስጠዘርዳ
5	ስባጉሳንዳ
6	ፈርጋሽካማ
7	ስላዳቶንጋ
8	ሸንገ
9	ዳሳዳህርዳማ
10	ዋንጃጥራ
11	ሸራቀኛ
12	ኢጉጉርምስ
13	ስንዳሹራራ
14	ክሲሰዳ
15	ገርማዞበዚ
16	ሰኛገበያ
17	ቆጥም
18	ሸጋዲንቃ
19	ታጅርብ ገበያ
20	ፋንጉ ሞበራ
21	ቃጣጠዋራ
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24	ሸሸዳንዚ ገዳተኪ



Appendix III: A letter written from the central government on the issues of the animal
Lionskins



Appendix VI: The Islamic Religious Heritages and Materials



Source: Photo taken at Ya'a Masara Islamic Shrine center on 18 March, 2020 by
Researcher

Glossary


<i>Abba</i>	Father, a title given in <i>Maccaa</i> Oromo for elders
<i>Abbaa Bokku</i>	leader of <i>gadaa</i> in power
<i>Abbaa Dula</i>	Military leader in the <i>Gadaa</i> system
<i>Abbaa Muudaa</i>	spiritual head of the <i>muudaa</i> office for life
<i>Abbaa qoros</i>	local rulers
<i>Asqarri</i>	ac cleric with meager Islamic knowledge, who only taught the Qur'ān
<i>Ayaannaa</i>	spirit
<i>Awraja</i>	Administrative sub-province
<i>Balabat</i>	Land lord or local hereditary chief
<i>Baraka</i>	divine favor, saintly power, miraculous gifts
<i>Caffee</i>	the <i>gadaa</i> assembly
<i>Darasas</i>	religious students
<i>Du''a</i>	supplication
<i>Gadaa</i>	a socio-economic, political and religious institution of the Oromo
<i>Gabbar</i>	Tribute paying peasant
<i>Gasha</i>	Unit of land measurement equivalent to 40 hectares
<i>Horaa</i>	mineral water
<i>Jabarti</i>	Muslim traders from northern Ethiopia
<i>Khalifa</i>	successor of head of the religious order
<i>Khalwa</i>	small, dark hut used as a place of retreat for Sufi Practices
<i>Madrasa</i>	modern Islamic school <i>Mawlid al-Nabi</i> the Prophet's birthday festival
<i>Muudaa</i>	pilgrimage to the land of <i>Abbaa Muudaa</i>
<i>Mootii</i>	king
<i>Naggade</i>	refers interchangeably to merchants, strangers,

	and Muslim clerics
<i>Odaa</i>	the holy sycamore tree, a sacred place of assembly
<i>Qaallu</i>	the messenger of <i>Waaqaa</i>
<i>Qadi</i>	Muslim judges
<i>Shari" a</i>	the religious law of Islam
<i>Shekota</i>	an honorific title given to a highly respected sheikh
<i>Sufism</i>	the ascetic and mystical way of Islam
<i>Tariqa</i>	religious order or a spiritual way
<i>Ulama</i>	Muslim scholar <i>Waaqqeffanna</i> the Oromo religion
<i>Waaqefataa</i>	The followers of the Oromo religion
<i>Zaka</i>	Alms
<i>Zawiya</i>	Atouched that ched roof mosques in rural Ethiopia and elsewhere

DECLARATION

I, the under signed, declare that this thesis is my original work done under the guidance of Ketebo Abdiyo (PhD), and Hailu Gelana (PHD Candidate), and has not been submitted for a degree in any other university. All sources materials used for the thesis have been duly acknowledged.

Name: Bedilu Adugna Debelo

Signature:  _____

Place: Jimma University

Date: 29/7/2021