

# Critical Discourse Analysis on Religious Tolerance in South Wollo

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## Abstract

This study is about religious tolerance in South Wollo. The study were conducted in Kutaber, Alasha, Sulula, Haik, Dessie, and Kombolcha in South Wollo Zone. Data were collected from range of live and recorded discourses from elders, youngsters, females and children from different casual and non-casual speech events. The result of the study revealed that the Muslim-Christian community in this area have developed a harmonious, peaceful co-existence with high sense of belongingness among each other. There are different historical and contextual factors that are threatening the long lived culture of religious tolerance; however, the people have continued to live with tolerance fighting all the factors that work against. Presently, there are many rumors that emphasize on the negative trying to deny the peaceful co-existence of this society. Nevertheless, the people still hold to the fact that they have fought to live with tolerance. The level of tolerance exhibited by these people is so high that it incorporated one more entity. Tolerance is defined as recognition, respect, and appreciation. The level of tolerance in Wollo applies one more element, i.e. acceptance. The people have accepted the difference as a natural and normal behavior that they have gone to the stage of accepting each others' difference as a different way of life. This makes the tolerance of the people as a complete culture which can protect itself from any possible violence.

**Keywords:** religious tolerance, peaceful co-existence, critical discourse analysis

## 1. Introduction

South Wollo is the study site where a large number of both Muslims and Christians demonstrated peaceful co-existence for a long period of time (Mesfin, 2004: 209). At present, however, there are cases of challenges to such peaceful coexistence. The communication behavior of the community displays how they have developed a harmonious culture to sustain their identity.

Wollo is bounded by Tigray in the North, Gojjam in the West, Shewa in the South and Afar in the East. The capital city, Dessie, is 400 km away to the North of Addis Ababa. In Wollo, Muslims and Christians live together peacefully (Amsalu and Habtemariam, 1969:1). The community has a unique history of tolerance and peaceful coexistence. This community consists of a large number of Muslims and Christians. There is a thick historical record that this community exhibits a harmonious and peaceful contact and an intense sense of belongingness. The Wollo community is far more than mixed. There is a strong blood tie as there is intermarriage among Muslims and Christians. There is also cultural diffusion, and a strong sense of togetherness that has been held for generations. Many significant cultural and historical contexts tie the Muslim-Christian Community to a great extent.

Wollo is one of the sub regions of Amhara Regional State which is also known as Region Three. Wollo is bounded by Tigray in the North, Gojjam and Gonder in the West, Shewa in the South and Afar in the East. The central town, Dessie, is 400 km away from Addis Ababa.

Topographically, the region is mountainous and cold in the Western and Northern part. In the East, it is very hot. In the population senses of 2007, the population of Wollo is 4, 022, 733 and more than 62% of this live in South Wollo Zone. This in figure is 2, 519, 450.

In South Wollo, the Muslim-Christian mix is high and there are considerable Muslims in this zone as compared to the rest of the Zones of the Amhara Region. From the 20 Weredas of South Wollo, the researcher conducted the study in Tehuledere (Sulula, Gishen), Dessie Zuria (Bilen, Kelem, Boru, Gerado), Kutaber (Alasha and Kutaber), and Dessie. Moreover, the researcher had co-researchers who helped collect data from Ambasel, Kelala, Jama, and Debat. Particularly, the areas where large data were collected are Alasha (Kutaber Wereda), Sulula (Tehuledere Wereda), Boru (Dessie Zuria Wereda), Bilen (Dessie Zuria Wereda), Gerado (Dessie Zuria Wereda), Kelem (Dessie Zuria Wereda), and Gishen (around Hitecha, Tehuledere Wereda).

Wollo is a place with rich historical and cultural assets. The area is claimed to be the origin of the Amhara ethnic group (Getachew, 1984:10). According to Getachew, the first original home of the Amhara is Amhara Saynt (Ibid: 12). He claimed that Amhara means 'agrarian' and Saynt 'a place where harvest is collected' in Arabic. He further states:

Though the Agew people is mixed and so it is named as Agew Midr Begemidir, and though because of Oromo it was named Wollo later; Bete Amhara includes the areas bounded by Tigray in the North, Begemdir and Gojjam in the West, Shewa in the south. In the middle was all the area of Bete Amhara (Wollo) (Getachew, 1984:12).

The Amhara ethnic group lives in Lasta, Wadla Delanta, Woreilu, in large numbers, and in Dessie area, Yeju, Ambasel, Raya, Kobo, Borena and Worehimeno mixed with other ethnic groups (Gebre Kidan, 1981:II). Ethnic groups that reside in Wollo are Amhara, Agaw, Argobba, Oromo, Warra Sheikh and Mamadoch (Sheikh Seid Muhammed, in Edris 2007:115-119).

Wollo was known as “Bete Amhara” (house of Amhara) before it was named Wollo (G/Kidan, 1981:7; Sheikh Seid Muhammed, in Edris 2007:112). After Gragn, according to Getachew, because of the Oromo’s movement to the area of Bete Amhara, the name was changed to Wollo after the name of the governor of Bete Amhara who came from the south and central part of Ethiopia (Ibid). He was the son of Kereyu and the grandson of Berentuma. Wollo had children by the names Bukon, Woregura, Worellu, Wore Kereyu, WoreAlu (Ibid). Because of him, the name of “Bete Amhara” ‘the house or homeland of Amhara’ was changed to Wollo and the sub regions were also named after his children.

Historically, both Christianity and Islam have lived for long in Wollo. Of all the Amhara region, Wollo is where a large number of Muslims live. Islam faced difficulties in the reign of Tewodros II (1855-1868 E.C.) and Yohannes IV (1872-1889 E.C.). Wollo Muslims became victims of power and suppression especially during the latter’s reign (Getachew, 1984:48).

According to Getachew (1984), of the four schools of thoughts in Islam (Mezhabs) known throughout the world, two are found in Wollo. These are Shafi which was established by Abu Abdela Muhamed Ibn Idris (767-870 G.C.) and Hanefiya established by Abu Hanifa Al Nueman Ibn Sabit (699-767 G.C.). The former school has great followers in Dewoy and Yifat. The second school that is Hanefiya is common in Kalu, Borena, Worehimeno, Worebabo and Yeju. Wollo is also a place where great Muslim scholars who have done a lot to teach and sustain Islam in Ethiopia originated (Ibid). There are many places of pilgrimage among which Jema Nigus, Geta, Dana, Deger, and Chale are most known (Ibid).

Wollo is a place where people of different ethnic groups, beliefs and cultures are believed to have coexisted peacefully. The languages spoken in the region are Amharic, Agew, Oromo, Tigray, Afar and Argoba (G/Kidan, 1981: II; Getachew, 1984:17). The people are known as ‘Wolloyye’. The people do not want to identify themselves by their ethnic groups but by the place, ‘wolloyye’ (the Wollo person) (Ibid: 18).

The four musical melodies of Ethiopia, Anchihoylelne, Tizita, Bati, and Ambasel, are found in Wollo. Tizita was known as Wollo before it was renamed as such (Ibid). The melodies are named after the names of places of Wollo. This shows that the people are accustomed to expressing their culture, history, love, and overall lives through their music (Getachew, 1984:43).

Menzuma is a major artistic work performed by Wollo ‘Ulemas’ (Muslim religious scholars). The people of Wollo have used Menzuma for many years for different purposes. They use it for prayer, and for teaching their religion. Among the well known

Menzuma performers are Sheikh Husen Jibril, the Arsi Emebet (Yejuye), the Mersa Aba Getye, the Guna Nigus (Yejuye), the Dessie’s Tengego Sheikh and the recent Sheikh Mohammed Awol. These people are known even outside of Wollo by their Menzuma chants.

Wollo is rich in natural resources. There are many rivers, lakes and minerals in the region. In Wollo, Awash, Mile, Miowa, Chireti, Ala, Hormat, Tiratina Zamra, Tekeze, Borkena, Abay, Becho, Wayeta and Gerado rivers flow (Getachew, 1984:52-53). These rivers flow all year long. The lakes are Loga Hayk, Ardibo, Abi Gurgura, Afanbo, Ashenge and Maybar (Ibid:53). Among the minerals are iron soil, marble, green soil, salt, red sand, coal, and others that can be used for production of cement, paintings, and jewelries (Ibid: 58-59). There are different archeological findings in Wollo that provide valuable information for genealogical studies of human beings (Ibid). There are scriptures of Christian and Muslim traditions that reveal the spirituality of the people.

The one significant history of Wollo that the people are not proud of but legendarily stereotyped is drought and famine. The description of Wollo barely completes without the description of the effect of famine that has affected the people. In fact, Ethiopia is known for the same mainly because of its impact on the people of Wollo. Wollo is a place where many times famine has had its bad effects on the people. The drought has had unforgiving effect to the extent that the image of Ethiopia has remained a symbol of famine until now (Getachew, 1984:63). Sadly, the damage of the famine had been known first to the rest of the world before it was known by Ethiopians. This is because the ruling elites of the time wanted to keep it secret to safeguard their interest. Many blame the government for this and it became a case for its downfall.

Apart from this, there are many things that place Wollo in historical times among which are its historical places such as Lalibela which is one of the wonders of the world. It is one of the things that identify Wollo as a unique area (Ibid:21).

Beauty, love, kindness and innocence are traditionally associated with Wollo people. The following appreciations are often heard about Wollo and Wolloyye.

ባቲና ኮምቦላቻ ኮሚሴና ሀርቡ	battinna komboläčča kāmisenä härbu
የነሽዮ አገር የናይግብ	yänäšägyä ’äggär yännayyt’ t’äggäbu

Bati Kombolcha Kemisie and Harbu, (names of Wollo places)

The country of the beautiful and the ever-wanted,  
Also, Wollo is known for love. This is explicated in many traditional Wollo songs.

የፍቅር አንገቻ የሚቋደሱበሽ                      yāfəqqr 'əngočča yāmiqqwaddäsübš  
የሁሉ አገር እኩል የውበት አዳራሽ                      yāhullu 'əggär 'əkul yāwbät 'āddaräs

A place where people share love,  
A place for all equally, a parlor for beauty,

It is generalized that the men and women of Wollo are love addicts. The Wollo people are also known to be kind and innocent. This is also indicated by the popular saying 'Wollo the barley'. The Wollo people are also known to be not trust worthy as the proverbial saying 'an empty neighbor house is better than a Wolloyye neighbor/ kăwālo gorābet yšalal bado bet' has it. Wolloyyes, however, do not accept this stereotype.

Leaving stereotypes aside, Wollo is home to the two major religions, Christianity and Islam. The majority of the Wollo people are Muslims and their ethnic group is Amhara (Ibid), but some scholars claim that the people are Oromo (Alemayehu et. al., 2006). There are many among my informants who also believe that they are of Oromo descent but in general, many people from the study group claim that they are Amhara ethnically.

The majority of the Amhara ethnic group of the rest of the country is Christian. Wollo is one of the very few places in the world where Muslims and Christians live together peacefully. The community has a unique history of tolerance and peaceful coexistence that was revealed through their language. The two religions have existed in the area for generations (Getachew, 1984: 19).

Popular opinion has it that many of the people are not strong in their religion and that they easily shift between Orthodox Christianity and Islam. It is the place where nobody is surprised to find an Ahmed priest and a Gebre Sheikh or Imam. It is also very common to have somebody from the family change his/her religion. It is also not so much surprising to see couples who follow different religions, i.e., the husband being a Muslim and the wife being a Christian or vice versa. These and many more distinctive ways of lives of this community prove that religious differences cannot prevent people from accepting each other. The Wollo people are known to be passionate, nationalist and kind. Sheikh Seid states, "A Wolloyye is like barley – Their Amharic is fit for any purpose. Their Amharic is not standard. However, they know poetry and jokes... A 'Wolloyyan' may be poor but proud, even in foreign lands" (Sheikh Seid Muhammed, in Edris 2007:121).

There is a thick historical record that shows how this community exhibits a harmonious and peaceful contact and an intense sense of belongingness. The Wollo community is far more than mixed since there is a strong blood tie due to intermarriage between Muslims and Christians. There is also cultural diffusion and strong sense of togetherness that has been held for generations. Many significant cultural and historical contexts tie the Muslim-Christian Community of Wollo (Amsalu, 1987).

There is much in common between the Muslims and Christian of Wollo. Pagan practices such as 'Wukabi' is a common cultural practice for both (Sheikh Seid Muhammed, in Edris 2007:122). The norms and codes of conduct in this society are designed by both religions. The customs are shared each one originating from either of the two religions, but followed by both with slight differences. For example, a 'Christina Liḡ' (God child) is a concept of the Christian society, but this is adopted by the Muslims of Wollo as 'Yayn Liḡ' (Eye's Child). And, 'wodaja', Muslims' practice for prayer is adopted by the Christians.

The total population of the country according to the 2007 population census was 73,918,505, of which the Amhara (in the Amhara region only) number 17,214,056. In the country, the entire ethnic Amhara constitutes 19,870,651. In Ethiopia, the Muslims exist in large numbers next, of course, to Orthodox Christians. Orthodox Christians count 32,138,126 which is 40% and the Muslims count 25,045,550 which is 35% of the total population. In Amhara region, the Orthodox Christian population is 14,208,067 which represents 83% and the Muslim 2,952,775 which represents 16.8%. Muslims do not exist in large numbers in Amhara region. The region has 12 zones. Of these, three have a considerable number of Muslims. The following table maps out the Muslims distribution in the region.

Zone	Name of the zone	Total population	Muslims in Percentage
Zone 1	North Gonder	2,921,470	4%
Zone 2	South Gonder	2,047,206	4%
Zone 3	North Wollo	1,503,283	17%
Zone 4	South Wollo	2,519,450	71%
Zone 5	North Shewa	1,839,089	5%
Zone 6	East Gojjam	2,152,671	2%
Zone 7	West Gojjam	2,107,723	1%
Zone 8	Waghemira Zone	426,038	0%
Zone 9	Awi Zone	981,491	5%
Zone 10	Oromia Zone	459,847	97%
Zone 11	Bahir Dar Special Zone	220,344	8%
Zone 12	Argoba Special Wereda	35,444	98%

Table 1: Zones of Amhara Region

As shown in the table, zone 3, 4 and 10 are areas where Muslims are the majority. Of these, zone 3 has only 17% Muslims which is relatively small. In zone 4 and 10, the number is larger. Zone 10 was not taken as part of the study area since the researcher's concern is the Amharic Speaking Muslim Community of Wollo. Zone 10 is not part of the study area because the people are Oromo Speaking Muslims. Therefore, the researcher's study area is limited to zone 4 which is South Wollo. The Zone has 2,519,450 inhabitants. The Wereda (district) population distribution is shown in the next table.

Wereda (District) name	Population	Wereda name	Population
Ambasel-Wereda	121,100	Kalu-Wereda	186,650
Tehuledere-Wereda	117,856	Legambo-Wereda	164,964
Albuko-Wereda	77,120	Dessie Zuria-Wereda	157,629
Sayint-Wereda	144,937	Debresina-Wereda	158,920
Kelela-Wereda	137,446	Jama - Wereda	127,467
Were Ilu - Wereda	109,200	Werebabu-Wereda	99,824
Legahida - Wereda	67,112	Mehal Saynt Wereda	73,409
Dessie/Town/-Wereda	151,094	Wegidi - Wereda	135,169
Kombolcha/Town/ - Wereda	85,337	Kutaber-Wereda	95,385
Mekdela-Wereda	142,623	Tenta-Wereda	166,208

Table 2: Weredas of South Wollo

Besides the concentration of Amharic speaking Muslims in the area, the researcher conducted the study in Tehuledere, Dessie Zuria, Dessie, and Kutaber Weredas mainly because she observed the phenomenon in these areas in the first place which brought about the inspiration to conduct the study. However, since the population make up is similar throughout the zone, the result is believed to be transferable to the other Weredas of the South Wollo Zone.

South Wollo is the study site where a large number of both Muslims and Christians demonstrated peaceful co-existence for a long period of time (Mesfin, 2004: 209). At present, however, there are cases of challenges to such peaceful coexistence. The communication behavior of the community displays how they have developed a harmonious culture to sustain their identity.

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## 2. Objective of the Study

### General Objectives

The general objective of the study is to investigate the status of religious tolerance in South Wollo:

Specifically, it is the objective of this study to:

1. Describe how the people cultured religious tolerance in South Wollo.
2. Explain how and why the community developed religious tolerance and sense of belongingness among themselves for long

3. Seek to comprehend (critically analyze) the complex construction of religious tolerance in South Wollo.
4. Identify what the intimidating issues are for the religious tolerance in the research area.

### 3. Research Methodology

The present research calls for qualitative research design because the objective is to describe, explain and critically analyze the communication behavior of the group which is by its very nature qualitative. Qualitative research approach is a research method used extensively by scientists and researchers studying human behaviour. A qualitative method investigates the why and how of behaviour, not just what, where, and when of things that can be measured quantitatively. Qualitative research has its roots in social science and is more concerned with understanding why people behave as they do: their knowledge, attitudes, and underlying beliefs. Qualitative research is extremely useful when the issue is too complex to be answered by a simple 'yes' or 'no' hypothesis. The purpose is to understand people's interpretations of their reality in the way it appears to them (Dornyei, 2007:32). It helps to produce in-depth and comprehensive information. It seeks to gain a complete picture of the behaviour being studied.

The study were conducted in Kutaber, Alasha, Sulula, Haik, Dessie, and Kombolcha in South Wollo Zone. Data were collected from range of live and recorded discourses from elders, youngsters, females and children from different casual and non-casual speech events. A corpus of data were collected, transcribed and coded based on the objectives of the study.

Data were collected through introspection, participant observation, in-depth interview and record of social events. For the analysis, corpus-based description, ethnomethodology and critical discourse analysis were employed. Ethnomethodology is "the use of transcripts of conversations to develop descriptions of the interlocutors' knowledge, especially of the social situation in which they interact" (Davies, 2007:163). Ethnomethodology is concerned with the discovery of the underlying processes which speakers of a language utilize to produce and interpret communicative experiences, including the un-stated assumptions that are shared knowledge. Ethno-methodologists assume that by going to cultures themselves and becoming immersed in the problems of everyday life, they could discover what constitutes cognitive reality for the members of a given culture (Burk and Lukens, 1979:44; Wardhaugh, 1986:255). Ethnomethodology emphasizes less on universal procedures and focus more on real contextual happenings (Silverman, 1985:16). It is the sociological partner to discourse analysis (Davies, 2007:163).

In order to critically analyze the culture of religious tolerance, CDA and Critical ethnography are employed. Critical ethnography evolves from critical social theory that aims at challenging hegemonic ideas that laid down suppressive power over the world. Critical discourse analysis and critical ethnography are both methods of part of critical social theories that employ theory at different stages of analysis. Madison, (2005:13) explain as follows:

### 3. Major Findings of the Study

#### 3.1. Tolerance

The Muslim-Christian society of Wollo has peacefully co-existed for a long time. Tolerance is a very important value which they have maintained. In their language use, it appears to be an important discourse that has been valued by the people. For example, in the poems of Sheikh Hussein Jibril, the following verses are found:

ኢትዮጵያ አገራችን ራሷን ተሰርታ ተብላ ልክክ	'ityop'ya 'ägäraččəñ raswan täsäarta täbla lökkək
ተቀብታዋለች በሀምበር በምስክር	täqäbbətawalläč bähämbär bämäsk
ትሽታቸዋለች ለሮማ ለቱርክ	təšättaččäwalläč läroma läturk
በሰማይ አይሮፕላን በመሬት ላይ ታ ንክ	bäsämay 'äyəröplan bämäret lay tank
እየመጡ ቀሩ እያሉ ልክክ	'əyämät't'u qärru 'əyyalu lökkək
ሀይለ ስላሴ ነው ባሏማ በልክ	häyälä səllase näw balwamma bällək
<b>እኛም ዱአ አርገናል ስላሴ ይባርክ።</b>	'əññam du 'ä 'ärgännal səllase yəbark

Our country Ethiopia gets her hair done well,  
She wears perfume and good fragrance,  
Rome and Turkey smells her,  
with plane on the air and with tank on the ground,  
They have come and stayed fit,  
Hailesilasie is her right husband though,  
We have prayed; let the Trinity bless it.

The last verse of this poem states that the Muslims pray to their God and the Trinity (Christian's God) also bless Ethiopian. This implies that the poet accepts the legitimacy of both religions as sacred. Such expressions are used for the purpose of solidarity.

Ethiopia can be said a home of tolerance. There were rough times of intolerance caused by religion. For example, Gragn Ahmed has caused great damage to the Christians when he killed many Christians and



destroyed Churches because they refused to be converted. Atse Yohannes IV also caused great damage to the Muslims of Wollo when he said “Let Muslims disappear and forest be pushed far. The Muslim’s country is Meka and that of the eagle is jungle... Leave my country within four months or accept Christianity.” This was said to 50 thousand Muslims in a place called Boru Meda. As a result of this, many Muslims lost their land, were killed and forced to be converted. Many pretended that they were Christians. There is a saying ‘Wollo Muslims are Christian during the day and Muslim during the night’. A local Muslim Sheikh is also known to have said ‘zaher yimesgen’ when he was forced to say ‘egziabher yimesgen’ (Thanks to God). He was using one of the 99 names of Allah, Zahir which sounds like the Amharic name of God, ‘Egziabher’. It is also a major tradition among Wollo Muslims, as many informants stated, to be converted to Islam at the time of their last breath, ‘shahada’ in Arabic. The people knew about all these but the government does not. In fact, the people were supportive of Muslims when the government discriminates them. The following extract from an informant explains this in brief.

ይህም አሰላም ተሆነ አልጋየን የሚጠናውተኝ ኑ ሁላችሁም ከፈሩ። ኑ ከርስተያን ሁኑ ጠበል ተጠመቁ እንግዲህ ኑ ብሉ ጠጡ እያሉ ከአቁን እንግዲህ ዝም ብለው ያዙት ይላሉ። መምህር አካለወልድ ብለዋቸው ግብጥ ነው ትምርተዎ ይላሉ። ደግ ሰው ነበሩ ይላሉ። እናንተ የሀምረሰ አልጋኮ ነገ ለቃቂ ነው። አሰላምቹን ትልልቆቹን ምሁሮቹን አሰላምቸ ህዳችሁ አይታችሁ አታቁም። የሰላም አገር ንጉስ ህዳችሁ አይታችሁ አታቁም። አሰላምቹን... ተበጠብጧቸው እየቤታችሁ አርጋችሁ አትይዟቸውም? ደህና ሰው ነበሩ ይላሉ። ይህ መምህር አካለወልድ ምናላ እንደው ከፈሩ እያሉ እኩሎቹም በሉ። እያረዳችሁ ብሉ ተባል ተሰላም አረዱ ይላሉ አሉ። ተሰላም እያረዱ ምን ተሉ ምን ተሉ አሉ።

yohemma 'eslam tahonä 'algayän yämmit't'anawwättän nu hullaččəhum kəfäru. nu kərəsətiyan hunu t'äbbäl tät'ämmäqu 'əngədih nu bəlu t'ät'tu 'əyalu häləqun 'əngədih zəm bläw yazut ylällu. mäməhər 'akäläwäləd bläwäččäw gbət' näw tmrätäwo ylällu däg säwä näbbäru yälällu 'ənantä yähäwanis 'äləgakkō nägä läqaqi näw. 'əslamoččun täləlləqoččun mhuroččun 'əslamoč həddačəhu 'äytačəhu 'ätaqum. yäslam 'ägär nəgus həddačəhu 'äytačəhu 'ätaqum. 'əslamoččun...tibät'äbttwäččäw 'əyyäbetaččəhu 'ärəgaččəhu 'ätəyzwäččäw? dähəna säw näbbäru ylällu. yhe mämhər 'akäläwäləd mnalla 'əndäw kəfäru 'əyallu 'əkuloččum bällu. 'əyarrädačəhu bəllu tibbal täslam 'ərädu ylällu 'älu. täslam 'əyaräddu' mən tilu mən tilu 'älu.

‘If it is Muslim that threatens my throne, all of you be Christians.’ They hold the Muslims saying come be baptized, come eat and drink Christian’s food. There was a wise teacher who was known as Teacher Akalewold who had learnt in Egypt. He said ‘ you people do not listen to Atse Yohannes. His power will come to end soon but you will live with the Muslims forever. You have never seen the Muslims’ noblemen and king in their country. When the government disturbs the people..., why don’t you hide them in your homes?’ He was a wise man. Half of the people ate and became Christians because of the suppression. The teacher used to say slaughter in the name of Allah in secret. They were doing such and such things.

As the description of the informant, Memr (teacher) Akalewold who was a priest adviser of the then king (Atse Yohanes IV) was against the practice of forcing the Muslims to change their religion. He used to advise the people to live peacefully with the Muslims because the government of the king will not last forever but the people will live together even after the downfall of the king. He was very wise to advise the Muslims also to slaughter in the name of Allah in Muslims’ way which will be reported as if they had slaughtered it in the name of God in the manner of Christians. He also advised the people to embrace their Muslim brothers and sisters to be with them at such bad times.

Another informant stated to show that the people belong to each other, Memhr Akalewold asked to divide the same ox between the Muslims and the Christians. The Muslims slaughtered the ox first. Half of it was given to Christians who then cut it again in the name of their God. Others state that the Muslims used to hide in churches while the government forced them to be converted to Christianity. The people wanted to do against their king because they were smart enough to choose and decide their fate to be tolerant. The people describe tolerance as an important value. Religious tolerance is acquired and cultured in Wollo. They have acquired and cultured it, make it a norm – a rule of communication and a way of life. They have taken the culture of tolerance to another level.

### 3.2. A Step Further in Tolerance: Recognition, Respect, Appreciation, and Acceptance

Tolerance requires recognition, respect and appreciation of different ways of living. The diversified community of the world need to recognize each other’s different ways of living; respect it as it naturally is; and if possible appreciate each other’s systems of living. If the diverse world community manages to do just these, it can be said that they practice tolerance.

As the community themselves describe their communication culture and as the researcher has observed them, the Wollo community is doing much more than these. There is one more step further in practicing tolerance. The Wollo community understands the value of tolerance and develops it to its possible highest level.

The Wollo people do not stop at appreciation, but take one further step forward and accept and practice

the different systems. They practice each others' systems as observed in the following discourse as social practices. Some of the discourses that the people own are the following:

1. There are some discourses that the people adopt and practice at the same label and practice. For example, wodaja which is a Muslim cultural practice is adopted by the Christians and 'tsebel' which is a Christian cultural practice is adopted by the Muslims of the area.
2. There are some discourses that the people adapt and practice which has different label with the same practice or same label with different practice. For instance, 'Yayn Lij' is a label given by the Muslims for God child. This practice has been owned by the Muslims. Interceding is a social practice of both Muslims and Christians with different practice.
3. There are some discourses that the people do not practice but consider it as right in itself. They do not own and practice the discourse but they consider it as another way of doing it right. Such practices include wearing style, sitting style, eating style, and washing (reproductive organs, ablution).
4. There are some discourses that the people do not practice but consider it as own that belong here. Such kinds of social practices are believed to be wrong. But they believe 'some of us do it this way and it is ok'. Such social practices include the basic religious practices.

### 3.3. Extended Relationship (Wolloyye)

The feeling of belongingness is extended to the place as a whole. Wolloyye want to identify and label themselves as one irrespective of every possible differences they may have. They know the others as 'የሰው አገር ሰው' 'yäsāw 'ägär säw' "a person from the country of others", for example, as indicated in the following Wollo song.

የወሎ ልጅ ብቶን ይህን አሰራኝም                      yäwällo ləḅ bəton yəhn 'ässāraññəm  
የሰው አገር ልጅ ናት ትቅር ግዴላኝም                      yäsāw 'ägär ləḅ nat təqr gəddelāññəm

She would not have done this to me if she were from Wollo,

She is a girl from other country whom I do not mind losing.

The poet expresses that the woman left him because she is not from Wollo. The rest are referred to as persons of other's country.

### 3.4. Solidarity

Solidarity is a communication strategy. Solidarity refers to a union of interests, purposes or understanding among members of a group. "Solidarity concerns the affective dimension of interpersonal relations (i.e. the expression of mutuality and common grounds). Solidarity strategies include claiming common ground or showing interest, approval, and sympathy, as well as the use of in-group language and colloquialisms" (Koester, 2005:1). The following are among the dominant solidarity strategies employed by the speech community.

#### 3.4.1. Speaking 'their' Language

The majority of the Amharic speech group of the area speaks the in-group code which the out-groups do not use except for reasons of solidarity. This creates belongingness to each other. The out-groups speak the in-group's code. They say 'aselamualeykum' for greeting, 'afu' for forgiveness; 'gomi' for disappointment. These are expressions that are regarded as part of the code of the Muslims in the area.

#### 3.4.2. Speaking 'Our' Language

There are expressions that are excluded from the everyday use of the in-group code because they are regarded as religious. The speech group deliberately uses these words as a strategy of expressing their shared codes. For example, the speech group uses 'egziabher' for Allah, 'tselot' for 'dua' 'mitswat' for 'sodeka' 'sbket' for 'daewa' and many other words that are excluded from everyday use when they communicate with out-groups. When a member of the in-group says 'Egziabher Yimesgen' instead of 'Alhamdulillah' to thank God when speaking to a member of the out-group, he is seeking a common ground, approval or sympathy. By so doing, he is affirming they belong together. This reflects speakers assuming different identities in different speech situations in mixed group as well as in-group. Hence, "as the contextual configuration varies from one occasion to the next, so the speaker identity changes as well" (Hasan, 2004:35).

### Conclusions

In the study area, tolerance is cultured and practiced to a larger extent. The level of tolerance is uplifted to another level. The common elements of tolerance include recognition, respect, and appreciation. In South Wollo, religious tolerance incorporates elements of recognition, respect and appreciation. Besides, one more element is added to the list – acceptance. This is a further addition to the practice of tolerance cultured among the people of Wollo.

There are different historical and contextual factors that are threatening the long lived culture of religious tolerance; however, the people have continued to live with tolerance fighting all the factors that work against. Presently, there are many rumors that emphasize on the negative trying to deny the peaceful co-existence of this society. Nevertheless, the people still hold to the fact that they have fought to live with tolerance.

An enormous price was paid for the current culture of tolerance adopted by the people. It didn't come haphazard; rather it came with deliberate choice carefully and wisely made by the people.

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