MUSLIMS' PARTICIPATION IN ETHIOPIAN CIVIL SOCIETY:

FINDINGS FROM FIELD RESEARCH IN ADDIS ABABA

HÖGSKOLAN DALARNA

MASTER THESIS

Presented by: Martina Finessi

Supervisor: Prof. Lars Berge, Prof. Of History, Högskolan Dalarna

External Examiner: Prof. Irma Taddia, Prof. Of History, University of Bologna

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in African Studies (2011)

Abstract

This thesis is an investigation into the Ethiopian Civil Society, with a focus on Muslims' participation and activities. This research is the result of a series of interviews carried on in *Addis Ababa* during my staying there thank to a scholarship from Pavia University.

Chapter One is a general introduction of the study, presenting the object, the methodology and use of sources as well as the state of the current research of the topics covered by this research. Chapter Two is a framework chapter about *Islām* in Ethiopia offering an historical perspective as well as focusing on its characteristics and current developments. Chapter Three deals with Ethiopian Civil Society characteristics and with its legal framework. Chapter Four constitutes the core of this research: in it, I collected the findings of my research describing the presence of Muslims into Ethiopian Civil Society. I analyzed the activities and characteristics of the different organizations and associations that I met in *Addis Ababa*, their self-representation concerning their being related with *Islām* and their opinions on Muslims' marginalization and lack of non-politicization in Ethiopia. A set of conclusions constitutes the last section of the thesis.

Acknowledgements

List of Abbreviations

CBOs Community Based Organizations

CCRDA Consortium of Christian Relief Development Associations

CDA Charity and Development Association

CSOs Civil Society Organizations

CSP Charities and Societies Proclamation

DPPC Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Commission

EIASC Ethiopian Islamic Affairs Supreme Council

EIFDDA Ethiopian Inter-Faith Development Dialogue and Action

EMDA Ethiopian Muslims Development Agency

EMRDA Ethiopian Muslims Relief and Development Association

EPRDF Ethiopian Peoples Revolutionary Democratic Front

FBOs Faith Based Organizations

FDRE Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia

HDA Hidaya Development Association

ICC Islamic Cultural Centre

IR Islamic Relief

IMIC Ibn-Mosuod Islamic Centre

IRCC Islamic Research and Cultural Centre

KMWCBO Kheirat Muslim Women Capacity Building Organization

NGOs Non-Governmental Organizations

PDN Pro-Development Network

SWCSO Selam Women Counseling Support Organization

WoFi Ethiopian Women of Faith Initiative

Transliteration System

Arabic Alphabeth	Scientific Transliteration
ء	ʾ
ا	ā
ب	b
ت	t
ث	ṯ
ج	ğ
ح	ḥ
خ	ḫ
د	d
ذ	ḏ
ر	r
ز	z
س	s
ش	š
ص	ṣ
ض	ḍ

ط	ṭ
ظ	ẓ
ع	ʿ
غ	ġ
ف	f
ق	q
ك	k
ل	l
م	m
ن	n
ه	h
و	w/ū
ي	y/ī

Amharic Scientific Transliteration from *Encyclopaedia Aethiopica* [http://www1.uni-hamburg.de/EAE/]

a)	The consonants												
ሀ	h	ሰ	s	ፀ	č	ኝ	ḵ	ይ	d	ጸ	ṣ	ኰ	kʷ
ለ	l	ሸ	š	ኀ	ḫ	ወ	w	ጀ	ǧ	ፀ	ṣ́	ጐ	gʷ
ሐ	ḥ	ቀ	q	ነ	n	ዐ	ᶜ	ገ	g	ፈ	f		
መ	m	ቈ	q̱	ኘ	ñ	ዘ	z	ጠ	ṭ	ፐ	p		
ሠ	ś	በ	b	አ	ᵓ	ዠ	ž	ጨ	č̣	ቈ	qʷ		
ረ	r	ተ	t	ከ	k	የ	y	ጰ	p̣	ኈ	ḫʷ		

b)	The vowels						
1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.
ä	u	i	a	e	ə or no vowel	o
በ = bä	ቡ = bu	ቢ = bi	ባ = ba	ቤ = be	ብ = b, bə	ቦ = bo

Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction

Structure of the thesis

This thesis is organized into five chapters: this introduction, a framework chapter on *Islām* in Ethiopia, an analysis of the Ethiopian Civil Society, a main chapter containing the findings of my field research and a short conclusion. In this introduction, I am going to present the object of this study, the research questions that led my investigation, the methodology and use of the sources. The conclusive part of this chapter is a state of research of the literature related to the topic of my thesis.

Object of the study

The object of my research is to present a study of the presence of Ethiopian Muslims into the Ethiopian Civil Society: my aim is to spread some light on their multiple and various activities in this sector, especially in the Capital city *Addis Ababa*. I will generally refer to NGOs, because I have met only two religious organizations.

A crucial aspect of this sector is, in my opinion, its dynamism. I want therefore to analyze, in particular, three changes occurring among Muslims involved in the Ethiopian Civil Society. The first one is the variation in the character of the organizations/associations part of it: my aim is to underline the differences in the structure of the "Muslim" Ethiopian Civil Society, the reason why and when these have begun to take place. The second change concerns the socio-political role of Muslims acting in the Ethiopian Civil Society and of their organizations/associations: I want to explain what this role is, and why and when it has changed. The third and last change deals with identity and can be described as an investigation of Muslim actors' self-representation in the context of Ethiopian Civil Society and of their perception of Muslims' marginalization. Regarding the first issue, my goal is to underline how they perceive themselves and how and when this perception has changed; whereas regarding Muslims' marginalization, I want to study what they mean with this definition and how their opinion about it has varied.

My research is based on two assumptions: the lack of politicization concerning *Islām* in Ethiopia, and Muslims' marginalization in the Ethiopian society[1]. Given the heterogeneity of *Islām* in the African continent, and its growing Islamization, I have chosen to follow a rather new approach of the literature so far produced on this issue: I want to make mine Terje Østebø's thesis about the non-politicization of *Islām* in Ethiopia, despite its higher presence in the public life (Østebø: 2007). In the conclusion of his field research about Islamic Reform-Movements and some Islamic Organizations in Contemporary Ethiopia, in fact, he states: "My hope is that a case-study as this could serve as an example for the need to recognize Islamism[2] as a heterogeneous

---

[1] For a more detailed account, see Chapter Two.
[2] I think that is useful to quote Kramer's article about the use of the term *Islamism* (Kramer: 2003). At first used in French as a synonym of *Islām*, from the late 1970s it has begun to be used in connection to the phenomenon of the

phenomenon only to be fully understood in light of a variety of contexts. Whereas contemporary Islamic movements in Ethiopia have been charged of having a political agenda, I have argued that these movements are less inclined to struggle for the inclusion of Islam in politics than assumed" (Østebø: 2007, p. 17). Following Østebø, therefore, I present the activities of "Muslim NGOs" in Ethiopia without stressing their supposed connection with Islamism, but focusing on their role in the Ethiopian Civil Society: the NGOs I met, in fact, are not linked nor to Islamization, nor to Islamism.

The other point of departure, already cited, derives from Negash's study on the status of Islamic law in Ethiopia. Despite they gained the opportunity to apply Islamic Law for the Law of Persons, Muslims in Ethiopia according to him still lack political representation because of demography, Muslims being a minority, and because of the process of modernization that favored Christian communities (Negash: 2010). Given this under-representation in the political system, which I will refer to as marginalization, I want to analyze contemporary Muslims' responses in the Civil Society.

Of course, this research is not exhaustive, but I think that can be useful as a framework for future researches.

At the beginning of this thesis, I introduce the main historical developments and characteristics of *Islām* in Ethiopia. I am interested in providing a general framework of this religion in Ethiopia, so to understand its role in the country and its possible influence on Ethiopian Civil Society. Furthermore, I describe the main features of Ethiopian Civil Society: an investigation which I regard as important for the understanding of the context into which the organizations I interviewed work.

Research questions

The main research question of my study is, of course, how Muslims participate into Ethiopian Civil Society. In order to answer it, I need to analyze the presence of *Islām* in Ethiopia, and in particular I am interested in the following questions: what is Ethiopian *Islām*? How did it arrive and spread in the region? Which are the current developments and its influence in the country? Regarding Ethiopian Civil Society, my research questions are: how does Ethiopian Civil Society work? Which is the role of traditional forms of association into it? Is there a legal framework concerning Civil Society and what does it prescribe? Lastly, regarding "Muslim" Civil Society, in particular I want to answer these questions: what kind of activities are these organizations carrying on? Which are their vision, mission and goals? What is the influence of *Islām* on the organizations part of Ethiopian Civil Society? Can they be regarded as Muslim organizations? Is

---

Islamic movements. Kramer states that *Islamism* and *Islamic fundamentalism* can now be used as synonym in the American usage. But the problems of definition are not over: after 9/11, in fact, also the term *Jihadism* has begun to be used in the same writings about *Islamism* and *Islamic fundamentalism*. At present, he states, the term *Jihadism* refers to the most violent movements and people in contemporary *Islam*. I adopt Kramer's usage of the terms.

it true that they do not aim at including *Islām* into politics? What are their opinions regarding Muslims' marginalization in Ethiopia?

Methodology and source material

I started my research with the intent of working on Muslim Civil Society in Ethiopia, then I had to change the definition of my topic: the Ethiopian Law does not allow to mix up religious and developmental activities and all the developmental organizations I met advised me not to use this definition, but rather to talk about Ethiopian Civil Society with a focus on Muslims' activity.

The methodology of this research includes the use of primary and secondary sources as well as of interviews to organizations.

For the section concerning *Islām* in Ethiopia, in fact, I used secondary sources collected mainly at the Nordiska Afrika Institutet of *Uppsala*, at the *Högskolan Dalarna* in *Falun*, through the interlibrary loan in Sweden and in the library of the Political Science Faculty of the *University of Pavia*. For the section regarding Ethiopian Civil Society, instead, in *Addis Ababa* I had the opportunity to have access to the library of the Institute of Ethiopian Studies and of the Organization for Social Research in Southern and Eastern Africa in Addis Ababa University.

Furthermore, I added also information gathered during my interviews as well as my impressions of *Addis Ababa*'s urban landscape. Much information that gave me a useful framework for field research was collected on the Internet: before leaving for Ethiopia I did a research looking for Muslim Organizations and other similar keywords and on some other sources in order to set up a framework for my field study. As I discover later in *Addis Ababa*, some of the information I had were incorrect and sometimes misleading. My focus for research has been on organizations involved in developmental activities, easier to find on the Internet and, I assumed, more willing to participate in an academic research. Furthermore, I focused on local organization: some of them are only cited on the Internet and it is not easy to understand what their activity is, whereas some others have good websites providing information about them and their activities in Ethiopia. All the information collected on different aspects of Ethiopian Civil Society in which Muslims are involved provided me a framework for field research but, at the same time, left me confused on the kind of associations I wanted to investigate in. Moreover, almost all the organization I met in *Addis Ababa* provided me their *brochures* or *profile* that are of course included in my references as primary sources as well as what they stated on their websites.

During the 3 months spent in *Addis Ababa* for field research, between September 15 and December 15 2011, I had the opportunity to meet 13 associations and organizations and to realize that the landscape of Ethiopian Civil Society in which Muslims are involved is variegated and mostly unknown to academics. As for the Internet research, I focused on local organizations involved in developmental activities for a number of reasons. First of all, it was easier for me to find their contacts because they are legally registered. Secondly, some informants gave me the contacts of other organizations working in the same field. Furthermore, this kind of organizations, mostly unknown among foreigners and often also among Ethiopians, were willing

to share information about their activities. I was not able to reach all the organizations and associations run by Muslims or in which *Islām* plays an important role, also because some of them are not even known by Ethiopians themselves. In any case, I was able to interview different types of organizations and associations, for example I have dealt with local and international as well as developmental and religious organizations and associations.   The majority of the organizations part of this research, dealing with development, can be labeled as NGOs, even if this denomination is not used in the Ethiopian Law, as I will explain in Chapter Three. I regard NGOs as "private organizations that pursue activities to relieve suffering, promote the interests of the poor, protect the environment, provide basic social services, or undertake community development." (WB 2001). In wide usage, the term NGO applies to any non-profit organization, independent of government, typically value-based and that exists wholly or in part on charitable donations and voluntary service" (Bankole: 2008, p. 40). They differs from religious organizations because they are institutions "established by believers to organize and propagate their religion and shall not include organizations established for the achievement of any charitable purpose" (Article 2.16 of the CSP). The *Charity and Societies Proclamation* of 2009 regulates the NGO sector and distinguishes between *Charities* and *Societies*. During my field research, I have met only representatives of *Charities*. The 2009 Law also allows the creation of consortiums of charities, and I have met two out of the almost 40 existing[3].

The landscape of local development organizations part of the Ethiopian Civil Society is rich and diversified. For the scope of my research I looked into NGOs citing *Islām* or Muslims in their names or suggested me by my informants as being led or formed by Muslims. The NGOs I have dealt with are different in relation to their size, their objectives, their activities etc…

I began my research thank to a meeting with the Dean of the *Awelia College*[4], who gave me some contacts of Muslims working in the Ethiopian Civil Society. I was able to have some other contacts thank to a Ph.D. student in Arabic Philology in Addis Ababa University. In general, all the people I met were kind, willing to cooperate and some of them provided me other contacts of associations and organizations useful for my research. I thought that, being a foreigner and a woman, it would have been difficult to carry on this research: luckily, however, my knowledge of Arabic and Islamology, together with my "harmless" aspect, helped me in being perceived as a reliable person. This is true for the NGO sector, in particular with women's organizations, whereas with religious organizations I had more difficulties: I have tried many times to have an interview with *Islamic Knowledge and Da'wa Association* and with *Al-Wahda*, an organization for the Muslim youth, but the contact persons always said they were out of *Addis Ababa* or too busy to meet me. I had some misunderstandings with language, because not all informants spoke fluent English, but in general there were no problems of this kind during the interviews.

My informants were all high level representatives of the organizations contacted, or people

---

[3] Information provided by the PDN Executive Director.
[4] The *Awelia College* is part of the *Awaliyyah School and Mission Centre* reported in Østebø's research.

suggested me by them[5]. The interviews I did were structured more as an open chat than as a formal interview with a questionnaire: I thought it was easier to cover a broader set of topics and that it was the right way to let the interviewed person more comfortable, especially because dealing with *Islām* in Ethiopia can be labeled as a sensitive issue. For the same reason, I took notes instead of recording the interviews.

During the interview I asked three general questions: the first one was a description of the organization or association: the vision mission and objectives, its activities, the people reached, the staff and every other useful information.

The second question dealt with whether the organization or association could be labeled as a Muslim organization and what this meant: this was the most delicate part of the interview because of the separation between religious and developmental activities stated in the 2009 Law, but at the same time was really interesting to see the different self-representations provided by the organizations and associations interviewed.

The third and last question regarded the two assumptions for my thesis, introduced in the section dealing with the object of my research: the non-politicization of Muslims' activities in Ethiopia and Muslims' marginalization in the political field. I have asked my informants to give me their opinion concerning these two issues. Despite being a bit outside the core of the research, this question gave me the opportunity to get an idea about how Muslims see their history and their current situation in Ethiopia, together with confirming my assumptions.

The information gathered during the interviews is mostly based on what the informants told me and on the material they provided me. It is not easy to verify them, especially what they told me concerning their self-representation and perception of marginalization. However, they were all informed that the findings of this research would have been publicly presented and discussed, and almost all of them allowed me to cite their full name in the research, together with their opinion. Furthermore, given the strictness of Ethiopian Law on Civil Society Organizations and of the controls on their activities, I believe that the information regarding the description of the organizations, their non-politicization and lack of religious ties can be considered valid.

I have organized my findings according to the three changes outlined in the previous section - change in the structure and character of the organizations, change in their socio-political role and change in their identity - and to the three questions on which the interviews were based. In particular, because of the number and variety of the organizations interviewed, I decided to divide their structure and character on the basis of their typology, developmental or religious organization; of their origin, local or international; and, for local organizations, of their size, big or small. This division is proposed in accordance with the distinction between developmental and religious organizations, together with the further separation between *Ethiopian* and *Foreign Charities*, made by the Ethiopian Law. Furthermore, I divided the local organizations according

---

[5] For a detailed list of informants, their role, the place and date of the interviews, and a short description of the material they provided me, see the Appendix.

to their size, to help the reader understanding the variety that characterizes Muslims' involvement into Ethiopian Civil Society.

State of research

In this section, I am going to introduce what I consider to be the relevant literature already published on the topics covered by my research. In particular, I am going to present the literature produced about the issues of *Islām* in Ethiopia and of Ethiopian Civil Society. My aim is to underline what has been researched and revealed on these topics, which is the approach used and what, in my opinion, still needs to be investigated.

First, I will present the literature on *Islām* in Ethiopia. This is a topic with which many researchers have dealt, but often they have focused on its historical aspects and on its co-existence with Christianity instead of underlying the specific features of this religion in the Ethiopian region. I will not follow the time of publication for these writing, but I will try to make connection among them with the purpose of clarifying their positive points as well as their limits. The last sources I am going to present deal with the phenomenon of Islamism and its possible relations and impacts on Ethiopia: I consider them really interesting because based on recent analysis and offering a good framework for the study of Muslims' involvement in Ethiopian Civil Society. Then, I am going to deal with the literature about Ethiopian Civil Society.

Literature on *Islām* in Ethiopia

Dealing with *Islām* in Ethiopia, a milestone is J. Spencer Trimingham's study: *Islām in Ethiopia* (Trimingham: 1952). Despite being published in 1952, this is still the basis for the study of this religion in the Ethiopian region.

As stated by Ahmed (Ahmed, in Alkali and others ed.: 1993) in his paper about the history of *Islām* in Ethiopia, Trimingham's study is too focused on the confrontation between the majority of Christians and the Muslim external minority. However, most of the studies on this issue are focused on the history of *Islām* in Ethiopia as a challenge to Christianity.

I consider the last part of *Islam in Ethiopia* to be the most relevant for my study where he deals with the special characteristics of *Islām* in Ethiopia.

In a way similar to Trimingham's work is the Chapter "Ethiopia and the Horn" of Mervyn Hiskett's book *The Course of Islam in Africa* (Hiskett: 2004). His study, in fact, provides a rich and detailed historical account of *Islām* in Ethiopia. Unlike Trimingham, and even if he takes into account the Christian background of Ethiopia, Hiskett does not stress the prominence of one religion on the other or the history of Christian/Muslim confrontation. For this reason, I think it would have been interesting to have Hiskett's historical and objective account also of the most recent years.

Another author who deals with *Islām* in Ethiopia with an historical approach is David Robinson in his Chapter "Ethiopia: Muslims in a "Christian Nation" from the book *Muslim Societies in African History* (Robinson: 2004). As Trimingham, he stresses the relation between Christians and Muslims and deals with this second group as a minority. The period of time covered in Robinson's research is from the coming of *Islām* in the region until, again, 1991. I think that an interesting aspect of his research is his analysis of the long-term effects of the ambiguous policy perpetrated during the Italian occupation: during this period, Muslims were somehow favored by Italians as a way of weakening the Christian State and this has influenced their relationship with the Ethiopian political system.

Lidwien Kapteijns, in his chapter on Ethiopia collected in the massive study *The History of Islam in Africa* (Kapteijns, in Levtzion and Pouwels: 2000), gives an historical account of *Islām* in Ethiopia stressing how it has been part of the history of the region as Christianity. The author focuses on the political history of *Islām* in Ethiopia until the fall of the *Därg* regime in 1991. Furthermore, he provides a detailed account of Islamization through the *Ṣūfī* Brotherhoods, of the relation between *Islām* and the Colonial Rule and of the Islamic education.

Hussein Ahmed is an author who cannot be left out in my analysis. In his researches he dealt mainly with *Islām* in Ethiopia. An important paper about this issue is "Trends and Issues in the History of Islam in Ethiopia" (Ahmed, in Nura Alkali and others ed.: 1993). Here, Ahmed briefly traces the main points of the history of *Islām* in Ethiopia and then develops a set of critics to the scholarly image of *Islām* in Ethiopia, to the popular stereotypes about it and to the literature on this topic. He states: "Islam is an integral part of the history of the formation and development of the Ethiopian state" (Ahmed, in Nura Alkali and others ed.: 1993, p. 210) and, more importantly, underlines that behind the conflicts between Christians and Muslims there has always been a set of socio-economic and political factors. Furthermore, Ahmed depicts Muslims as outcasts because of official hostile policies and popular prejudice against them. This change of perspective that underlines Muslims' marginalization in the Ethiopian society is interesting and can be used as a good basis for researching on current Muslims' role in society.

Rashid Moten's paper, presented on the same occasion of Ahmed's one (Moten, in Nura Alkali and others ed.: 1993) goes further. The author, in fact, provides a new point of view on the history of *Islām* in Ethiopia. He starts from the fact that, according to his sources, Muslims constitute the majority of the Ethiopian population: "About 65% of its 43 million population profess Islam though the government and the Christian circles do not admit this." (Moten, in Nura Alkali and others ed.:1993, p. 221). He then provides an historical perspective on *Islām* in Ethiopia focusing on modern Ethiopia, in particular on Haile Selassie's project of eliminating Islamic influence from the country. He concludes his paper describing the negative impacts of the *Därg* militarization, citing the resettlement plans in the rural areas and the religious persecutions operated by this regime.

I cannot deny that this paper seems to me too focused on demonstrating Muslims' marginalization, however, a positive aspect of Moten's study is surely the fact that he gives another point of view on the history of *Islām* in Ethiopia that is important to take into consideration.

Hussein Ahmed has published in 2001 a comprehensive study about *Islām* in *Wallo* during the XIX century (Ahmed: 2001). In it, he focuses on some crucial aspects of Ethiopian historiography. Of great importance is the very well-structured introduction, where Ahmed reviews the existing literature on *Islām* in Ethiopia criticizing many aspects of it, as for example the emphasis on *Islām* as an external political force.
Very interesting is also the second chapter, which deals with the Islamization of Ethiopia and *Wallo*: I regard the section on the different theories of conversion to *Islām* as a useful tool of analysis.
Chapter Three deals with *Sufism* and its role in the revival of *Islām* occurred in *Wallo* in the XIX century. The first part of the chapter constitutes a good examination of the *Ṣūfī* presence and its characteristics in Ethiopia.
Chapter Six is also interesting because in it the author traces the attitudes of two Christian rulers, *Tewodoros II* and *Yohannes IV*, towards *Islām* and the subsequent Muslim resistance in *Wallo*.
In the Conclusion, Ahmed focuses on some themes connected to the study of *Islām* in Ethiopia that I consider very important: the fact that *Islām* has constituted an integrating factor among different communities; the existence of stereotypes on *Islām* in Ethiopia that have no basis and the indigenous character of *Islām* in Ethiopia. These three themes need to be readdressed by scholars.

Hussein Ahmed and Alessandro Gori are the authors of the "Islam" item of the *Encyclopaedia Aethiopica*. They focus on the geographical distribution of *Islām* in the region, on the processes of Islamization and on the characteristics of Ethiopian *Islām* and Islamic culture, as well as on the presence of different Islamic schools of law and Islamic brotherhoods. In this very condense article, I think they introduce all the aspects of *Islām* in Ethiopia in a very clear way. In particular, I have appreciated their focus on the role of urbanization for the spreading of the religion (Ahmed and Gori: 2005, p. 198).
The next item introduced in the *Encyclopaedia* is the "History of Islam in Ethiopia", edited by Hussein Ahmed alone. In only five pages, the author retraces the history of *Islām* in Ethiopia from the first *hiğrah* until the last decade of the XX century. The objectiveness and precision of this account render this item, as the previous one, the perfect tools to begin to cope with the broad theme of *Islām* in Ethiopia.

A quite recent paper by Hussein Ahmed analyzes the co-existence of Christians and Muslims in Ethiopia trying to challenge the pattern of tolerance and peaceful relations among the two communities as the only feature of their relation (Ahmed: 2006). According to him, in fact, there

have been historical episodes of conflict and marginalization that have been underestimated as well as the current tensions under the surface between the two communities.

The recent study carried out by Tekeste Negash on the status of Islamic Law in Ethiopia (Negash: 2010) can be described as having an historical approach applied to the legal characteristics of *Islām* and to the legal status of Muslims in Ethiopia. Negash describes the history of *Islām* in Ethiopia explaining which are according to him the three main reasons for *Islām* marginalization and the changes after the 1974 revolution. The first one is the historical predominance of Christianity: after 1976, he states that Christianity and *Islām* are officially equally treated; the second reason is what he calls demographic, that is the Christian majority and predominance in the political sphere; the third one is the fact that the process of modernization favored the settled Christians at the expenses of the Muslims.

The second part of Negash's study deals with the status of Islamic Law: he underlines that Muslim communities have always applied the Islamic Law for their personal Law. Moreover, in 1944 some courts applying the *Šarī'ah* were officially proclaimed as having jurisdiction on personal law and the 1960 Civil Code recognizes the application of the Islamic personal Law for Muslims. Negash's paper seems to me unfinished: the second objective of his study, that is the identification of some areas of research about the implementation of Islamic Law in Ethiopia, is not developed. However, the legal status of Muslims constitutes a good point of departure for researching about Muslim society in Ethiopia.

A comparative and historical perspective is the approach used by Haggai Erlich in his study of the relation between Ethiopia and Saudi Arabia (Erlich: 2007). In his research, which covers the period of time from the early years of *Islām* until 2006, Erlich investigates many aspects of this relation: religious, political, commercial etc… What is more interesting for my research, despite the fact that sometimes he seems to stress too much the possible negative impacts of this relation and the challenge that the closeness between the two states can constitute, is the last part because it covers the most recent years. Erlich reports that after 1991 Muslims began to be more active in the Ethiopian society through a more widespread presence (like organizations, press and cult places) and that, at the same time, *Islām* has been radicalized thank to the contacts with Saudi Arabia. In particular, *Wahhabism* has spread in the country behind the activities of Saudi organizations in the fields of relief and education that sometimes are affiliated to the international terrorism.

Even if sometimes exaggerated, Erlich's study has spread light on a relation that surely can impact Ethiopian *Islām* and, at the same time, Ethiopian Society. Furthermore, his account constitutes one of the few researches that do not stop to 1991 events.

An historical-anthropological approach is the one chosen by Jon Abbink for his studies on *Islām* in Ethiopia. The reasons behind this choice, as explained in his paper "An historical-anthropological approach to Islam in Ethiopia: issues of identity and politics" (Abbink: 1998),

are the presence of patterns of tolerance of Christianity and of *Islām* in the region and the role of religious and communal political identity of Ethiopian Muslims: these need to be investigated also from an anthropological perspective.

In this paper, Abbink traces an historical overview of *Islām* in Ethiopia until 1991 and, most interestingly, discusses new issues related to *Islām* post-1991: the presence of a "flexible" religious identification among Christians and Muslims that the author defines "religious oscillation"[6]; the understanding of the ethnic diversity that characterizes the country; the adherence to a so-called "folk Islam" and the risk of politicization of *Islām*. Abbink asks whether the impact of globalization will affect the way Ethiopians profess *Islām*, in particular with regard to Islamic fundamentalism: his hypothesis is that, despite the fact that a process of Islamic revival is going on, as the growth of independent media organizations and proselytizing testifies, fundamentalism will not take ground in Ethiopia. The approach chosen for this paper is really interesting and, furthermore, Abbink's question "whether Islam in Ethiopia will serve as a vehicle for political or social mobilization and exclusivist identity" constitutes a good point of departure for researching on contemporary *Islām* in Ethiopia.

The phenomenon of "religious oscillation" has been developed in other studies by the same author. In a short paper published in 1999, which more or less covers the same topics analyzed in the previous one, Abbink states that the Islamic revivalism constitutes a challenge to the patterns of tolerance and exchange between Christians and Muslims (Abbink: 1999).

This challenge has been exemplified in the paper published in 2007 as part of the book *Muslim Politics*. In his Chapter, "Transformations of Islam and Communal Relations in Wallo, Ethiopia", Abbink deals with the transformations in the life of the Muslim community living in *Wallo*. In doing so, he provides an historical view of *Islām* in *Wallo* and of the interrelations between Christians and Muslims typical of this place. Furthermore, and more relevant for my research, the author analyses the changes occurred after 1991 in the Ethiopian Political space: these developments determined the rising importance of religious identity for the Ethiopian Muslim community at the expenses of the national one. This of course constitutes a challenge for the state: Abbink proposes as a solution the adoption of a non-sectarian development agenda and suggests more neutrality in the private sphere.

This paper is useful and valuable in two ways: it provides an example of field research in a Muslim community and it deals with contemporary challenges to Ethiopian *Islām*.

---

[6] It is interesting to note that, despite the fact that this phenomenon characterises many religious contexts in Africa (for example Uganda, as explained by Professor Isabella Soi during a lecture held at the *Högskolan Dalarna* in Falun in 2011, where *Islām* constitutes a minority but has an important role in public life), Abbink's study has not be investigated further in relation to Ethiopia. I think that this aspect of the interreligious relations between Christians and Muslims needs to be analysed also in contexts different from *Wallo*: for example in relation to the system of Ethiopian Ethnic Federalism or in an urban context like the Capital, *Addis Ababa*.

Another good example of field research in a Muslim community is the set of studies carried by Terje Østebø in *Bale*. The first of his researches on this issue, "A history of Islam and inter-religious relations in Bale, Ethiopia" (Østebø: 2005) is an account of the history of the region, of its people, of its Islamization through the *Oromo* migrations, of its conquest by the *Amḥara* and of the relations between Muslims and Christians in this land.

The same issue is revisited in a paper presented in 2009: "Religious Change and Islam: The Emergence of the Salafi Movement in Bale, Ethiopia" (Østebø: 2009). In this research, Østebø focuses on the emergence of the *Salafi* movement (generally known as *Wahhabism*) in *Bale* from the 1970s, the importance of "indigenous agents" for its spreading and how it has affected *Bale* Muslim community in the fields of education and socio-economic relations.

More relevant for my research, is a paper published in 2007: "The Question of Becoming: Islamic Reform-Movements in Contemporary Ethiopia" (Østebø: 2007). His aim is to present and discuss the current issues related to *Islām* in Ethiopia after 1991, in particular reform movements, their activities in *Addis Ababa* and their ideologies.
A point that makes his research different from Erlich's study is the fact that despite the rise of influence of external Islamic movements, Østebø stresses the importance of locality in understanding Ethiopian *Islām* and rejects the idea that *Islām* in Ethiopia has being politicized. These different points of view show how the topic of *Islām* is a hot one and, therefore, call for a deeper analysis of its role into Ethiopian society.

M.A. Mohamed Salih's research on Islamic NGOs (Salih, in De Waal: 2004) constitutes my main source on this topic. In his chapter about the activities of the Islamic NGOs in Africa, after an introduction on Voluntarism, Salih traces the development of Islamic NGOs in the African continent highlighting their transnational ties and their relation with the so-called Islamic resurgence. He also provides a list of transnational Muslim organizations, some of them reported to be active in Ethiopia, and their alleged linkages with terrorism.
The topic of his study is of course of great interest for me, also because his analysis goes after the events of September 2001, but, as already mentioned at the beginning of this introduction, his stress on the political role of Islamic NGOs is out of my scope: what is missing in my opinion is an analysis of NGOs as actors of the African Civil Society.

The topic of J. Millard Burr and Robert O. Collins's study *Alms for Jihad: Charity and Terrorism in the Islamic World* (Burr and Collins: 2006) is out of my scope: they study the connections existing between charity, the duty of the *Zakāt*, Islamic bank activities and Islamic terrorism. Nevertheless, I am interested in their focus on the concept of *Zakāt* and on their study of the charity activities carried on by Saudi Arabia, an issue investigated also by Erlich in his study. For this reason, their chapter about Saudi Arabia is relevant for my research: I want to investigate whether the organizations cited and described in this study, and reported by Erlich as being active in Ethiopia, have a role in Ethiopian Civil Society.

Østebø's report about Islamism in the Horn of Africa (Østebø: 2010) is one of the most recent and complete articles about this issue. In it, the author deals with the phenomenon of Islamism in Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Somalia and Sudan. To me, the most relevant parts of his study, which is based on the existing literature on the topic and on Østebø' s knowledge of the region thank to field researches, are those about Ethiopia.

After a clear and very useful summary, he introduces the distinctions existing between three categories of Islamism: *Political Islamism*, *Reformist Islamism* and *Jihadi Islamism*. In chapter Two, Østebø deals with the main actors operating in the Horn, which for Ethiopia are the *Salafi Movement*, the *Jamaat al-Tablighi* and the *Intellectualist Movement* already introduced in his former study (Østebø: 2007).

In Chapter Three he analyses Islamists' attitudes towards political power: in Ethiopia, in particular, he underlines that Islamist movements are seeking religious parity between Muslims and Christians and, at the same time, that the bigger visibility of *Islām* does not mean that a politicization of *Islām* is occurring. Then, he describes the political regimes' attitudes toward Islamist Movements. In Ethiopia, from the mid-1990s *Islām* is becoming more informal and de-institutionalized due to Government's reaction to episodes of violence. This is leading to a greater importance of mosques instead of organizations and to the subsequent control over them by the regime. Chapter Four is about the impact that Islamism has on intra and inter-religious dynamics: in Ethiopia there have been tensions among Muslim groups such as the *Salafi* and the *Ṣūfī* but in recent years it seems that they are trying to build up Muslims' unity. At the same time, Østebø describes the climate of mutual suspicious among different religious communities, underlying that Islamism is not the only cause: it is important to recall the historical dimension in order to understand Muslims' seeking for more representation and Christians' discomfort with it. The last Chapter traces the intra-regional and transnational connections of Islamism in the Horn of Africa. With regard to Ethiopia, Østebø focuses on the role of refugees and traders in influencing the different Islamist Movements. More relevant for my study, is the account of the transnational Islamic NGOs operating in Ethiopia, mainly working through local NGOs, the rather new issue of the Yemeni connections with Ethiopia as well as the peace-building efforts carried on by the Ethiopian Muslim Diaspora.

Ethiopian Civil Society

In order to understand the status of *Islām* in Ethiopia, I think that is important to analyze its presence in the civil society given its political marginalization and, as will emerge from the presentation of the literature below, the importance of civil society. For this reason, a study of the Ethiopian Civil society will be part of my research. As the previous issues, also the theme of Ethiopian Civil Society has not been studied in depth, I think because of the novelty of this issue in the region. The literature below suggests many interesting aspects that need to be analyzed further.

Richard Pankhurst and Endreas Eshete's article (Pankhurst and Eshete: 1958), Seifu Alemayehu's contribution (Alemayehu: 1969) and Mekuria Bultcha's paper (Bultcha: 1973) all provide a description and an analysis of the *Idir* association in Ethiopia which is useful in order to understand its importance and presence in Ethiopian Civil Society.

Kjetil Tronvoll has published a study about the protection of minorities under the Federal Government of Ethiopia (Tronvoll: 2000). In this paper he traces the stages towards the coming of the federal government led by the EPRDF post-1991 and defined as "ethnic federalism". He investigates whether this type of government is giving power to a minority group (the *Tygrignans*) and whether this ethnicity would become a source of conflict in the future of the country. What could be relevant for my research is to understand how this political system can affect Ethiopian society and which place Muslims, if we agree on the fact that they constitute a religious minority, can have in this fragile system.

The book edited by Bahru Zewde and Siegfried Pausewang deals with Ethiopian Civil Society (Zewde and Pausewang: 2002). Their focus is on the process of democratization occurred in Ethiopia after 1991 and more relevant for my research is the role of Civil Society Organizations in this process. This importance is stressed in Kassahun Berhanu's contribution where he focuses on the role of NGOs in promoting democratic values. Dessalegn Rahmato's contribution, instead, describes how the Ethiopian Civil Society is organized, its genesis and development, its main fields of activity and the challenges and constraints that it faces.
These papers are of pivotal importance for my study because of their topic. What is missing is, however, a mention of Muslims' activities in this field: a sign that further investigation is needed. The only hint to Muslims is given in the contribution written by Shimelis Bonsa, where he refers to the rise of Islamic press in the country.

A mention to Muslims' activities in Ethiopian Civil Society is instead present in Sarah Vaughan and Kjetil Tronvoll's chapter about the associational life and the Civil Society in *The Culture of Power: Contemporary Ethiopian Political Life* (Vaughan and Tronvoll: 2003). They focus on the religious institutions and associations and include Muslims' activities in their study, even if they do not go into details. Furthermore, they provide a really good framework for dealing with Ethiopian Civil Society: they study the developmental activities carried by NGOs and analyze very well their structure. Moreover, in their list of NGOs they include Islamic Welfare Organizations, underlying their importance for the Muslim community.

Daniel Saheleyesus Telake's study (Telake: 2005) constitutes my main source on Ethiopian Civil Society, even if it does not mention any organization related to *Islām*. In the first three chapters he introduces a general geographical and historical context of Ethiopia and of Civil Society and, in Chapter Four, focuses on Ethiopian Civil Society. Here he introduces the historical roots of Ethiopian NGOs: he describes the earliest forms of community-based organizations and the characteristics of the associational culture of Ethiopia, he then retraces the emergence of modern

Community-Based Organizations and of NGOs. In this section, in particular, Telake distinguishes between mission and church-related welfare activities, philanthropic organizations, secular developmental organizations and international organizations. He then describes the development of NGOs in Ethiopia, their characteristics and the legal framework of the country. This study is really important for my research because constitutes a useful tool of analysis, providing a detailed framework and an historical account of the rise of Ethiopian Civil Society but, as already mentioned, it did not take into account the developments of the Muslim presence in this context, which I am going to present.

Taye Assefa and Bahru Zewde edited a collection of studies about Ethiopian Civil Society recent developments. In the preface, in fact, they underline the "young age" of Ethiopian Civil Society Organizations and their main constraints (Assefa and Zewde: 2008). For the purpose of my research, Dessalegn Rahmato and Tsehai Wada's contributions have been the most interesting. In the first one, Rahmato deals with the challenges and prospects of the Ethiopian voluntary sector: he provides a general background about it and then analyses the changes occurred after 1991. Wada's study, instead, is a very detailed analysis of the Draft for the 2009 *Charities and Society Proclamation*. He starts from a general framework on the Ethiopian legal system regarding Civil Society in Ethiopia and then describes the main points of the law, criticizing them. Both these papers will be useful in order to have a set of critics to the Ethiopian Civil Society.

In their study about Ethiopian Civil Society after 1991, Asnahe Kefale and Dejene Aredo first deal with the possible definitions of Civil Society and Governance and the role that the first can play in the second. In the second part of their study, more related to my topic, these authors provide a framework of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and Governance in Ethiopia. They describe the development of CSOs in contemporary Ethiopia and analyze their relationship with the state in terms of legal regimes. Furthermore, they offer an analysis of the role of Ethiopian Civil Society Organizations in the Governance of Ethiopia after 1991 relating the first three assumptions to the real context of the country: they underline the importance of traditional mutual help organizations and of a free-press.

The *International Centre for Not-for-Profit Law* (ICNL) monitor report on Ethiopian Civil Society (ICNL: 2008) and the complete text of the 2009 *Charities and Societies Proclamation* (Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia: 2009), are of course useful tools for my research. Whereas the first one offers a detailed analysis of the critical points of the law, the second one is an official document of the Ethiopian Government and contains the whole text of the Law in Amharic and in English.

Chapter Two: *Islām* in Ethiopia: an overview

In this chapter, I am going to introduce the issue of *Islām* in Ethiopia from an historical point of view. Most studies, in fact, use this type of approach to the topic or, instead, focus on the relationship between *Islām* and Christianity in the region. Using the studies already cited in the State of Research, I will present the main points about the history of *Islām* in Ethiopia. A brief overview of the current developments of *Islām* in Ethiopia will follow. In the last part, I am going to focus on the Islamization of Ethiopia, the geographical distribution of *Islām* in the region as well as the characteristics of Ethiopian *Islām*.

The coming of Islām in Ethiopia: the first Hiğrah

Ethiopia has often been described as a "Christian nation", because of the importance of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and its connection with the power since the 4th century (Robinson: 2004).

Many authors, dealing with the coming of *Islām* in the region of the Horn of Africa, underline the importance of trade relations: *Islām* was adopted first in the trading centers along the coast where the presence of Arab Muslim merchants was significant. It is important to underline that some authors, as well, stress the fact that *Islām* began its spreading in the region in coincidence with the decline of the Christian kingdom of Aksum in the VII century (Kapteijns, in Levtzion and Pouwels: 2000).

Other authors prefer to highlight the Muslim tradition of the first Muslims' *hiğrah* (migration) in the region as well as the presence of some Ethiopians in *Mecca*[7] as episodes of impact for the spreading of *Islām* in the region. Academics refer to the first *hiğrah* as the migration in the year 615 A.D. of a group of Muslims to *al-Ḥabaša* (Abyssinia, the kingdom of Aksum) seeking asylum and protection from persecutions in Mecca. This tradition is historically documented but there is division among scholars and among Muslims on the issue. Ahmed reports that in particular the alleged conversion of the Aksumite ruler *nağāši Aṣḥama ibn Abğar* and his secret correspondence with the Prophet are cause of division among scholars. Nevertheless, there are numerous Arabic sources reflecting the interest of the Muslim world into Ethiopia as well as a non-hostile attitude[8] towards this country, not to be attacked by Muslims (Ahmed, in Nura Alkali and others ed.: 1993 and Ahmed: 2005).

---

[7] Robinson (Robinson: 2004, p.111) focuses on the importance of the Ethiopian freed slave *Bilāl bin Rabaḥ al-Ḥabaši* , the first *mu'aḏḏin,* for Islam and for the relations Ethiopia – *Islām*.
[8] Robinson (Robinson: 2004) reports the name *Dār al-Hiyād* (home of the neutrality) with which Ethiopia was known among Muslims.

The Muslim Sultanates

The common opinion according to which at the weakening of the Aksumite kingdom followed the rising of the Muslim traders on the coastal region is challenged by Ahmed (Ahmed: 2005, p. 202), according to whom Arabs had to respond with punitive expeditions against pirates that disrupted their trade routes: as a consequence of this "revenge", the first Muslim settlements in the Red Sea were established. The early Muslim settlements in Ethiopia followed trade routes: from the *Dahlak* islands and from the coastal town of *Zayla*, into the interior of the region. The *Dahlak* Island became an Islamic Sultanate in the 8th - 9th century and, as all early Muslim settlements, was tributary to the Christian Empire (Hiskett: 2004).

From the 12th-13th century, together with the expansion of Islamic presence as a religion and a political power in the south of Ethiopia, a number of Muslim states dominated by a hereditary aristocracy claiming Arab origins[9] rose (Hiskett: 2004 and Ahmed: 2005). Ahmed reports that the Islamic Sultanate of *Ifat* "is considered to have been the earliest indigenous 'centralized Islamic state' in sub-Saharan Africa" (Ahmed: 2005, p. 203). Other six Sultanates are recorded as existing in the middle of the 14th century.

By the end of the 14th century, the Sultanate of *'Adal* rose and absorbed the others. Its capital was *Harär*, which became one of the most important centers of commerce and Islamic culture in the whole Horn of Africa. It is important to recall that the main political power in the region was still the Christian Empire: Christians were mainly located in the highlands, whereas the majority of Muslims was settled in the lowlands (Robinson: 2004). The period witnessed a general coexistence, as Ahmed states: "The administration of the Muslim provinces was usually left in the hands of the local ruling families on the condition of their loyalty and payments of tributes. Ethiopian Muslims enjoyed a measure of religious freedom and tolerance. The local Muslim élites had conversion as an option which could open for them further possibilities in political life" (Ahmed: 2005, p. 204). Nevertheless, "[t]he sultanates regularly produced religious leaders who raised substantial forces to fight against the enemies of *Islām*, and peaceful coexistence between the Muslim states and the Christian kingdom was frequently overshadowed by conflict" (Ahmed: 2005, p. 204).

The main conflict occurred in the first half of the 16th century, with the *Ğihād* launched by *Imām Aḥmad b.Ibrāhīm al-Ġāzī* (from here *Aḥmad Grañ*). Ahmed traces the origin of this act of war in the previous conflicts emerged between the Christian kingdom and *'Adal* (Ahmed: 2005), whereas Robinson recalls the importance of the Ottoman expansion in North Africa and the arrivals of religious men from the Arabic Peninsula (Robinson: 2004).

Aḥmad Grañ's *Ğihād* lasted from about 1527 to 1543: in 1529, 1531 and 1533 the Christian forces were defeated. By 1540 the forces of *Aḥmad Grañ* tried to establish a unified Muslim State through the military occupation of the former Christian lands[10]. The Christian kingdom,

---

[9] These future religious and political leaders are known as *Jabarti* or *Jeberti* (Robinson: 2004).
[10] Many conversions to *Islām* followed the military occupation.

however, never resigned and, with the help of Portugal, launched a counteroffensive against *Aḥmad Grañ* who, despite the help from the Ottomans, was defeat and killed in 1543 (Hiskett: 2004 and Ahmed: 2005). "…the Muslim regions, including Harär, were devastated and depopulated by the long war and became exposed to the raids of the Oromo. The decline and political disintegration of 'Adal was never reversed" (Ahmed: 2005, p. 205).

Islām from late 16th to 19th century

As a result of *Aḥmad Grañ*'s *Ǧihād*, *Islām* spread towards the South of the Ethiopian region and the *Oromo*[11] were exposed to the influence of *Islām*. The intervention of the Ottoman Turks led to their occupation of the Red Sea coast in the following centuries. The consequences of these changes in the geopolitical context of the region led to Muslims' marginalization and exclusion from the administration of the provinces of the Christian Empire and, sometimes, to their persecution[12] (Hiskett: 2004 and Ahmed: 2005).

Islām continued to grow until the reign of *Yoḥannəs I* (1667-82) who "…convened a council that ordered Muslims to live separately from Christians in villages and town quarters of their own. […] Muslims could not usually own land, and for this reason they took up commerce and craft activities and often resided in towns, where they could rent church lands" (Kapteijns, in Levtzion and Pouwels: 2000, pp. 230-231).

During the 18th century, *Islām* spread further thank to the conversion of the *Oromo* people, which later would have a Muslim dynasty, and the influence of some *ṣūfī* orders (Hiskett: 2004).

The 18th and 19th centuries, defined *mesafint* or "era of the princes" because of their power at the expense of the central state, saw also the development of some Muslim dynasties, especially in *Wällo*[13], transformed by the local *Oromo* Muslim dynasty in an important Muslim centre. Hiskett reports that the rise of *Islām* in the 19th century was caused by the political influence of Egypt, by the conversion to *Islām* of many chiefs of nomadic tribes and by the fall of the Solomonid dynasty in Ethiopia during the reign of *Tewodros II* (Hiskett: 2004).

The emperors who led Ethiopia in the late 19th century were very rigid towards *Islām*, considered an obstacle for a unified Ethiopia. They formally required Muslims to convert to Christianity: *Tewodros II* in 1856 to the Muslim *Oromo* of *Wärrä Himano* and the *Yoḥannəs IV'*s council in 1878 to the Muslims of *Wällo* (Ahmed: 2005). "However, by viewing Muslims as the engineers of the division of the country through their dealings with foreigners at the time of the encroaching Egyptian intervention under [...] Ismāʻīl (resulting in the Egyptian-Ethiopian war of 1875-84) and, later during the destructive *Ǧihād* waged by the Mahdists, the emperors ignored the fact that religious and cultural heterogeneity was not the only weak point of the Empire in

---

[11] The *Oromo* migrations and adoption of *Islām* are described in Østebø's study about the Islamization of *Bale* (Østebø: 2005)

[12] This aspect is particularly emphasised in Moten's contribution in the collection from the "Islam in Africa Conference" (Moten, in Nura Alkali and others: 1993).

[13] For a detailed account of the development of this region, see Hussein Ahmed's *Islam in Nineteenth-century Wallo, Ethiopia* (2001).

that period: in the 1870s Yoḥannəs IV's Christian vassals in the north were intriguing and allying themselves with the Egyptian invaders" (Ahmed: 2005, p. 206). Furthermore, armed protests inspired by militant Muslim clerics occurred in those years.

Emperor *Mənilək II* (1889 – 1911) had a "more pragmatic approach towards indigenous Muslims" (Ahmed: 2005, p. 206) but, at the same time, led a campaign of "Christianization" of Ethiopia that was successful in the sense that unified the Christian Empire but, of course, provoked many armed protests led by Muslim leaders. This campaign was carried out with the help of the European powers, especially Britain (Hiskett: 2004).

Kapteijns reports: "In the period 1880 to 1918, the three forms of Islamic militancy referred to above – that against adherents of indigenous religions and lax Muslims [targets of the "Islamic revivalists", see below], that against the expanding and intolerant Christian Ethiopian state, and that against the colonizing powers from Christian Europe – became interconnected and fuelled the pan-Islamic sentiments roused by Ottoman participation (and defeat) in World War I. [...] The *trait d'union* between the seething discontent of the Muslim victims of the Ethiopian and European expansion and the pan-Islamic cause promoted by the Ottoman Empire was Emperor Ləǧ Iyasu (1909/13 – 1916). Ləǧ Iyasu, who was Mənilək's grandson and successor, was also the son of that very Wällo Oromo leader who in 1878 had been forcibly converted to Islām. When he, as head of state, openly adopted and began to court his Muslim subjects, the nobility and church élite combined to excommunicate and depose him" (Kapteijns, in Levtzion and Pouwels: 2000, p. 236).

Islām in 20th century Ethiopia

After the defeat of *Ləǧ Iyasu*, *Ḥaylä Śəllasə* became Emperor. His policy towards Muslims is reported as one of partial liberalization (Ahmed: 2005).

During the Italian Occupation of Ethiopia in 1936 – 1941, Italians had an ambiguous approach towards Muslims: they used them as a tool of propaganda against the Christian Empire that had long-term effects (Robinson: 2004). "The benefits brought by Italians included: granting full freedom of worship; appointment of Muslim judges[14] *(qāḍī)*; teaching of the Arabic language in Muslim schools; construction and repair of mosques; and subsidizing the pilgrimage" (Ahmed: 2005, p. 206).

In 1941 *Ḥaylä Śəllasə* was restored as Emperor of Ethiopia: he "...not only turned the clock back by restoring discriminating practices against Muslim Ethiopians, but he also took punitive actions against them for having sided with the enemy. [...] While Ḥaylä Śəllasə' s reign did not openly or actively hinder Islām worship, it undermined Islām and Muslims through purposeful and systematic disregard. In official rhetoric, the country belonged to all, with religion a mere private affair. In reality, state and nation were defined in terms of Christianity, with Muslims excluded from land ownership and higher government service. As a result, the economically

---

[14] *Šarī'ah* courts were established in 1944 (see Negash: 2010)

most successful and wealthy Muslims continued to be engaged in commerce or the crafts. The Ethiopian church was heavily subsidized, as was religious (Christian) education in state schools, where Amharic was imposed and Arabic banned. Muslim employees had to work on Fridays and observe Sunday as holiday. Foreign missionaries were allowed to proselytise in Muslim areas. The Civil code of 1960[15] regulated marriage, divorce, and family property in ways that conflicted Islamic law and practice" (Kapteijns, in Levtzion and Pouwels: 2000, p. 240).

An interesting perspective on this period is offered in Moten's paper presented at the "Islam in Africa Conference" in 1993. Moten[16] states that *Ḥaylä Śǝllasǝ*'s objective was the elimination of Islamic influence from the country and that, in order to achieve this goal, he adopted three main policies: a policy aiming at cutting off Ethiopian Muslims and their linkages with the Muslim world depicting Ethiopia as a Christian land; a policy of national integration through the medium of the Christian culture of the *Amḥara* ruling class that caused a reorganization of economy in order to provide Christians a dominant position through confiscation of Muslims' lands and their subsequent displacement, activities of Christian missionaries, and Muslims' exclusion from modern education; a third policy of imposition of a unitary structure through centralized bureaucracy that led to the elimination of all Muslim political entities, as for Eritrea, annexed to Ethiopia in 1962 (Moten, in Nura Alkali and others: 1993).

Until the eve of the 1974 Revolution, Muslims were seen as a minority community associated with foreign aggression. Muslims tried to improve their situation with the establishment of the *Därg* regime in 1974. They presented eleven demands to the new government, of which only three were put into practice: the observance of the three main Islamic festivals as national holidays; a land reform and the official adoption of the term "Ethiopian Muslims" instead of the former "Muslims residing in Ethiopia". The desire of an official recognition of the *Ethiopian Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs* failed, but it was allowed to function. *Islām* gained a status of parity with Christianity, with a higher participation of Muslims in the state affairs. However, with the adoption of a Marxist-Leninist ideology, and the more harshness of its policies, religion and *Islām* in particular were seen with hostility by the government and policies of restriction[17] on trade and land were introduced (Ahmed, in AA.VV.: 2003 and Kapteijns, in Levtzion and Pouwels: 2000).

The fall of the *Därg* regime in 1991 opened up a new period for *Islām* in Ethiopia: as a consequence of the political liberalization, religious and cultural identities were respected. *Islām* thus gained new impetus and visibility in the public sphere: Islamic associations rose, Islamic publications began to be available also in Ethiopia, Islamic schools were founded and new

---

[15] For a rather different interpretation see Negash: 2010

[16] Despite being too focused on demonstrating Muslims' marginalization, this paper opens new ways of dealing with the history of *Islām* in Ethiopia.

[17] Moten reports episodes of Muslims' resettlements and religious persecutions during this period (see Moten, in Nura Alkali and others: 1993)

mosques were built. Despite some Muslims' demonstrations in 1994 for their representation[18] and the violent incident occurred in 1995[19], Muslim-Christian relations in Ethiopia seem to be based on tolerance and peaceful co-existence throughout the last decade of 20th century (Ahmed: 2005).

---

[18] Abbink (2011) reports that, during these protests, Muslims were asking for the inclusion of the Islamic law into the secular constitution.

[19] Abbink reports: "On 21st February 1995, things came to a head in an unprecedently violent incident within the compound of the al-Anwar Mosque in Addis Ababa (the biggest in the country and the centre of the Muslim community). As always in such cases, the circumstances of the incident have remained very unclear, but worshippers and the police came to blows and the latter instantly used their fire-arms. In the ensuing violence, nine people were killed and 129 people wounded. There was never any independent judiciary inquiry into the incident" (Abbink: 1998, p. 118).
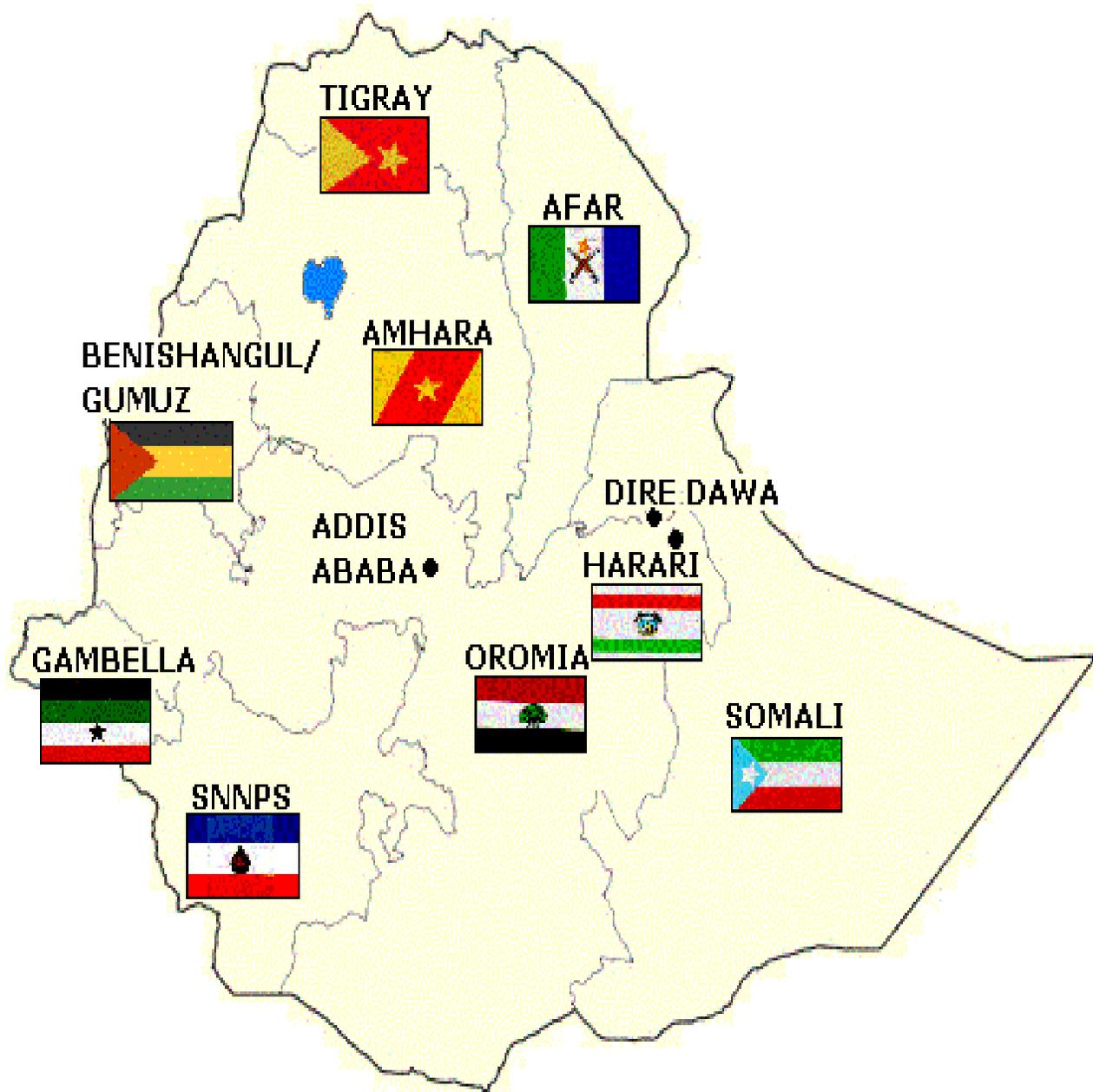
Picture 1. The actual division in nine regional states and two cities administrative councils of the FDRE (Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia) (http://www.ethiopia.gov.et/English/Information/Pages/RegionalStates.aspx).

Many authors have been focusing on the recent developments of *Islām* in Ethiopia. The stress is on the increasing phenomenon of Islamic revivalism, even if they focus on different aspects of this trend.

Jon Abbink (Abbink: 1998; 1999; 2003), using an anthropological approach, investigates whether Islamic revivalism constitutes a challenge to the patterns of coexistence based on tolerance and mutual exchange between Christians and Muslims of Ethiopia. In his opinion, the "religious oscillation" typical of the coexistence between these two religions is in danger: he calls for more neutrality in the public sphere, where there is an increasing religious competition (in terms of religious affiliation but, in particular, with regard to religious organizations and media). In a recent paper, Abbink reports many incidents involving religious affiliation during the first decade of the 2000s in which religious press played an important role in influencing public opinion about these episodes of violence. In particular, he focuses on the rivalry between Muslims influenced by *Wahhabism* and Christians of the Evangelical-Pentecostal Churches (Abbink: 2011).

More focused on the changes internal to *Islām* are both Erlich and Østebø. The first author focuses on the influence of Saudi Arabia in Ethiopia, and with regard to the last years, underlines how the recent resurgence of Ethiopian *Islām*, and its impact in the political arena, has been affected by Saudi Arabia's influence through financing and through activity of various affiliated NGOs, especially in the education sector (Erlich: 2007).

Østebø's study (Østebø: 2007), starting from his experience of research of *Islām* in *Bale* and the *Salafi*[20] influence in this area, traces the origins and distribution of the three main Islamic reformist movements (*Salafi, Jama'at al-Tabligh* and *Intellectualists*) in contemporary Ethiopia underlining their impact on the higher presence of *Islām* in the public life of the country but, at the same time, denying their correlation to the politicization of *Islām* that he considers alien to Ethiopia.

A last point which I consider interesting to mention when dealing with the recent developments of *Islām* in Ethiopia and its possible politicization, is the concept of "Islamic Voluntarism", in particular related to the activities of Islamic NGOs. Discussing it generally in relation with the Horn of Africa, Salih states: "...Islamic NGOs distinguish themselves from other NGOs by the fact that voluntarism is a religious duty in Islam, and those NGOs which profess an Islamic identity claim also to advance a Muslim way of life and expand the Islamic *umma* (community) worldwide. As there is no distinction between ethics and law in Islam, there is also no distinction between NGOs' social, economic, political and religious functions" (Salih, in De Waal: 2004, p. 146). Islamic NGOs are therefore voluntary organizations inspired by the principles of Islam. Among them, an important role is played by the pillar of the *zakāt*, the obligatory almsgiving for all adults who possess a minimum of personal health (Burr and Collins: 2006, p. 11).

---

[20]   Østebø uses the term *Salafi* as a synonym of *Wahhabi*. The *Salafiyah* is a reformist movement pursuing the renovation of *Islām* inspired to the first generations of Muslims. *Waḥḥābī Islām* defines another revivalist movement and the religion as observed by the Saudi Arabia kingdom.

Salih also believes, and I agree with him, that the lack of distinction between ethic and law in *Islām* causes the lack of distinction between economic and humanitarian principles. For this reason, Islamic humanitarianism is considered to be part of the *zakāt*. He confirms and enforces his thesis: "As part of an elaborate welfare system, *zakat* is considered by most Muslims as the cardinal Islamic principle of humanitarianism and solidarity. Moreover, because of the integration of economic and social life in Islam, the distinction between Islamic humanitarianism and altruism does not exist" (Salih, in De Waal: 2004, p. 147). According to this author, the contemporary system of Islamic NGOs often carries out the role of collecting *zakāt* in non-Muslim states, where Muslims constitute a minority group, and so the alms cannot be gathered by the Islamic State as it should be. This allows Islamic NGOs to have a potential political role.

Processes of Islamization and geographical distribution

"[T]here is no doubt that the history of Islām in Ethiopia is intimately connected with that of an initially accommodating, but progressively hostile, Christian kingdom. It is equally significant to bear in mind that, in spite of this potential antagonism and occasional friction, Islām succeeded in gradually establishing itself in the region and in becoming an integral part of Ethiopian culture" (Ahmed: 2001, p. 31).

The direction followed by the process of Islamization, as already mentioned, followed the trade routes from the coastal areas towards the interior of the region. Traders and other groups of travellers are conventionally identified as the main agents of Islamization[21] but other agents need to be underlined. Ahmed and Gori cite three categories: *Ṣūfī* scholars, learned men (sometimes foreigners, especially from Yemen) and traders (Ahmed and Gori: 2005). "One can assume that the form of Islām introduced by different agents was not the same. Traders probably disseminated only the external aspects of the religion. The evident stress on the execution of formal religious and legal obligations [...] is due to the strong impact that the Ṣūfīs and jurists, especially of the Ḥanafī and Šāfiʿī schools of law, had on the formation of Islām in Ethiopia" (Ahmed and Gori: 2005, p. 199).

Many authors have dealt with the theories of Islamization in Ethiopia: Ahmed's model consists of five stages: an early phase (from the 7th until the 11th century) during which Muslim immigrants reached Ethiopia, established settlements of the coast, converted the coastal population and the groups of the plains and led to the emergence of Muslim political entities in the 10th century. A period of expansion and consolidation followed (from the 12th to the 15th century) causing a third phase of confrontation (the 16th century – *Grañ* episode) ended with the decline of *Islām* in the region. A fourth stage of expansion followed (17th and 18th centuries) which in turn determined a subsequent phase of revival and internal reverses (19th century) (Ahmed: 2001, pp. 30-59).

---

[21] This is, for instance, Trimingham's view.

Regarding the geographical distribution of *Islām* in Ethiopia, the earliest account has been Trimingham's study (Trimingham: 1952). Ahmed and Gori state that Islamic communities are present in almost the entire region of Ethiopia, with Eastern Ethiopia as the place with the greater concentration. Some Muslim groups also live in the interior of Ethiopia in traditionally Christian areas. They underline that urban migration has been important for the growth of conversion to *Islām* (Ahmed and Gori: 2005).

Abbink states: "In Ethiopia's last census (2007), approximately 62 percent of the population was counted as Christian, 34 percent as Muslim, and the remainder as of traditional faiths. The Muslims are Sunni, but with a growing number of Wahhabist-Salafist persuasion (an estimated 15 percent, not registered as such in the census data). Within the Christian part of the population there is also a shift from Orthodox Church (now 43.5 percent of the Ethiopian population, a decrease compared to the 1994 census), to Evangelicalism-Pentecostalism (now 18.6 percent). Compared to 1994, Muslims increased by 1.1 percent to a total of 33.9 percent" (Abbink: 2011, pp. 256-257).

Characteristics of Ethiopian Islām

I think that the use of the terminology "Ethiopian *Islām*" underlines two of its features: first, the fact that *Islām* can be considered an indigenous religion[22] in Ethiopia, because of its early spreading in the region and, second, the peculiarity of *Islām* in the region due to the encounter with the Ethiopian context and culture that affected the adoption and assimilation of this religion. Furthermore, Ahmed views *Islām* as an integrating factor for Ethiopia: "The Muslim religion has constituted the basis of the cultural identity of a sizeable part of the Ethiopian population, thereby functioning as an additional basis for the integration of diverse communities into the overall Ethiopian society, which has always had ethnic heterogeneity as its principal characteristics" (Ahmed: 2001, p. 188).

With regard to the characteristics of Ethiopian *Islām*, Ahmed and Gori underline that "[i]n its popular manifestations, Ethiopian Islām shows traces of assimilated elements of traditional religions. This is reflected in festivals held at the shrines of holy men where pilgrims gather to sing and dance, chewing *qat* all night long, and sometimes to perform *zar* cult rituals. They seek the intercession of the *walī* so that God might bestow his grace upon them. The veneration of relics, graves, stones, trees, streams and hills which have become sacred through their connection with the *walī* is also a manifestation of syncretism. These traditional cultural activities are condemned as remnant of the pre-Islamic polytheism (*ğāhilīya*) by many Muslim learned men" (Ahmed and Gori: 2005, p. 199).

Furthermore, there are practices connected to the belief in *ğinn* and other magical rituals. Also the ceremonies of the individual life of a Muslim such as birth, circumcision, wedding and death

---

[22] See, for example, Ahmed: 2001.

are influenced by traditional customs. Dietary rules follow the prescription of *Islām*, despite some discussions on the way of slaughtering animals. "Another feature of Islām in Ethiopia is regular contact between the various Muslim communities in northern, central, southern and eastern Ethiopia through trade, education, the mystical orders, pilgrimage and movement of peoples. [...] Ethiopian Muslims maintained relations with the wider Muslim world, with some settling there permanently and interacting with the local populations, and others returning with new ideas of reforms" (Ahmed and Gori: 2005, p. 200).

Ethiopian *Islām* belongs to *Sunnī Islām*. Of the four canonical schools of law, three are present in Ethiopia: the *Šāfiʿī*, the *Ḥanafī* and the *Mālikī*. The *Šāfiʿī* and the *Ḥanafī* were introduced from Arabia and Yemen whereas the *Mālikī* school came from Sudan (Ahmed and Gori: 2005 and Kapteijns, in Levtzion and Pouwels: 2000).

As already mentioned, mystical *Islām* is an important aspect of Ethiopian *Islām*. The major *Ṣūfī* orders are the *Qādirīyah*, the *Tiğanīyah*, the *Šāḏilīyah* and the *Sammānīyah*. The first one to be introduced in the region has been the *Qādirīyah* in the 15th or 16th century and became instrumental to the Islamic revival of the 19th century as well as the *Sammānīyah*; the other orders were brought to Ethiopia in the 19th – 20th centuries. Education was central for the activities of the mystical orders and centres of Islamic and mystical learning were established in the region (Ahmed and Gori: 2005 and Kapteijns, in Levtzion and Pouwels: 2000).

"In those parts of the country with a Muslim majority, and in the medieval Muslim sultanates, *Šarīʿa* was implemented from an early date. [...] Matters relating to marriage and inheritance were dealt with accordingly, although customary laws were also important. *Šarīʿa* courts have existed since the mid-20th century" (Ahmed and Gori: 2005, p. 201).

In his study about the status of Islamic Law in Ethiopia, Negash (Negash: 2010) states that Muslim communities had always applied the Islamic Law in matters concerning personal law. Furthermore, in 1944 Emperor *Ḥaylä Śəllasə* issued the *Qāḍī and Naʾib[23] Councils Proclamation*, very similar to another one issued in 1942. These councils, still operative, have jurisdiction over questions involving marriage and family relationships (with Muslim marriages); questions regarding *Wāqf* donations and succession for Muslims and questions involving costs related to the two previous matters. The Councils are courts of first instance, whose decision in the field of Civil law is final. It is important to note that the Islamic Courts were parallel to the secular courts.

Negash also focuses on the Civil Code of 1960, still operative, underlying that even if it regulates matters covered by Islamic Law, it leaves Muslims free of applying it. Ethiopian Muslims' freedom regards also the choice of the Islamic school of law to follow, but this does not apply at the moment of being judged by the *Qāḍī* and *Naʾib* Councils: they have to be judged by a Council even if it applies a different school of law (Negash: 2010).

---

[23] Judges and legal representatives according to the Islamic law.

Negash reports that the fact that Ethiopian Muslims are free to follow the Islamic Law derives from the *Islām* status as minority religion and from the State policy of non-interference in the religious practices of its citizens. He also states, however, that *Qāḍī* and *Naʾib* Councils need to be revised following the secularization taking place among Ethiopian Muslims (Negash: 2010).

Chapter Three: Ethiopian Civil Society

Ethiopian Civil Society has been characterized by indigenous forms of civil associations that constitute the basis of its modern and contemporary characteristics. In order to understand how it functions nowadays, therefore, it is necessary to investigate into the traditional associational culture. Furthermore, the development of Ethiopian Civil Society has been influenced by the radical changes happened into Ethiopia's politics. In this chapter, therefore, I am providing a general framework of Ethiopian Civil Society, trying to adopt an historical perspective and to compare it, when necessary, to some of the aspects covered by my research.

Traditional forms of association

During my interviews, some informants have told me that still today the majority of Ethiopians belong to informal networks, in particular to *Idir*. They described it as an association formed with the scope of providing mutual help in case of wedding or funerals. There are many types of *Idir*: for only women, for only men or for both of them. They can be based on professional activities or neighborhood relationships or may be formed by people originally coming from the same village or city and living in another city[24], sometimes they also do not take into account different religious faith, sex or age. *Idir* is a very old institution; it has been into existence for at least a hundred years[25].

In the literature, *Idir* has been described as a traditional secular association, mainly developed in urban areas, formed with the scope of dealing with funeral and burial services of the members: they submit a certain amount of money to cover the funeral expenses, help each other during bereavement and have to be present at funerals. The members are usually from the same district and, contrary to other types of traditional civil associations, *Idirs* have a statute, an elected committee and can be registered under the government's laws (Pankhurst and Eshete: 1958; Alemayehu: 1969; Bultcha: 1973). "Although *Idir* still continues to perform its primary role of taking care of funerals and comforting the bereaved, lately some units, especially those in urban areas, have begun to scale up their activities by adding other development-oriented functions. To this effect *Idirs* in recent years have been observed interlocking with government structures of NGOs […]. The initiative to interlock *Idirs* with NGOs is often taken by the NGOs, in order to

---

[24] For example my informant M. has mentioned an *Idir* formed by *Harari* people living in *Addis Ababa*.
[25] Interview with M., a Muslim woman living and studying in *Addis Ababa*.

make use of the influential and credible position *Idirs* hold at grassroots" (Telake: 2005, pp. 81-82).

Other types of traditional forms of traditional Community Based Organizations include religious associations, such as *Mahiber* and *Senbete*, and secular ones as *Debo* and *Iquib*.

Mahiber, nowadays also a secular association, was traditionally a gathering organized to celebrate a saint's day, mainly by followers of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. *Senbete* is a similar kind of association, but not named after a saint. *Debo* is a secular traditional form of civil associations of rural communities and it aimed at organizing a web of mutual helping in farming activities among members. *Iquib*, mainly performed in urban areas, was and still is an association formed to deal with financial matters: members contribute a predetermined sum of money which is circulated among them on a lottery basis in order to cover individual or family needs that require large sums of money (Telake: 2005).

My informants have also told me that many Muslim women belong to an *Idir*, to a *Mahiber* or to a *Ǧamīʿah*[26] instead of gathering into formal organizations. In general, in fact, the majority of Ethiopian women gather into informal self-help associations because it is a sort of taboo not to do it[27]. However, I have been told that these informal networks often lack proper organisational capacities[28].

Together with traditional associations, other kinds of networks have been formed from the 1950s: some of them were initiated by people from the same place or ethnic origin. Others, instead, were more concerned with social or developmental issues such as labor unions, teachers' and students' organizations and regional development associations. Both the imperial government and the *Därg* regime saw these organizations as a threat to their power and discouraged their formation. Furthermore, during the *Därg* regime a large number of mass organizations/cooperatives were established by the government to strengthen its power: they had few linkages with developmental objectives and more political functions. They have been abolished with the end of the *Därg* (Telake: 2005; Kefale and Aredo: 2009).

Non-Governmental Organizations

Non-Governmental Organizations are a recent phenomenon in Ethiopia. The earliest organized forms of humanitarian or development activities were probably run by missionaries and local churches affiliates starting from the 16th century. From the 1800s onwards various missionary groups were active in Ethiopia and engaged in service provision activities for the population together with their activity of evangelization (Telake: 2005).

The first secular, non-governmental organization created in Ethiopia has been the *Ethiopian Red Cross Society*: it was established in 1935 with the main objective of responding to the

---

[26] Arab word meaning society.
[27] Interview with of *Ethiopian Interfaith Development Dialogue and Action*.
[28] Interview with *Hidaya Development Association*.

humanitarian crisis provoked by the Italian invasion. This was followed by the establishment of the *Ethiopian Women's Voluntary Organization* that assisted the resistance movement and, after the war, focused on the training of young women.

In the following years many non-religious philanthropic organizations and voluntary aid agencies rose and became involved in charity welfare and development work. Other secular organizations flourished in the 1960s: philanthropic initiatives providing voluntary welfare services were established as well as orphanages, schools and clinics were set up by important individuals. Furthermore, the *Haile-Selassie I Foundation* was created by imperial charter (Telake: 2005).

The first developmental local organizations appeared in Ethiopia in the 1960s, despite the predominance of religious affiliation in the NGO movement. "It was after 1974 that the size and operations of NGOs began to expand in Ethiopia. Between 1974 and 1991, when the country was under a socialist-oriented military administration, most Western countries were reluctant to provide development aid to the government. Whatever little they might have considered giving, they preferred to channel it through a few NGOs of largely foreign origin working in the country. This heightened donor interest in NGOs and the repeated humanitarian crises that the country experienced were also factors contributing to the blossoming of these institutions" (Telake: 2005, p. 89).

As a response to the terrible drought and famine of 1973-74, several international NGOs settled down in Ethiopia to carry on activities of emergency relief and, after the end of the emergency, started running rehabilitation activities like orphanages and support projects for small communities. The same happened with the 1984-85 drought and famine. "[T]he other major crisis that the society faced was civil war and associated social problems. From the early 80s to the early 90s, the intensified civil war resulted in millions of people being uprooted from their homes. To make the problem even more complicated, the civil war was more intense in the northern parts of the country where drought and famine had been posing a serious threat. The places largely affected by the problem were controlled partly by the government and partly by the rebel movements. While the relief efforts in government-controlled areas were administered by the large international NGOs and the UN in collaboration with the Ethiopian Relief and Rehabilitation Commission, the relief needs of the other side were attended to by *cross-border operations* from the Sudan that channeled relief assistance to the humanitarian wings of the rebel movements" (Telake: 2005, p. 91).

NGOs were allowed to exist and operate in emergency situations during the *Därg* Regime (1974-1991) even if with restrictions. For longer-term development activities, instead, their activity was much more limited but, nevertheless, some international and local NGOs could carry on long-term development programs, especially in remote areas of the country where they implemented mainly rural development programs (Telake: 2005).

Ethiopian Civil Society after 1991

Rahmato, as Vaughan and Tronvoll, analyses the situation of the Ethiopian Civil Society since 1991, from the beginning of the EPRDF (*Ethiopian Peoples Revolutionary Democratic Front*) government. The political liberalization of those years allowed the development of Ethiopian Civil Society separated from the State, and sometimes opposed to it.

Rahmato classifies Ethiopian Civil Society as mainly formed by four types of organizations: "1. Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs). These consist of local or international organisations engaged in relief, development or both. NGOs provide services, channel funds, carry out development projects, and frequently engage in advocacy work. 2. Advocacy organisations. These consist of rights-based institutions and institutions committed to the protection of the environment, wild life, etc. 3. Interest group institutions. Under this category we find professional societies, trade unions, cooperatives, chambers of commerce, employers' associations, and cultural society. 4. Community organizations. These consist of neighborhood groups, and citizens' and youth organizations" (Rahmato, in Zewde and Pausewang: 2002, p. 105).

I think it is worthy to note that this author does not mention any religious institution and association. These, instead, are cited in Vaughan and Tronvoll's research. They highlight that with the coming of the EPRDF government religious affiliation and activities in the country increased, in particular connected to Islam, and that, given the separation between state and religion typical of the Ethiopian state, they were not employed by the government to implement its policies as it was in the previous years (Vaughan and Tronvoll: 2003).

Generally, there has been a growth in number of Ethiopian Civil Society actors: "[t]he 1990s particularly saw the growth in the number and functions of local NGOs, when for the first time they outnumbered the international NGOs operational in Ethiopia" (Telake: 2005, p. 89).

Also the kind of activities has changed, for example for NGOs: "Since the mid-1990s, a clear policy regarding the urgent need to shift from relief to development activities has been officially introduced by the current government. […] As a result of this major shift in policy, NGOs started to scale down their intervention in relief activities. […] thus, today the focus of NGOs which operate in Ethiopia is mainly improving the quality of life for the disadvantaged and promoting social justice" (Telake: 2005, p. 93). NGOs are now engaged in different activities including working with the weaker part of the society (children, disabled, elderly and women), health, education, food security, environment, HIV/AIDS, water, gender issues, microcredit, research and training programs, advocacy and lobbying activities. Furthermore, there has been an increase in the collaboration between International and local NGOs (Telake: 2005).

Vaughan and Trovoll write about a polarization between the State and Civil Society: the government is suspicious towards NGOs and other organizations' activities while often these organizations do not reflect the locality in which they work and therefore lack roots in the society. During my field research, I had the impression that the majority of organizations I met were mostly unknown to common people and also to other organizations.

Vaughan and Trovoll analyze the activities of NGOs in the development sector and classify the NGOs operating in Ethiopia as International NGOs and Ethiopian NGOs. In 2002 the International NGOs were 126 out of the 270 registered[29]. Among the Ethiopian NGOs they divide between Government-oriented, Welfarist and Traditional NGOs, the last ones classified as Community Based Organizations, Ethiopian Development NGOs and Indigenous Welfare organizations. Among the latter they state that in particular Islamic Welfare Organizations are cause of concern for the Ethiopian State especially after 9/11 (Vaughan and Tronvoll: 2003).

I think it is important to underline the role played by Civil Society in the Ethiopian society. Civil Society, defined as: "the public realm that is distinct from the state, and that seek to promote the interest of the public from different dimensions" (Kefale and Aredo: 2009, p. 92), can enhance the performance of the state, social justice, transparency and information. Civil Society can have a fundamental role in the process of democratization of the state. With regard to Ethiopian Civil Society's role in enhancing governance, Kefale and Aredo state: "It is true that NGOs have to address the concerns of both donor and host governments, but to ensure their credibility as genuine partners of communities in development, they should promote what they preach – "community ownership" and "stakeholder" participation at all levels. In the face of a growing economic clout and almost pervasive presence of NGOs throughout Ethiopia, the government should also engage NGOs in decision-making" (Kefale and Aredo: 2009, p. 104).

Rahmato, in a paper written in 2007, lists some recent policy shifts regarding Civil Society relationship with the Ethiopian Government: a better coordination between CSOs[30] and the Ethiopian Government; a new role for NGOs at the local level deriving from the political decentralization; expressions of goodwill made by public officials towards civil society; the establishment, by the Ministry of Capacity Building, of a department responsible of CSOs support and capacity building; the fact that governmental agencies are seeking partnership with CSOs.

Civil Society in Ethiopia still faces many challenges: "Most of the indigenous civil society organizations currently operating in Ethiopia have a life-span of less than two decades. They are predominantly donor-dependent and mostly engaged in development and service delivery. While many have benefited from the capacity-building initiatives of international NGOs and other donor agencies, their level of organizational development and democratic culture is still at an early stage of growth. Most have a narrow constituency base and many have little or no program for policy engagement. Public forums on civil society issues are not only a recent phenomenon, but also quite few and sporadic. The institutional culture of networking and coalition building is lately beginning to catch on, but needs considerable efforts to take root and serve as a vehicle for social mobilization and a collective voice" (Assefa and Zewde ed.: 2008, p. viii).

In the same collection of papers Rahmato deals with the challenges and the opportunities for

---

[29] Rahmato, in a paper written in 2007, reports that in coincidence of the 2005 elections there has been a growth in registered organizations, which he esteems as being more than 4000 in 2007 (Rahmato, 2007 in Assefa and Zewde: 2009).

[30] Civil Society Organizations.

Ethiopian Civil Society: with regard to the first ones, he distinguishes between external challenges, namely the relation with the government, pressures from donors and the image problem; whereas for the internal challenges he identifies a lack of culture of collaboration, alliances and networks and the staff turnover problem. The opportunities, instead, derive from the growth and diversity of civil society: for example, NGOs working in small areas at community level are more flexible and innovative (Rahmato, 2007 in Assefa and Zewde: 2008). During my field research, I lived in *Addis Ababa* and this gave me the opportunity to see that a lot of civil society organizations are active, or at least have an office in the capital city, and that many of them were recently established. This gave me the impression of a very dynamic sector in constant growth but, at the same time, of a spreading competiveness among organizations, increased by an overlapping of activities, mainly engaged into relief and care provision.

The current situation of Ethiopian Civil Society, therefore, can be said to be in a stage of transition: having a look to the newest law about it is of pivotal importance in order to understand its possible future developments.

Legal framework and the 2009 Charities and Societies Proclamation

Telake wrote in 2005: "The term Non-Governmental Organization has never been explicitly defined in the Ethiopian law. […] the short-term strategy to handle the issue seems to have been to try to accommodate it within the existing legal framework. This is what is happening in the case of NGO registration. NGOs are treated as like associations for which the law has provision" (Telake: 2005, p. 99).
Until the 2009 *Proclamation*, the Ethiopian law did not provide a specific regulation for Civil Society Organizations. So the legal framework for Civil Society had to be drawn from other sources of the Ethiopian law. The Ethiopian Constitution recognizes the rights of freedom of assembly, of expression and of association. Furthermore, Ethiopia has ratified the major international Human Rights instruments. Other legislations having some provisions indirectly referred to Civil Society Organizations are the *Civil Code* of 1960 and the *Associations Registration Regulation* of 1966 (Wada: 2008, in Assefa and Zewde: 2008).
In the following years, other provisions were put into existence: despite the need for NGOs to sign an agreement with the DPPC (*Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Commission*) in order to be licensed to operate in Ethiopia, many ministries commissions and authorities also have registered and signed agreements with NGOs. In 1992, the Prime Minister Office issued a directive aimed at coordinating NGOs activities under two agencies: the former RCC (now DPPC) for the coordination of the relief and rehabilitation activities, and the former *Ministry of External Economic Co-operation* (now MOFED) for the coordination of development activities. The duty of registering association was then transferred to the *Ministry of Justice* in 1995 and the *Association Registration Office*, with the mandate of registration and supervision of the associations at federal level, was established under its responsibility. However, many problems

remained: the registration process was too long and the obligation of re-registration of an NGO every year at least unusual in the international context. In March 1999, the Ethiopian NGOs community created a common document, "the code of conduct for NGOs in Ethiopia", seeking for an effective collaboration with the Government on development issues (Telake: 2005).

In May 2008 the *Ministry of Justice* presented a draft proclamation regulating the activities of the Ethiopian Civil Society. After long discussions and protests by representatives of the Civil Society, the law has been adopted by the Government in February 2009. The *Proclamation to Provide for the Registration and Regulation of Charities and Societies* (CSP), [is] Ethiopia's first comprehensive law governing the registration and regulation of NGOs. The law is one of the most controversial NGO laws in the world" (ICNL: 2011, p. 1). These are the main aspects of the 2009 *Charities and Societies Proclamation*[31]:

Table 1: Analysis of the 2009 *Charity and Society Proclamation*

Organizational Forms	**Charities** - Institutions established exclusively for charitable purposes and providing public benefit (Article 14 of CSP). Ethiopian law recognizes four types of charitable organizations: a charitable endowment, charitable institution, charitable trust and charitable society.	**Societies**- Associations or persons organized on non-profit making and voluntary basis formation for the rights and interests of their members and to undertake other similar lawful purposes as well as to coordinate with institutions of similar objectives (Article 55 of CSP).
Registration Body	Ethiopian Charities and Societies Agency (Agency)	
Approximate Number	4000+	
Barriers to Entry	Excessive Agency discretion in the mandatory registration of Charities and Societies. CSP Article 68 requires all charities and societies to register. It further requires Foreign organizations to obtain a letter of recommendation from the Ethiopian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. CSP Article 69 allows the Agency to deny registration if, inter alia, (1) the proposed charity or society is "likely to be used for unlawful purposes or for purposes prejudicial to public peace, welfare or good order in Ethiopia"; or (2) the name of the charity or society is in the opinion of the Agency contrary to public morality or illegal.	
Barriers to Activities	CSP Article 14j-n restricts participation in activities that include the advancement of human and democratic rights, the promotion of equality of nations and nationalities and peoples and that of gender and religion, the promotion of the rights of disabled and children's rights, the promotion of conflict resolution or reconciliation and the promotion of the efficiency of the	

---

[31] Adapted from ICNL - International Centre for Not-for-Profit Law: 2011.

	justice and law enforcement services to Ethiopian Charities and Societies.
Barriers to Speech and/or Advocacy	The restriction on NGOs that receive more than 10% of funding from foreign sources from participating in essentially all human rights and advocacy activities may effectively silence civil society in Ethiopia by starving NGOs of resources, and thus essentially extinguishing their right to expression.
Barriers to International Contact	The CSP does not directly restrict International Contact, but the restriction on foreign funding may have a negative effect on International Contact.
Barriers to Resources	The restrictions on NGO resources may force the closures of many of them, especially Human Rights organizations. This is of particular concern in Ethiopia where local sources of financing are very limited and NGOs are thus dependent on foreign funding. Alternately, NGOs may abandon disfavored missions or activities if they cannot raise funds locally to sustain them.

I think it is importance to underline a further distinction created by the 2009 *Proclamation* is the fact that *Charities* and *Societies* can have one of the following three possible legal designations: *Ethiopian Charities or Societies*, *Ethiopian Resident Charities or Societies* and *Foreign Charities*. The first category includes "Charities or Societies formed under the laws of Ethiopia, whose members are all Ethiopians, generate income from Ethiopia and are wholly controlled by Ethiopians. These organizations may not receive more than 10% of their resources from foreign sources. (Article 2 of CSP)" (ICNL: 2011, p. 4); the second group is formed by *Ethiopian Charities or Societies* receiving more than 10% of their resources from foreign sources. *Ethiopian Charities* have furthermore the opportunity to form networks of organizations[32], which can be useful to enhance the collaboration among them. Lastly, the third group includes *Charities* established under the law of a foreign country or with foreigners included in its membership or receiving funds from foreign sources: these cannot engage in advocacy and human rights related activities[33].

Charities and Societies' activities can be restricted by the *Agency*'s almost unlimited authority to supervise their activities (ICNL: 2011). This has been confirmed during my field research: all the organizations I met assured me that the *Agency* has the power to control every aspect, ranging from their programs to their vision or budget.

"A look at its important provisions reveals that any right recognized by it, is easily taken away by the number of limitations provided there in. Moreover, the limitations run through all the process of formation and operations of CSOs or put differently, from registration to dissolution, as a result of which no process is unaffected" (Wada: 2008, in Assefa and Zewde, 2008, p. 190).

---

[32] Interview with *Pro-Development Network*.
[33] Interview with *Islamic Relief*.

During my field research, the organizations I met underlined the fact that the new law strictly distinguishes between development and religious activities[34] but, at the same time, a law regulating the activities of religious organizations[35] is still lacking: they are under the responsibility of the *Ministry of the Interior*[36], but no other legal provision has so far been implemented. Despite this, there is no official discrimination against the formation of Muslim Organizations[37] and religious organizations in general.

From the above analysis, and from some of the results collected during my field research, I think that the 2009 *Proclamation* is still inadequate in regulating Civil Society landscape in Ethiopia and that a better coordination with the Government, instead of a set of restrictions, needs to be implemented. Furthermore, religious organizations have to be regulated, because nobody has an idea about how many they are and about the activities they are engaged in, and they are therefore seen with suspect, or at least that is the impression I got in *Addis Ababa*.

Chapter Four: Findings from research

As already mentioned in the introduction of this thesis, during my field research I did thirteen interviews to different organizations part of Ethiopian Civil Society, as well as I looked through the internet and into my sources in order to get useful information on my topic. As I realized during the interviews, this is the first research that has tried to investigate in depth into Muslims' involvement in Ethiopian Civil Society.

These are the results I collected, organized according to the three questions on which I based my interviews: a description of the organization or association stating its vision, mission and objectives, its activities, the people reached, the staff and every other useful information; whether the organization or association can be labeled as a Muslim organization and what this means; an opinion on Muslims' marginalization in the political field and the non-politicization of Muslims' activities in Ethiopia. At the same time, given the dynamism of the context, I have organized the findings of my research according to the three types of changes taking place in the context under study: the changes occurred in their character and structure, in their socio-political role and in their identity.

---

[34] Interview with *Ethiopian Muslims Relief Development Association*.
[35] Interviews with *Islamic Research and Cultural Centre and Islamic Cultural Centre.*
[36] Interview with *Al-Birr Development and Co-operation Association.*
[37] Interview with *Pro-Development Network.*

Change in character: description of the organizations/associations

The main change occurred in the character of the organizations and associations related to *Islām* has been caused, in general, by the new political landscape after 1991, which has allowed the proliferation of associations and organizations dealing with religion, development and other topics. Moreover, the new directives brought by the 2009 *Proclamation* have determined a radical re-shaping of the Ethiopian Civil Society, which has affected also Muslims' activities.

In order to underline this dynamic structure, I am going to describe the organizations/associations object of my research differentiating them on the base of their being committed to religious or to developmental activities. Development organizations can also be very different in size, affecting therefore the possibility of carrying on activities in the country, and in origins: the majority of the organizations interviewed were formed in recent years and are still very small in size. For this reason, I want to distinguish between small and big organizations/associations as well as between local and international ones, because the last ones have to follow, as already explained in the previous chapter, a different set of regulations.

In my opinion, the different character of every actor in Ethiopian Civil Society can affect its socio-political role and its perceived identity, as I will show in the last two paragraphs of this chapter.

Development activities

Big Local organizations/associations

The organizations labeled as big include the oldest ones among those interviewed and working in the whole Ethiopia. Furthermore, I include in this group also two networks of NGOs because, through the organizations part of them, their activity reaches the entire country.

Charity and Development Association (CDA) "is an Ethiopian Charitable (non-governmental and non-profit making) voluntary development organization dealing with relief, rehabilitation and development efforts in some Zones of Oromia Regional State. It is a humanitarian organization initiated by voluntary individuals to make appropriate development intervention in the country and governed by a general assembly and a board whereby the former constitutes the supreme organ of the association. The then Ministry of internal Affairs of Ethiopia had registered CDA as local development association in 1992. As per the new legislation requirement for re-registration, CDA was successfully re-registered under the Charities and Societies Agency in Ministry of Justice in 2009 as Ethiopian Residents Charity" (CDA Brochure; www.cda.org.et).

As told me by my informants, the association does not pursue any political agenda nor does it promote any religious activity. It works in the whole country for the development of poor people

and marginalized sectors of the society, mainly women and orphans.

"CDA aims at bringing long lasting and sustainable development programs that will add to the preferment living standard of the people with whom it is working and promotion of the wellbeing of the rural and rural town poor through implementation of integrated development activities and participation in relief activities at time of disaster" (CDA Brochure, www.cda.org.et). For example, CDA is part of some networks of NGOs such as PDN and CCRDA[38].

The association's vision is "to see fair and just treatment of women in the society and advocate for equal success of women for basic human rights in an attempt to minimize male dominance [and] to get improved the life of the orphan children and unprivileged people in sustainable way" (CDA Brochure; www.cda.org.et).

Regarding the mission, this association wants to increase the participation and contribution of marginalized people in the socio-economic life of Ethiopia through the provision of formal education, health, OVC support and safe drinking water in order to increase their capabilities and self-reliance (CDA Brochure; www.cda.org.et).

The goal of the association is so stated: "CDA aims at encouraging participatory development that will provide women, children and other disadvantaged groups of the society with necessary marketable and self-employment skills and knowledge for sustainable income generation and assist them to meaningfully play their pivotal roles in society" (CDA Brochure; www.cda.org.et). CDA is therefore currently engaged in developmental activities in the sectors of support for orphans, rural water supply, health service and education (www.cda.org.et). Furthermore, is currently working on emergency relief in the Somali region.

"Ethiopian Muslims Relief and Development Association [EMRDA] is a legally registered indigenous NGO established in 1994 by a group of dedicated persons to heal the degraded conditions of underprivileged Ethiopians from absolute poverty regardless of sex, ethnicity and religious differences. Registered under the Federal Ministry of Justice, and signing operational agreement with the country's Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Commission (DPPC) and the Regional Line Bureaus, EMRDA is operating in Afar, Amhara, Oromia and *Addis Ababa* Regions. EMRDA strives to bring about sustainable change in the lives of poor and vulnerable groups residing particularly in rural areas of the country" (www.emrda.info, this is the old website). The new website states that "EMRDA was re-registered as Ethiopian Residence Association with Registration No 0194 in October 2009" (www.emrda.org). The *Ethiopian Muslims Relief and Development Association* has its headquarter in *Addis Ababa*.

The goal of this association is to act as a strong integrated development organization against poverty, especially in the rural areas of the country.

Its objectives are: to support the expansion of formal education and training; to provide skills training to youth, orphans and women; to provide care and support to OVC, as well as capacity

---

[38] *Consortium of Christian Relief Development Association*, is an umbrella of local organizations.

building and food security programs of the community-based organizations; to implement projects for the environment protection; to contribute to the Ethiopian Millennium Development in the strategy for poverty reduction; to contribute to the HIV/AIDS and other diseases prevention and control; to provide skill training and financial support to youth, orphans and vulnerable children, women living in poverty conditions and community-based organizations; to sensitize the marginalized communities in order to eliminate poverty conditions; to provide relief and rehabilitation support in case of disaster; to mobilize internal or external resources for projects and to participate in implementing national policies.

Its activities therefore are in the fields of education, child labor reduction, OVC care and support, training, reproductive health and HIV/AIDS prevention, women empowerment, CBOs capacity-building, small-scale water development, disaster and emergency relief, humanitarian aid (www.emrda.org).

The only reference to Muslims is in the old website, where the major donors of the organization are listed: among the partners of the association are cited many Muslim and Islamic transnational organizations reported by some authors as active in Ethiopia[39].

During the interview, EMRDA's Program Director confirmed the information I previously collected on the internet. Therefore, I asked him to whom should we refer when dealing with "Muslims" cited in their name. The answer was that the association does not pursue any religious activity being registered as a *Resident* development *Charity* under the 2009 *Proclamation*. "Muslim" can only be referred to their values. Furthermore, despite being active in the whole Ethiopia and working without discrimination for all the people in need, sometimes the association prefers to work in predominantly Muslim areas.

I have also tried to verify the information I had regarding funding: the 90% of the association funds come from Western Countries through multilateral organizations as the *World Bank* or single organizations as *Pact*. Among the donors there are also Christian organizations like CCRDA.

According to my informant, the *Ethiopian Muslim Development Agency* (EMDA) is a not-for-profit, not-political and not-partisan organization. The peculiarity of this organization is that it has been established as the development wing of the *Ethiopian Islamic Affairs Supreme Council* (see below) in May 2000 (EMDA Profile: 2007) and only very recently has begun working in a separate compound and as a separate body from it. It has been re-registered as a *Resident Charity* organization under the 2009 *Proclamation* and for this reason cannot engage in religious activities.

---

[39] Among the others are listed the *Organization of Islamic Conference* (OIC) linked to the EMRDA for activity grant; the *Sheikh Abdella Alnury Charity* for activity grant as well; the *Ethiopian Islamic Affairs Supreme Council* for co-operation; the *Sheikh Mohamed Hussen Alamudi* linked to the EMRDA for capacity building and activity grant; the *Humanitarian Relief Foundation Turkey* for activity grant; the *Muslim Aid UK* for activity grant; the *World Assembly of Muslim Youth* for information sharing and membership; the *World Muslim League* for information sharing.

Despite this, the *Agency*'s developmental activities seem to be set up explicitly for Muslims, since them are clearly cited in its vision, mission and goals. The organization's vision is "observing spiritually and substantially sound integrated dynamic Muslim Community of Excellence" (EMDA Profile 2007: p. 7) which has been changed into "to improve the living conditions of the marginalized & poor Muslim community of Ethiopia and enhance the sustainable livelihoods at the grass roots level" (EMDA Presentation 2011) as cited in a recent power-point presentation provided me by my informant.

The *Agency*'s mission is "helping the Ethiopian Muslim Community at large to have good spiritual life and participate in the country's socio economic development effort by alleviating and then eradicating poverty through an organized mass participation approach" (EMDA Profile: 2007, p. 7). In their recent presentation the mission is: "addressing the health, education and socio-economic problems of the marginally served Muslim Community and improving the well-being of this section of the community through an integrated and participatory community development approach" (EMDA Presentation: 2011).

Regarding the *Agency*'s goals, in the *Profile* three major goals are cited: the preparation and implementation of projects and programs that can sustainably improve the living conditions of marginalized and poor people of Ethiopia; the study of Muslim communities' social and economic problems and the participation in advocacy and sensitization; the participation in relief and rehabilitation efforts (EMDA Profile: 2007, p.7). These goals are similar to those listed in the 2011 presentation, with the difference that the last one includes also the *Agency*'s efforts against the spreading of HIV/AIDS. The objectives or strategic goals include: "Assist the community in achieving food security in sustainable manner; to ensure that the impacts of HIV/AIDS are addressed within communities in Islamic context; assist non-formal education in the remotest parts of the country; to enhance the accessibility of primary health care services and clean and potable water to the less benefited Muslims found in arid and semi-arid regions of the country" (EMDA Profile: 2007, p. 7). The 2011 *Presentation* adds also "build up the capacity of EIASC/EMDA; contribute towards gender equity; environmental protection and reduction of climate change" (EMDA Presentation: 2011).

As told me by my informant, the *Agency* mainly works in the HIV/AIDS sector, providing for example information material on HIV/AIDS prevention taught by *Imām* in the mosques; furthermore, it has organized workshops on climate change as well as developed a project on water together with a German NGO. It gives support to OVC education and works against FGM (feminine genital mutilation), on leadership capacity building and provides daily health services in some areas of the country. The *Agency* works in the whole Ethiopia and provides help to both Muslims and non-Muslims. Its funds come from EIASC and other donors as for example USAID (EMDA Profile 2007).

My informant told me that EMDA works according to human values and does not separate Muslims from non-Muslims as beneficiaries of its development activities. He added that the word "Muslims" in the name of the *Agency* indicates that it mainly works in Muslim

communities even though nowadays there are no places where only Muslims live. The staff is entirely formed by Muslims.

Concerning local networks, *Pro-Development Network* is among the biggest ones, with at present 26 *Ethiopian Resident Charities* part of it[40]. As told me by the Executive Director, the majority of the organizations part of the *Network* is administered by Muslims, as the *Network* itself, but none of them can be labeled as Islamic Organization.

This *Network* was created some 3 or 4 years ago from the willing of the majority of the member NGOs to work as a network for example for fund raising: this was made possible by the 2009 *Proclamation* that authorized the formation of networks. As cited in their *brochure* and in their 2011 *Profile*, "*Pro-Development Network* /PDN/ is a consortium of Ethiopian residents charities. PDN is registered by the charities and societies agency and given certificate of registration and license bearing the number 1701 in March 2010" (PDN Brochure; PDN Members' Profile 2011, p.2; www.pdn.org.et). "The Network has bylaws and application forms in which possibilities of membership expansion is exposed. […] PDN in behalf of its members correlates with networks, consortiums, umbrella organizations, forums and the likes for mutual benefits of its members" (www.pdn.org.et).

The structure of the organization consists of a General Assembly, of a Board and of a Secretariat office. In order to realize its objectives, PDN has organized different work units and departments based on its activities (PDN Brochure; www.pdn.org.et).

Regarding the vision, the *Network* "aspires to see a prosperous Ethiopia, where all citizens participate-in and benefit-from national development" (PDN Brochure; PDN Members' Profile 2011, p.2; www.pdn.org.et). "The mission of the network is become 'one of the leading networks in the country that adds value to its members, building the capacity, creating better access to resources and establish strategic alliance with all stakeholders in close collaboration with members, beneficiaries, government and other development partners" (PDN Brochure; PDN Members' Profile 2011, p. 2; www.pdn.org.et).

As the Executive Director told me, their objectives are not different from other networks' objectives: these range from coordination to fund raising and technical support, in particular:

---

[40] Here is the list of the member organizations in December 2011: *Center for Development Initiative*/CDI/; *Charity and Development Association* /CDA/; *Crescent School network* /CSNet/; *Development and Relief Association* /DRA/; *East West Development and Support Association* /EWDSA/; *Empathy for Life Integrated Development Association*; *Ethio-Gulf Development Association* /EGDA/; *Ethiopian Muslims Relief and Development Association* /EMRDA/; *Give Water Society* /GWS/; *Guidance Welfare and Development Association* /GWDA/; *Health Professionals Association* /HPA/, *Hidaya Development Association* /HDA/; *Hunde Nageya Development Association* /HNDA/; *Idfa' Charity Association* /ICA/; *Ifteen Relief and Development Association* /IRDA/; *International Languages Promotion Association* /ILPA/; *Islamic Research and Culture Centre* /IRCC/; *Kelem Education and Training Association* /KELEM/; *Kheirat Muslim Women Capacity Building Organization* /KMWCBO/; *King Nejashi Charitable Organization* /KNCO/; *Millennium Anti-HIV/AIDS Poverty Reduction and Development Organization*; *Muslim Graduates Initiative for Education and Training* /MGIET/; *Nama Charity and Development Association* /NCDA/; *Nur-Selam HIV Positive Muslim Association of Tigray* /NSHMAT/; *Selam Women Counseling Support Organization* /SWCSO/; *WOFA Development and Islamic Organization*.

"Building the overall capacity of member organizations to enable them play active role in the sustainable development of the country" (PDN Brochure; PDN Members' Profile 2011, p. 3; www.pdn.org.et). This main goal is articulated into several specific objectives: building members capacity; creating consultative platforms; building the financial capacity of the network and member organizations; promote research and studies on development; actively participate in the nation building process supporting specific sectors that are believed to accelerate national development priorities based on the development directions of the government (PDN Brochure; PDN Members' Profile 2011, p. 3; www.pdn.org.et). The Executive Director, furthermore, highlighted that the *Network* believes that there should be equal rights and opportunities for everybody and that there should not be discrimination.

Concerning the *Network*'s core values, these are equity and justice; the belief in continuous capacity development; solidarity with the poor and marginalized; respect for diversity and team work; integrity, impartiality and reverence; "doing more with little"; commitment, accountability and transparency; efficiency and professionalism (PDN Brochure, www.pdn.org.et).

Regarding its activities, PDN is mainly involved in the training of technical and senior management staff of member organizations and in the Board development, in organizing events such as workshops, conferences, experience sharing and exposure visits, in providing technical and material support as well as professional consultancy and in leading fund raising. Great evidence is given, in their website, to the activity of sponsoring and/or cosponsoring "action based research activities in areas of development to promote innovations in development approaches and to document best practices for further expansion" (www.pdn.org.et). Member organizations operate in different areas: education, health care; potable water; gender and women empowerment; capacity building; skills training and employment creation; support for OVC; agriculture and food security; rural development and environment; community dialogue and support; linguistic and cultural promotion (PDN Brochure; PDN Profile 2011, p. 4).

I have had the opportunity to talk with the Coacher Person of the *Ethiopian Interfaith Development Dialogue and Action* (EIFDDA), a Muslim woman with great experience in the NGOs sector in Ethiopia, in particular with Muslim women: it has been really interesting to have her opinion on Muslims' activities in Ethiopian Civil Society and to have a look into an organization rather different from the other ones I met.

The network "was initiated in 1999 as a country-level extension of the World Faiths Development Dialogue (WFDD). It was established in December 22, 2002 and formally registered in 2006 as an Alliance of Faith Based Organizations (FBOs)[41] in Ethiopia" (EIFDDA Brochure). According to my informant, EIFFDA has been established by different religious

---

[41] But only FBOs that carry on development activities (EIFDDA Brochure). The *brochure* I am referring to is outdated and unfortunately the website (www.eifdda.org.et) does not provide the exact definition used by EIFDDA for its members after the 2009 *Proclamation*.

group representatives, now there are 10 member organizations[42] tied to *Islām*, Christianity and *Bahai* religion[43]. With the 2009 *Proclamation*, EIFDDA has been re-registered as a *Resident* development *Charity* and works as a consortium of NGOs. The organizations related to *Islām* part of the network are the *Ethiopian Islamic Affairs Supreme Council* (EIASC), the *Ethiopian Muslim Development Agency* (EMDA) and the *Ethiopian Muslims Relief and Development Association* (EMRDA). There are two coacher persons according to the religions mainly represented in the consortium, at present *Islām* and *Bahai*.

The network's vision is "to see interfaith harmony and spiritual and material prosperity among the peoples of Ethiopia" whereas the main values and principles "are rooted in the scriptures of their [of the members] respective religions and are […] fellowship, solidarity, collaboration; tolerance, integrity, inclusiveness; concern for others, fairness and justice; commitment and devotion; accountability, honesty, transparency" (EIFDDA Brochure).

Their aims are the promotion of coexistence; the promotion and co-vision of religious and spiritual values and the support to people in need especially in the sectors of HIV/AIDS, OVC and against SDD (stigma discrimination and denial). "EIFDDA hopes to achieve its aim by engaging its members and partners in the complementary and mutually reinforcing learning processes of dialogue on substantive issues related to mainstreaming religious values in Development and Action. Such an approach is expected to ultimately bring about social, economic, cultural and spiritual prosperity for the vast majority of Ethiopians living in material poverty" (EIFDDA Brochure).

The network mainly works in the sectors of HIV/AIDS, with a focus on the social mobilization for OVC support and against SDD as well as mainstreaming and capacity building activities for its member organizations. The tools for this kind of interventions include community conversation facilitated by religious leaders, the launching of media campaigns and the establishment of training and workshops. Another field of activity is in the sector of good governance, where EIFDDA is engaged in the Provision of Basic Services projects on health, water and education in some regions of the country. Furthermore, the network promotes peace building and conflict transformation as well as information sharing.

EIFDDA also coordinates *Ethiopian Women of Faith Initiative* (WoFi), an initiative launched in

---

[42] EIFDDA's founding members are: the *Ethiopian Orthodox Church* (EOC) *Development and Inter-Church Aid commission, Ethiopian Orthodox Church Children and Family Affairs Organization* (EOC-CFAO); the *Ethiopian Islamic Affairs Supreme* Council (EIASC*) - Ethiopian Muslims Development Agency* (EMDA); the *Ethiopian Catholic Church* (ECC) - *Ethiopian Catholic Secretariat* (ECS); the *Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus* (EECMY); *Christian Relief and Development Association* (CRDA); the *Ethiopian Muslims Relief and Development Association* (EMRDA); *Norvegian Church Aid* (NCA); *Christian Aid-Ethiopia* (CA); the *Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus – Development and Social Service Commision* (EECMY-DASSC); the *Ethiopian Kale Hiwot Church* (EKHCDP); the *National Spiritual Assembly of the Bah'a'is of Ethiopia* (NSABE); the *Sabri Development Institute* (NSABE-SDI).

[43] The *Bahai* religion has its origins in *Islām* but can be regarded as a religion of its own due to the doctrine novelties it has introduced.

2010 and formed by ten women of EIFDDA's member organizations[44]. It works at national level[45] and proposes focuses on gender violence and OVC. My EIFDDA informant is its representative in Ethiopia. I think it is worthy to cite this initiative, because it involves several Ethiopian Civil society organizations related to faith but working in a gender perspective.

Of course nor EIFFDA nor WoFi can be labeled as Muslim organizations, even if religion and *Islām* of course have an important influence in their activities. Interestingly enough, my contact used the definition "Muslim Organizations" to refer also to development organizations.

Small Local Organizations/Associations

This group of organizations includes those working only in some regions of the Ethiopia, with a small staff or having a very recent formation. The only exception regards the first organization introduced, quite old, but it has changed character and range of activities.

Al-Birr Development and Cooperation Association is a local development organization. According to their *brochure*, *Al-Birr* obtained its license to operate as a charity organization in Ethiopia from the *Ministry of Justice* in 2001 (Al-Birr Brochure). As told me by my informants, *Al-Birr* was founded by the *Muslim Brothers* with the scope of unifying their activities in the country under a single institution. At the beginning, it was established with the name *Al-Birr and Education Association* and was a religious organization working in the South of Ethiopia. After some years it began working in the development sector. The current organization was then re-established in 2005 and only works on development for human resources and infrastructures. It has been re-registered in 2009 as a *Resident* development *Charity*. Interestingly enough, nor the people I talked with, nor the *brochure* they gave me, refer to the mission and vision of the organization.

Al-Birr's objectives are the followings: commitment to the diffusion of safe and right way of living in the society; participation in the improvement of health and culture levels of the society; participation in the help to weak and needy people; support to orphans; education and training of the youth; relief in case of natural disasters (*Al-Birr* Brochure). *Al-Birr* works in the education sector and in the support of destitute families and orphans giving its help to family where the breadwinner has died mainly for HIV/AIDS. The *brochure* explains its activities: *Al-Birr* has opened schools and organized training courses for youth; has drilled wells for water; has supported orphans through scholarships; has facilitated marriages; has supported weak and poor people; has given grants in the *hajj* period as for example meals for poors. The association,

---

[44] *Ethiopian Orthodox Church Development and Inter Church Aid Commission* (EOC-DICAC); *Ethiopian Orthodox church-Children and Family Affairs Organization* (EOC-CFAO*); Ethiopian Islamic Affairs Supreme Council-Ethiopian Muslims Development Agency* (EIASC-EMDA); *Ethiopian Muslims Relief and Development Association* (EMRDA); *Ethiopian catholic Secretariat* (ECS); *Evangelical Church of Mekane Yesus Development and Social Service Commission* (EECMY-DASSC); *Ethiopian Kale Hiwot Church Development Program* (EKHCDP); *Ethiopian Mulu Wongel Amagnoch Church Development Organization* (EMWACDO); *Ethiopian Meserete Kristos Church Relief and Development Association* (EMKCRDA).
[45] There are also continental and global initiatives of this kind.

furthermore, wants to expand its buildings and activities with the establishment of a health and education center (*Al-Birr* Brochure).

Al-Birr is currently working in many regions of Ethiopia and prefers to work in predominantly Muslim areas. The staff is composed by Muslims.

The 2009 *Proclamation* includes the promotion of culture among development activities. This is why *Islamic Research and Cultural Centre* (IRCC) has been registered as a *Resident Charity* for development. It has been established in 2003 with the goals of giving information on Muslims and *Islām* in Ethiopia to every interested subject as the Government, NGOs or individuals; writing and preserving the history of Ethiopian Muslims trying to fill in the gap left by the past deprivation of Muslims' history and culture; preserving the literary and cultural heritage left by Muslims in Arabic or other languages; providing capacity building trainings for example on research methodology in a Muslim perspective: the *Centre* sponsors researches and gives advices for Senior Essays, especially in social sciences, providing examples of topics and giving researchers access to its library sources. There is, in fact, a library with books in Arabic, English and Amharic on *Islām* related topics and secular subjects as well as a section with the research papers they sponsored.

The Research Coordinator told me that the staff is Muslim but everybody can have access to the results of their researches. Furthermore, a criterion for their activity is non-discrimination: stakeholders and donors may be whoever. The *Centre* focuses on Muslim society as a social and not as a religious group. It is an organization based on faith but works in the academic research sector as a secular center. With the word "Islamic" in their name, they mean the Islamic society and culture and not the religion.

Despite the concerns expressed by EIFDDA Coacher Person, some organizations established by women and working for women in a Muslim perspective do exist. They are mainly formed by educated and open-minded women, with whom talking was a real pleasure. I have met three of them, the only three I got to know about.

I first met *Hidaya Development Association* (HDA) director. This is a small non-governmental, non-political, not-for-profit organization established and registered as a *Resident* development *Charity* in December 2009. "HDA is an association committed to the reduction of overall poverty and eradication of extreme poverty and bringing about lasting improvement in the undesirable conditions and lives of poor people especially focusing on women and children" (HDA Profile: 2011, p. 2; HDA Brochure).

The vision of the association is "to see the poor and marginalized segment of the population become vibrant members of the society and live in a situation where their holistic development needs are met" (HDA Profile: 2011, p. 2; HDA Brochure).

Regarding the mission, it works for improving the lives of poor people through education and humanitarian sustainable development programs collaborating with local communities and institutions (HDA Profile: 2011; HDA Brochure).

"HDA will strive to achieve the following objectives: 1. To promote education and training, humanitarian and development activities and acquisition and dissemination of knowledge in various fields to meet the needs of Ethiopian people. 2. To improve the quality of lives of women and children (OVC) from poor families by caring for and educating them. 3. To focus on and engage in works that promote sustainable poverty reduction strategies. 4. To promote the sanitation and health needs of women and children. 5. To expand educational and health facilities. 6. To undertake research activities that promote the healthy and all-rounded living needs of women and children" (HDA Profile: 2011, p. 2; HDA Brochure).

The sectors of activity are the following: education, health and HIV/AIDS, child support, income generating activities, women empowerment, training and capacity building, research activities (HDA Profile: 2011, p. 3; HDA Brochure). Being a very small organization[46], it works only in *Addis Ababa*. Currently, HAD is working on projects for poor women and children support: it has organized training for women with the objective of creating income generating activities and is helping a number of families through economic support to one of their children's education.

This association can be considered a Muslim organization only in relation to the values at its core. The staff is Muslim and it mainly works for Muslims.

Kheirat Muslim Women Capacity Building Organization (KMWCBO) is an organization founded in 2009 by a group of female students, mainly composed by Muslims. I had an interesting meeting with the Board Chairman and a Board member. The idea behind *Kheirat* was to create services as tutorial and training programs for Ethiopia's Muslim women community, because women are usually not included in the country's activities. The organization is registered under the 2009 *Proclamation* as a *Resident* development *Charity*; it is a small organization composed by Muslim women only. The majority of members, about 150, are volunteers and contribute economically or offering their help to the organization's activities. *Kheirat* does not currently have donors except its members. Because of its size, it is active only in *Addis Ababa*, especially in the disadvantaged areas of *Arada* and *Merkato* and in university campuses.

The vision and main goals of the organization are about Muslim women's empowerment in the education, social and economic sectors and do not refer to any political agenda.

Kheirat mainly works with Muslim female students, poor women and orphans. Regarding the first group, it works with university and high school students providing different trainings for example in self-development and leadership. Being a students' organization, it is easy to get in contact with students. Regarding poor women, the organization works with women in need or affected by HIV/AIDS supporting them, for example paying their rents and giving them clothes; it also supports orphans' education fees. *Kheirat* is providing sponsorships for female Muslim students in campuses and is working on a project for the involvement of professional women in social activities.

---

[46] Currently the staff is composed by 5 people.

Selam Women Counseling Support Organization (SWCSO) is a relief organization established in 2010 and registered according to the 2009 *Proclamation* as a *Resident* development *Charity*. It is an organization made by women and working for women. It is mainly formed by volunteer women, it does not pursue any political agenda and works in collaboration with the Ethiopian government and *Addis Ababa* administrations.

The organization's goal is to develop the society empowering women: "if you empower women they change society", my informants told me referring to all the women still under the control of their fathers or husbands.

The organization works as a training and counseling center. In fact, it has established a sewing and a computer training center for women. The beneficiaries are chosen by the sub-city government. Furthermore, it has a counseling center for women mainly on the issue of marriage: *Selam* works with a layer, who follows women with marriage problems, divorced, or close to get married. This organization is therefore working for women capacity-building in order to get their own source of income and being more independent as well as for being more aware of their own rights. Currently, it is working only in three sub-cities of *Addis Ababa* but, according to the generosity of the donors, it would like to expand its activities in the country.

International organizations/associations

As already introduced in Chapter Three, *Foreign Charities* are formed under the law of a Foreign Country, follow a different regulation from *Ethiopian* and *Ethiopian Resident Charities* and, for the same reason, cannot engage in the same activities.

Islamic Relief can be considered one on the most famous organizations engaged with *Islām.* As stated in its website, *Islamic Relief* is "an international relief and development charity which envisages a caring world where people unite to respond to the suffering of others, empowering them to fulfill their potential. We are an independent Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) founded in the UK in 1984 by Dr Hany El Banna" (www.islamic-relief.com).

Islamic Relief (IR) is based on Islamic values but states that its support activities of emergency relief and development projects are carried regardless of religion. Its aim is to build partnerships with local communities in order to promote economic and social development, eradicate poverty, illiteracy and disease. Its mission is: "Enable communities to mitigate the effect of disasters, prepare for their occurrence and respond by providing relief, protection and recovery. Promote integrated development and environmental custodianship with a focus on sustainable livelihoods. Support the marginalised and vulnerable to voice their needs and address root causes of poverty" (www.islamic-relief.com).

Islamic Relief works in more than 25 countries. It has been established in Ethiopia in 2000, providing emergency relief for the 2000-01 droughts. In 2004 an office has been opened in *Addis Ababa*. *Islamic Relief* is carrying on long-term development projects in the fields of education, health, water and sanitation, livelihoods and food security in several regions of Ethiopia.

I had the possibility to meet a representative of this international NGO in *Addis Ababa*. During the interview, I tried to understand in what it differs from local ones: *Islamic Relief* does not have local founds and the Ethiopian law limits its activities, it cannot therefore engage in activities related to advocacy and human rights. It is a faith-based organization: its values, vision and mission are influenced by *Islām*. Despite this, it does not discriminate on the basis of religious faith and support whoever is in need. The new *brochure* states for example that *Islamic Relief*'s vision is: "Inspired by our Islamic faith and guided by our values we envisage a caring Country where communities are empowered, social obligations are fulfilled and people respond as to the suffering of the others" (IR Brochure[47]). The values of the organizations are stated as: "Following Prophetic Guidance […]: sincerity, social justice, compassion, custodianship, excellence" (IR Brochure).

The organization is carrying on two types of activities: emergency responses and development intervention. It works in the regions of *Somali*, *Afar* and *Addis Ababa*. In the first two regions, it mainly works in Muslim communities, whereas in *Addis Ababa* it has a child support program with Muslim and non-Muslim children. The staff is mixed: both Muslims and Christians are working for this organization.

Despite the fact that IR is the only development NGO with reference to *Islām* I got to know about[48], I think that it is important to underline that there are some associations and organizations based in Saudi Arabia Kuwait Sudan Libya India and USA, or connected to their charitable activities, reported by Erlich (Erlich: 2007) Salih (Salih, in De Waal: 2004) Burr and Collins (Burr and Collins: 2006) to be active in Ethiopia. These are *Al Da'wa*, *Al Birr al-Dawliya*, the *Islamic Culture Association*, the *Saudi World Salvation Association*, *Al Ittihad Al Islami* (active in Sudan and Somalia), the *Saudi Arabia Red Crescent Society*, the *Muslim World League,* the *Mercy International,* the *Organization of the Islamic Conference,* the *Islamic African Relief Agency,* the *World Islamic Call Society,* the *International Islamic Charitable Organization,* the *International Islamic Relief Organization,* the *Aga Khan Foundation,* the *World Assembly of Muslim Youth,* the *Jamaat al Tabligh,* the *Al Haramain Islamic Foundation.* I have tried to investigate into the activity of the *International Islamic Relief Organization* (IIRO), but some of my informants told me that the organization has ceased its activities in Ethiopia some months before my visit to the country[49]. I was not able to contact the others while in *Addis Ababa*, nor did any of my contacts mention them as being active in the country. Østebø (Østebø: 2007) reports the presence in the Capital city of the *Ethiopian Muslim Youth Association*, which has

---

[47] When I first met them, asking for an appointment, the secretary gave me two brochures: an older one issued in 2009 and a new one from 2011. I refer hereafter to the newest publication.

[48] My contacts, in fact, reported the other International Organizations found on the internet or cited in the literature as not active in the country, or at least without offices and representatives in Ethiopia.

[49] I regard this information as reliable because referred me by the Dean of the *Awelia College* formerly administered by *International Islamic Relief Organization* and by my *Islamic Relief* informant. I have tried to go to its headquarter in *Addis Ababa*, but I did not find it at the address they gave me.

been closed down in 1995[50], and of the *Islamic Da'wa and knowledge association*[51] whereas Erlich cites the activities of the *Mawafaq al Khairiya* (Erlich: 2007). Furthermore, in a recent study on Islamism, Østebø cites other organizations: the *Addis Ababa Ulema Unity Forum* (AAUUF), composed by *Salafi* scholars and *Ṣūfī* community, which has been closed down in 2009; the *Ahl al-Sunna*, a *Salafi* oriented organization active in Ethiopia since the 1990s; the *Takfir wal Hiğra*, a radical *Ṣūfī* organization established in 1990s; the *Madkaliyya*, a *Salafi* association active in *Addis Ababa* since 2006 as well as the activities of Muslim groups in the capital city from the *Gurage* community or in *Addis Ababa University* (Østebø: 2010). Unfortunately, none of my informants was willing to help me in confirming the above information.

Religious activities in the Ethiopian Civil Society

As already mentioned in Chapter Three, CSOs do not merely include NGOs, but also other kind of associations, organizations or groups active in the civil sector. I believe that the main dynamism among Muslim actors active in the Ethiopian Civil Society is the one taking place in its "religious sector" because still not regulated by the law and more based on informal networks, mainly mosque-based. During my field research, I have met some representatives of Muslim organizations and found out information on other types of religious activities in the country.

The *Ethiopian Islamic Affairs Supreme Council* (EIASC) "was formally established in 1976 in the aftermath of the revolutionary changes that had been unfolding in the country since 1974. But throughout the period of military rule, it only functioned as a *de facto*, not *de jure*, organization. Attempts to secure a legal personality and a license for the Council, one of the demands put forward at the time of the big Muslim demonstration in April 1974, failed partly because of the traditional hostility against, and suspicion of, *Islām* as a potential ally of anti-Ethiopian forces and partly because of the ineptitude, corruption (financial, administrative and electoral) and rivalry within the leadership of the Council. This greatly undermined its credibility and claims to represent the Ethiopian Muslim community. However, the chairmen of the Council were formally recognized by the government as 'representatives of the Ethiopian Muslim community' and treated equally, at least symbolically, with the spiritual heads of the Orthodox, Protestant and Catholic Churches" (Ahmed: 2006, pp. 11-12).

EIASC has been described by many of my informants as a weak umbrella organization, not representing Ethiopian Muslims anymore. One of them also advises me not to go there because they were not inclined to give information about them to foreigners. I must admit that contacting them was not easy, but I finally made an appointment and they were kind and collaborative. They did not say much about the organization, but gave me some documents and allowed me to

---

[50] Informant: Mr Hassen Muhammad and then confirmed by Dr. Abdella from *Awelia College*.
[51] As cited in the introduction, I have tried to get an appointment with the Executive Manager of this organization without success as well as I tried to contact *al-Wahda*, an association working for Muslim youth.

make pictures of the panels with their vision etc… in their office which I used as sources for this writing[52].

"*Ethiopian Islamic Affairs Supreme Council* (EIASC) is non-profit, Faith-Based Organization that seeks to improve the development and spiritual need of current and future Muslim generation around the country. It was reorganized in 1995 after the realization of democratic rights in the country after the dismissal of the military regime and the replacement of EPRDF led government. EIASC represents an estimated 40-50% of the population of the country" (EMDA Profile: 2007, p. 1). The *Council* is the governmental institution officially representing Ethiopian Muslims. It follows the federal structure of the state: it has a council representative in all the eleven regions of the country and local affairs representatives. It has elected representatives at all levels of the Ethiopian administrative structure: *kebele, woreda* and *zone*. These follow a pyramidal structure up to the regional representatives who choose the national representative. My informant also told me that the organization has a chairman, a vice-chairman and a secretary; the *Council* is furthermore organized into 8 committees according to the different activities in which it is engaged.

The *Council*'s vision is so stated in their panels: "To see a peaceful, just and prosperous world in which the society is well developed spiritually and materially". Its mission is: "To empower the Muslim community in freely exercising his faith and actively involves in the national socio-economic and development endeavors". The values at the core of the *Council*'s activity are: "spiritually justice and equality; good governance; promoting community participation, sharing experiences, transparency and accountability; mutual collaboration; respect and love; volunteerism; adaptation and persistence; self-development; building a self-reliant Muslim community".

EIASC is mainly engaged in religious activities: it provides logistic support for people wanting to do the *haǧǧ* to Mecca and/or other less important pilgrimages known as ʾ*umrah*, it surveys mosques in the country, it is engaged in religious propagation activity (*daʿwah*), it gives help and relief through EMDA and follows regional committees.

Being a governmental institution, EIASC does not pay taxes to the Ethiopian government. The main source of funds comes from the *haǧǧ*: it has a service charge for every person who does the pilgrimage and a commission on flight tickets. With this money, it can pay salaries, included those of people serving into mosques, and finance mosque activities.

During the interview at the *Islamic Cultural Centre* (ICC), I have been told that this is a small religious center founded in 2006: according to the 2009 Law, it is a religious organization and for this reason cannot engage in development activities. The *Centre* does not have any political objective and works according to the law and in collaboration with the Ethiopian government. It deals with teaching and education, offering support courses for preparatory school or university students. These are mainly Muslims. They also offer support to Muslim women interested in

---

[52] Unfortunately EIASC new website, www.eiasc.org.et does not provide useful information about the *Council*.

learning more about *Islām*. Support courses include religious and secular subjects taught for free by Master or Ph.D. Graduates and access to the center library. Furthermore, the *Centre* works for the preservation of Muslim cultural heritage for example conserving researches on *Islām* made by *ʿUlamāʾ*.

The *Centre* has contacts with both local and international organizations (as WAMY, *World Assembly of Muslim Youth*) and receives economic support from its members as well as from donations made by local people.

On the Internet there are information regarding the *Ibnu-mosoud Islamic Center* (IMIC) also known as *Ibnu Mas'oud Islamic Center*. It has been founded in 2001 (according to www.islamicfinder.org) or 2009 (according to www.nesiha.org) in *Addis Ababa*. Its main activity regards the teaching of the fundamentals of *Islām* and of Arabic language. www.nesiha.org states that the organization is licensed and registered by the Ethiopian *Ministry of Justice* as an independent religious organization and that its founding comes from donations made by Ethiopians. Its services include an Arabic and *Šarīʿah* Institute for women, a *Qurʾān ḥifz* centre, a modern library, an internet *Daʿwah* centre, an audio recording studio, an Islamic study for deaf Muslims, a Muslims' training centre, a computer and Basic Academy study for students of religion, different lectures for males and females as well as different courses and trainings. I have been told by one of my contacts[53] that this centre is active in *Abimat*, *Addis Ababa*.

Daru al-Hijra for Da'wa and guidance center is an Islamic centre founded in May 2007. On www.islamicfinder.org is defined as an Islamic center in *Addis Ababa* that deals with religious affairs and charitable activities under the Ethiopian *Ministry of Justice*. On the same website is also listed the *Ababora Yewetatoch Limat Mahiber,* an association established by the local youth in *Addis Ababa* with the scope of helping financially and trying to educate people who cannot afford going to school. Its main source of funding derives from *Zakāt* and from unspecified monthly contributions.

Schools are very visible in *Addis Ababa* and many of them are inspired by religion even if they cannot teach according to religious curricula[54]. I managed to have an interview with the Dean of the *Awaliyah School and Mission*[55]*Centre* (or *Awelia School*) in *Addis Ababa*. This school has been cited in Østebø's study on religious revival in Ethiopia as an example of formal relationship between Saudi-controlled *Muslim World League* before and IIRO after 1993 and Ethiopian *Salafis* (Østebø: 2007). This seems not to be the case anymore, since the *Centre* has recently moved under the responsibility of the EIASC[56]. An important school in *Addis Ababa*, founded as

---

[53] Interview with Dr. Abdella Khedir, Dean of the *Awelia College.*
[54] Interview with Dr. Abdella from *Awelia College.*
[55] An interesting analysis of Islamic education in Addis Ababa is offered in: Bawer, Oumer (2000) *A history of Awelia Secondary Muslim Mission school (1968-1999)* BA-thesis in History, Addis Ababa University
[56] Interview with Dr. Abdella from *Awelia College.*

an Islamic school, is also the *Abadir School*, still active[57]. www.islamicfinder.com lists some Islamic schools working in *Addis Ababa*. One of these is the *Medewa School* (*Mawaḍḍa),* an Islamic school teaching academic and religious subjects. Another one is the *Al-Imam Shafie Madrasa*, providing teaching based on the *Qurʾān* and the *Sunnah* (Prophet's tradition). An unspecified *al-Ansar centre* is also cited: this, as told me by my informant[58], is a *Salafi* center which formerly belonged to the *Awelia School*. A third Islamic school cited on the same website is the *Madinah Arabic Center* situated in the *Madrasa al-Qalam al-Islamiyya*, located close to the *Awelia School*. It provides online Arabic courses for Amharic speakers, based on the curriculum of the *Arabic Institute of the Islamic University of Madinah* in Saudi Arabia.

On the Internet are also available information regarding book-stores specialized in Islamic books, as the *Habesha Islamic Book Store,* whose goal is to provide "pure and correct books" (www.islamicfinder.org) of the Muslim tradition and community. They provide audio tapes and CDs in Arabic, English and Amharic; book and tapes about the faith; scientific lesson courses for *ʿulamāʾ* published by *Maktabah al-Imam Ahmad* and *Dar al Manhaaj* and by other *Salafīyah* publishers. I visited it and I found mainly Arabic books, together with few works in English and Amharic. It mainly sells books from traditional Muslim-Arabic literature as well as religious books for adults and children. Erlich cites in his research the *Najashi Publisher* (Erlich: 2007), which is close to *al-Anwar* mosque, and I have been told about the existence of *al-Bayyan* Publisher[59] in *Merkato* area. The Islamic press is widespread: my contacts listed some newspapers published in Ethiopia, as *Al-Salafīyah, Al-Quds; Ṣaut al-Islām; al-Hiǧrah* (published by EIASC); *al-ʿAlam*[60](published by the Ethiopian Government); *ye Muslimoch Godday* and *al-Islām*[61].

Several mosques are also part of the landscape of the city. I think it is important to cite them in this research for the importance of the informal networks they can generate among Ethiopian Muslims living in *Addis Ababa*, perhaps also among women, and for their informal activities of aid and support for the population. The main ones are *al-Anwar* and *al-Nūr* (*Banin Safar*) mosques.

A last interesting point is the presence of on-line networks about *Islām* in Ethiopia. Their activities include the creation of a network of Ethiopian Muslims, also living abroad (*Badr Sisters*); the provision of news about *Islām* and Muslims (*Radio Bilal, Ethiomuslim media*); the publication, translation and selling of "Muslim" books (*Nejashi Islamic Publisher*) and *Daʿwah*

---

[57] Interview with Dr. Abdella from *Awelia College*.

[58] Interview with Dr. Abdella from *Awelia College*.

[59] Interview with HDA.

[60] Ahmed published a paper dealing with this newspaper: Ahmed, Hussein (1991) *Al-ʿAlam: the history of an Ethiopian Arabic Weekly* in *Proceedings of the Eleventh International Conference of Ethiopian Studies* edited by B. Zewde, R. Pankhurst, T. Beyene – Institute of Ethiopian Studies, Addis Ababa University 1994

[61] Interview with Dr. Abdella from *Awelia College*.

activities (*Muslims to Muslims, Badr Dawaa*). Furthermore, there are also some Ethiopian Muslims' Organizations abroad with good websites giving information and creating networks among the Ethiopian Muslim Diaspora such as *Badr Ethiopia* based in Washington D.C., *Al Nejashi Trust Incorporated* in New Zealand, the *Darul Iman Ethiopian Muslim Community* of Las Vegas, the *Bilal Community Center* of Dallas, the *Ethiopian Bay Area Muslims Association* of San Francisco, the *Muslim Women Support Centre*, a global network, the *Negashi Community Center of Atlanta,* the *Tawfiq Islamic Center* in Minnesota and the *Network of Ethiopian Muslims in Europe.*

Change in the socio-political role of organizations/associations

In general, all the organizations I met firmly rejected the idea of a politicization of Muslims' presence into Ethiopian Civil Society and all stated that they do not pursue any political agenda. The organizations committed to development are pursuing only developmental goals, and I think that the strict control made by the *Charities and Societies Agency* can function as a deterrent in case they change their field of activities. Religious organizations are not subject to the same control, but they seem to be interested only in religious issues. Furthermore, I had the impression that they did not want to talk about politics, because perceived as a hot issue, especially if related to *Islām*.

Many informants told me that nowadays Muslims do not want to engage into politics even if after the fall of the *Därg* regime they have the right to do it. This is related to the fact that historically their main activities were related to trade: Muslims "pray and trade" told me my SWCSO informant. More importantly, in my opinion, are the perceived concerns in Ethiopian society regarding Muslims' presence in the political sphere.

Muslims' participation in Ethiopian Civil Society, furthermore, remains more based on informal networks. During the meeting with EIFDDA, the coacher person gave me her opinion about Muslim women and their participation in the Ethiopian Civil Society. It has been really interesting to get to know that according to her there are few Muslim organizations led by women and working for women, because Muslim women usually support each other through informal organizations such as *Iddirs*. Furthermore, the existing Muslim organizations work in the sectors of support and development, but none of them focuses on right issues and in particular on women's rights and their education. Furthermore, she thinks that Muslims should ask to be more active in the political field and also should be less suspicious towards the government: she cited me the case of rumors about the closing of two Muslim organizations because of their being Muslim.

There is little knowledge about Muslims' involvement in Ethiopian Civil Society: in *Addis Ababa* I felt that people were a bit suspicious towards the topic of my research, because they thought it could be related to political *Islām* or Islamism. Moreover, many told me that there was nothing to research about.

Moreover, sometimes there is a misrepresentation of Muslims' participation in Civil Society. For

example, IR informant reported that, being registered as *Foreign Charity*, IR cannot engage in religious activities. Nevertheless, often people misunderstand IR's goals because of its name and logo[62] and believe that it builds mosques or gives Islamic teaching. Furthermore, it is often confused with the Saudi-based IIRO, engaged in religious activities. It also has difficulties in government offices when asking for agreements or similar issues: my contact told me that its representants always have to explain that IR does not pursue religious objectives.

Another example of this type has been provided by CDA informants: they told me that CDA was perceived by one of my informants as a Muslim Organization because its leading person, with whom I then had the talking, is a Muslim. This gave me the opportunity to reflect on the fact that NGOs do not really know each other and that for this reason it becomes easy to misunderstand what kind of activities they are carrying on.

Changed identity: self-representation and perceived marginalization

Regarding organizations' self-representation, from the above account we can infer that in general they do not want to be labeled as Muslim Organizations even if the majority of them perceived themselves to be so. The only two "pure" Muslim organizations are in fact EIASC and ICC, which however are not dealing with development activities: they are religious organizations concerned with *Islām* and Muslims.

As stated during the interviews or as written in their informative materials, the other organizations cannot be defined "Muslim". First of all, the law does not allow them to mix up development and religious activities (PDN interview) and all of them work in accordance to the principle of non-discrimination providing support to whoever is in need.

The only organizations which, during the interview, rejected to be defined "Muslim" are EIFFDA, WoFi, SWCSO and CDA. For the first two, this is of course related to the fact that they are interfaith forums and therefore cannot be related to only one faith. SWCSO cannot be labeled as a Muslim organization because, despite the fact that the staff is formed mainly by Muslims, it works with women of every religious faith. They also told me that now is a good moment for Muslim women in the country: they can go out and gather so Muslim women can go and visit their organization without fear.

During the interview with CDA, my informants clearly told me that it cannot be defined a Muslim organization: CDA helps whoever is in need without discrimination on the basis of their faith and has a mixed staff because it hires people according only to their qualities and not to their faith. There are no "special places" for *Islām* in the organization, they believe in the values of equality and of mutual co-existence among religions. This was the only place I went where I did not see any "visible sign" of *Islām*.

The other organizations I interviewed, instead, did not clearly reject this definition, but gave me their personal interpretation of it.

---

[62] *Islamic Relief* has the symbol of a minaret in its logo.

In general, they perceive their being Muslim Organizations in relation to their values. My contact at IR, for example, stated that it is a faith-based organization whose values, vision and mission are influenced by *Islām*. PDN cannot be regarded as a Muslim organization because forbidden by the Ethiopian Law but, nevertheless, signs of *Islām* are well visible in its office as the veiled secretary and the presence of pictures of Mecca and *sūrah* on the walls. PDN, as told me by the Executive director, does not work on the basis of *Islām*: the adjective "Muslim" is applicable just to its values.

Also EMRDA perceives its being Muslim in relation to values. In particular, the "Muslim" in their name can only be referred to the values at the core of their activity: for example, my contact told me that the association has a credit/saving program in which it prefers to lend money without interests as suggested by *Islām*. Furthermore, despite being active in the whole Ethiopia and working without discrimination with all the people in need, sometimes the association prefers to work in predominantly Muslim areas. He then concluded that "Muslims" does not refer to the activities, to the mission nor to the people they are working with. Nevertheless, visible signs of *Islām* are present in their office such as pictures of Mecca and some *sūrah* on the walls, as veiled women employed.

EMDA's case is more complex, since Muslims are clearly cited in their vision, mission and goals. My informant told me that the *Agency* works in accordance with Muslim values: for example in the HIV/AIDS sector they do not promote sexual encounters between not-married people and are against drinking alcohol. HDA can be considered a Muslim organization only in relation to the values at its core, which are nevertheless not only part of *Islām*: humanity, impartiality, integrity, quality, impact and sustainability, independence and good governance (HDA Profile, 2011; HDA Brochure).

KMWCBO can be defined a Muslim organization in the sense that it works in accordance with the values of *Qurʾān* and *Hadīṯ*: these are in fact applicable to the society as for example the notions of development, women empowerment or influence on other people. They state that, working for a better society, they define themselves a Muslim organization.

Another reason according to which the organizations can perceive themselves as Muslims is related to the people they are working with and their staff members.

EMDA, for example, mainly works in Muslim communities and its staff is formed only by Muslims. Also PDN employs only Muslims.

Al-Birr works in the whole Ethiopia and prefers to work in predominantly Muslim areas because they believe them to be historically marginalized. The principle according to that it chooses people to work with follows religious faith: *Al-Birr* prefers working with Muslims even if some non-Muslim families are included into its projects because the selection of beneficiaries is made by local authorities. The staff is instead only composed by Muslims, many of them studied abroad in Arabic countries, and signs of *Islām* are well visible in the office: for example they do not use shoes inside.

IRCC employees are only Muslims, but everybody can access it. HDA staff members are Muslims and it mainly works with Muslims. In principle KMWCBO works for every woman,

Muslim or not, but, as my informants told me, they mainly work with Muslim women because usually these have less opportunities and less access to education. Furthermore, they believe that, in order to improve the society, it is necessary to empower Muslim women.

Regarding Muslims' marginalization perception, all the interviewed had a lot to say about.

During the interview with IR, my contact generally referred to Muslims' marginalization: according to her, in the past Muslims were marginalized and therefore concentrated their activities on trade. This allowed Muslims to keep contacts with the Middle East, also for seeking education. Nowadays, a state of mind according to which Muslims are seen as inferiors is still present in Ethiopia.

EMRDA and *Al-Birr* prefer to work in predominantly Muslim areas because perceived as marginalized: historically, in fact, the majority of Muslims did not benefit from nor contribute to any development activity; these areas have therefore been marginalized also in a geographical meaning, because far from the center of the country. According to my EMRDA informant, furthermore, these people have the right to participate in the socio-economic development of the country, but for doing so they need services and resources: EMRDA has the goal of helping them.

I think it is interesting to cite the personal opinion of PDN Executive Director concerning religious tolerance and Muslims' participation in Ethiopian Civil Society: according to him, Muslims have been marginalized in the past, for example concerning education, but with the present government things are getting better and there is an equal participation of religious communities in the public field, with a bigger involvement of Muslims in the social and political affairs compared to the past. Therefore, since some Muslims had been victims of discrimination, PDN wants to work as a bridge between cultures avoiding discrimination on the basis of religion.

HDA Director told me that in the past Muslims have been marginalized but that now the law is equal. Despite this, its implementation is not easy and sometimes differs from the law prescription: she told me that the majority of people employed in civil, law and government services are not Muslims and therefore less inclined to listen to Muslims' requests. According to KMWCBO's informants, Muslims have been marginalized in the past and there is still a misrepresentation of Muslims and of Muslim women which are seen as incapable of working and studying: KMWCBO wants to go against this because it is time to re-establish equilibrium among Muslim men and women, and among rich and poor Muslims.

SWCSO's informants told me that, in their opinion, Muslims do not have the same opportunities in the society because this is fearful of them. ICC's informant, instead, understood my question about Muslims' marginalization as related to politics: he told me that that the majority of Muslims is excluded from political field and that the Ethiopian Law does not allow the formation of religious parties.

Also Muslims' culture is perceived as marginalized: IRCC works, in fact, for the preservation of Ethiopian Muslims' history and for filling in the gap left by the past deprivation Muslims' history and culture.

Conclusions

In this last chapter I will provide some conclusions for my research, highlighting what I consider to be the novelty brought out with this study. I will refer to the literature analyzed in the State of Research that will be organized according to the three changes already presented.

First of all, it is not possible to use a single definition as "Ethiopian Muslim Civil Society" to generally define the character of the organizations I met. This is clearer in the case of development organizations, because the Ethiopian Government does not allow mixing up development and religion: but much depends also from the self-representation of the various organizations.

Dealing with Muslims' involvement into Ethiopian Civil Society, we necessary deal with the characteristics of Ethiopian *Islām*. I would like to underline its indigenous character and, at the same time, its capacity of adapting to and assimilating different traditions of Ethiopian Society (Ahmed: 2001). I think that, despite a growing external influence, Ethiopian *Islām* is still preserving its "local" aspects, which can play an important role in contrasting the reformist and Islamist pressures. These external influences are nowadays analyzed in all their different aspects by the literature. A group of scholars consider them to be a tool for politicization of *Islām* in Ethiopia, as reported by Erlich in his analysis of Saudi Arabia's influence on Ethiopia (Erlich: 2007), whereas others see them as a development not able to impact on Ethiopian *Islām* or at least not to politicize it (Abbink: 1998; Østebø: 2007).

We cannot deny, however, that the growing impact of *Islām* in the country is a consequence of the Islamic Revival that has followed the fall of the *Därg* regime and of the subsequent opening of the country to democracy and freedom of association: these have favored, among other things, the establishment of associations and organizations concerned with *Islām* (Abbink: 1998; Abbink: 1999; Abbink: 2007; Ahmed: 2005; Erlich: 2007). The literature, however, has focused so far only on them as being or as being related to transnational Islamic NGOs engaged with Islamism (Salih, in De Waal: 2004; Burr and Collins: 2006; Erlich: 2007; Østebø: 2010). A different interpretation has been presented by Østebø regarding Islamic Reform Movements, but he did not analyze the character of Muslims' presence into Ethiopian Civil Society (Østebø: 2007).

The presence of indigenous Muslim actors in Ethiopian Civil Society, in fact, has begun to be investigated with this study, that of course is not exhaustive but that I think has shared some light on the context. I want to underline, in particular, that many Muslim indigenous actors are involved in Ethiopian Civil Society, and that they are characterized by a high dynamism as showed by their young presence and by the re-shaping still into existence caused by the recent 2009 *Proclamation*. Furthermore, they are very different in size, origin, as well as in the activities they are carrying on: a new phenomenon is, for example, their willingness to establish networks for coordination, made possible by the 2009 *Proclamation*. From the past, instead,

Ethiopian Civil Society has inherited an informal character, still testified by the *Idir* institution.

There have been some changes concerning the socio-political role of Muslims involved in Ethiopian Civil Society. First of all, I would like to answer to the questions raised by Abbink in his paper regarding this issue. He asks whether *Islām* can act as a vehicle for political and social mobilization and if it can lead to the creation of an exclusivist Muslim identity. I personally think that *Islām* has the potential to act as a political and social vehicle but that in the Ethiopian case it is confined only to the social sphere, into which I include of course Civil Society. Regarding the political mobilization and creation of an exclusivist identity, I think that much depends on the political attitudes in the country, where so far religious involvement in the political field is forbidden, and on Ethiopian Muslims' willing to preserve their "locality". Much depends on, of course, Muslims' marginalization: the current law does not discriminate them and therefore they can have access to education and to all sectors of employment: their empowerment in the social sector can therefore discourage any possible attempt to use *Islām* as a political tool.

I agree with Østebø according to whom Ethiopian *Islām* seems to be non-politicized, refuting therefore Erlich's thesis (Erlich: 2007). Østebø underlines that, on the contrary, *Islām* in Ethiopia is becoming more informal and deinstitutionalized, with EIASC as the sole official institution representing Ethiopian Muslims (Østebø: 2010). This informal *Islām* is taking root in the country, as showed by a growing importance of mosque-based networks. Ethnic federalism (Trovoll: 2000), with its promotion of ethnicity at the expenses of religions, is of course a partial cause for *Islām* growing informality.

The organizations I met assured me that they do not pursue any political agenda behind their development or religious activities: of course this cannot be confirmed during an interview, but the general impression I got is that, after having been excluded from the political sphere for a long time, nowadays they prefer to remain out of it and to try to improve their situation in the society starting from the access to education, really seen as a priority, and the support to those Muslims still living in marginalized areas.

From what I have been told especially from IR and CDA, I understood that there is a diffuse misrepresentation of Muslims involved in Civil Society. On the one hand, they are perceived by a part of the society and in some cases by authorities as wanting to spread *Islām* through development and, for this reason there is suspect towards their programs; on the other hand, it can happen that Muslims regard an organization a "Muslim Organization" because led by a Muslim.

Moreover, during my staying in *Addis Ababa* I perceived a general lack of knowledge about the topic I was researching on, among both Muslims and Christians also in the academic sector. Unfortunately, this lack of knowledge is diffused also among organizations: I had the impression that they do not know each other's activities and some of the people I interviewed expressively told me that they do not know much about Muslims' presence in Ethiopian Civil Society. The result is that there often is an overlapping among programs beneficiaries and objectives whereas

other sectors are left completely uncovered.

This is the case, as told me during the interview with EIFDDA, of human rights and advocacy activities. Some organizations are beginning to work in this sector, especially regarding women, but there is still a lot to do. I came up with some possible explanations for the lack of involvement in some sectors: this can be due to the fact that the organizations I have dealt with have been established very recently and therefore prefer to provide material support, easier to organize; a lack of involvement in these sectors generally affects Ethiopian Civil Society because of historical reasons: human rights and advocacy issues, in fact, are faced only in well-established democracies or, related to a previous conclusion, Muslims may be fearful of being misunderstood if engaged in human rights and advocacy activities.

Furthermore, I would like to highlight the importance of informal networks for Muslims' participation in Ethiopian Civil Society, in particular those formed by Muslim women that often prefer to be part of a self-support association instead of constituting a formal organization.

Identity is a very dynamic issue in Ethiopia. As reported by Abbink, in fact, Ethiopians are generally characterized by a "religious oscillation" that for example brought Muslims to adopt practices typical of Christianity and vice-versa. This flexible identification has allowed a general coexistence between different religious groups and the adaptation of religion to the cultural and social context of the country (Abbink. 1998).

Despite this, some changes are happening in the religious landscape of the country. There is a growing "religious competition" (Abbink: 2011) among Christianity and *Islām* that I could feel in *Addis Ababa* for example at night when, exactly after the call to the prayer sang from the mosque, a sermon started to be diffused with the microphone from the church. The competition is reported to be stronger between *Wahhabi* and new Evangelical and Pentecostal churches: this is of course part of the phenomenon of religious revivalism that is affecting both Christianity and *Islām* and that can have a negative influence on the patterns of religious coexistence typical of Ethiopia (Abbink: 1998; Abbink: 2011). During the time spent in *Addis Ababa*, I could feel an underground tension between religious communities, which was confirmed also during the interviews: there is a growing suspect toward the "different" as well as prejudices concerning religious practices and beliefs. It seems to me, in the end, that the patterns of coexistence are in danger not so much because of external influences on *Islām*, but more because of a changing attitude among people which should be analyzed further.

The majority of the organizations/associations who perceive themselves as being Muslim do so because acting according to values that are typical of *Islām*. Therefore *Islām* has an influence on their visions and not on the activities the organizations are engaged in.

Muslims were subject to marginalization in the past, due to the tradition according to which *Islām* was perceived as external to Ethiopia (Ahmed: 2001), because of the Christian legacy on the Empire and later on because of the policies contrary to religion put into existence by the *Därg*. According to Negash, Muslims in Ethiopia lack political representation because of

demography, Muslims being a minority, and because of the process of modernization that has favored Christian communities (Negash: 2010). As discovered during my interviews, Muslims perceive themselves as having been marginalized in the past but are generally optimistic regarding an improvement in their conditions. Nowadays, in fact, they have more opportunities in education, and are free to organize themselves into organizations according to the law: these represent good opportunities to empower themselves. Despite this, they continue to consider their community as underestimated in the Census: I have been told that Muslims are more than half of the Ethiopian population but that the government is silent on this issue because of the possible negative impact that this can have in a country traditionally considered Christian.

Appendix: List of Informants

Informants at *Addis Ababa University*:

- Prof. Shiferaw Bekele: Professor at the History Department. He gave me the contacts of other informants and introduced me to the *Institute of Ethiopian Studies.*

- Dott. Hassen Muhammad: Ph.D. student in Arabic Philology. I met him on 2011/09/27; 2011/10/14; 2011/10/19 and 2011/11/21 at the university campus. He gave me the contacts of some organizations and some advice for references on *Islām* and Islamic education in Ethiopia. He also came with me to IRCC.

- Dott. Abdella Khedir: Dean of the *Awelia College.* I met him on 2011/10/04 at the *College*: he gave me information on *Islām* in Ethiopia and many contacts for organizations. He informed me about other schools, mosques and Islamic press. He allowed me to visit the compound where the *College* is and his collaborators gave me information on the school and its *curricola.* I met him also on 2011/11/17 and 2011/12/06.

- Dott. M.A.: Ph.D. student in Arabic Philology. I met her on 2011/10/14 at the university campus. She gave me information on Muslim women's organizations and *Idir.*

- Dott. Ibrahim Mulushewa: Ph.D. student in Arabic Philology. I met him on 2011/10/14 at the university campus. He provided me information on the history of *Islām* in *Addis Ababa* and on the *Abadir School.*

Informants, materials and websites of the organizations:

- *Ethiopian Muslims Relief and Development Association* (EMRDA): Mr. Abdul Aziz, Program Director, interviewed on 2011/10/18 in his office.

  http://www.emrda.info/ and http://emrda.org/
  The first website is updated until 2004, when the association opened up a new website. There have been variations in EMRDA's vision, mission and objectives and the programs have been updated. The new website provides information about EMRDA's activities, its partners and donors, as well as its contacts and how to make a donation.

- *Pro Development Network* (PDN): Mr. Abdul Kadir, Executive Director, interviewed on 2011/10/21 in his office. He gave me a *brochure* of the organization. I came back to PDN's headquarter on 2011/12/06 to take the *Profile* of the organizations part of the consortium.

http://www.pdn.org.et/
PDN's website provides general information on the network (vision, mission, objectives), on its activities and on its members. Unfortunately, the list of members in not updated. There are, moreover, links to useful material, to other networks and to the websites of some of the organizations part of PDN.

- *Hidaya Development association* (HDA): Mrs Zahra Zeinab, Director, interviewed on 2011/11/02 in a cafeteria in the same building where HDA office is located, which I visited after the interview. She gave me the *Profile* of the organization and a *brochure.* I had also a phone call with her to have another contact for interview.

- *Islamic Research and Cultural Center* (IRCC): Mr. Muhammad Ali, Research Coordinator, interviewed on 2011/11/21 in his office.

- *Islamic Cultural Centre* (ICC): Mr. Muhammad Yusuf, Director, interviewed on 2011/11/22 in his office.

- *Ethiopian Interfaith Development Dialogue and Action* (EIFDDA): Mrs. Bedria Muhammad, coacher person e project coordinator of Wo.FI. (*Ethiopian Women of Faith Initiative*), interviewed on 2011/11/22 in her office. She gave me the *brochures* of EIFDDA and Wo.Fi.

  http://www.eifdda.org.et/
  EIFDDA's website is not very rich: there is some information on the consortium formation, on its activities and on the organizations part of the network, but the majority of the links does not work properly.

- *Al-Birr Development and Co-Operation Association*: Mr. Fethulbari Mohammed Nur, Secretary General, Mr. Mohammed Tajudin, Project Officer, Sultan *Haǧǧ* Aman, General Manager Officer, interviewed on 2011/11/23 in their office. They gave me a *brochure* of the organization, only released in Arabic.

- *Kheirat Muslim Women Capacity Building Organization* (KMWCBO): Miss K., Board Chairman, and Miss Z., Board Member, interviewed on 2011/11/30 in a cafeteria in *Piassa* area.

- *Ethiopian Islamic Affair Supreme Council* (EIASC): Mr. A.K.I., former director of EMDA, I first met him on 2011/11/1 in EIASC compound and I interviewed him on 2011/12/05 in EIASC compound. He provided me some documents about EIASC and EMDA, and EMDA's *Profile*. On the same day I interviewed also Mr. N, employed in EIASC Finance Sector.

http://www.eiasc.org/site/index.php and http://www.eiasc.org.et/

The first website is in English but, unfortunately, still under construction: it provides only some information on Muslim presence in Ethiopia. The second website in only in Amharic and not updated.

- *Ethiopian Muslims Development Agency* (EMDA): Mr. Nureddin Jamal, Director, interviewed on 2011/12/05 in EIASC compound. I met him also on 2011/12/09 in his office at EMDA, when he gave me a ppt. presentation of the agency.

- *Selam Women Counseling Support Organization* (SWCSO): Mrs. F, Director, and one of her collaborators, interviewed on 2011/12/05 in SWCSO office.

- *Islamic Relief* (IR): I went to its headquarter on 2011/11/09, 2011/11/29 and on 2011/12/06. During my first visit, the secretary gave me two IR *Brochures*. During the second visit, I met Mr. T., Program Director, who introduced me to Mrs. D., his collaborator, expert in public relations, interviewed on 2011/12/06.

  http://www.islamic-relief.com/
  IR website provides information concerning IR formation, its activities and the places where it works. For each country, in fact, there is a file about the realized projects and the ones still active. Furthermore, the website home page focuses on news and analysis of world crisis. In the website there is also a IR list of contacts across the world for information, job opportunities and donations.

- *Charity and Development Association* (CDA): Mr. M.A. N., Director, and Mr. A., Program Director, interviewed on 2011/12/11 in the association compound. They gave me a *brochure* of the association.

  http://www.cda.org.et/
  CDA website is rich of information concerning its projects and programs. There are listed the association history, its vision, mission, objectives, as well as news and links to CDA contacts or to make a donation.

References

Abbink, Jon (1998) *An historical-anthropological approach to Islam in Ethiopia: issues of identity and politics* in: *Journal of African Cultural Studies*: vol. 11, no. 2

Abbink, Jon (1999) *Ethiopian Islam and the challenge of diversity* in *ISIM Newsletter* 4

Abbink, Jon (2007) *Transformation of Islam and communal relations in Wollo, Ethiopia* in: Soares, Benjamin F. and Otayek, Rene (2007) *Islam and Muslim politics in Africa* New York: Palgrave Macmillan

Abbink, Jon (2011) *Religion in public spaces: emerging Muslim – Christian polemics in Ethiopia* in: *African Affairs* 110/439

Ahmed, Hussein (1993) *Trends and issues in the history of Islam in Ethiopia* in: Nura Alkali and others (ed.), *Islam in Africa: Proceedings of the Islam in Africa Conference* Ibadan, Spectrum Books

Ahmed, Hussein (2001) *Islam in Nineteenth century. Wallo, Ethiopia – Revival, reform and reaction* Leiden: Brill

Ahmed, Hussein (2005) *History of Islam in Ethiopia* in Uhling, Siegbert (ed.) (2005) E*ncyclopaedia Aethiopica, vol. II* Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag

Ahmed, Hussein and Gori, Alessandro (2005) *Islam* in Uhling, Siegbert (ed.) (2005) E*ncyclopaedia Aethiopica, vol. II* Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag

Ahmed, Hussein (2006) *Coexistence and/or confrontation? Toward a reappraisal of Christian-Muslim encounter in contemporary Ethiopia* in: *Journal of Religion in Africa* 36:1

Al-Birr Development and Cooperation Association *Brochure*

Alemayehu Seifu (1969) *Eders in Addis Ababa– A sociological Study* in *Ethiopian Observer* vol. XII no. 1

Assefa, Taye and Zewde, Bahru (ed.) (2008) *Civil Society at the Crossroads – Challenges and Prospects in Ethiopia* Forum for Social Studies, Addis Ababa

Bankole, Adeyinka (2008) *NGO Sector in the Quest for Africa's Development: with emphasis on Nigeria* in Bankole Adeyinka, Puchnarewicz Elżbieta (2008) *NGOs, International Aid and Development in the South* Faculty of Geography and Regional Studies, University of Warsaw

Bultcha, Mekuria (1973) *Eder: its role in development and social change in Ethiopian urban centres* IV year senior Essay – School of Social Work Haile Selassie I University, Addis Ababa

Burr, J.Milliard, and Collins, Robert (2006) *Alms for Jihad: Charity and Terrorism in the Islamic World.* Cambridge

Charity and Development Association *Brochure*

Ethiopian Interfaith Forum for Development Dialogue and Action (EIFDDA) Brochure

Ethiopian Islamic Affairs Supreme Council (2007) Profile of Ethiopian Muslim Development Agency

Ethiopian Muslim Development Agency (EMDA) (2011) Presentation

Ethiopian Women of Faith Initiative (WoFi) Brochure

Erlich, Haggai (2007) *Saudi Arabia and Ethiopia: Islam, Christianity and politics entwined* Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner Publishers

Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (2009) *Proclamation No. 621/2009*: *Proclamation to Provide for the Registration and Regulation of Charities and Societies* in *Federal Negarit Gazeta of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia* Year 15th, 13 February 2009

Hidaya Development Association (HDA) *Brochure*

Hidaya Development Association (HDA) (2011) *Organizational Profile*

Hiskett, Mervyn (2004) *The course of Islam in Africa* Edinburgh : Edinburgh University Press

ICNL (International Centre for Not-for-Profit Law) (2008) *NGOs Law Monitor – Ethiopia* last updated 16 November 2011

Islamic Relief (IR) *Brochure*

Kapteijns, Lidwien (2000) *Ethiopia and the Horn of Africa* in: Levtzion, Nehemiah and Randall L. Pouwels (eds) (2000) *The history of Islam in Africa* Athens: Ohio University Press; Oxford: James Currey; Claremont: David Philip

Kefale, Asnahe and Aredo, Dejene (2009) *Civil Society and Governance in Ethiopia since 1991* in *Good Governance and Civil Society participation in Africa* OSSREA – Addis Ababa

Moten, Rashid (1993) *Islam in Ethiopia: an analytical survey* in: Nura Alkali and others (ed.), *Islam in Africa: Proceedings of the Islam in Africa Conference* Ibadan, Spectrum Books

Negash, Tekeste (2010) *The Status of Islamic Law in Ethiopia: An Introduction to an unexplored research subject. A Paper read in honour of Francesco Castro, Professor of Islamic Law, at Rome University (Tor Vergata) May 28, 2010* in: *African Studies Compendium 2010*

Pankhurst, Richard and Eshete, Endreas (1958) *Self-help in Ethiopia* in *Ethiopia Observer* vol. II no. 11

Pro-Development Network (PDN) *Brochure*

Pro-Development network (PDN) (2011) *Members' Profile*

Robinson, David (2004) *Muslim societies in African history* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Salih, Mohamed M.A. (2004) *Islamic NGOs in Africa: the promise and peril of Islamic Voluntarism* in: De Waal, Alex (ed.) (2004) *Islamism and its enemies in the Horn of Africa* London: Hurst and Company

Telake, Daniel Sahleyesus (2005) *Non-Governmental Organizations in Ethiopia. Examining Relations between Local and International Groups* The Edwin Mellen Press: Lewiston; Queenston; Lampeter

Trimingham, J. Spencer (1952) *Islam in Ethiopia* London

Tronvoll, Kjetil (2000) *Ethiopia: a new start?* Minority Rights Group International, London.

Vaughan, Sarah and Tronvoll, Kjetil (2003) *The Culture of Power in Contemporary Ethiopian Political Life* SIDA Studies n° 10

Zewde, Bahru and Pausewang, Siegfried (ed.) (2002) *Ethiopia: the challenge of democracy from below.* Uppsala Addis Ababa: Nordic Africa Institute (Nordiska Afrikainstitutet): Forum for social studies

Østebø, Terje (2005) *A history of Islam and inter-religious relations in Bale, Ethiopia* Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, Uppsala: Universitetstryckeriet

Østebø, Terje (2007) *The Question of Becoming: Islamic Reform-Movements in Contemporary Ethiopia* Chr. Michelsen Institute

Østebø, Terje (2009) *Religious change and Islam: the Emergence of the Salafi movement in Bale, Ethiopia* In: *Proceedings of the 16th International Conference on Ethiopian Studies,* ed. by Svein Ege, Harald Aspen, Birhanu Teferra and Shiferaw Bekele; Trondheim

Østebø, Terje (2010) *Islamism in the Horn of Africa. Assessing ideology, Actors and Objectives.* In *International Law and Policy Institute Report 02/2010* edited by Kjetil Tronvoll; Oslo

Websites

http://www.islamicfinder.org/cityPrayerNew.php?country=ethiopia Last accessed 2012/03/30

http://nesiha.org/ Last accessed 2012/03/30

http://ethiomuslimsmedia.com/muslim/ Last accessed 2011/05/15

http://bilalcommunication.com/ Last accessed 2011/05/15

http://www.nznejashi.org/ Last accessed 2011/05/15

http://communitylink.reviewjournal.com/servlet/lvrj_ProcServ/dbpage=page&gid=01445001051 197080835256242 Last accessed 2011/05/15

http://www.bilalcommunity.org/ Last accessed 2011/05/15

http://www.mcabayarea.org/ Last accessed 2011/05/15

http://www.mwsc.com.au/ Last accessed 2011/05/15

http://www.negashicenter.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1:welcome-to-negashi-community-center&catid=1:latest-news Last accessed 2011/05/15

http://tawfiqic.org/ Last accessed 2011/05/15

http://www.ethiopianmuslims.net/ Last accessed 2011/05/15

http://www.badrethiopia.org/ Last accessed 2011/05/15

http://badrsisters.org/default.aspx Last accessed 2011/05/15

http://www.badrdawaa.org/ Last accessed 2011/05/15

http://www.wics-it.org/ Last accessed 2011/05/15

http://www.iico.net/home-page-eng/index-eng.htm Last accessed 2011/05/15

http://www.oic-oci.org/ Last accessed 2011/05/15

http://www.srca.org.sa/ Last accessed 2011/05/15

http://www.themwl.org/Home.aspx?l=ar Last accessed 2011/05/15

http://www.tablighijamaat.org/ Last accessed 2011/05/15

http://www.historycommons.org/entity.jsp?entity=the_islamic_african_relief_agency   Last accessed 2011/05/15

http://www.historycommons.org/entity.jsp?entity=al_haramain_foundation_1   Last   accessed 2011/05/15

http://www.wamy.co.uk/ Last accessed 2011/05/15

IR's website: http://www.islamic-relief.com/ Last accessed: 2012/01/04

EMRDA's websites: http://www.emrda.info/ and http://emrda.org/ Last accessed: 2012/01/04

EIASC's   websites: http://www.eiasc.org/site/index.php   and   http://www.eiasc.org.et   Last accessed: 2012/01/04

PDN's website: http://www.pdn.org.et Last accessed: 2012/01/04

EIFDDA's website: http://www.eifdda.org.et Last accessed: 2012/01/04

CDA's website: http://www.cda.org.et Last accessed: 2012/01/04