

AFRICA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

CONVERSION FROM ISLAM TO CHRISTIANITY AMONG  
THE ARSI OROMO: MISSIOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS  
FOR CHRISTIAN WITNESS

BY  
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July, 2011

**Student Declaration**

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I declare that this is my original work and has not been submitted to any other College or University for academic credit.

The views presented herein are not necessarily those of the Africa International University or the Examiners

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## ABSTRACT

The Arsi Oromo people are part of the wider Oromo people group of Ethiopia and Islam is the dominant religion of the people despite the presence of minority Christians among them. This thesis attempts to understand the conversion process of the Arsi Oromo from Islam to Christianity. It employs Rambo's seven stage model of conversion process in order to understand the conversion experiences of Arsi Oromo MBBs (Muslim Background Believers). The changes resulting from conversion and how the western Arsi local churches engage in helping Arsi Oromo converts to adapt to the existing church context are examined. Twenty converts (ten MBB women and ten MBB men) have been interviewed in order to get emic data about their conversion process.

The literature review part seeks to discuss conversion from the perspectives of different disciplines. The biblical and theological views of conversion are discussed as a basis for conversion from Islam to Christianity. The review also assesses and discusses conversion from the perspective of social sciences and the various works that have been done on conversion from Islam to Christianity.

This research employs ethnographic research method, which is a branch of qualitative research method in order to gain understanding of the conversion processes of the Arsi Oromo MBBs. The data was collected through unstructured and semi structured interviews and moderate participant observation. The coded data (appendix 2) presents the emic view of conversion in the way the stories told by the interviewees. Based on this data the analysis has been carried out in order to get etic view of the conversion process. The aim of this study is to gain a deeper and wider understanding of the different processes involved in the conversion of Arsi Oromo.

Through the findings of this research, it has been established conversion is a long time process and influenced by various factors: the context of the convert, crisis, quest, and interaction with the agents of the gospel. A strong desire for relationship with the divine and ethical community was the core factor in the conversion process of the Arsi Oromo. The study also registered peace, joy, assurance of salvation, and fulfillment are the immediate positive consequences of conversion despite all converts facing various degrees of persecution from their community. Allegiance, moral and cultural encounters are also the most important changes observed in the life of converts as a mark of genuine conversion. This study also shows that more conversion happened in the rural village which is very hostile environment for Christianity compared to the towns that enjoyed freedom of worship. In the final chapter, missiological implications for Christian witness are drawn from the research findings. Recommendations for further study are also proposed.

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## **OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS**

**MBB:** Muslim Background Believer

**Potential convert:** A Muslim person, who started a journey of conversion process, but not yet converted to the Christian faith.

**Convert (s):** A person who has come to the faith in Jesus Christ from the Muslim background. It is synonym to MBB.

**Chat:** A plant that grows in some parts of Ethiopia and most Muslims chew its leaves to keep them awake and energetic. It has low nicotine content, but Evangelical churches prohibit their members using it.

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The researcher was converted from Islam to Christianity in 1995, and passed through various conversion processes. He has learned the Christian faith through the teaching of the church and been involved in various Muslim outreach programs. In his ministry, he has encountered different kinds of Muslims, and even led several to Christianity. The researcher experienced persecution at a personal level as well as observed several cases of persecution of converts in his ministry. On the other hand, many Muslims backslide to their former faith due to various reasons. Furthermore, most of the Christian churches expect complete and drastic changes from their converts both in terms of theology and culture. This assumption has adversely affected the new converts as well as mission work among Muslims. For this reason, many Christians are not able to communicate the gospel of Jesus Christ to their Muslim neighbors.

The researcher identified the necessity of understanding the conversion processes from Islam to Christianity and the factors that lead Muslims to embrace Christianity in order to present the good news of Christ in cross-cultural settings. This study will help the researcher to explore the conversion of the Arsi Oromo from Islam to Christianity and to draw missiological implication for Christian witness.

#### **Motivation**

The researcher who is from the Gurage ethnic group of Ethiopia has had contact with the Arsi Oromo people group for the last six years. As he was serving as

Muslim outreach coordinator in the Ethiopian Kale Heywet Church central office, he conducted several Muslim outreach trainings for local missionaries, evangelists, and church leaders in that region. He also traveled to several villages to support the church planting activities, to disciple Muslim converts, and to be involved in the baptism programs of Muslim Background Believers (MBBs).

Furthermore, conversion from Islam to Christianity has become a major concern for Ethiopian churches in particular and for African churches in general. The religious freedom in some parts of Africa has led many Muslims to respond to the gospel message; Ethiopia is one of the countries that have enjoyed the conversions of several thousand Muslims from Islam to Christianity. However, very little research has been conducted on conversion from Islam to Christianity in the Ethiopian context. Although tremendous conversion happens among the Arsi Oromo, it has not received proper attention from researchers. For this reason, there is a great need to employ missiological research among the Arsi Oromo, because it is an important issue for Muslim evangelism and for discipleship among Muslim converts. Therefore, this study sheds light on conversion process of the Arsi Oromo from Islam to Christianity.

### Background of Arsi Oromo

Ethiopia is located in the horn of Africa with eighty one different ethnic groups and local languages. Ethiopia is the second most populous country in Africa, with a population of about 80 million people. The Oromo is the largest ethnic group in the country and makes up to 40% out of 80 million Ethiopians. The Oromos are one of the Cushitic speaking groups of people with variations in color and physical characteristics ranging from Hamitic to Nilotic.

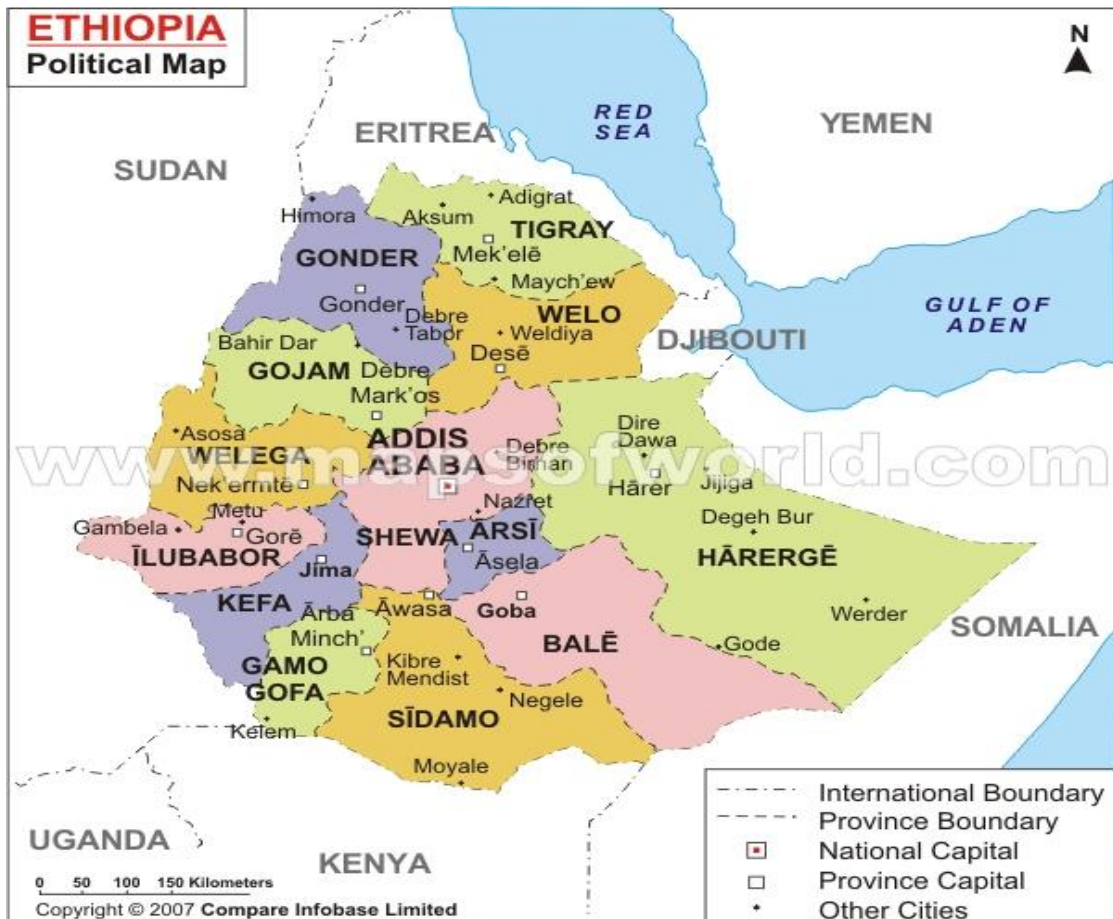
The Oromo tribe has a common mother tongue known as Oromiffa that is related to the Eastern Cushitic peoples' languages. As Greg notes, Oromiffa is considered one of the most widely spoken languages in the horn of Africa (1993, 82). The language recently began to use the Latin alphabet, which is relatively best suited for transcription of Oromiffa.

The ethnic origin of this group is from the south eastern part of Ethiopia who moved northward of the country in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Roenne, in the book the *Stories of Bale* describes how the Oromo ethnic group migrated from the Bale fertile land to other parts of the country including Arsi province in the 16<sup>th</sup> century (2005, 61). He also noted that Oromos adopted the conquered local people and gave the right to marry real Oromos, enabling the Oromo expansion to be easier and faster. This is true of the Arsi Oromo since two-third of the Arsi Oromo are of Kembata and Hadiya origin (61).

Since 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Arsi people converted to Islam. There are various factors for the Islamization of Arsi people. Since the pre-existing culture of the Arsi Oromo was neither Islamic nor Christian, the rejection of the Arsi Oromo by the Amhara régime led the group to embrace Islam. The main reason for this was that Islam appeared as the religion of the oppressed. To those oppressed by the Amhara, Islam appeared as a refuge (Trimingham 1952, 101).

The Arsi people are the majority in the Arsi province and one of the branches of the Oromo people group, and inhabit in the south central part of Ethiopia in the area from the Bale province in the east to the Shewa province in the west, and the Harerge and Shewa provinces in the north, and the Sidamo province in the south east. This research will be conducted in the western Arsi province. The national map is presented below.





Source: [www.mapsofworld.com](http://www.mapsofworld.com)

**Figure 1: The National Map of Ethiopia**

### Problem Statement

In this study, the researcher investigated the conversion process of the Arsi Oromo from Islam to Christianity and its missiological implication for Christian witness.

### Research Questions

1. How do Rambo's seven stages of conversion model explain the Arsi Oromo's conversion from Islam to the Christian faith?

2. What are the most important areas of change in the Arsi Oromo convert's life during the first five years after their conversion to the Christian faith?
3. How do the western Arsi local churches engage in helping Arsi Oromo converts to adapt to the existing church context?

### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the process of conversion from Islam to Christianity and the most important factors that lead the Arsi Oromo Muslim to the Christian faith. The changes resulting from conversion and how the western Arsi local churches engage in helping Arsi Oromo converts to adapt to the existing church context has been identified. The research established the process of conversion of the Arsi Oromo MBBs as well as the factors that lead them to conversion. Rambo's model was used to identify the experiences that the converts undergo in the conversion process (1992, 159-77). He also examined the various stages that the converts experience in the conversion process. The changes those are associated with the conversion period and the missiological implication for Christian witness was studied in order to provide knowledge for Christians to communicate the gospel message effectively and in culturally relevant ways among Muslims. Consequently the researcher hopes this will help missionaries to plant indigenous churches for Muslim converts.

### Significance of the Study

This study sought to understand the process of conversion from Islam to Christianity among the Arsi Oromo and to provide missiological implications for Christian witness, it is of significance to the following groups: to the researcher, Ethiopian Kale Heywet Church, pastors, evangelists, missionaries, and missiologists.

### **To the Researcher**

In this study, the researcher tried to understand the most important factors for conversion and the process of conversion of Arsi Oromo Muslims to the Christian faith. He also identified changes that happened after conversion and the role of the local churches to help the convert to adjust his or her life to an existing church context. Then he has drawn missiological implications for Christian witness, which in turn, will enable him to develop Muslim outreach strategies and design relevant discipleship programs.

### **To Ethiopian Kale Heywet Church**

This research will help the Ethiopian Kale Heywet Church to design appropriate Muslim outreach strategies for Arsi Oromo Muslims in particular and can use this research as a model for other parts of the country. It will also enable the church to sort out the potential conversion factors and what role the church should play in helping the convert to adapt to the church context in order to address various needs of MBBs.

### **To Pastors, Missionaries, and Evangelists**

This study will help pastors, evangelists, and missionaries who are serving among Muslims to communicate the gospel cross-culturally. It may also give them insights into the factors and processes of conversion from Islam to Christianity.

### **To Missiologists**

This research will play an important role on the studies being undertaken in the conversion of Muslims from Islam to Christianity. Much research has been done in the area of Islamic beliefs and practices, but only a few anthropological research projects have been conducted into the conversion of Muslims in Ethiopia where more

than 25 million adhere to Islam. This research will address the missiological need on this field of ministry.

### Limitations

Although the researcher has conducted extensive training and discipleship ministry among the Arsi Oromo, he is not a native Oromo and had limited knowledge of the culture of the people. The language barrier required the researcher to use a translator in some cases.

Furthermore, the limited time for the research placed some challenges on the researcher to find interviewees. Since the research was conducted in the rainy season, it was difficult for the researcher in moving from village to village to collect data; the interviewees were busy taking care of their farms.

### Delimitations

As a result of the diversity among the Arsi in Ethiopia, the study could not survey all the Arsi Oromo MBBs. This research was based in the Shashmene town and its surroundings alone. It focused on MBBs who were members of The Ethiopian Kale Heywet Church and The Full Gospel Church in the west Arsi zone. In general, there are more than five thousand Arsi Oromo MBBs in The Ethiopian Kale Heywet Church. The study was held in the Shashmene town and the surrounding areas for the following reasons:

1. In these areas, there have been numerous conversions from Islam to Christianity among the Arsi Oromo over the last fifteen years.
2. Large numbers of MBBs are living in western Arsi, where the research has taken place.

3. The Oromo Muslims comprise a large portion of the Ethiopian Muslim population.
4. Since the MBBs are from various social and academic backgrounds, they will represent different social groups.

The researcher interviewed MBBs from Shashmene, Arsi Negele, Kuyera, Aje, and the surrounding villages. The informants also included both men and women of various ages who were then converts of at least one year. The researcher conducted an interview for ten MBB women and ten MBB men

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

The aim of this chapter was to examine and assess the accessible and available literatures related to the topic of the study. It reviews the previous works done on conversion in order to identify the major issues that need to be addressed in the research. The researcher attempts to discuss how conversion is explained from the perspective of different disciplines. In this section, he reviews the biblical and theological basis and views of conversion, different works on social sciences and stage models in order to understand conversion from Islam to Christianity. Various studies on conversion from Islam to Christianity are reviewed to gain understanding of how conversion happens among Muslims.

#### Conversion from the Perspective of Different Disciplines

Conversion involves the study of multi-dimensional disciplines. Studies of various scientific and religious disciplines help the researcher to understand conversion. These include sociology, psychology, anthropology, and religious studies. Malony and Southard in the *Handbook of Religious Conversion* make a good contribution to this field by presenting the history of the study of conversion (1992, 1-6). In this book various scholars discuss conversion from the perspective of comparative religions, theology, social sciences, evangelistic practices, and culture and church (1992, 9-294). It also gives a brief, but important description of conversion from the viewpoint of various scientific and religious disciplines.

Rambo's seven stages model of the process of religious conversion also helped the researcher to analyze his findings in chapter four of the study (1992; 1993).

### **Conversion in Sociology of Religion**

Sociologists are concerned with the context in which conversion takes place. Social science deals with the social aspects of reality that bring conversion, such as traditions, institutions, relationships and social conditions. However, Bainbridge in his work *The Sociology of Conversion* argues that "sociologists have not always done the best possible job in understanding the social side of conversion." They should leave the study of the divine interaction in the conversion process to theologians (1992, 178). He points out the need for the study of other disciplines to understand religious conversion. He further explains the two alternative sociological theories that deal with religious conversion: strain theory and social influence theory.

According to Bainbridge, strain theory focuses on explaining the social phenomenon. It posits that people seek conversion because of absolute deprivation (lack of objective needs) or relative deprivation (lack of something that others with different status possess). This means that people change their religion because of poverty and unfulfilled personal needs. Social influence theory on the other hand, claims that people seek to convert to another religion because of the social attachment they have formed with the members and the weak attachment with the other groups. Bainbridge states that there are two schools of thought within the social influence theory. The first one is control theory, which hold that people act in conformity as long as they possess a powerful bond in their social order (1992, 182). Changing social location or facing disruption in the life of a person causes loss of the strong bond with the member of the group and becomes open to other social attachments. The second branch of social influence theory is subculture theory, which claims that

like-minded people establish a particular type of thinking and acting. This theory states that when people develop strong social attachment with members of a group, they tend to convert.

Bainbridge suggests that a combination of the two theories is important for conversion to happen (1992, 184). A powerful and enduring frustration leads the person to seek religion in order to solve his/her deep problems. This triggers a quest to dissatisfaction and seeks to form a strong bond with the religious group. Poloma maintains similar argument in her article *The Sociological Context of Religious Experience* by tracing back to Weber who stresses the importance of subjective meaning of an activity, and Durkheim who focused on the objective reality of social phenomenon (1995, 161-82).

However, these social theories put more emphasis on belonging to a group and suppressing the individual role in the decision making process without the familiarity of a particular group. In many cases, conversion happens without joining a specific religious group; conversion is more than being a member of a social group. Karsdolf in his work *Christian Conversion in Context* argues that “conversion is personal, but not individualistic; it is experienced by individuals, but it affects the community; it is expressed in a vertical relation, but not without horizontal dimensions” (1980, 105). In community oriented societies, it is impossible to examine the conversion of people apart from the strong sense of social attachment with their community. In some cases, conversion happens in the social context of the individual without joining and forming a strong bond with the other group.

Karsdolf takes the discussion further and includes the cultural aspect of conversion. He defines conversion as, “The religious and ethical processes of man’s spiritual transformation in terms of his values, relationships, attitudes to God, himself,



and others within the matrix of his own cultural and social structure” (1980, 20). Karsdolf’s definition is very important for understanding the cultural aspect of conversion from Islam to Christianity because conversion can be affected by the cultural context of the people. It also clarifies the different dimensions of conversion as a change, which involves personal, spiritual, social and cultural elements.

Eliade on the other hand, stresses the necessity of tradition, transformation and transcendence in order to understand and define conversion (1987, 73). Tradition includes the social and cultural aspects; transformation covers the process of change that happens in the inner being of the convert, and transcendence includes encounter with the divine (73-4).

According to Rambo, there are five types of conversion “in terms of how far someone has to go socially and culturally in order to be considered a convert” (1993, 13). The first type of conversion is apostasy or defection, which means leaving the religion without joining another religion. The second type is intensification that happens at the time the member takes religion as the core of his life. The third one is affiliation, which means when the person transforms from the level of no religious commitment to full involvement and affiliation. The fourth type is institutional transition from which a person changes from one denomination to another. The fifth one is traditional transition, which is changing from one tradition to another one. Even though this is not exhaustive list of the types of conversion, the fifth type of conversion happens when Muslims change their faith from Islam to Christianity.

John Lofland and Norman Skonovd claim that there are six conversion motifs (1981, 373-85). These conversion motifs differ from person to person and place to place. However, it is part of the whole understanding of conversion experiences. The six conversion motifs are as follows: First, intellectual conversion happens when an

individual seeks an alternative ideology and way of life. Second, mystical conversion occurs because of a supernatural encounter and a sudden experience, such as the conversion of Paul. Third, experimental conversion happens when some dramatic event occurs in someone's life orientation, then others feel there is something in it for them. Fourth, affectional motif causes conversion when love, nurture, and affirmation of the group challenge the individual. The fifth one is revivalism motif which causes conversion when the individual faces pressure, crowd-conformity, and influence of the group. The last one is the coercive motif, which is when a brain-storming exercise to cause conversion.

### **Conversion in the Psychology of Religion**

Psychology of religion helps to understand the person, patterns of perception, cognition, emotion, and behavior in the process of conversion from Islam to Christianity. Rambo presents four approaches from the psychological point of view. The first one is psychoanalytic which emphasis the internal emotional elements of the convert. The second one is a behaviorist approach, which focuses on the immediate environment of the convert. The third one is humanistic and transpersonal and focuses on how conversion helps the person on self-realization or fulfillment. The fourth one is holistic/social, which tries to synthesize the other three approaches (1992, 159-63). William James in his book *Varieties of Religious Experience* categorizes religions into healthy minded and the sick soul. He also divides religious conversion as gradual and sudden. His work is classic in the field of the study of religion and Psychology (1985, 58-59).

## **Conversion in Anthropology of Religion**

Anthropological study is another key scientific discipline that helps to understand the conversion process of Muslims to the Christian faith. For this reason, anthropologists study people and the cultural context of converts. Kraft in his book *Anthropology for Christian Witness* argues that anthropology should take the holistic view of people in order to deal with the whole range of human behavior within one discipline (2003, 7-8). He further claims that anthropology should be the most holistic and comprehensive discipline in order to deal with the whole aspect of man in a cross-cultural setting, especially for the sake of understanding conversion processes. Rambo explains that anthropological study is very crucial to understand and examine the conversion process in its context (1993, 8). Nida in his book *Customs, Cultures and Christianity* argues that “good missionaries have always been good anthropologists” (1954, xi). This indicates that cross-cultural study gives a clear picture of the cultural assumption and human behavior of a group in its context. This in turn, enables researchers to understand the conversion process.

Recent research points out that the conversion process is not a sudden phenomenon; rather, it is a complex process that involves change of social identity, cognitive and affection dimensions, cultural setting, and affiliation to the other group. Buckser and Glazier on their work *Anthropology of Religious Conversion* argue that conversion is such a complex process that it is beyond the usual assumption of anthropology and religion. They further explained the relationship between conversion and social processes (such as group identity and solidarity), and the role of conversion in personal experience (2003, xvi-xvii).

Furthermore, Tippet in *Handbook of Religious Conversion* thoroughly explains the cultural anthropology of conversion. His description focused on how

people leave their old context and join the new (1992, 193). In terms of time unit, Tippett classifies conversion into three parts: period of awareness, period of decision, and period of incorporation. The period of awareness is the time in which a group or individual become aware of “another way of life, another behavior pattern, or another set of values apart from the traditional context.” As Tippett explains this awareness probably happens because of natural development, pressure from without, internal pressure of crisis situation, or direct advocacy (1992, 195-6).

Period of decision is a long process of discussion at the family or individual level and concludes with a multi-individual decision, but it may not necessarily be total acceptance of the new context. Tippett mentions four different possibilities of decision: it may be an act of rejection, an act of total acceptance, an act of modification, or an act of fission (1992, 196-8). The last conversion period according to Tippett is the period of incorporation, which is when the group or individual leaves the old context and incorporates into a new context (Christianity) right after the decision is being made. At the end of his work, he states the necessity of the period of maturity that is the sanctification process (1992, 198-205). I agree with Tippett that anthropologist and Christian missionaries need to understand the periods of conversion processes and the contexts of converts in order to examine and analyze the conversion experiences from Islam to Christianity.

### Conversion from the Perspective of Theology

Now the discussion shifts to conversion in the perspective of Christian theology because Christian conversion is the basis for faith in Christ. However, for this study, I have selected only some of the many works and discussed conversion from the Christian perspective.

## Conversion in the Bible

Conversion is an important subject in Bible. Even though some differences exist among biblical scholars in the definition of conversion because of their emphasis, it seems most of them agree in the idea of turning from sinful life and responding to the saving work of God. Nock states that conversion is turning from the previous way of life to the new life into prophetic religion by assuming the latter is better than the former (1933, 7). Conversion is a multi-dimensional change from the former life to a new one and involves cultural, spiritual, social and personal transformation.

Furthermore, biblical authors use various terms to describe conversion. The key Hebrew word for conversion is *shuv*, which indicates repentance of ones sin or turning to God from sin. In the Old Testament, *shuv* was used to refer to restoration from a sinful act and to form genuine fellowship with God. Wells based his discussion on Jeremiah 31:18 and explained *shuv* as a dual aspect of conversion, which is man turning to God as well as God turning to his people (1989, 31). Another OT term for conversion is *nicham*, which indicates ‘to regret,’ and this term was used in (2Kin 23:26, 1Sam 15:11, and Gen 6:6). In these passages, *nicham* refers to God’s action: God turns from punishment; God rejects people for their sinful act, and God’s grievance for creating a man.

In the New Testament, three Greek words designate repentance for conversion: *metamelonai*, *epistrepho* and *metanoeo*. The word *metamelonai* refers to the emotional aspect of repentance. Brown explains this term as, “The feeling of repentance for error, debt, failure and sin” (1986, 354). Similarly, Erickson defines *metamelonai* as, “to have a feeling of care, concern or regret” (1985, 936).

*Epistrepho* means to turn to God, turn back, or be converted to God by the influence

of the Holy Spirit (Acts 3:19-20). *Metanoeo* has the same meaning as *epistrepho*, which is turning from a sinful life and looking ahead towards God. Such conversion affects the whole life of the convert. So, the New Testament stresses the importance of conversion from a sinful life style to faith in Christ in order to form a genuine relationship with God and to continue to live a life of righteousness.

Christian conversion also involves different forms. Gaventa in *Conversion in the Bible* describes conversion taking three forms: alteration, pendulum-like conversion, and transformation (1992, 42-3). Alteration is a conversion that develops naturally out of the previously established life patterns. Pendulum-like conversion is a form of conversion that happens when the person rejects his past in favor of the newly chosen religious system. Transformation is another form of conversion, which happens when the convert reinterprets the new experience without rejecting the past faith.

On the other hand, Peace in his book *Conversion in the New Testament* explains conversion as an event and a process (1999, 56-101). He proves conversion is a sudden or gradual process from the conversion experiences of Paul and other disciples of Jesus. Sudden conversion happened in the life of Paul, whereas gradual conversion was seen in the process of the twelve disciples' spiritual and physical journey with Christ. Moreover, in his account, Peace gives us three stages of conversion in the New Testament: insight, turning, and transformation.

It is important to have insight in order to accept or reject the choices offered. Insight leads the person to understand the saving work of Christ and to turn to him by faith. This, in turn, brings transformation in the life of a convert. Conversion is a long complex process of turning to God. The researcher agrees with Wells saying, "The process involves thinking and rethinking, doubting and overcoming doubts, soul-

searching and self-admonition, struggle against feelings of guilt and shame, and concern as to what realistic following of Christ might mean” (1989, 63).

Understanding conversion as a complex process helps greatly to consider various facets and stages in the study of conversion process from Islam to Christianity.

### **Conversion in Systematic Theology**

Conversion is a controversial issue in systematic theology. Theologians define conversion in relation to their understanding of theological terms and issues, but traditionally conversion was defined as turning to God by responding to the Christian message of the gospel. In the classical period, theologians used terms, such as calling, regeneration, conversion, and faith synonymously in order to refer to Christian conversion (McKim 1992, 124). However, after the Reformation they made careful distinction between terms. McKim further argues that in classical Christian theology, conversion was under the broader theological category of sanctification; it was considered as the first exercise of God’s grace and personal response to the decisive intervention of God in life in Jesus Christ (1992, 123-4). In this case, the focus of Christian conversion is Jesus Christ, because God’s saving work is possible only in Christ. McKim claims that “those who are ‘converted’ are ‘turned around’ and released from the bondage of sin and by the grace of God are enabled to live new life of joyful obedience to God in Jesus Christ through the power of Holy Spirit” (124). Conversion is the restoration of the image of God in humanity through the new life in Jesus Christ.

Theologians also took different positions due to the question of who the active agent of conversion is. Is it humans or God? The main discussion is based on the relationship between the activity of God and the responsibility of man in the conversion process. Arminians hold a view that human nature has the ability and the

capacity to choose good and evil and to respond to the gospel message even if man is in a state of sin. Calvinist theologians, on the other hand, assert that human will is enslaved by the power of sin; it cannot reach out to God on its own to receive the gospel message of salvation (1992, 126-7). So, election and predestination in the conversion process are solely the work of God without any human contribution.

McKim's review of the various theological images of conversion which are advocated by different theologians is very important for this study in order to gain understanding with regard to various views of each theological tradition (1992, 130-5). New birth is used by evangelicals, which stresses on the complete spiritual revolution in the life of the convert. Furthermore, transition is an alternative image that considers conversion. The advocates of this position are some liberal theologians, who claim that it is not necessary to turn drastically; rather, conversion is part of the natural life transition (1992, 131).

Education is another image of conversion that was advocated by some liberal theologians in the nineteenth and twentieth century. It stresses salvation can be achieved through education in a certain period of time from man's capacity. As forwarded by McKim, Karl Barth advocates the renewal theology of conversion which means "waking up." New being is another theological image of conversion that teaches the participation of the convert in the new being (God). This view claims that salvation or healing of the person "occurs when the estrangement of sin has overcome and humanity is reunited and reconciled with God" (1992, 133). The advocates of new identity, on the other hand, talk that conversion brings new identity to the convert through faith. Liberation theologians also perceive conversion as freedom from worldly economic and political injustice. The last type of conversion image is reorientation, which sees conversion as a reorientation of all life (1992, 135).



Millard Erickson on the other hand, classifies conversion in two aspects: repentance as the negative aspect of conversion that is turning from sin and faith as a positive aspect of conversion that is “holding upon the promises and the work of Christ” (1985, 938). Grudem also provides the same definition of conversion as repentance from former life and faith in Christ (1994, 713).

These diverse images of conversion tell us that there are various theological positions among Christians. It is clear that among some Christian groups, the focus of conversion shifted from the act of the divine to the act of man. I agree with the argument of Bloesch, he states that we cannot claim any merit for our salvation; the grace of God enables us to respond to the call of God (1984, 273). Even though man was alienated from God because of sin, the Bible calls sinners to return to God. It is clear in Scripture that both the divine initiative and human responsibility in the conversion process are very important (Acts 16:14). Therefore, the human and divine actors should be studied and understood.

### Conversion in Missiology

Conversion is also an important study in Missiology. In many cases, conversion becomes the goal of Missiology. In the twentieth century, missiologists were interested in studying the stories of conversion in various parts of the world especially in Africa and Asia. The other question may be, is conversion a sudden action or a process that involves world view change, deals with cultural, social and contextualization issues? Also is conversion individual, multi-individual, or group decision? (Hiebert 1994, 107-110)

Furthermore, various literatures have been written on the area of conversion and sharing good news to Muslims. Books by Woodberry (1996, 2008) and Parshall (2000, 2003), deal with how to communicate the gospel in an Islamic context.

### Comprehensive Models

Scholars have developed different models to serve as a framework for the conversion process. These models claim that even though some cases of sudden conversion experiences exist, in most cases conversion is a process. Engel and Norton developed a scale of spiritual-decision process matrix from -8 to +8 (Engel and Norton 1975, 45). In this model, they categorized the stages of conversion process into four: proclamation, persuasion, regeneration and cultivation (47-58). The first stage of conversion according to Engel and Norton is proclamation, which is when the communicator of the gospel stimulates awareness, initiating interest and positive attitude. The second stage is persuasion, which means calling the convert to commit her life to Jesus Christ. The third stage is regeneration, which means making a decision to follow Christ. Cultivation is the last stage that is sanctification or the growing conformity over a life time to the likeness of Christ.

Karsdolf on the other hand, applies what he calls “ethno-theology” in order to understand the complex nature of conversion. In this research ethno-theology should be employed that incorporates theology and social science. Karsdolf claims that ethno-theology “seeks to integrate the scientific studies of theology, socio-cultural anthropology, history, and psychology with a biblical view of God, human kind, and culture” (1980, 20). In this approach divine and human activities are clearly mentioned. In the conversion process God’s activity is wooing the spirit of the person, regenerating, and sanctifying the convert. Man’s activity is part of the conversion process by developing awareness, turning, and maturing.

### Stage Model

Another scholar who made significant contribution in the field of study is Lewis Rambo. He developed seven stage models to organize and assess the complex

data of conversion. Conversion in most cases is a process where converts may undergo several stages of conversion experiences. Rambo argues that “though instantaneous conversions do occur, most conversions are gradual. Religious change is usually a process involving a complex interweave of personal, social, cultural, and religious forces” (1992, 159). Rambo’s stage model is very useful, comparing it with other models, for explaining the conversion process among Arsi Oromo Muslims from Islam to Christianity (1992, 163-77). The researcher used this stage model to organize, assess and analyze the data in chapter four of this study. Rambo’s seven stage models are summarized as follows:

1. Context

Context is the social, cultural, religious, and personal environment that includes both the micro and macro contexts. Macro context is the larger cultural and social setting of the convert. Micro context is the immediate context of the convert, such as family, ethnic group, religious community, and local neighborhood. These groupings are important for sense of identity and belonging so that context shapes the decision of the individual in the conversion process (Rambo 1992, 163-165).

2. Crisis

Crisis is the disorientation in the life of the individual that happens before conversion that opens the person to new options. The crisis will be religious, psychological, political or cultural. In such a situation, people start to realize that the present situation is not satisfying and start to seek new opportunities (Rambo 1992, 165-166).

3. Quest

Quest is a process in which people want to gain more meaning and purpose in their life. People in crisis are more active in finding solutions for daily life problems.

Quest of meaning and purpose in life or other things such as material goods leads people to conversion (Rambo 1992, 167-168).

#### 4. Encounter

Encounter is a stage that the advocate of the gospel and the potential convert come together in a particular setting. Encounter stage includes the cognitive and affective needs. In many cases encounter happens with the compatibility of sex, ideology, age, education, and other similar attributes. It may precede crisis or some times it comes after crisis. The advocate of the gospel and the potential convert reciprocally meet each other's need. The persuasion of the advocate leads to conversion (Rambo 1992, 169-171).

#### 5. Interaction

Interaction mostly happens after encounter that the potential convert start to integrate in the group and learn more about the teaching, lifestyle, and expectations of the group. The degree of interaction and personal relationships may determine the conversion process of the person. Since the person starts to reject the old way of life and embrace the new one, fellowship and religious teaching are very important in order to lead to conversion (Rambo 1992, 171-173).

#### 6. Commitment

Commitment is a public testimony of the conversion of the person to the new religion. It includes testimony, rituals, decision making, and surrender. Baptism is a good example of the public testimony for the conversion of the individual. In Islamic context, it results persecution because it is assumed as total conversion of a Muslim person to Christian faith (Rambo 1992, 173-175).

## 7. Consequences

All kind of choices have a certain type of consequences. Conversion has both positive and negative results. In most cases joy, peace, and fulfillments in the inner being of a convert are the positive consequences of conversion. While, on social or external level the converts may face persecution or rejection from their community. In the Muslim context, persecution may force the converts return to their former faith (Rambo 1992, 175-177).

### Conversion from Islam to Christianity

Many have researched the conversion of Muslims to Christian faith. They find out that conversion is a complex process that involves various stages, phases, and dimensions of the convert's life. Even though they focus on specific geographical locations and people groups, their findings may have universal significance.

Straehler (2009), in his doctoral dissertation, analyzed the conversion process of 17 urban Muslims to Christian faith in Kenya. He has given an extensive description of conversion from the perspective of different disciplines. He has analyzed the data by using the principles of grounded theory. In his research, he finds out that only the cognitive and the affective dimensions exist in the conversion process (2009, 258). The researcher develops the *Matrix of Conversion Process* in order to explain how the conversion process takes place in the four "layers" and "six chronological phases" that exist in both dimensions. Straehler also identifies two factors, "causal conditions" and "intervening conditions," influenced the process in a way that causes Muslims to interact with Christians and eventually convert to Christianity (260). His finding reveals that context of a person (gender, socio-economic level, education, and the kind of community from which the convert come from) influences the conversion process. The findings of Straehler show that converts

experience changes in the form of transformation in their attitudes and behaviors towards themselves and others. Lastly, he develops the matrix of different *Types of Conversion Processes*. The matrix includes the intellectual type, the affectional type, mystical type, and solution-seeking type conversion processes. These four types of conversion processes are very helpful to evaluate and assess conversions.

His study is comprehensive and deals with different aspects and dimensions of conversion process. It is a great contribution to the discipline of Missiology and interdisciplinary conversion studies by refining the existing conversion theories, proving grounded theory as a “useful methodological guide in Missiology,” and developing the *Matrix of Conversion Process* that can help to understand and analyze the conversion process of people of various backgrounds.

Conversion research is also done by Raman (1993) in the United States to understand the conversion and development experiences of Muslims. She conducted her research by interviewing thirty converted men and women living in the state of Illinois. The main focus of the research was to identify the characteristics of conversion, pre and post conversion experiences, and consequences of conversion from Islam to Christian faith. In her research, she employed the theological perspectives of conversion, and the psychological and sociological issues that may affect the convert socially, psychologically and culturally in the conversion process. In her comparison of the conversion experiences of men and women, she noted similarities to a certain extent, but there are several differences. Her observations are very important for this study in order to bring out conversion experiences that are unique to Muslim women.

Murumba (2008), who did MTh study about conversion from Islam to Christianity among the Borana women in Nairobi, Kenya, examined the conversion

process of Borana Muslim women, their pre and post conversion experiences, and the changes resulted in the conversion period. She interviewed twelve converted women from Islam. Eight of them were from Borana Oromo and four from Burgi who were living in Nairobi, Kenya. Her research findings reveals that the “conversion process of the Borana MBB women is highly marked with the search for relationships at both the social and supernatural levels” (2008, 149). She also finds out that most of the respondents experienced some kind of crisis at the “personal, social, or supernatural” level that led them to look for alternative solution that resulted faith in Christ. In the end, she recommends further study on conversion among the elite MBBs, the role of Christian husbands in the conversion of the wife, the role of crisis, and the role of madrasa in the life of Muslim child and community. She made a great contribution in understanding the conversion process of Muslim women from Islam to Christianity.

Asland (2005) in his MTh thesis presented and analyzed the conversion of Digo Muslims to the Christian faith. He analyzed nineteen MBBs stories by using Rambo’s seven stages model. He focused on Digo Muslims of the East African Coast and showed the importance of worldview in understanding the conversion process of Muslims. He used Rambo’s stage models to bring out the various conversion experiences of MBBs and stresses that Rambo’s model is effective to analyze the conversion process of Muslims to the Christian faith. He concludes by recommending the importance of team work to contextualize the gospel message.

These researchers bring out the various conversion experiences of Muslims to the Christian faith from different contexts and backgrounds. They make tremendous contribution on understanding the various aspects and dimensions of conversion. They also reaffirm the usefulness of the previous works that has been done and the

theories developed on conversion experiences. These works enabled the researcher to understand conversion process in a better way in data analysis.



## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **RESEARCH METHODS AND PROCEDURES**

In chapter two, the study focused on literature review related to the area of the study. In this chapter, the focus shifts to research methods and procedures in carrying out the study. It covers the rationale for qualitative research method, population and sampling, data collection and recording, data analysis procedures, and validation and verification.

#### **Rationale for Qualitative Research Method**

In research, there are three types of methods: quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods. Investigating the conversion process of the Arsi Oromo from Islam to Christianity, the researcher found that a qualitative approach was the best method to employ for this study. To describe the qualitative approach Creswell states, “It also uses strategies of inquiry such as narratives, phenomenology, ethnographies, grounded theory studies, or case studies. The researcher collects open-ended, emerging data with the primary intent of developing themes from data” (2003, 18). In this study, the researcher employed a qualitative approach in order to understand the most important factors and the process of conversion of the Arsi Oromo from Islam to Christianity, to identify the changes resulting from conversion, and how the local churches engage themselves in helping the convert to adapt and adjust to the existing church context. As Mugenda and Mugenda argue, qualitative research enables the researcher “to collect data and explain phenomenon more deeply and exhaustively” (1999, 197).

Since a qualitative method is a wider approach, the researcher used an ethnographic approach, which is a branch of the qualitative research method. This approach is more appropriate, because it puts more emphasis on human behavior, experience, and understanding. Spradley explains that “anthropologists go to where the people live and ‘does field work’. This means asking questions, eating strange foods, learning a new language, watching ceremonies, taking field notes, washing clothes, writing letter home, tracing out genealogies, observing play, interviewing informants, and hundreds of other things” (1979, 3).

The main reason why the researcher employed this approach was that he realized there were only meager materials on conversion among the Arsi Oromo. Since the researcher has not yet come across any good material for this study, he employed a type of ethnographic approach in order first to gather emic data on the topic under discussion.

### Ethnographic Research

Ethnographic research understands people’s way of life from the insider perspective (emic view point) in a specific cultural setting (Spradley, 1979, 3). This study mainly attempted to learn from people, rather than studying people from the researcher’s point of view. Focusing on human behavior, the researcher was able to gather raw data from the informants and to understand how the informants defined reality; it also helped him to appreciate the subjects’ view point concerning the research problem.

Spradley provides twelve steps for how the ethnographer employs ethnographic interviews and participant observation in his “Development Research Sequence (DRS)” (1979, 224-226; 1980). This ethnographic research was conducted based on these steps in order to collect reliable, detailed and authentic data.

Spradley's twelve steps can be summarized with four categories and the researcher followed these four major categorical steps in order to understand conversion processes: 1) finding key informants, 2) preparing and asking right questions, 3) data collection and recording, and 4) data analysis.

The researcher used both ethnographic interview and participant observation in data collection process. The rationale for using ethnographic interview is that it provides tools to understand people and to gather data as raw as it is. It also enables the researcher not only gathers information but also interpret as much detail as possible. Furthermore, the researcher conducted participant observation for data collection. He had previously developed close relationships with some of Arsi Oromo MBBs in his travel to the western Arsi province for ministry in the church. He had gotten a chance to observe their conversion experiences and changes after conversion for the last six years. In his time of data collection, he also lived within the Arsi community for one month that enabled him to observe the conversion experiences of MBBs. The researcher relied on his observation, experiences gained during these years, and information from ethnographic interview.

### Population and Sampling

This research sought to understand the conversion of Arsi Oromo Muslims from Islam to Christianity. The Arsi Oromo are one of the Muslim dominated branches of the Oromo people group of Ethiopia located in the south central part of the country. The study was conducted in the western Arsi zone where about five thousand MBBs worship the Lord within The Kale Heywet Church mainly in rural villages. The research included both towns and villages where the researcher could get easy access to collect his data. The researcher chose these places, because he had travelled the area so many times and coordinated the Muslim outreach ministry for

several years. He used the credibility and the contacts he gained from Muslim converts and church leaders.

In this study, the researcher selected a sample to represent a specific group of people. It is important to select a representative group to interview. The selection includes informants both male and female from different educational and social backgrounds and different towns and villages. The researcher used his experience in selecting informants, and he sought advice from the church leaders, pastors, and colleagues who were serving in that region. Three main criteria were employed in selecting the informants: 1) the person should be an Arsi Oromo MBB. 2) The interviewee should be a convert to Christianity after growing up as a Muslim. 3) The conversion should have happened in the Arsi region, and the person should still live in the western Arsi zone.

Ten MBB women and ten MBB men were interviewed in the data collection process. As mentioned above the sampling was conducted from various groups in order to identify if the diversity of the groups affects their behavior, knowledge, and understanding. So, the researcher learned from the informants the factors and processes of conversion from Islam to Christianity, and found out the changes resulting from the conversion.

#### Data Collection and Recording

The researcher employed ethnographic interviews for data collection in order to find out the reasons and processes of conversion of Arsi Oromo Muslims to Christianity. Lists of guiding questions were prepared to direct the research (see appendix 1). The questions give a general guidance to explore the participants' response to the questions. The aim was to understand the conversion experience and behavior of the converts in their natural context. The researcher stayed with the

subjects before and after the interview to enable him to gain insight and understanding of the life of the informants. This study used two data collection approaches: unstructured interviews and semi-structured interviews.

### **Semi-Structured Interview**

The semi-structured interview is a widely used technique for ethnographic research. Bernard explains that semi structured interviews enable the researcher to follow the course of the interview without missing the focus through the guiding questions (1995, 208-13). The researcher started his interview with four people (one man and woman from the village and one man and woman from the town) as a pilot test for his studies by using the semi structured interview question in order to shape the latter interview. Then he developed and made adjustments to the semi-structured interview questions. The semi-structured interview guide focused on the conversion of the Arsi Oromo Muslims to the Christian faith. Semi-structured interviews were conducted at the end of the study in order to validate the findings. The interviewees were an evangelist and a church member who were converted from Islam to Christianity. The interviews were conducted in Amharic and sometimes a translation from Oromiffa.

### **Unstructured Interview**

The unstructured interview is another technique in ethnographic research. The researcher used this approach to make a thorough description of the data. As Carol V. McKinney explains, it is difficult to get information from the primal sources in a society, which has “no tradition of written history without conducting informal interviews” (2000, 93). There are very few written sources in history of conversion among the Arsi Oromo. This approach involves the study of conducting interviews to

describe behaviors and beliefs (Spradley 1979, 60). So, the researcher conducted friendly and informal meetings with MBBs for the purpose of understanding the conversion process of the informants and clarifying the various aspects that he did not understand before. As Fontana and Frey note, the goal of this approach is to “understand the complex member of the society without imposing any a priori categorization that may limit the field of inquiry” (2000, 653). The researcher employed informal discussions with select informants during his stay in the research area in order to explore the factors influencing conversion process among the Arsi Oromo from Islam to Christianity. He also identified the changes resulting from conversion.

The researcher used ethnographic data recording. Creswell suggests that ethnographic data consists of observational protocol, interviewing, and taking notes (2003, 189-90). So, the researcher identified and recorded forms of language used by the informants, and responses to the question administered. Based on the interview protocol, he recorded personal observations of the informants’ behavior, responses, and information to the interview questions. The researcher has also taken field notes of his observation and recorded the responses of the informants to the interview question on a tape recorder for a later data analysis process. The transcription and recording of the data were carried out in Amharic, and then translated into English. Latter, the data was typed on a personal laptop computer to make it ready for data analysis.

#### Data Analysis Procedures

Before analysis, the data was tabulated based on the categories of research questions and themes, translated from Amharic into English, and transcribed in the computer in order to make ready the data for analysis. The analysis of the data was

based on the English texts, while keeping the original words and ideas in Oromiffa and Amharic through continuous reference to the interview documents. The re-examination of the collected data has been done as soon as the interview was completed in order to feed them into further interviews (Creswell 2003, 190). The researcher attempted to examine carefully the data to identify key ideas, patterns and themes (Creswell 2003, 191). Then, they were arrayed and codified. He used the coded data to create a thick description.

The researcher employed Rambo's seven stages model as the analytical (theoretical) framework for this study in order to understand the process of conversion from Islam to Christianity. Analytical framework is very important to analyze the data at hand. Creswell suggests that an analytical framework should be a guide (1992, 159-77).

Even though various models have been developed by scholars, Rambo's model was suitable for this specific research. Straehler's doctoral dissertation is more comprehensive and more recent than Rambo's. However, the researcher preferred Rambo's seven stages model over Straehler's *Matrix of Conversion Process* for several reasons: First, Straehler's *Matrix of Conversion Process* is very comprehensive that includes the cognitive and affective dimension of conversion process; so, it is difficult to cover all aspects and dimensions of conversion process in a Master's level work. Second, the nature of the research questions led him to choose Rambo's seven stages model. Third, Rambo's model is comprehensive enough to analyze the data and incorporate the different dimensions of life of the converts, such as cultural, spiritual, personal, and social. The seven stages of Rambo's model have been discussed in Chapter Two of this research.

### Validation and Verification

The researcher validated and verified the data collected in the field by taking the final report or the descriptions of the data to the informants in order to check the accuracy of the information (Creswell 2003, 196). The reason for this was that the validation of data should start during data collection. Besides, the data should be collected until a new category of information emerges. This enabled the researcher to check the internal consistencies of the data sources. However, as Bernard noted, the researcher should be open for new ideas, alternative explanations, and seek to explain any internal inconsistencies (1995, 361-62).

Furthermore, various validation and verification means were used for this study. First, a thick description was used to explain the cultural aspects of the findings. Second, the researcher has worked with his supervisor by sending reports regularly. Third, cross-checking of the data was conducted, and the transcribed data was validated by taking the data to the informants. Fourth, the data was made open for other fellow researchers (NEGST students) to check the communicability of the analyzed data.



**CHAPTER FOUR**  
**DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS OF THE ARSI OROMO**  
**CONVERSION TO THE CHRISTIAN FAITH**

The researcher collected the conversion stories of twenty people (ten MBB men and ten MBB women) from Islam to Christianity. In this chapter, he described and analyzed their conversion processes based on the coded data (see appendix 2 for code numbers and coded data). The researcher used Rambo's seven stages model for his analysis of the first research question. He also analyzed the roles of churches in western Arsi in terms of their engagement of the converts in the church context as well as the most important changes observed in the converts' life. In each part, the researcher will discuss the general issues that have emerged frequently by using the coded data (see appendix 2), and will also attempt to examine the processes and the dynamics involved in the conversion of Arsi Oromo people from Islam to Christianity.

**Stage One: Context**

The Arsi Oromo are part of the Oromo people group in Ethiopia. They have an extensive contact with the Amhara, Sidama, Alaba, and Bale Oromo people groups. The people were exposed to the Christian Amhara people during the time of Emperor Menilik in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Later, Western missionaries brought the gospel message to the Arsi province, which gave an opportunity for the Arsi Muslim community to hear the gospel message. The researcher observed that Muslims who live in the towns are more exposed to various Christian groups; however, they are more resistant to the gospel message compared to the Muslims in the surrounding

villages. The conversion of Muslims to the Christian faith is faster in the villages than in the towns. On the other hand, the researcher also noticed that the Muslims who live in the villages near a town called Aje, and who have closer contact with predominantly conservative Muslims called the Alaba, are very resistant to the gospel.

### **Religious Background**

The religious backgrounds of the informants influence their conversion process. Regarding their religious background the researcher found out four types of converts. The first group of converts came from a people group very zealous for Islam and committed to defend their religion in every possible way. In this group, three converts (P01M, P02M, and P10M) came from a rural setting, maintain conservative Islamic background, and were well informed about Qur'anic teachings from their childhood. P01M has taken military training to wage Jihad against Christians and led several Islamic missionary activities. The other two converts (P02M and P10M) were very zealous for their faith and were involved in persecuting Christians and burning churches. They have also rejected any form of folk Islamic practices. Their stories of conversion are very dramatic and the conversion of the two (P01M and P02M) was accompanied by a supernatural encounter. It is very difficult to acquire converts from this group.

The second group of converts came from a Muslim people group who practiced Islam sincerely and had either positive or negative attitudes towards Christians; however, they did not promote military Jihad. Most of them were taught the Qur'an in the Arabic language from their childhood and were devout Muslims. P13M was the imam of a Mosque and had tremendous spiritual influence on his community. His Islamic knowledge and devotion enabled him to reach out to several Muslims; however, his former position as a Muslim leader in his community has

brought severe persecution and hardships to himself. Nine informants (5 MBB women and 4 MBB men) are in this category that observes and takes the Islamic teachings and practices seriously. They had negative attitudes towards Christianity at least in the initial stages of their conversion process. However, one of them (P09M) had developed quality relationship with Christians even before he considered Christianity to be an option. Despite their devotion to Islam, when their interaction with Christians grew, the attitude of most of the converts in this category changed. The study shows that half of the interviewees are from this group.

The third category of converts is those who neither practice orthodox Islam nor folk Islamic practices. Five out of the twenty informants had either abandoned practicing Islam or were dissatisfied with the Islamic teachings and practices. People in this category had a positive attitude and interaction with Christian neighbors and friends. They were more open for the gospel message compared to the other groups. P04F was not practicing Islam and was highly influenced by her contact with Christians from The Roman Catholic Church and The Seventh Day Adventists. P03M also had little knowledge about his faith, but he engaged in various religious discussions. P16F was not interested to practice Islam and even married an Orthodox Christian man though she resisted conversion to Orthodox Christianity. These converts were not well informed about Islamic religious teachings. Since they lost hope in Islam, they became more interested in Christianity when their contact with Christians grew.

The fourth category of converts is comprised of people who used to practice folk religion. They had initially changed their faith from Islam to Orthodox Christianity for various reasons. Two converts (P18F and P19F) were forced to convert to Orthodox Christianity; however, they were practicing Islam secretly. They

converted to Islam after some years of secretly attending Islamic rituals. They also involved in different folk Islamic practices in order to receive blessings. The deep seated search for power led them to the faith in Christ.

### **Home and Family**

Home and family setting is one of the most significant contexts that facilitate the Arsi Oromo conversion. The researcher initially assumed that like himself most of the converts would make decisions to follow Christ while they were away from home, which might have given them freedom from their family and community's influence. However, this study unveiled that twelve of the twenty converts made their decision while they were at home. Through personal study of the Bible and the testimony of a friend, P02M announced his conversion in a family meeting unintentionally before making strong commitment to follow Christ. The immediate reaction of his family forced him to go to the nearby town to get protection and provision. Another convert (P05F), who was hopeless due to the loss of her father, was interested in follow Christ after she heard the gospel message in her village. Her conversion was followed by the conversion of her mother and seven siblings even though they faced severe persecution from their Muslim community.

Five converts (P07M, P11F, P13M, P17F, and P18F) were influenced by the message of the gospel from their family members. P18F got the message from her children through the testimony of their conversion experiences and exemplary life style. P17F also got the message from her mother and sisters. The life style of the family had tremendous impact upon the decision making process of these converts. The drastic conversion and healing of P07M's brother played a critical role in changing of P07M's attitude towards Christianity and in his decision making process. This tells that the preaching and the life testimonies of the family members' play an

important role in the conversion process of Muslims while they are in their familiar context.

However, eight converts came to the Christian faith while they were living away from their village and family. After P01M experienced a supernatural encounter while he was taking military and theological training for Jihad war in Sudan, which was very far from his home; he decided to follow Christ while traveling home. For P03M, the Bible study program and his encounter with foreign missionaries in a school setting, which was also far from his home, led him to convert to Christianity. He made a decision after searching for the truth for several years. P04F also got saved in a distant town while she was studying in high school. This gave her more access to interacting with Christians and eventually she decided to follow Christ. Furthermore, P15F explains that she heard the gospel while she was in her home area, but made a decision to follow the Christian faith while she was living in Negele Town.

Still, in this sample conversion took place more at the home setting than in an unfamiliar context. Twelve converts decided to convert while they were at home despite their circumstances being hostile to Christianity. This indicates that some motives and dynamics were occurring in the convert's life that influenced their conversion. In a similar research, which was done among the Digo of Kenya, Asland observes that most Digo Muslims made the decision to convert to the Christian faith "at their home place" (2005, 110-111). All female informants except for only one person in this study came to the Christian faith in their home areas through the preaching of family members or other Christians, and supernatural encounter. This tells that Arsi Oromo Muslims feel more comfortable with their home context when they make important decisions for their life. However, it also shows that there is the possibility that they can make a decision while they are far away from their home.

## **School**

School is another context that facilitates conversion of Muslims to Christianity. Five of the twenty people say that they got attracted to the Christian faith through the preaching of their friends and teachers in school. P03M went to a school owned by foreign missionaries. The Bible study program of the school enabled him to read the Bible for himself. However, since he was zealous for his faith, he encouraged his Muslim friends in the class to say, “Jesus did not die on the cross,” in their oral Bible test. However, in his turn, he experienced a supernatural encounter and answered differently. This moment was a turning point for him to look at Christianity as an option.

Another person (P04F) was exposed to the gospel message in her high school days at a Catholic school, which is located far from her home area. Even if she was not attracted to Catholic Church’s rituals and teachings, the gospel message she heard in the school aroused her interest to discuss with other Christian groups. Through the continuous discussion with her school friends and visits to the evangelical churches, she came to know Jesus as her Savior and Lord.

Three converts (P05F, P08M, and P17F) also got an important encounter with the Christian faith during their school career. One of these converts (P08M) started the process of conversion during his high school years, but converted to Christianity while he was a student at Jijiga University. The University context gave him freedom in his decision making process despite the loss of financial support from his family members and friends.

From this research, the researcher concludes that both the micro and macro contexts influence conversion of Arsi Oromo people from Islam to Christianity. Even though there is more freedom in the urban context compared to the rural setting,

which is predominantly Muslim, more conversions happen in villages than towns. Converts prefer to make important decisions in a familiar context despite the fact that it is a hostile environment to Christianity. Religious background of the converts also influence their relationship with Christians and the decision making process. Context plays a crucial role in the Arsi Oromo conversion. Rambo asserts that “the context not only provides the social/cultural matrix which shapes a person’s myths, rituals, symbols, and beliefs, it also has a powerful impact in terms of access, mobility, and opportunity for even coming into contact with religious change” (1992, 164).

### Stage Two: Crisis

Having examined the various contexts the converts come from, the focus shifts to the second stage of Rambo’s model: crisis. Crisis facilitates Arsi conversion to the Christian faith. Crisis at teenage, adolescence, or old age is a common phenomenon that happens in the conversion of Muslims to Christianity. According to Bainbridge, crisis may occur due to absolute deprivation that is lack of objective needs or relative deprivation that is lack of something that others with different status possess (1992, 182).

Rambo’s description of the various kinds of crisis is also important at this point to understand the process of conversion. Rambo writes, “Two basic types of crisis are important to the conversion process: crisis that calls into question one’s fundamental orientation to life, and crisis that in and on themselves are rather mild but are the proverbial straw that breaks the camels back” (1993, 46). Since crisis plays an important role in the conversion of Muslims, in the following section I will describe how crisis has influenced the conversion process of Arsi Oromo Muslims.

### **Age of Converts**

Converts experienced some types of crisis in their conversion process to Christianity. Most of them faced either a major or mild crisis before conversion. Table 1 shows that sixteen of the twenty interviewees experienced some types of crisis in their young or old age; it facilitated their conversion in a significant way. Twelve people converted to Christianity between the ages of 14 and 20; five others converted between the ages of 21 and 30. Only three converted at older ages (37, 56, and 60). The study shows some of the converts experienced crisis in adolescence; however, many of them experienced crisis in their teenage years that led them to conversion.

Conversion requires some ages to make such a strong decision and to face the challenges that may come from the society. My previous assumption was that older people would be bold enough to make decision compared to younger people when they experienced a crisis. However, this research (see Table 1) reveals that older people are less open to convert compared to younger people because of fear, insecurity, social pressure, and seeking identity and community. Young people make decision more easily when they get into a crisis than old people. In a similar research, which was conducted among the Digo of Kenya, Asland observes that “. . . many persons got converted in their late teen ages, but the crisis they experienced were of a very diverse nature” (2005, 118).

The data also unveils that the number of conversion among the Arsi Oromo grows in recent years. Two interviewees out of the twenty converted to the Christian faith before 1996. However, the rest converted to Christianity in the last fifteen years. Four of them came to the faith between 1996 and 2000. Four others converted between 2001 and 2005. However, half of the total interviewees (ten converts)



responded to the gospel message in the last five years (between 2006 and 2010). This figure tells that the number of converts to Christianity grew significantly despite various forms of persecution by their families and Muslims in their community.

**Table 1: Age of Conversion and Crisis**

Conversion Person	Age of converts during conversion (years)	Year of conversion	Period of crisis
P03M	14	1971	One year
P20F	15	2003	One year
P05F	15	2009	
P07M	16	1996	One year
P11F	16	2008	Three years
P17F	16	2005	Two years
P02M	18	1997	Five years
P12M	18	2006	One month
P08M	19	2009	Four to five years
P10M	19	2009	One year
P01M	20	1997	Five years
P04F	20	2009	
P06M	21	2009	
P14F	22	1992	Six years
P16F	24	2006	
P09M	25	2006	Two months
P13M	30	2009	Seven years
P15F	37	2001	Four years
P18F	56	2000	One year
P19F	60	2001	One year

### **Life Crisis**

Life crisis is an important factor that facilitates conversion. It might be caused by diverse ways among the Arsi Oromo, such as sickness and demonic oppression, financial crisis, mistreatment by fellow Muslims, lack of meaning, and dissatisfaction with their religion. Eleven converts had a major life crisis that led them to questioning Islam and to look for another option. Sickness and demonic oppression are the primary life crisis that some converts experienced. They sought healing from various religious means, but it did not work. So they began to think that Christianity could answer their health problems and protect them from demonic attack. The attacks from

demon and sickness are common among the Arsi Oromo and they often dealt with the problem by consulting religious practitioners. When the problem was beyond the power of the practitioners, they sought solution from another religion (Christianity).

P03M was suffering from bad dreams and disturbing spirits. After he tried all possible means to treat the problem, he came to a conclusion that Jesus might give him freedom and protection. P18F also experienced demonic oppression; eventually she learned that Christ has the power to defeat the work of dark angels. Another two persons (P06M and P16F) got sick and sought solution in Islam; however, they lost hope in their religion. This situation forced them to come to the faith in Christ. They thought that Christ is a healer and deliverer. They got healed after they converted to the Christian faith.

Lack of meaning and dissatisfaction in Islamic teachings and practices is another type of life crisis that the converts encountered. Converts tried to get meaning and peace from Islam. However, whenever they became devout Muslims, they felt empty. P01M was very zealous for his faith. He was a jihad fighter and Islamic missionary team leader, but he could not find meaning, satisfaction, and peace in Islam. This crisis led him to read the Bible and come to the faith in Christ after he faced another life threatening situation and more dreams. When Jesus saved him from a death threat after he offered prayer to God in Jesus' name, this event brought him to understand Jesus has power over life and death.

The third kind of life crises that the converts faced were finance-related, which was powerful enough to lead some of them to quest. When the Muslim community failed to address the financial needs of some of the converts in their time of crisis, they started to question Islam. P05F used to slaughter a sheep in the birthday of Muhammad; however, she refused to do it during 2004 Maulid holiday. In the same

year all her cattle die due to unknown reason. She thought, it was the work of Satan. The Muslim community and other family members did not support her financially. This crisis pressed her to seek protection and a community who could care and love her. P13M was also an imam of the mosque in a rural village for eight years, but he faced a financial crisis because he was not paid by the mosque and did not have another job. This situation forced him to chew a locally grown leave called “Chat,” which is forbidden by some conservative Muslims. He thought, he may get peace through this action. He prayed to Allah to provide him with a job. However, his financial situation became worse. He ended up with questioning Allah and the Muslim community; as a result he became open to the gospel message.

Lastly, mistreatment by fellow Muslims forced the converts to question Islam and to look for a better religious community who could care and love them. Christian love and care for the poor are a powerful life testimony that attracts Arsi Muslims. On the other hand, the lack of proper treatment and care, or mistreatment from the Muslim community, paves the way for converts to look at another community of believers. P09M lost his father at young age and all his family faced a financial crisis. He thought the Muslim community might care for their needs. However, no one in the community supported them while they were passing through grief and financial hardship. When he grew older, he compared the lives of Christians and Muslims. Eventually, he realized Christians were more caring and loving for orphans and widows than Muslims.

Mistreatment and adverse Islamic teachings of women were another cause of crisis that triggered a quest in the life of Arsi women. P14F was deeply disturbed by the adverse attitude of the Muslim clerics towards women. One day, she heard a sermon from the mosque saying, “Only a few Muslim women will enter paradise.”

Then she lost hope of assurance of salvation and was upset with unjust treatment of women in Islam. P19F also sought solution from a medicine man for her daughter's demonic problem, but the sheik used his magical power and made her daughter to remain with him. Then she refused to go back to home. The mother could not do any thing because she did not have a power to fight the medicine man. In this situation, the Muslim community also did not cooperate with her because of fear of the evil powers. This was the turning point for her to question the Islamic life style and teaching.

### **Dreams and Visions**

Dreams and vision are a decisive element that causes crisis and facilitates conversion. Rick Love claims that “dreams and visions play an important role in this pursuit of guidance” (2000, 156). Among the Arsi Oromo, dreams and visions are taken seriously; they believe dreams are answers from God. Dreams and visions may occur either when a convert encounters Christians, after a life crisis, or randomly. In other cases, similar dreams and visions can be experienced repeatedly until the person makes a decision to convert to Christianity. In such a context, dreams and visions play an important role to arouse the interest of the Muslim person to follow Christ.

Five converts were heavily influenced by dreams and visions in making decision to follow Christ. P01M had a dream while he was struggling with a life crisis (lack of meaning and peace) while he was in an Islamic training center. The same dream appeared at different times, so he thought that the message was from God. The dream together with other life crises led him to conversion. Another person (P13M) had a dream twice, which helped him to seek God more. P14F also experienced an unusual vision in which she saw Jesus Christ sitting on a tree while she was going to the market place. He was in a white robe and called her to follow him. When the same

man (Jesus) appeared in her dream several times and called her to come to him, she made a decision to convert to Christianity after she spent several years of struggling to make a decision.

I found two more people (P15F and P18F) whose dreams played an important role in their conversion process. Dreams combined with the quest for truth and search for a more meaningful life fostered conversion. The dream offered a solution for the life problems of these two women. They received guidance for their future religious journey; the dream helped them to realize that Jesus is the right path to heaven.

In all these cases, a dream offered helpful solutions for the problems of the converts. All the converts have a positive view of the impact of dreams on their conversion process. The converts did not see dreams as a sole reason for conversion, but it was an important factor that provided assurance for their decision making.

### Stage Three: Quest

When the converts experienced some crises, they responded to them in various ways. It is natural for human beings to look for a solution for the problem faced. Rambo writes that “quest is a process in which people seek to maximize meaning and purpose in life. Under abnormal or crisis situations this active searching intensifies; people look for resources for growth and development in order to ‘fill the void’” (1992, 167). Some converts looked for an internal solution, others an external one, from various sources such as Muslim religious leaders, people of other religions, and supernatural beings.

This study discovered that five major quests came out to the surface: the quest for truth, the quest for peace, the quest for blessing/*baraka*, Quest for fellowship, and the quest for power for healing and freedom from demons. For some, it was a search to know their future destiny after death. For others, it was to build a better relationship

with the supernatural and to have a better life in this world. When they felt their religion could not offer a solution for their problems, they looked to Christianity as an option. The process was a painful one and took a long time until they became confident that conversion to the Christian faith would be a genuine solution. In some cases, one factor might be more dominant over the other; at another time a combination of quests play an important role in conversion.

### **Quest for Truth**

The Quest for truth is a very important element when one is in crisis. This study shows ten converts experienced a profound quest for truth after they faced some crises. The deeply seated spiritual hunger led them to look for solutions from religious books, religious leaders, and supernatural intervention in order to know and follow the true path that might lead them to salvation. All interviewees were not sure of their destiny after death even though they thought Islam was the right religion. Loss of hope for salvation troubled most of them and made them look for people in other faiths to know about their belief.

P01M was searching the truth from his childhood. Reading of the Bible and supernatural encounter through dreams and prayers led him to understand that Jesus was the only true path to heaven. In the same way, after P03M experienced a supernatural encounter and attended a Bible study class, a quest for truth grew in him. The quest for truth created strong zeal to get the true path; consequently it led him to engage in dialogue with Christians. P04F did not face any crisis in her life, but the strong desire of searching for the truth caused her to give her life to Christ after a long journey of looking for the true path. P11F and P15F struggled with a quest for several years; as a result, they found that Jesus was the savior.

The converts sought a supernatural intervention in order to reach the truth. When a crisis happened in their lives, they prayed and fasted to get supernatural guidance in their particular life issue. Having been taught that Islam was the only true religion, the converts struggled to know if salvation would be possible apart from Islam. This teaching made them to seek supernatural guidance through dreams or in other means in order to identify the true path. For this reason, P07M fasted for six days in order to get a revelation about the right path; P19F also prayed for one year in order to know the truth.

Furthermore, reading religious scriptures (the Qur'an and the Bible) created the quest for truth within the converts as well as aroused the need for a savior. The Qur'an gives a glimpse of Christ; however, the Bible gives a full picture of the savior; so converts came to the knowledge of the savior through these scriptures. P13M searched the truth in Islamic literature and got a piece of information from the Qur'an about the person and ministry of Christ, but latter he encountered a more adequate explanation from the Bible and Christians. Since the quest grew deeper during his discussion with the Christians, he came to realize that Jesus was the savior. P10M read the Bible to learn more about the savior. When he realized what he read in the Bible contradicted the Islamic teaching, he started to ask sheiks to explain the Islamic view of the Messiah. The warning he received from the religious leaders not to ask about Christ intensified his quest for truth. This research unveils that the quest for truth is a decisive factor for the conversion of Arsi Oromo Muslims to the Christian faith. However, it may occur before or after a person faces a crisis.

### **Quest for Power**

The quest for power is an integral part of the Arsi Oromo Muslims in order to get healing from sickness and deliverance from demons. Rambo mentions one put

forward by James Beckford as, “Beckford catalogues different kinds of power which have been recognized as playing a role in religion, like the power to heal, the power to be successful, the power to gain control over one’s life, and the power over death” (1992, 168). Power persons are also very important, even though sometimes they cannot help as they are expected. They try to heal the sick and treat demonic attacks. However, at times the power person fails to heal or deliver the sick person. In such a situation, the converts sought better sources that had more power to provide for a solution to their life problems.

Three converts (P05F, P18F and P19F) experienced demonic attacks and sought help from different religious practitioners; however, neither power people nor Islam provided them with a solution for their predicament. After she consulted different practitioners to get deliverance from spirits, P05F went to the church compound where the evangelistic conference was held. During her visit, after the preacher prayed for her, the demons left her immediately. When she realized the mighty power of God in Jesus, she decided to follow Christ on the same day. P18F also was convinced that Jesus had the power over any demonic attacks and decided to commit to the Christian faith. The freedom she obtained after conversion helped her to grow in her Christian faith. The deeply seated search for power also led P19F to convert to Christianity.

The desire for healing power is another prominent factor that results in conversion from Islam to Christianity. Among the Arsi Oromo, causality of sickness is mainly related with the spirit world, so consulting specialists is very crucial. At times, when medication does not work, a spiritual solution is sought. Lack of solution from medication and religious specialist forces the sick to look for a power person from another religion. P06M was sick for a long time and consulted power people and



used power objects to get healed; however, all his efforts did not bring the desired result. After hearing life testimonies of other converts, he decided to follow Christ hoping to get healed. He got healed after the Christians prayed for him. Besides, after observing the miraculous healing of her brother, P14F decided to convert to Christianity together with all her family members.

### **Quest for Blessing/Baraka**

Beyond the quest for truth and access to power, there is a need for physical blessing (children, money, good harvest, and so forth) through manipulation of spiritual powers, using power objects, and through prayer to God. Blessing is the basic need like food for most Arsi Muslims. This is quite clear from the life of P18F, the Sufi woman who consulted a Sufi sheik to get blessings. She has done everything that the sheik told her to do to get the blessing of Sheikena Hussein of Bale. Even though she kept small stones in her box and did not change her clothes for 140 days as she was instructed by the sheiks, she lost all the money she had instead of getting more money. Then the deprived old woman decided to come to the Christian God believing that He could bless her.

Similar dynamics are also found in the life of four converts (P19F, P12M, P01M and P05F). They were desperately searching for the blessings of God. They have tried different means to get blessed; however, when they compared their life with their Christian neighbors, they felt they were not blessed. This deep seated deprivation led them to convert to the Christian faith. P01M also felt that the lack of satisfaction and meaning was a result from the lack of God's blessings in his life. These converts were convinced that the Christian God could bless them if they converted to Christianity. P03M and P13M lost hope in Islam because they sought the

blessings of God in vain for many years. When they failed to access earthly blessings, they tended to look at Christianity as an option.

### **Quest for Peace**

Peace is another important quest in the life of the Arsi converts. P01M states that one of the most important reasons for him to convert was lack of peace and fulfillment in his life. He tried to become a devout Muslim. His mission was to fight Christians; however, he felt that Christians had more peace than he did. Two converts (P02M and P12M) were attracted to the love and peace of their Christian friends and neighbors. When they compared their life with other Christians, it triggered a question about the fundamental teachings of Islam. Even though they were taught that Islam was the religion of peace, in the practical sense it did not offer them peace. The quest for peace in life was an essential factor for the conversion of Muslims to Christianity.

P13M encountered a financial crisis after many years of his immoral life. As a result, he did not have peace. So he began to quest for truth. The strong desire to have peace brought him to closely observe the life of Christians. Through a personal observation of the life of other converts and continuous dialogue with Christians, he came to the understanding that Jesus is both the savior and the prince of peace.

### **Quest for Fellowship**

Rambo observes that “a religious movement which offers warm fellowship, for instance, will appeal to someone searching for relationships” (1992, 168). The love and fellowship of Christians often creates a strong quest for meaningful relationship among Arsi Oromo Muslims. P01M was impressed with the fellowship and unity in the Christian community in his village and tried to imitate their life style even in his young age. However, he could not become like them and was not able to

have a similar type of fellowship in his Muslim community. Since he was an Islamic missionary team leader, he made every effort to form a fellowship that resembled the Christian one. When he failed to do so; therefore, he was attracted to join the Christian fellowship. Another person (P02M) was also attracted by the love and fellowship of Christians even though they were despised by the Muslim community. His desire to join a caring and loving community led him to know more about Christianity. Eventually through the reading of the Bible, he decided to convert to the Christian faith. Three converts (P12M, P13M and P16F) were also attracted by the unity and fellowship of the Christian community in their respective villages. This attraction caused them to interact with Christians and seek to join this community. At times, they felt abandoned by their own community in time of need; in such a situation, they found Christians to be more loving and caring than Muslims. They felt love from Christians while they were still Muslims as well as they observed Christians love for each other.

#### Stage Four: Encounter

This stage is also important in the process of conversion to Christ. The agents of conversion come to the life of the convert in various ways. They may appear through natural and daily interactions with people like close families or even through supernatural encounters. In some cases, an agent came to the informant's life through ordinary daily interactions. There is a diversity in the manner of encounter in that for some individuals it meant several people were involved, in others just a few.

Some scholars suggest that encounter should be the first stage in the conversion process, which generates a crisis and facilitates a quest (Rambo 1992, 163). Although this claim is appropriate in several cases of this study, encounter comes after crisis occurs or quest is triggered in the life of the informants. Since it

takes a long time between the first encounter and commitment, several events and agents are involved in the process of conversion. The encounter between the agents and the converts is very important to understand conversion. Often the first encounter can either slow down or speed up the conversion process.

### **Evangelists and Missionaries**

Evangelists and missionaries are an important people to lead Muslims to the knowledge of Christ among the Arsi Oromo. Eight of the twenty informants encountered evangelists and missionaries. In the case of P03M, evangelists from other parts of Ethiopia and SIM missionaries played a key role in his conversion process. They presented the gospel, prayed and led him to decision. P04F contacted an evangelist in her village who helped her to understand the death and resurrection of Christ after she conducted several discussion sessions with him. An evangelist from neighbourhood also played a prominent role in leading P13M to conversion. He provided an Arabic tract, the Bible, and Christian books in order to help the convert to understand more about the Christian faith. P14F and P20F also heard the gospel message from evangelists in their respective villages.

In the case of P19F, God revealed her situation to the evangelist who came from a far place; he revealed the secrets of demon worship in her home. Then she brought power objects and burned them in front of the evangelist and her Christian children. The revelation of God that came through the evangelist impacted her life and helped her to understand that the Christian God is a powerful God who can reveal all the secrets to his servants. This tells that the power encounter ministry had a significant and powerful impact on the conversion process.

One week of intensive lessons and discussions with an MBB evangelist (Sheik in that context) aroused the interest of P10M and P11F to read the Bible more and

seek Christ. Their discussion with the evangelist was a pivotal point for them to turn to Christianity. The roles of evangelists were so great in the conversion process and follow-up ministry among the Arsi Oromo converts. Since some of the evangelists speak the vernacular language, they can communicate with clarity and use local idioms and examples in evangelism and discipleship. So, the strong involvement of evangelists in the Arsi conversion is remarkable phenomenon. Evangelists both from the Arsi province and from churches from southern province have been an instrument for half of the conversions in this paper. The researcher observed that the involvement of the MBB evangelists in Muslim evangelism is growing in recent days.

### **Family Members**

Nine of the converts the researcher interviewed were heavily impacted by either the life style or the preaching of their family members. The agents of their conversion were children, brothers, sisters, or close relatives. Three converts (P07M, P10M, and P11F) heard the gospel message from their brothers. Their discussion with their brothers initiated them to read the Bible and to know more about the Messiah. The endurance of their (P10M and P11F) brother in the face of persecution also triggered their mind to ask the question why he had persevered in this difficult situation; this situation provoked them to question their faith and search how he got such strength.

P12M received a booklet from his Christian uncle. His uncle's personal testimony together with reading of the booklet and the Bible brought him closer to the Christian faith. His uncle and other relative played a significant role in inviting him to attend the church even before his conversion. In the case of P13M, his sister who invited him to live with her while he was looking for a job in Assela Town helped him to change his attitude towards Christianity. The other woman who told about family

influence is P17F. She heard the gospel message several times from her family and friends, but she resisted for a long time. However, their humble response and love attracted her to consider Christianity as the right religion to follow. The children of P19F also played a critical role in her conversion especially after she encountered a life crisis. They assured her that Jesus had the power over any crisis and demonic oppression. The words and exemplary life of her children facilitated her conversion.

It is evident from the above stories that, even though the converts are marginalized both in the Muslim communities and family members, it seems that they exercised a strong influence on some of the family members and friends. Their perseverance in hardships and persecution, their exemplary life, and the preaching gained respects from the family members and they became powerful agents for conversion.

### **Friends and Neighbours**

Most converts also find friends and neighbours to be a contributing factor to their conversion process. School friends and neighbours are the most helpful people in guiding the converts to Christianity before or after crisis and quest occur. In this study, Christian neighbours played a critical role in leading the Arsi Oromo Muslims to conversion. A Christian woman from the neighbourhood came to P06M and assured him of healing if he committed his life to Christ. This encounter was followed by a dream on the same day that convinced him to convert to the Christian faith on the following day. God also miraculously healed him after the Christians prayed for him.

Christian friends are the most decisive people who encountered Muslims and influenced their decision making process. Some of them are school friends and others are friends in the neighbourhood or in the village. Two converts (P05F and P08M) were challenged and guided by their school friends to know Jesus. Their preaching

and personal life style led the converts to be interested in the Christian faith. In addition, the influence of friends from the neighborhood and village had a tremendous impact because of continuous personal contact and life testimony. A friend of P02M's tried to contextualize the gospel message and his life even beyond the limits of the doctrinal and moral teaching of his church. He was involved in practices, which were prohibited among most evangelical Christians in the region in order to identify with his Muslim friend for the sake of building bridge for the gospel message; he chewed "Chat" and sung secular song with his friend. His action opened doors to share the good news to the person (P02M) and led him to read the Bible for himself.

Another six converts (P04F, P09M, P20F, P16F, P19F, and P13M) revealed that their friends from their village influenced their perception of Christianity and their decision making process. The converts witnessed the genuine love and care of their Christian friends played a prominent role in their conversion process. The Christian message is all about loving others and sharing the message regardless of tribal, religious, or cultural differences. From my observation, it is clear that many Christians in the Arsi province are influential life examples for their Muslim neighbors.

### **Supernatural Intervention**

I have discussed the social, anthropological, and psychological aspects of conversion in the beginning four stages of conversion. Now it is appropriate to discuss the divine aspects of conversion. The supernatural intervention of God in the lives of the converts through His word, dreams, and visions are clearly observed in the conversion process. Since the lives of Muslims are highly influenced by Islamic supernaturalism, we need to take into account the supernatural intervention seriously in the study of conversion processes. The worldview of supernaturalism is also very

prominent among the Arsi Oromo. Converts are deeply convinced that their conversion is a plan of God even though there is human involvement. Therefore, conversion should not be understood in isolation from the role of divine activity.

P01M did not have Christian friend, family member or neighbour; rather, God touched his life through reading the Bible, by rescuing his life from a guerrilla fighter, through dreams, and through the positive response of a Christian man whom was attacked by him. His conversion was primarily influenced by the supernatural intervention. When he experienced a supernatural intervention and realized Jesus as his saviour, he rushed to the church to commit his life to Christ. P03M, a young zealous boy who was very passionate to defend Islam, experienced a supernatural encounter in an oral Bible test at a mission school. This event was the turning point in his conversion process; he was not able to speak against Christianity again. Four other converts (P02M, P04F, P10M and P17F) also experienced a supernatural intervention through reading Scriptures. God spoke to their hearts in powerful ways. Some of these informants read the Bible with their eyes full of tears. This explains that God uses his words in a supernatural way to communicate his message to the potential converts.

God's supernatural intervention is also realized through dreams and visions. As discussed earlier, dreams and visions create a sense of crisis or quest that may lead to conversion. After she had four different dreams with similar messages calling her for conversion, P15F came to the conclusion that Christ should be her personal Savior and Lord. Then she went to the church without consulting anybody from her family or community. She took this step because dreams and visions are normally considered as divine communication among the Arsi Oromo. Three additional converts (P18F, P14F and P13M) received a divine communication through dreams that eventually led them



to conversion. They claim that the dreams they had were a direct communication from God in order to show them the right path.

The supernatural intervention in the case of P08M was so remarkable and unique. He resisted hearing the gospel message for several years despite hearing Christian songs as entertainment. However, on one Christmas Eve, he experienced a supernatural encounter and was filled with fear while he was hearing a Christian song. Immediately he called his Christian friend to take him to his church. He did not have a plan to convert to Christianity, but the supernatural intervention changed his allegiance to Christ immediately.

These stories indicate that God is the main actor in the conversion process of Arsi Oromos. In each conversion story, God was acting behind the scene by sending agents, through dreams and visions, to arouse crisis and quest in the convert's life so that he or she might be led to conversion. Although we explain the Arsi conversion in sociological, psychological, and anthropological terms, the divine activity is in operation in every aspect of the conversion process. Rambo writes that "conversion is sudden and it is gradual. It is created totally by the action of God, and it is created totally by the action of humans" (1993, 176).

#### Stage Five: Interaction

The stage of interaction is very crucial in the lives of converts. Studies on conversion should not ignore it. Some converts maintain interactive relationships with the advocate for a long time while some others only for a short period of time. Interaction between the advocate and the potential converts might be sustained for long time after the first encounter, or their relationships might be broken. On the other hand, either the agent or the potential convert might work out to sustain the interaction. Rambo claims that "in the interaction stage, the potential convert either

chooses to continue the contact and become more involved, or the advocate works to sustain the interaction in order to extend the possibility of persuading the person to convert” (1993, 102).

Relationship with the potential converts needs serious attention and long time contact in a way that might generate trust between the two people. The initial interactions are very important to develop relationships, to win trust, and to share love and care. Rambo claims, “Important variables which operate in this stage include the degree of the control of the group exerts over communication and social interaction, the nature of the persuasion process, the formation of the personal relationships, . . .” (1992, 171-172). These variables are very important for the potential convert to reject the old way of life and to adapt the new one.

This study has uncovered that developing relationship is very critical to lay foundation for the next step of sharing the gospel message. Most of the Arsi converts had negative attitudes towards Christian preaching; however, they were attracted by their life style and fellowship. Some converts revealed that they had a negative perception about Christianity due to the teaching they received in Islam and the Christians’ approach to share their faith. Since this stage is very crucial to clear all misunderstandings and prejudices, and to lead the potential convert to commitment. It should receive proper attention in order to help converts to understand the word of God with love and care.

### **Fellowship with Christians**

In this study, it is obvious that the Christian care and fellowship for potential converts plays a key role in their conversion process. In some cases, the interaction between the advocates and the converts from the first encounter to the commitment, and even after conversion, was very strong. P04F developed interaction with

Christians gradually, but it was so profound. She participated in Christian holidays, which was not acceptable in most Muslim communities. She also kept her fellowship with her Christian friends after conversion. This interaction enabled her to grow in the new faith and obtain a community of believers who cared about and loved her.

The sacrificial life example and love of the friend of P13M influenced his perception about Christianity. Even though P13M was an imam of a mosque, his fellowship with his Christian friend grew gradually for seven years. This interaction was followed by his crisis and quest for truth; as a result, it built up his confidence in the Christian faith. Three informants (P19F, P18F and P15F) developed a strong fellowship with Christians within their family members and from the community. This fellowship provided them with a sense of security in their decision making process.

However, some converts' interaction with Christians was marred by some Christians' approach of evangelism or the content of the message they delivered. Many converts were disappointed by polemical arguments and aggressive ways of presenting the gospel. The study shows that potential converts were not attracted by the method of Christian preaching; rather, almost all the converts were influenced by the lifestyle and fellowship among Christians. This evidences that the gospel message becomes effective in the life of the hearers in the context of genuine fellowship and interaction, which is based on trust and love. Asland observes that "we can say that interaction and fellowship are important factors. The long and slow processes need close interaction with someone inside the church to get some kind of momentum" (2005, 150). Unconditional love and care may help Muslims to build a genuine relationship with God. Therefore, gospel preaching apart from a true fellowship bears little desired fruit in the lives of the converts. It is clear from this research that the life

of the agent as well as the content and approach of gospel preaching should be appropriate to the given specific context so that it may generate a proper response and relationship.

### **Effects of Interaction**

Interaction might have either positive or negative effects in the conversion process of Muslims to the Christian faith. The positive effects of interaction enable the potential convert to understand more about God and to appreciate the life of the Christian community. However, the negative experience of interaction between the convert and the agent might adversely affect the decision making process, and it may lead the new converts even to backslide to their former faith. In this study, converts revealed that they had negative interactions with Christians in terms of the preaching of the Word of God especially concerning the doctrine of Christ, salvation, and the Trinitarian doctrine of God. In most occasions, Muslims reacted aggressively whenever they discussed these doctrinal issues with Christians.

However, most informants say that the fellowship and life of Christians attracted them. The love, patience, integrity, honesty, unity, care, and humility of Christians were the most sought by the Arsi Oromo Muslims. P01M was touched when he heard “God bless you” after he wounded a Christian man with a knife. He never heard such a word of blessing from his fellow Muslims after he attacked them; this was a unique experience for him. The response of the man touched the convert, and he regretted his action. The interaction of five converts (P13M, P20F, P17F, P19F and P15F) with their Christian friends, neighbors and family members has drawn them closer to Christianity. Their interaction had a tremendous effect on the change of their attitude and facilitated their conversion process. In several cases, this interaction

continued even after commitment. The agents also became their mentors and close friends.

### **Period of Interaction**

Some converts needed a considerable amount of time to evaluate what they heard from Christians and to contemplate the consequences of their decision. For others, it was very short because of the situation in which they were living. During this period of interaction, some converts stayed very close to the agents, but at some other times they withdrew from the contacts to reflect and evaluate their decision and the risk they might get after conversion. The study shows the period of interaction ranges from one to thirty years. This shows that conversion among Arsi Oromos involves a long time of interaction and fellowship. This study also reveals that the commonly held approach of short term mission or door to door evangelism is not an effective way of reaching out to Muslims; rather, a long term interaction, friendship, and daily personal contact is the best way to do evangelism among Arsi Oromo Muslims. Table 2 shows that most converts took more than one year in searching for truth, interacting with Christians, evaluating the life style of Christians, examining the truthfulness of the Christian faith, and weighing the consequences of their conversion.

**Table 2: Period of Interaction**

Period of Interaction	1-2 years	2-5 years	5-10 years	Above 10 years
Frequency	6	8	2	1

### **Stage Six: Commitment**

After a period of intensive interaction and encounter, the potential convert makes a choice to surrender to the new religious system. This stage is the pivotal

point in the conversion process. The convert has to decide to commit him/herself to Christ and change his/her allegiance to the new faith. In this stage it becomes clear for the converts that living with uncertainty is not the right decision; there should be a stage of commitment and surrender to the new faith and the fellowship of the community of believers. Rambo claims that this stage may include “biographical reconstruction, testimony, rituals, pain induction, decision making and surrender” (1992, 173). Therefore, conversion requires change of direction, repentance of sins, and building a new relationship with God in Christ and the believing community.

However, commitment does not happen easily due to the reason that potential converts face different kinds of social, cultural, and psychological challenges that hinder them to surrender their life to the new faith. Fear of social pressure and uncertainty of the new religious system are the most challenging factors before commitment. Rambo observes that “. . . the commitment stage often the occasion for an intense, painful confrontation with the self” (1992, 174). When Muslims surrender their life to the Christian faith, it happens after they overcome the various challenges and being assured of the truthfulness of the new religion. In the process of commitment or decision making process various internal and external factors are accompanied to facilitate the conversion process. When these factors are stronger than the challenges, commitment easily happens. Therefore, without strong motives and dynamics, it is difficult to surrender to the new belief system.

### **Challenges to Make Decision**

The Arsi Oromo Muslims usually face a variety of challenges which draws them not to make decision for conversion. It is not easy for them to make a step towards conversion to Christianity in the Arsi context, which is a predominantly Muslim community. It is obvious for all potential converts that they might be rejected

and persecuted, and might lose their positions, jobs and family relationships. Counting gains and losses, and evaluating decisions are continuous struggles for prospective converts in the decision making process. Some converts take years while others days depending on the situation they face.

Another person (P02M) hesitated for years to convert to Christianity due to fear of social pressure. Since the Christians in his community were very few and not recognized by the community, he was so worried about burial ground. Lack of legal burial ground for the dead is a very humiliating event among the Arsi Oromo in particular and in the Ethiopian community in general. Two persons (P03M and P07M) also struggled to make decision because of fear of persecution and rejection from their community. After making personal confession of Christian faith, P16F worshiped the Lord secretly for two years without announcing her decision either to Muslims or Christians. She went to the church when she felt it was the right time to make the public confession of her new faith. Commitment is a very critical aspect of the conversion so that potential converts need encouragement and close follow-up from their agents in order to be bold enough to face both the internal and the external challenges. Since immediate public confession of faith has various adverse consequences, it is better for the converts to surrender their lives to God without public announcement. The advocates can nurture the new converts with the word of God and help them to grow in their faith, so that they can persevere during the time of persecution and hardship.

### **Most Important Factors for Conversion**

As discussed in the previous sections, various factors (context, crisis, quest, encounter and interaction) are involved to cause conversion to happen. At this stage, I will briefly sum up the most important factors that bring out the Arsi Oromo

conversion. The conversion of some converts might have been caused by a single dominant factor, but in most cases different internal and external factors played an important role in the conversion process. P01M says that “the most important factors for my conversion are: Bible reading, dreams, lifestyle of Christians, life crisis, and quest for truth.” In the life of this convert, each factor facilitated his conversion to some degree.

In the case of P02M, what attracted him the most was the life style of Christians. The exemplary life style, the love, fellowship, and unity of Christians are the most decisive factors for the conversion of Muslims to the Christian faith. In this study, eight converts attributed the life of Christians to the most prominent role played in their conversion process. They found the Christians holiness and love to be far better than the Muslim ones.

Dissatisfaction with the teachings and practices of Islam, as well as the life of Muslims is another factor that led Arsi Oromo Muslims to look up to Christianity as an option. Since P04F was disappointed by the teaching and practice of Islam, she lost hope in her religion. She preferred to convert to Christianity. She said, “I was dissatisfied with Islamic teachings and practices. I hate polygamy in Islam. And this led me to look for another option.” Dissatisfaction was also the major factor for P05F to leave Islam and join the Christian community. She felt that the Muslim community abandoned her and her family after the death of her father. Another strong factor was the adverse teaching of Islam about women. The Islamic teachings that she received from a mosque led her to lose hope of salvation in Islam.

Truth encounter was another important factor in the conversion process. When the word of God is presented in love and in the way the Muslims can understand, conversion happens. Even though some converts were upset with the Christians



preaching, the truth they encountered through reading the Bible and the testimony of Christians impacted their decision making process. Three persons (P10M, P11F, and P13M) converted to the Christian faith because of search for truth. They learned from MBB sheiks who taught them about Christ by using the divine vestige in the Qur'an and leading them to the truth in the Bible.

Lastly, dreams also played an important role in the conversion process of the Arsi Oromo converts. In several cases dream triggered a quest and often created a strong motivation for conversion. P01M, P13M and P15F witness that a dream was one of the decisive factors for their conversion to the Christian faith. For many converts, one or more of these factors facilitate the conversion process. Therefore, conversion is a process that involves different internal and external factors.

### **Decision Making Process**

The interplay of these factors encourages the potential converts to make a decision. Decision making process is a dynamic that takes the convert to the stage of commitment. The converts come to the decision to surrender their life to Christ after a long time of inner struggle, that is, after the stages of crisis, quest, encounter and interaction. When the motivation becomes very strong, the potential converts make a decision either publicly in the church/home fellowship setting or secretly by themselves or with the help from other Christians. Converts prefer to make the secret decision in a very hostile environment and when they are totally dependent on the family for daily living. At times the converts prefer to make a public confession even if it may cause severe persecution.

Eight converts (P11F, P10M, P09M, P07M, P13M, P14F, P15F and P20F) preferred to stay secret after conversion. Most of them worshiped the Lord and attend a secret fellowship with Christians for several months after they made decisions to

surrender their lives to Christ. Fear of persecution was the main factor that made them stay anonymous and nurture their spiritual life with the Word of God. They also stayed secret in order to gain wisdom and knowledge to answer the questions raised by Muslims and gets acquainted with Christians for further preparation to face the anticipated persecution from the Muslim community. P20F tried to keep her conversion secret for some time because of fear of persecution. But her family suspected her conversion when they observed some signs of life change even before making a verbal confession to follow Christ. After they found out about her conversion, they severely beat her several times and chased her out of the community. P13M stayed for nine months in the mosque after making his decision. During this period, he led about fifteen Muslims to the Christian faith. However, when Muslims found out about his conversion, they threatened him with death, confiscated all his property, and chased him out from his village. Secret decision making was one possible option for the Arsi Oromo converts; however, this does not mean they were passive converts.

The other twelve converts made their decision in public. A local church was the most common setting at which they made public confession. Even though it was difficult to publicly declare their conversion in a church worship program, they confessed their faith in public when they were profoundly convinced. P01M and P02M did not know which church they had to attend in order to confess their faith. They did not have enough knowledge about how to make public confession. While they were still wandering on the street looking for a Christian fellowship or a church building, they met Christians who led them to their churches for their faith confession. P04F also claimed that she decided to follow Christ when she experienced a power

encounter in evangelistic conference in the church. Through this power encounter, she has sensed the presence of God's power in the Christian faith.

### **Rituals**

Rituals make up an important part of the commitment stage. Baptism is the most significant ritual the new converts undergo. It has a both theological and social meaning among Arsi churches. A convert is considered a full member of a local church when he or she is baptized. Baptism is a symbolic representation of the inner conversion. It is also a means for the public announcement of the convert's faith. Once the person is baptized, the Christian community facilitates the convert to be involved in social, religious, and other important affairs of the church. Baptism is very crucial for the convert to partake of the Lord's Supper. It comprises the convert's new identity, fosters his or her fellowship, and solidifies the theological aspect of his or her life.

All converts except P04F were baptized after attending a discipleship or confession of faith class that was designed both in The Ethiopian Kale Heywet Church and The Full Gospel Church despite having some variations in its implementation in different local contexts. P04F could not get a chance to be baptized and attend the discipleship class even though she was converted two years before. Her work place is very far from her local church, which kept her away from attending discipleship class and baptism. Therefore, she felt that she was not full member of her church. The converts attended a discipleship class either for a few months or for a longer period of time depending on the church's policy before their baptism.

In some cases, there is a considerable degree of contextualization in the baptism program by conducting it in a manner that would not provoke violence from the Muslim community. Some converts were taken to a different town or village to be

baptized where they were not well known to people. P10M and P11F were baptized in Arsi Negele, which is a town about 50 Km from their home area. This helped the converts to identify fully with the Christian community as well as to be kept secretly in the Muslim community. On the other hand, there is sometimes a low degree of contextualization due to the assumption that the public baptism is the most important way to declare one's faith publicly. Such public baptism results in persecution because Muslims see baptism as a final step for conversion to the Christian faith. Both the family and the Muslim community become more hostile towards the converts. Although the symbolism of baptism is very important, it should be conducted in culturally sensitive ways.

#### Stage Seven: Consequences

Conversion to the Christian faith may be accompanied by various consequences. This section mainly concentrates on the immediate consequences of conversion. Some of the consequences are desired by the converts and the believing community; some others are mainly external and unwanted. In this study, two major consequences are observed as a result of conversion: life change among the converts and persecution from family members and Muslim community. The change of life that is experienced by each individual has positive effects in terms of his or her relationship with himself or herself, other people, and God. At the same time, conversion also exposes the convert to rejection and persecution by the Muslim community. The convert may experience persecution on different levels depending on his or her family religious background, social setting, and his or her own social status.

## **Life Change**

After converting to Christianity, most of the converts say they have experienced some changes in their life. The first experience was joy and peace in their hearts, which never happened when they were Muslims. Peace replaced the restless life and inner struggle that the converts experienced before conversion. P01M sought peace, joy and fulfilment in his life for several years. He committed his life for the cause of God (military Jihad) to achieve fulfilment in his life, but he was not satisfied in Islam. He felt peace and joy immediately after conversion. The converts attribute the peace to a result of the supernatural intervention which cannot explain how it happened in their lives.

A feeling of assurance of salvation is another consequence of conversion. After long period of uncertainty, crisis, and quest for truth, the converts felt free from the consequences of sin and obtained assurance of salvation. P02M worried about the last Judgment of God and was not sure of his future destiny. He says that he experienced a great hope of salvation because his sins were forgiven and he felt reconciled with God through Jesus Christ.

Deliverance from evil spirits, physical healing, and the breaking of ancestral curses are other positive consequences of conversion, as it is reported by the converts. The power encounter they experienced provided them with freedom from the torment of spirits, the ancestral curses that had come down through generations, and sicknesses caused by various reasons. Immediately after her commitment to Christ, demons left P05F when Christians prayed for her. Then she felt peace and joy. Her mother who was paralyzed for many years also got healed after she committed her life to Christ.

## **Persecution**

Persecution and rejection are the most difficult part among the Arsi Oromo converts. Conversion demands a high price to pay. This study shows all converts experienced a certain degree of rejection and persecution from their family and the respective Muslim community. Even though some families are nominal Muslims, they become very strict when it came to conversion to Christianity. They faced various kinds of persecution: death threat, confiscation of properties and land, being chased away from their villages, beating, verbal abuse, divorce, refusal to pay school fees, bewitchment, and so forth.

The normal procedure of the persecution is that the family rejects and denounces the convert from the family. Oftentimes the family asks the convert to recant his or her new faith. Then other aspects of persecution followed: beating, insulting, and taking away all the rights to use the family property, to inherit, to worship, to live within the family, and to participate in social affairs. The Muslim community also reacts against the converts when the family fails to bring him or her back to Islam. This is the climax of the rejection and persecution; in some cases the converts cannot live in the society due to the severity of the hardship. Persecution seems more severe for those who are community leaders or high practitioners in Islam. P13M was an imam of a mosque and remained secret for several months. When his family and community found out his conversion, they took his land, property and chased him away from his village.

### **Most Important Changes**

This section seeks to examine the second research question, regarding the most important changes that occurred in the life of the informants during the first five

years after their conversion to the Christian faith. Since half of the informants have been Christians for less than five years, the period under scrutiny was five years.

Although it is not easy to measure the changes at the worldview level, there are obvious changes in moral, cultural, personal, social, and religious areas. The changes mainly focused on the personal relationship with God and people. Among others the change of allegiance is the first and foremost shift that occurs immediately after conversion. The socio-cultural and moral change follows at the worldview level. According to Rick Love, moral and cultural encounters are results of truth and power encounters (2000, 165-195).

### **Change of Allegiance**

Change of allegiance involves giving up the old allegiance and surrender to the new faith. It happens at the deep worldview level and it is the most decisive factor for conversion to the Christian faith. For the Arsi Oromo, it is very critical to choose between their family and the new faith. For most of the converts, a strong allegiance to God resulted in being cut from their family and Muslim community. Rick Love describes allegiance as truth encounter, which involves personal and propositional dimensions (2000, 89-91). The personal dimension is getting in personal encounter with Jesus Christ, while the propositional dimension is to believe in the truth about Christ. These two dimensions are very important for converts from Islam in order to make a strong allegiance to Christ.

For P06M, the change of allegiance was very difficult because he was uncertain of the power of Christ. In the early days of his conversion, he consulted a traditional medicine man for healing. But when he experienced the power of Christ latter, he got healed. After this event he decided to trust no other powers but Christ Jesus and came to the understanding that Jesus is the Lord and Savior. Based on his

encounter with Christ, even in his early days of conversion he prayed for his sick brother for healing. His brother also got healed and decided to follow Christ.

Two converts (P10M and P11F) encountered Christ while they were in a mosque. They were secret believers for three years after their conversion. They surrendered to the power of Christ and believed in what was written in the Scriptures about Christ and God. For them, Christ was not only a prophet as Muslims believe, but he was their Savior and Lord. So they shared this truth with their friends and won twenty four young Muslims to Christ, and they disciplined the new ones in home fellowship. They report that they identify themselves theologically with Christians and culturally with Muslims. However, three other informants (P07M, P13M, P14F and P20F) report that their community rejected them immediately when they shifted their allegiance to Christ. This study shows that, most of the converts changed their allegiance to Christ even when they maintained their Muslim cultural and social identity to some extent. In all cases, it is clear that the Arsi Oromo converts have truly changed their allegiance and have been transformed at the deep level of worldview despite the reality that they face severe persecution and social pressure for their allegiance to Christ.

### **Love for Others**

The moral change is the second major area of change among the Arsi Oromo converts. Rick Love describes that character development is the main part of moral change, which demonstrates Christian values in the kingdom of God. He points that peace and love are the prominent aspects of moral change in church planting (2000, 165-175). His theory of moral encounter helped the researcher to understand moral changes resulting from the Arsi conversion from Islam to Christianity.



The love of God and other people are a key biblical principle that should be manifested in genuine conversion. This love is not an abstract reality; rather, it is manifested in the change of moral behavior. P01M admits that he engaged in a jihad war to wipe out all non-Muslims from the world. He was full of hatred towards Christians. He reports that such a behavior is the most sought among the Arsi Oromo Muslims. But God delivered him from such a hostile behavior and his life has changed.

Moreover, P12M reports that he was fighting with his family members and friends. But God changed his behavior so that he was filled with compassion and love towards others. Three converts (P13M, P05F and P02M) also report that their conversion resulted in a drastic moral change. They admit that they were quarreling with their families and neighbors; however, after conversion they became more loving and humble. Their relationship with others has been completely changed. A moral change is also observed in the family relationship of the converts. P14F reveals that she was beating her children for minor reasons. After conversion she completely quitted beating them; instead, she began to care for and love them. The love and compassion towards others is a result of the converts' personal encounter with Christ. It is obvious that the love for God generates the love for others.

Rick Love claims that peace is an "important aspect of kingdom ethics" (2000, 171). Peace is both the work of God and the work of man. Peace and harmony with God, self, and other people is a mark of genuine conversion. As mentioned before (P. 67), most of the converts reveal that they experienced joy and peace immediately after their conversion. The relationship of two informants (P12M and P13M) with their family and friends was marred by their intolerant behavior; however, they tell that

they have rebuilt good relationships and became peacemakers in their respective community. They live in harmony and peace with others.

### **Socio-Cultural Change**

The third area of change occurs in the socio-cultural life of the converts. Religious rituals make up the most important part of the socio-cultural life of an individual in the community. Rick Love asserts that “religious ritual serves numerous social functions. Rituals preserve culture and give individuals a sense of group identity. Religious rituals also reinforce the social order, producing a feeling of solidarity between its members” (2000, 178). Since religious rituals are closely tied with the belief system and the spirit realm among the Arsi Oromo, a critical evaluation of the rituals in light of biblical truth is very essential. The converts report that they made their evaluation of each religious ritual in order to know whether or not they should retain or reject in their Christian life. Based on this evaluation, most of them classified Islamic rituals into two categories: rituals that do not violate biblical principles and rituals that go against the truth of the Bible.

Every culture has sinful tendencies, so Christians should confront them. It is prominent among the Arsi Oromo Muslims to offer sacrifice for the saints and celebrate Islamic holy days. P05F reckons that she abandoned these practices believing they were not appropriate for a follower of Christ to be involved in such rituals. However, she retained her social interaction with the community and ate the Muslim food. P09M also reports that he abandoned all Islamic worship and traditional practices because he thought them to be against the truth of the Bible. Islamic ritual prayer, fasting in the month of Ramadan, and shahada are the religious rituals that most of the converts abandoned after at least some months of their conversion. Secret believers retained fasting in the month of Ramadan with a different religious

interpretation and ritual prayers with a different content for some period of time.

P13M continued participating in prayer in the mosque for nine months until he was identified as a follower of the Messiah; eventually, he quitted praying the Islamic ritual prayer and fasting in the month of Ramadan. In contrast, P16F and P20F report that they have rejected all Islamic culture at the inception of their conversion and completely immersed into the Christian culture. P20F was persecuted by her community and had to live in a place far from her village, and this made her feel greatly resentful towards Islam.

It is evident that uncritical rejection or uncritical acceptance of the Islamic religious rituals and practices will result in syncretism and will set problems in the mission of the church. Some actions of persecution were a result of immediate uncritical rejection of Islamic rituals. Imposing church traditions upon the new converts instead of helping them grow in Christ will cause various problems in the life of the converts and in the mission of the church. The conversion story of P14F is a good example for this claim. She converted to the Christian faith together with her husband and his second wife; however, when the church had forced the man to divorce one of his wives, the family was broken apart. The second wife returned to Islam. It is very difficult for a young Arsi Oromo woman to live without a husband and children, which is totally unacceptable in the community. She narrates:

When I came to the faith together with my husband, the other wife also came to the faith hoping that he would continue the normal marriage life with her. The church taught him to send one of us. Then my husband continued to live with me and he gave her a land and property without the marital relationship. But she insisted that he should to continue his marital relationship with both of us. Because of this conflict, he and the second wife converted to Islam again. I remained Christian, but after some months, he got sick seriously. In a dream, he saw a man in a white robe sat on a big building coming down to rescue him from the attack of evil people. The man commanded him to confess his sin. Then on the second day, he returned to the Christian faith. Since she lost hope of her marital relationship with him, she left him and married a Muslim man. She loved him so much and was willing to live with him if he continued his

marriage with both of us. The tradition of the church has broken their marital relationship, in which we used to live in harmony and peace. I do not think it is God's will to break marriage relationship and pave the way for people to return to Islam.

Islamic religious rituals and Muslim practices should be dealt with seriously in consideration of biblical truth, cultural orientations of people, and its missiological implication for Christian witness. Some of the changes are deeply rooted in the transformation of the worldview of the converts, which are desirous in church planting. Allegiance, moral, and cultural encounters are important areas of change, which were observed in the conversion process of the Arsi Oromo converts. However, some of the socio-cultural changes of the converts were influenced by the tradition of the church without critical contextualization of the gospel to the Arsi context. From this research, it is concluded that change should begin with allegiance and truth encounter at the personal level, which then should lead to moral encounter. The socio-cultural change should come next and it should be accompanied by a critical evaluation of the socio-cultural elements of the given community.

#### Church's Engagement

Conversion from Islam to Christianity is the greatest step that the Arsi Oromo converts ever take in their entire life, which might cost them their life. They may lose their family, job, social status, finance, and friends. It also has psychological effects when they leave their community and join another community. Some converts find the process of engaging in the church context is very painful and damaging while others experience an easy transition; it depends on the response of the church and how the church addresses the felt needs of the converts. The research reveals both aspects when local churches attempt to engage the new converts in the church context.

### **Church's Response to Conversion**

The response of local churches to converts from Islam to Christianity is an important factor which will either discourage or facilitate the Muslim's response to the gospel message. It may also affect the perception of converts towards the church and Christians. In many cases, conversion is determined by churches. The research shows that town churches are less receptive to converts than churches in villages. Even though the percentage of Christian population is higher in towns, the churches are very slow to embrace converts. The converts say that they are perceived as a source of curiosity when they join the town churches.

P01M reports that, when he went to one of the churches in Shashmene Town in the early days of his conversion, the church welcomed him. But after a few days the church leaders suspected him as a secret agent for Muslims. At the same time he was attacked several times by his family and Muslim community. He was cut off both from his former community and from the church. He states, "Suspicion of the church destroyed my life. One day, I went to the church to attend the night prayer program, but the church leaders assigned one person to watch over me because they suspected me as a thief or a messenger from Muslims."

After being persecuted by his family in the village, P02M came to the same town church where P01M joined seeking protection and provision. He committed his life to the Lord in this church in a Sunday worship service. Everybody was happy because of his conversion; however, after the day of his conversion the church leaders, pastors, and other Christians did not look after him except the church guard who provided him with a place to sleep in and slices of bread for one month. It was a very discouraging experience for him. After one month of a terrible life situation, by the guidance of God, he and another convert (a former sheikh converted through him)

went to a church in a village. The church leaders and other Christians warmly welcomed them. Christians provided them with a place to live in and food until they finished a discipleship class and got baptized. Town churches need to learn to welcome converts from Islam and integrate them fully into the Christian fellowship.

Most of the converts from the town report that town churches are less interested to accommodate converts in their congregation and to reach out to the Muslim community in the surrounding village despite the fact that they have better human and financial resources compared to the churches in villages. P07M is a member of one of the churches in Arsi Negele Town. He was welcomed by the church, and after some time he urged the church leaders to be involved in Muslim evangelism and support his effort to evangelize Muslims in the villages. Since he has challenged the status quo of the church, he was labeled as a heretic by the church leaders. He believes that the reason for the lack of concern for Muslims in the town churches is that most of the Christians in towns are from different ethnic backgrounds than the Arsi Oromo. The researcher also observed this to be true of many towns in Arsi Province in particular and other Ethiopian cities and towns in general.

Churches in villages usually welcome and accommodate Muslim converts in a better way. Most of the Christians are from the same ethnic, linguistic, cultural, and religious backgrounds. They are so keen to support the converts and reach out to their community with the gospel of Jesus Christ. Three informants (P13M, P14F and P20F) are from rural villages and joined the church in their respective villages. The churches welcomed and helped them to introduce them into the church context. The predominant members in these churches are MBBs. Since these churches respond positively to the conversion of Muslims to the Christian faith, a significant number of Muslims surrender their life to Christ. The research shows that the conversion of Arsi

Oromo Muslims has a direct relationship with the response of the church to the converts.

### **Addressing the Needs**

The church should play a primary role to address the physical, psychological, economical, social, and spiritual needs of new converts. Most Arsi Oromo converts are rejected by their community so that they face social, economic, and psychological crises. Some of them also need a spiritual support to get healing, deliverance from spirits and to nurture their life with the Word of God. As discussed above, most town churches are not ready to identify and address the needs of the converts. However, there are individuals who take the initiative to support converts by providing finances, inviting converts to their homes, counseling and praying for their needs. P02M received physical and spiritual supports from individuals; however, the church as an institution did not do much to integrate him into the church context and address his felt needs. P06M also reported that he went to a rural village where his Muslim relatives were living due to the fact that the church neglected him. He was persecuted by his family and lost his land, so he faced financial, social, and psychological crises. He desperately needed the care and love of the believing community. God spoke to him to return back to the church while he was convinced by his relatives to recant his new faith.

On the other hand, there are churches that closely follow up and care for their converts. Most of these churches are not financially strong, but they give priority to care and embrace converts. These churches are mostly found in the suburb of towns and rural villages. They initiate prayer programs for the sick, visit new converts, support the needy financially, facilitate ways to integrate the converts in the church social context, and counsel them about how they can deal with persecution. P13M

converted to the Christian faith in a rural village called Alelu. He reports that the church helped him to engage in the church context and grow in his faith. He says, “Allelu Kale Heywet Church provided me with food, house, clothes, and psychological support. Christians helped me to engage in the community and serve in the church. They identified my gifts and encouraged me to serve the Lord so that I could serve under the Muslim evangelism ministry of my local church.”

When some churches are unable to meet financial needs of the converts due to mass conversion, attack of extremist Muslims, and scarcity of funds, they seek partners from other mega churches in other parts of the country. P14F appreciates the church of which she is a member in a rural village for caring her spiritual and physical needs. The church leaders, pastors, and other Christians paid her medical bills, provided legal protection, and raised funds from other churches in time of need. P08M also received support and care from Christian student fellowship of Jijiga University when his family persecuted him and quitted their financial support.

This study evidences that the convert care is a very critical aspect of the ministry of the church. Most town churches seem indifferent to both the physical and spiritual needs of Arsi Oromo converts; as a result, there are very few converts in town churches compared to the village churches where the convert care is an integral part of their mission to the world.

### **Discipleship**

Discipleship is another important aspect of the church’s endeavor to help converts to grow in their faith. It also enables them to transit smoothly into the church context and then prepares them for ministry. Teaching the Word of God is the main part of discipleship program. Although discipleship is a long term process, western Arsi churches have made a significant effort to teach the Word of God for MBBs in a



variety of effective ways. It is obvious from the reports of the interviewees that different local churches use slightly different methods to disciple their converts. In this case; however, the weakness is that it is difficult to meet all the needs of the different converts.

Another person (P01M) reports that the discipleship class he attended immediately after conversion did not help him to grow in his faith. He says, “The teaching was not designed for Muslim background believers. The discipleship class did not consider the age difference or academic and religious background. It was mainly focused on doctrines, so it did not help me to grow spiritually.” Two converts (P07M and P19F) from Arsi Negele town churches reveal that the approach of discipleship program there had various weaknesses. They say that the curriculum of the lesson was designed for orthodox background converts. They did not benefit much from the teaching sessions; instead, they were confused by some of the questions from converts with different religious backgrounds. The disciple makers were also ill trained in the area of discipling MBBs. Besides, the teaching was mainly focused on the doctrinal teaching of the church rather than on the transformation of the life of the converts.

Eleven converts, most of whom are from rural villages, report that the discipleship program played a critical role in the growth of their Christian life. The evangelists and pastors were well prepared to teach converts by categorizing them based on their age difference, academic, and religious background. Even though it was demanding to teach converts individually, it provided freedom and more time for converts to ask questions to their teachers. It also gave an opportunity to learn from the life of the disciple-maker. An evangelist taught P11F in her rented house for several months. She confesses that the one-to-one discipleship helped her to grow in

her faith in Christ. P12M also received discipleship training in the same evangelist's home, which gave him an opportunity to ask various questions and learn from the life of the evangelist. All the above converts mentioned in this category witnessed that the content and approach of the evangelist's discipleship program were very helpful and relevant to their context.

The researcher has observed that most of the evangelists in rural areas were converts from Islam and fluent speakers of Oromiffa, which made them easily interact with the new converts. Many of the evangelists who were sent from other villages also follow the same pattern. This is one of the main reasons why more Muslims convert in rural areas than in towns despite hostile environments. A contextualized discipleship approach helped converts to grow in their faith and to be an agent of the gospel to their neighbors. P13M reports that the evangelist taught him how to live out the Christian faith and share the gospel to other Muslims in culturally sensitive ways. So, the discipleship training program enabled him to lead fifty two Muslims to Christ in two years since his conversion.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **CONCLUSION: MISSIOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

This study has attempted to examine the conversion experience of Arsi Oromo converts from Islam to Christianity. It looked into the most important changes after conversion, and also evaluated how churches in western Arsi helped the converts to adapt to the church context. The study focused mostly on the process of conversion with the emphasis on the different factors that facilitated the Arsi conversion and the most important changes that occurred in the lives of the converts. This study also attempted to describe how the Arsi Oromo Muslim community responded to their conversion and how the Christian community addressed their needs and provided them with necessary helps in the church context. Rambo's model was used with some modification in a way that can suit the context of Arsi Oromo MBBs in order to cover their pre-conversion, conversion and post-conversion experiences.

The findings have demonstrated that the conversion process of Arsi Oromo from Islam to Christianity is influenced by various factors; such as the context in which they live; life crises at personal, social and supernatural levels; quest for truth, peace and power; and interaction with the agents of the gospel. A strong desire for a relationship with the divine and ethical community was the core factor in the conversion process among the Arsi Oromo. The study has also witnessed that peace, joy, assurance of salvation, and sense of fulfillment are the immediate positive consequences of conversion despite new challenges that all converts had to face, such as persecution and rejection from their family members and their community. The

challenge of allegiance as well as continuing changes in moral and cultural life are also the most important shifts observed in the life of converts as a mark of genuine conversion. Interestingly, this study has revealed that conversion occurs more frequently in rural areas, where Muslims are usually very hostile against Christianity than in urban contexts in which the freedom of worship is normally enjoyed. The study shows that the main reason for more conversion in villages was due to the churches' sacrificial service to care for converts and disciple them in culturally sensitive ways. Now the discussion shifts to the missiological implications for Christian witness, which is based on the findings that developed in this research.

### Missiological Implications

Conversion is a process that involves both divine and human activities. Rambo writes that "Though instantaneous conversions do occur, most conversions are gradual. Religious conversion is usually a process involving a complex interweave of personal, social, cultural, and religious forces" (1992, 159). The converts usually take years to think and rethink, evaluate the new belief system and the life of Christians, and weigh the costs and gains of their conversion. As discussed in the analysis part, potential converts spent years after facing a crisis or encountering an agent. This shows that conversion from Islam to Christianity is a long term process. The communicator of the gospel needs to remember this. Wells observes, "The process involves thinking and rethinking, doubting and overcoming doubts, soul-searching and self-admonition, struggle against feelings of guilt and shame, and concern as to what realistic following of Christ might mean" (1989, 63). Therefore, the church needs to develop long term strategies to reach out to the Muslim community. Evangelistic crusades and short term mission activities may not help much the church

to lead Arsi Oromo Muslims to the Christian faith. From this study we learn that most potential converts are attracted by the life-style, fellowship, and love of Christians rather than evangelistic campaigns. This requires the advocate of the gospel to live in the midst of Muslims and share their life with Muslim neighbours for some time.

Conversion is the work of God. It does not happen only through the techniques and strategies of the church. Chew claims, “Conversion is the work of God. God enlightens the mind, opens the heart, and quickens the total person. The triune God is the author of conversion” (1990, 31). The church should totally trust God for the conversion of Muslims as Christians keep committing themselves to prayers and the Word of God. God is the one who transforms the life of the convert. This study has revealed that God worked in the life of each convert in a unique ways. The pace of conversion of each convert is different. This realization will enable Christians to acknowledge the role of God in the conversion process. They are the witnesses of Christ through their exemplary deeds and words. Then, our ministry to Muslims should be God-centred and people-oriented.

However, this does not mean that Christian’s role in the conversion process of Muslims is limited. A missionary has a critical role in presenting the gospel message in a culturally sensitive way in different contexts. Rick Love writes, “Yet in different contexts, the message had to be communicated differently. Thus, while Paul was dogmatic in his theology, he was flexible in his methodology” (2000, 50). The degree of contextualization of the life and the message of a missionary plays a prominent role in helping the potential converts to understand the Christian faith. As shown in Chapter Four, more conversion was registered in rural villages despite their hostility against Christianity because the gospel was presented in culturally relevant ways. In contrast, evangelistic campaigns were conducted in towns without consideration of

Islamic cultures and teachings. In the latter case, the result of conversion from Islam to Christianity was very limited. This indicates the need for a paradigm shift among town churches to craft culturally relevant strategies to reach out to town Muslims.

The convert care and proper discipleship are also very important in the conversion process. It is recommended that churches in western Arsi need to seriously consider this aspect in their Muslim outreach ministry. Town churches show weakness in this area compared to churches in villages; however, both rural and urban churches must take the convert care ministry seriously. The local Christian community is instrumental in addressing both the physical and spiritual needs of the converts on individual and corporate levels. Murumba writes, “In taking care of new converts, this community of believers has been quite instrumental. . . Community life makes the environment even better because new converts under threat can be secretly disciplined without raising eyebrows from the rest of the *umma*” (2008, 155).

The support from local churches is more influential than supports from outside. The local support should be holistic so that it may meet the social, psychological, physical and spiritual needs of the converts. Therefore, the role of the local community church is so important as she keeps providing a social atmosphere for new converts to feel loved, cared for, and accepted. Since most of the Arsi MBBs face rejection and persecution, the immediate need is to be part of a caring and loving community of believers within their socio-cultural setting. Those who received a proper convert care in their socio-cultural setting were able to grow in their faith and become fruitful in their witness to their communities. P13M was cared for and nurtured by his local Christian community for the last two years in his socio-cultural context. Although he faced death threat because of his faith, he was able to lead fifty

two Muslims to the Christian faith in two years. This tells us that churches should make the care of converts their primary agenda in their respective social context.

Power encounter is another area of ministry to which churches in western Arsi should give special attention. Hiebert observes that “Muslims’ resistance to the gospel is due not only to their creedal simplicity and to historical confrontations, but to Christians’ failure to deal with the common people’s felt need” (1989, 45). Since blessing, healing and deliverance are always sought by Arsi Oromo Muslims, Christian worker need to exercise the power of God in order to address both the physical and spiritual need of the people. We have seen how people converted to the Christian faith after experiencing the power of Christ. After prayers, some converts experienced healing. Others were delivered and protected from the attack of demons. Christian workers should not be reluctant to demonstrate the power of Jesus in their ministry among Muslims. We need to know the power of Christ has no limitation and Christ is on our side in any time of need according to his purpose and will.

Missionaries and evangelists should not wait until a big evangelistic crusade is conducted for healing and deliverance; they have to pray for the demonstration of God’s power in each and every event of their mission work whenever there is need.

Furthermore, the encounters in the areas of truth, moral and culture as mentioned above are important aspects of change in the convert’ life so that the church needs to attend to them in its ministry among Muslims. Power of healing and deliverance should be accompanied with truth, moral and cultural encounters. Rick Love writes that “if we establish communities of the king, then truth encounter and power encounter must be accompanied by moral encounter” (2000, 175). Muslims come to the Christian faith with an Islamic worldview; their former beliefs and values need to be encountered with the truth of the Bible. We should work towards helping

the converts to encounter Christ and know the truth of Jesus. We have to know that the truth encounter is the basis for the change of moral life. Some Muslims convert to Christianity without transforming in the worldview level; eventually this may lead them to becoming a nominal Christian. To avoid this happening, it is extremely important to deal with the moral and cultural life of the converts. The cross-cultural communicator makes sure to deal with the moral transformation of the convert and critically evaluate each and every element of the culture in light of the biblical truth. Since religious rituals are very important for group identity, Christians should find out which aspects of rituals are not acceptable in light of Scripture and which ones are biblically permissible. An uncritical rejection of Islamic culture will cause syncretism and persecution and cripple the mission work of the church. We should also be very careful not to uncritically accept all cultural elements of Islam since every culture has sinful tendencies.

Lastly, the study has also identified an extremely important role that local Christian communities and evangelists should play in the conversion process of Arsi Oromo MBBs. Most converts had a continuous contact with them throughout the stages of encounter, interaction, and commitment as well as in the post-conversion period. They came to the knowledge of Christ through the life testimonies of evangelists, family members and friends. This indicates that evangelists and local Christian communities are the main agents in the conversion process of Arsi Oromo MBBs. It is appropriate for the churches and expatriate missionaries to empower these groups through training and providing the necessary supports with spiritual nourishment and other resources. A missionary training for the Bible based Muslim outreach is very vital for the local believing community in order to reach their Muslim neighbours, family members, and friends through social networks.



### Recommendation for Further Studies

Four areas need further study among the Arsi Oromo and others.

First, most Muslim converts experience a crisis in their teenage period and convert when they are still young. Very few people convert to the Christian faith while they are old. A study needs to be done to establish why conversion occurs mostly in the younger age or in early adolescence. This study should engage development theory and what is known about conversion in non-Muslim context as well.

Secondly, the life style and testimonies of Christians have emerged as a crucial factor to influence conversion from Islam to Christianity in the Arsi Oromo context. A further study needs to be carried out to understand how Christian testimonies have been impacting the Arsi Muslim community.

Thirdly, it has been established from this research that conversion has taken place more frequently in rural villages than in towns among the Arsi Oromo. A study needs to be further conducted to identify the factors that facilitate more conversion in rural areas than in urban situation. Is a difference in love shown to converts the key or lack of contact between Muslims and Christians or preaching? How is this influenced by ethnic and linguistic differences?

Lastly, the study has revealed that all interviewees have faced persecution from their family, friends, and community. A thorough research is necessary to identify the causes of persecution and its effects in the life of the converts. Research is also needed about what should be the best response by the church, preferable strategies, and when and how MBBs declare their faith publicly?

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**APPENDIX 1: GUIDING QUESTIONS FOR ETHNOGRAPHIC INTERVIEW**

**(SEMI-STRUCTURED QUESTIONS)**

Background Information

Name.....Age.....

Sex.....

**Research Questions 1: How do Rambo's seven areas of conversion explain the Arsi Oromo's conversion from Islam to the Christian faith?**

a) What are the most important factors that determined your conversion from Islam to Christianity (spiritual, personal, social, cultural, economic, theological, supernatural, etc)?

b) Which factor do you think led you to conversion the most?

c) How did these factors affect your decision making?

d) Interview questions based on the seven stages of Rambo’s model on the process of religious conversion:

Context

1. Where did you grow up?
2. In which context did you hear the gospel message for the first time?
3. What was the role of family, friends, school, neighborhood, community, and church in your conversion process from Islam to Christian faith?
4. Where did you live when conversion happen?

### Crisis

1. What makes you to think change of religion? Is there anything special that initiated you to think about conversion?
2. How long the conversion process it took from the time you thought Christianity is an option?
3. What are the challenge(s) and situations you faced before your conversion?
4. How do the challenges affected your decision making process?

### Quest

1. Have you ever thought that you have missed some thing in your life before conversion?
2. Did you think Christianity will answer your life questions?
3. How does this affect your conversion to Christianity?
4. What appear to you the most attractive about Christianity?

### Encounter

1. Who challenged you for the first time with Christian message?
2. What was the role the person(s) in leading you Christian faith?
3. Do you think this encounter led you to conversion? How?
4. How long it took from the time of the first encounter to the time of conversion?

### Interaction

1. Did you have any Christian friend, family, and neighbor to interact with?
2. How did you interact with them before conversion?

3. Have you engaged in one to one or in group religious dialogue with Christians?
4. How your interaction with Christians did affect your decision of conversion both positively and negatively?
5. Did you participate in any Christian fellowship/ritual? What was its role in the conversion process?

#### Commitment

1. How did you convert to Christian faith?
2. What ideas or thoughts came to your mind to change your decision of conversion to Christianity?
3. Did you make commitment in public, in private place, or secretly?
4. What happened when you accept Christ as your personal savior?
5. In what ways do you express this commitment in you life?

#### Consequences

1. What are the positive changes you experienced immediately after conversion?
2. What challenges you faced from family, friends, neighbors, and the society at large?

#### **Research Question 2: What are the most important areas of change in the Arsi-Oromo converts' life for five years after their conversion to the Christian faith?**

1. What are the changes that you experienced in you life as a result of conversion from Islam to Christianity?
  - a) Cultural change
  - b) Social changes
  - c) Worldview change



- d) In terms of relationship
  - e) Moral change
2. How did you face these changes to bring out positive result?
  3. What are the impacts of the changes in your Christian faith?

**Research Question 3: How do the western Arsi local churches engage in helping Arsi Oromo converts to adapt to the existing church context?**

1. What was the response of the church to your conversion?
2. What was the role of the church to help you to engage in the Christian community?
3. How did the church address your needs (spiritual, social, physical, psychological, cultural, etc)?
4. Have you attended discipleship class after conversion? How do you evaluate the impact of the teaching in your life?

## APPENDIX 2: ARSI CONVERSION STORIES

This appendix contains the data collected from the interviews and organized based on the research questions, themes, and sub-themes. Some data appeared more than once due to the fact that they are relevant for more than one theme. The following table (table 3) describes the list of interviewees. They are categorized based on gender (M) for male and (F) for female, person (P), and number (1-20). For security reason the names are kept anonymous. Each quotation of the data items of the interviews is numbered so that the numbers refers back to each item.

**Table 3: List of Interviewees by Code Number**

Interview Number	Interviewees' information
P01M	In Amharic, 34 years old, Arsi man, Muslim outreach trainer, from village
P02M	In Amharic, 32 years old, Arsi man, evangelist, from village
P03M	In Amharic, 54 years old, Arsi man, evangelist, from village
P04F	In Amharic, 22 years old, Arsi woman, nurse, from village
P05F	In Amharic, 17 years old, Arsi woman, from village
P06M	In Amharic, 23 years old, Arsi man, farmer, from village
P07M	In Amharic, 31 years old, Arsi man, accountant, from town
P08M	In Amharic, 21 years old, Arsi man, university student, from town
P09M	In Amharic, 30 years old, Arsi man, farmer, from village
P10M	In Amharic, 21 years old, Arsi man, high school student, from village
P11F	In Oromiffa translated to Amharic, 19 years old, Arsi girl, high school student, from village
P12M	In Amharic, 23 years old, Arsi man, university student, from village
P13M	In Amharic, 32 years old, Arsi man, farmer and sheik, from village
P14F	In Amharic, 41 years old, Arsi woman, from village
P15F	In Amharic, 47 years old, Arsi woman, from village
P16F	In Amharic, 29 years old, Arsi woman, from village
P17F	In Amharic, 22 years old, Arsi girl, University student, from town
P18F	In Oromiffa translated to Amharic, 67 years old, Arsi woman, from town
P19F	In Oromiffa translated to Amharic, 70 years old, Arsi woman, from town
P20F	In Oromiffa translated to Amharic, 23 years old, Arsi girl, high school student, from village

**Research Questions 1: How do Rambo's seven areas of conversion explain the Arsi Oromo's conversion from Islam to the Christian faith?**

**Theme: Context**

**Sub-Theme: Religious background**

Interview number	Quotation from the interviewees
P01M	Since I had strong spiritual hunger and zeal for my religion, I gave myself for the service of Allah (Jihad). I took military training to fight Christians. I have led several Islamic missionary activities.
P02M	I grew up in a village ten kilometers far from Kofele town in a conservative Muslim family. There were few Lutheran Christians in my village. I have learnt the Quran from my childhood together with academic study. Since I was very zealous, I have burnt a church and bitten many Christians because of their faith.
P03M	I was not practicing Islam well and was not well informed about my faith. I was arguing with Christians without deep understanding of my religion.
P04F	I was not praying and fasting because of the Christian influence. I heard the gospel in The Roman Catholic Church but I did not come to faith. I visited The Seventh Day Adventist Church for one year period to find out the truth.
P05F	I was devoted to practice Islam and involved in daewa (Islamic missionary work).
P06M	I grew up in the village called Gogeta in a devout Muslim family. I learnt the Qur'an since my childhood.
P07M	I grew up in the village called Bokoji, but in 1985, I came to Negele town. I was devout Muslim and learnt the Qur'an from my childhood. I learnt Qur'an and secular education side by side. However, my Quran teacher bitten me and broken my hand when he was disciplining me so that I quitted going to the mosque to recite the Quran. I was performing all the Islamic duty except pilgrimage to Mecca because of lack of money. My brother was also the leader of the mosque and the missionary team leader in the southern part of Ethiopia.
P08M	I grew up in Negele town. I was nominal Muslim but my family was practicing Islam well.
P09M	I was practicing Islam, but I had good relationship with Christians.
P10M	I grew up in a village near to Aje town in a Muslim family and well versed with the Arabic Qur'an. I have served as youth Sheik for some years in the mosque, which is located in our compound. I persecuted Christians badly including my elder brother who was MBB and former Sheik of our mosque.
P11F	I grew up in a village called Abure, which is 12 kilometers from Aje Town. I was reciting Quran every day and was devout Muslim. I did not want to engage in any relationship with people of other faiths especially with Christians, because I was taught from my childhood that all people except Muslims are apostates.
P12M	Now I am 1 <sup>st</sup> year college student. I grew up in Shalla village and have participated in Islamic mission in summer break. I was sincerely performing Islamic prayer and all other Islamic practices.
P13M	I grew up in Alelu village in Shashmene area within a Muslim family. I studied both the Quran and secular education together. But when I was in high school, I quitted Madras education. After finishing grade twelve in 2002, I committed my life to serve as an imam of the mosque. I was one of the three prominent sheiks

	in my village. I have served as Quran teacher, imam, and prayer leader in mosque in my village.
P14F	I grew up in the village near to Shashmene town in a Muslim family, but now all my families converted to Christianity. I was praying Salat and fasting in the month of Ramadan.
P15F	I grew up in a rural village in Wotara area, but I came to Negele town because of marriage. I heard the gospel message when I was living here in my home area.
P16F	I grew up in a village called Hamus Gebeya near to Kuyera. I was not praying and fasting because I was not interested with Islam. I hated Islam even though all my parents and family were Muslim. I visited church secretly whenever there was conference. Since I was visiting the church so often, one day, I was touched by the gospel message. Fortunately, I have married orthodox Christian man, but I refused to convert to Orthodox Christianity. Six months after our marriage, I insisted my husband to convert to evangelical Christianity. In this period of searching the truth, the Christian songs and word of God impacted my life heavily.
P17F	I grew up in Arsi Negele town. I was devout Muslim and well versed with Quran from my childhood. I came to faith when I was sixteen years old in 2005.
P18F	I grew up in Dole village, but now I am living Negele town. I was devout Muslim before marrying an Orthodox Christian man. Then I become orthodox Christian for the sake of marriage and participate in Sunday clergy, but I was practicing Islam in the other days of the week. I was the follower of the Sufi order that the shrine is located in Bale; and visited the Tomb of Bale Sheikena Hussein several times in anticipation to receive Baraka (blessing). I visited Orthodox church every Sunday to please my husband. In the mean time I was praying the Islamic prayer regularly. In latter days, through continuous preaching, I have converted my husband and his second wife to Islam.
P19F	I grew up in Duri village. I came to this town (Negele) forty years ago. I have changed our faith to Orthodox Christian because it was not allowed to come to this city unless I change my faith. Then after some years I and my family have changed our faith again from Christianity to Islam.
P20F	I grew up in a village near to Aje town. I have lost my father when I was a child. I learnt the Qur'an and Islamic way of life from my childhood.

### Sub-Theme: Home/Family

Interview number	Quotation from the interviewees
P01M	I read the Bible and get saved when I was away from home. I was born in Kerara Filicha village near to Shashmene town, and grew up in Gobesa/Shirka village for thirteen years. I was trained with the knowledge of Islam from my childhood. When I was grade nine, I went to Sudan for missionary training for two and half years in order to gain knowledge how I can attack Christians. I had also got military training for nine months aiming to bring freedom to Ethiopian Muslims. After the training, I have served for one year as Islamic missionary team coordinator in different places in Ethiopia
P02M	I decided to follow Christ while I was in my village, but my community chased me out on the day I have pronounced faith. On the next day I went to the church located in Shashmene town, which is about thirty kilometers from my place, and committed my life to Christ.

P04F	I grew up in a place called Jiresa in the countryside. I came to faith when I was 20 years old in 2009 while I was living in a town far from home. The Christians warmly welcomed me before and after conversion.
P05F	I grew up in Kera Felich village in a Muslim family. I lost my father in my childhood. I, my mother, and seven siblings suffered physically, because our cousins did not support us. I came to faith when I was 16 years old. Then my elder brother, my mother, and others accepted Christ later on when we were in the same village.
P06M	There were some Christian neighbors. I heard the gospel in my village.
P07M	One day, my brother was sick and went to Wolayta Sodo town to visit power person (Woman). The power person was Christian woman. He was converted to the Christian faith in his visit due to power encounter ministry. He was also healed immediately after his conversion. His conversion experience and his preaching motivated me to read the Bible. Eventually I came to Faith through reading of the Bible and the testimony of my brother.
P09M	I am married and have five children. I grew up in a village near to Aje town. I heard the gospel message in my village and decided to follow Christ.
P11F	I heard the gospel message from my brother while I was at home.
P13M	I heard the gospel in my village, but I spent seven years hearing the word of God from Christian friends, neighbors, evangelists, and family member. My sister was also a Christian, but she was living in far places. Whenever she came home, she shared me the gospel even though I did not have interest to hear her preaching.
P14F	I heard the gospel message in my home area in Shashmene town.
P15F	I came to faith when I was at home.
P16F	I came to faith when I was at home and still I am living in the village where I grew up.
P17F	I heard good news both from friends in the school and family members at home. The life testimony of my mother and sisters impacted me to follow their foot steps.
P18F	I heard the gospel message in my home from my children. My children's exemplary life together with the dream I had led me to follow Christ.
P19F	I heard the gospel message while I was in my home.
P20F	I heard the gospel message from an evangelist in my village and came to faith while I was living there.

### Sub-Theme: School

Interview number	Quotation from the interviewees
P03M	I grew up in Kofele area. Then I went to Kuyera mission school which was about 50 km from my village. Bible study was offered as one course in the school. However, I was offended when I heard a phrase saying, "Jesus is a savior for all people." But I was struggling financially to support myself because my parents did not understand the value of education. Then I had financial problem that forced me to quit my studies. While I was in that situation, I have heard the gospel message from my teacher who was a missionary from abroad. Then she hired me as gardener in her compound and paid my school expenses.
P04F	I have learnt in the Catholic School and attended Sunday worship with my own interest. I was a bad girl and was quarreling with my friends and teachers. After

	I had heard the gospel message in the Catholic school, my interest was aroused to seek the truth. Through the preaching of school friends and frequent visit to the church, I realized that Jesus is the savior.
P05F	Christians shared me the gospel message in school. The preaching of my friend in the school led me to be more interested in Christianity
P08M	I heard good news from my friends when I was at high school. Initially I was not interested with their preaching, but latter on I have built good relation with Christian friends at school. However, I came to know the Lord when I was at JiJiga university.
P17F	I heard good news both from friends in the school and family members at home.

### Theme: Crisis

#### Sub-Theme: Age of conversion

Interview number	Quotation from the interviewees
P01M	I spent five years to convert from the time I thought Christianity is an option, but I was wondering which religion provides the right path. I got crisis when I was about 20 years old.
P02M	I have experienced crisis five years before my conversion. I came to faith in 1997 when I was 18 years old.
P03M	I came to faith in 1971 when I was 14 years old after facing crisis for one year.
P04F	I came to faith when I was 20 years old in 2009 while I was living in a town far from home.
P05F	Since I lost my father from my childhood, I experienced different challenges. I came to faith three years ago when I was 15 years old.
P06M	I came to faith in 2009 when I was 21 years old.
P07M	Since my elder brother warned me not to convert to the Christian faith, I made secret confession by my own in 1996 when I was 16 years old. I have experienced intense crisis for one year.
P08M	I spent four to five years hearing the gospel; even though my conversion was instantaneous I came to faith when I was 19 years old.
P09M	I have experienced crisis for two months and came to faith when I was about 25 years old.
P10M	My brother led me to Christ when I was 19 years old in 2009 after facing crisis for one year.
P11F	I heard the gospel message since 2005 for three years before my conversion. I came to faith when I was 16 years old in 2008.
P12M	I came to Christianity five years ago when I was 18 years old.
P13M	After I saw the dream, I kept thinking to make decision for one month. However, I stayed for seven years after I faced crisis that led me to see other option.
P14F	I came to faith when I was 22 years old in 1992. I was God seeker for six years after crisis happened in my life.
P15F	I have spent four years after facing crisis of quest through the preaching of my brother and dreams. I came to faith when I was 37 years old.
P16F	I came to the Christian faith when I was 24 years old in 2006.
P17F	I came to faith when I was sixteen years old in 2005 after two years of struggle

	for decision to follow Christ.
P18F	I came to faith in 2000 when I was 56 years old after facing one year of intensive crisis in my life.
P19F	I had experienced crisis one year before conversion. I came to faith ten years ago when I was sixty years old.
P20F	I have stayed for one year after I got crisis. I came to faith eight years ago when I was 15 years old.

### Sub-Theme: Life Crisis

Interview number	Quotation from the interviewees
P01M	I was restless person because I did not experience peace and joy; rather, I was filled with hatred and all my mission was to fight the infidels. I could not live peacefully and with joy like Christians do even if I had much money. Then I felt I missed some thing that the Christians had. Even though I was looking to kill Christians, paradoxically I wanted to imitate their life style. Besides this life crisis, I faced another big crisis in my life that eventually led me to conversion. When I was traveling to Sedin Ababillo village to supervise the Mosque building project, I met gorilla fighters. They decided to kill me without any reason, but they gave me a chance to speak my last testament. At that moment I prayed to Jesus by saying if you are really Lord, rescue my life from the hand of these people; then I vowed to follow him if he saves my life. Immediately, one of the fighter realized from my testament that I am his relative. Then He shot his friend and released me to go. Then in the same day I saw a dream Jesus calling me to come to him. In the next day I went to the church and gave my life to Jesus.
P03M	I was suffering with bad dreams and disturbing spirit. I tried to treat it by consulting witch doctors, but it did not work. This led me to look another option that can deliver me from my life problem.
P05F	Since my mother refused to sacrifice during 2004 mawlid holiday (birth day of Muhammad), all our cattle died with unknown reason. So, my mother said “the one who killed our cattle should be Satan” so that I decided to change my faith to Christianity and I thought through Christ I might get protection from the attack of the Devil. Few years latter, my mother and seven siblings came to faith.
P06M	I was sick before conversion and I thought Jesus can heal me. I was healed after conversion.
P09M	My father died when I was 8 years old. He was polygamous and left behind many children and two wives. We passed through various economic hardships, but the Muslims did not support us. This crisis led me to question Islam and look for anther community who can love and care.
P13M	I was looking for a job for eight years. Allah did not answer my prayer. I was not paid when I was serving as an imam of the Mosque in all these years. Then I faced terrible financial crisis. This situation forced me to chew “Chat” in order to get peace. I also faced another crisis when I was reading the Qur’an. I saw verses claiming all the prophets of the past committed sin and sought forgiveness from Allah, but Jesus did not commit any sin and will not seek forgiveness in the day of judgment. I was touched by this Qur’anic teaching and sought an answer from different Islamic teachers why Jesus did not sin. But

	they rebuked me not to ask this question again. Since I did not get the answer, I continued searching the truth for seven years through reading of the Qur'an and Bible.
P14F	I was disturbed when I heard a sheik saying, "only few Muslim women will enter paradise." He taught that the possibility of a woman inheriting paradise is like finding a "white donkey." The metaphor is that it is very difficult to get a donkey that has a white color; in the same way, it is rare to find a woman who is qualified enough to get into paradise. Because of this teaching; I lost hope in Islam. This led me to look for another option. When I was battling with this situation, I saw a man in a vision with white robe sat on the tree and spoke to me, "My daughter I am the way, come to me, this is the way" and disappeared immediately. I saw this vision while I was going to the market. Then I saw the same man in a dream several times calling me to come to him. The man whom I saw in a vision and in a dream was Jesus Christ.
P16F	I was sick for three months, but I got healing through medical treatment. When I was taking medication, I have prayed to God to heal me through this treatment. Then I believed the healing was from God. I hated Islamic religious rituals, practices and life style from my childhood with unknown reason. My parents tried to make me a better Muslim, but I became more interested in Christianity when I grew older.
P17F	Few months after my father's death, one of the sheiks in our village insisted my mother to inherit her. I was so angry with his action and because of his conduct; I hated Muslim men and Islamic teaching about marriage. Besides, the adverse Islamic teaching about the salvation of women forced me to look for other options. The Muslim leaders taught me that women are like white donkey. The meaning of this metaphor is that it is very rare to find a white donkey, in the same manner only few women will get saved. These things kept reminding me to think seriously about salvation and to look for another option.
P18F	I came to faith to get salvation and freedom from demonic oppression. I have suffered for many years with this problem.
P19F	I had a daughter who was serving in Ethiopian police commission in Jimma town. She got sick and took her to the sheik who gives medicine for demonic attack. However, since the sheik witched her, she refused to go home and remained in the sheik's house. She became a servant to the sheik. This situation led me to question Islam and the character of the religious leaders. In addition, in the break of Ramadan, the religious leader in a community prayer taught the congregation not to drink alcoholic drinks and to obey the command of Allah. However, in the same day, several Muslims went out from the mosque and got drunk. Negele town was chaotic at that day; Some Muslims were wounded because of the conflict. On the contrary, my Christian children came home early and without being drunk as they do all the time. This situation led me to question Islam more. Then I started to compare the life of Christians and Muslims.

### Sub-Theme: Dreams and vision

Interview number	Quotation from the interviewees
P01M	When I was in Islamic missionary training center in Sudan, I had a dream when Jesus calling me to follow him. In the same night, I saw when I was floating on



	the lake and rescuing people who were drowning down into the water. When I was doing this a man with white robe touched my head and said to me, “I need you to serve me.”
P13M	I had a dream twice and it challenged me to seek God more.
P14F	I had a vision and dream that continuously pushed me to come to the Christian faith.
P15F	I had a dream when I was struggling with different religious ideas concerning the right path. In a dream, I saw when I was travelling to the mosque; I had worn and dirty sock. Then I removed it, thinking I could not enter the mosque with this dirty sock. After this dream, I tried to pray and fast more by aiming to be a good Muslim, but I felt emptiness inside my heart. I had another dream again I saw when I was going to Full Gospel Church that was located in my village. After the dream, I prayed to God for one year to show me the right path. In this time, I quitted praying the Islamic ritual prayer. For the third time, I had a dream when people crossing two bridges. The Muslims were crossing on a decay wooden bridge, whereas, the Christians were crossing on the iron bridge with great joy, singing, and with white robes. I prayed during the dream by saying “O God! Would you allow me to cross on the iron bridge because I feared the wooden bridge that was decayed and it may collapse?” When I step on the iron bridge, I woke up from a sleep. In another day, I had the fourth dream; in my dream, I went to a mosque carrying empty pot and put it inside the mosque and returned back to my home. Then the next day, I have decided to follow Christ. I had the second dream one year after the first one, the third dream one month after the second one, and the fourth dream one year after the third one. After having these consecutive dreams, I was convinced that Jesus is the savior of the world.
P18F	When I was comparing the life style of Christians and Muslims, I saw a dream. The dream was that I saw when I was ascending on a long stairway to heaven. In that dream, my son and other Christian boys told me to ascend; and I saw light in heaven but darkness filled the earth. I saw another dream that clearly showed me the necessity of coming to the Christian faith. These dreams touched my life and led me to conversion.

### Theme: Quest

#### Sub-Theme: Quest for Truth

Interview number	Quotation from the interviewees
P01M	I was not sure of my salvation so that I was searching the true path from my childhood. I had deep seated quest of assurance of salvation.
P03M	After the supernatural encounter while I was answering the Bible study question to my teacher, I was rejected by my Muslim friends and became alone. Because of the power encounter, I have feared to speak against Christ and started to think deeply concerning my salvation. Then I begun to evaluate and compare the life style of the Christians and Muslim clerics; I preferred to hear the preaching of the girls who were working with me in the missionary’s house rather than the preaching of sheiks. I spent one year seeking the truth of God.
P04F	I came to faith because I was searching the truth. I had no physical needs that drive me to come to Christ. I came to faith to check whether Jesus is the right path to heaven. After several visit to the church, I realized that Jesus is the savior

	of the world.
P07M	Since I was seeking the truth, I have fasted six days so that God may reveal the right path. While I was in this situation, I read 2Cor 6:2 and got soaked. Then I asked my sister to interpret for me what it meant. She interpreted the passage for me, but I rejected her interpretation because I did not want to hear anything about Christ.
P09M	I was seeking the truth for two month. I was also so impressed by the endurance of the young Christian man who was persecuted by the community. His faith and commitment led me to question my own. Before my conversion I was suffering with bad dreams.
P10M	I was seeking the right path, but the Bible taught me Jesus is the way to God. I was also questioning why Jesus was ignored in Islam even though he is a big prophet. One day, I have asked my religious teacher saying, how we can be sure of our salvation? Again I asked him why we pray by saying “lead us to the path of those who do not go astray?” Then the teacher told me not to ask difficult questions. Then I left him and asked the same questions to another sheik, but he did the same.
P11F	The quest of assurance of salvation was the main life question that led me to Christ.
P13M	When my teacher interpreted the Quranic passages, I immediately thought that if Jesus has the ability to create birds out of clay, he must share divine essence with God. This question has stroke my mind to read more about Christ. Since I understood Jesus is the word of God, then through out my discussion with Christians I related the Quranic teaching about Christ with biblical teachings. That helped me to be more open for Christianity and to seek the savior.
P15F	Quest of truth was the key factor for my conversion
P19F	I compared Islam and Christianity for some years. This quest of the truth led me to understand who Jesus is. I prayed to God for one year to show me the right path.

### **Sub-Theme: Quest for Power**

Interview number	Quotation from the interviewees
P05F	I was suffering with demon possession and was looking for a power person who can deliver me from this problem. One day I have entered the church compound to hear the sermon of the evangelistic conference. Then the preacher prophesized about my situation and rebuked the evil spirit that possessed me. Then immediately I fell down and cried. The preacher prayed for me and exorcised the demon. Then I accepted Christ as my personal savior in that moment. I did not go there to convert to Christian faith, but God’s power rescued me from the bondage of the demon.
P06M	I was sick for long time so that I tried to visit all power people and used power objects to get healing. However, all my efforts did not bring healing. Then I thought Jesus might heal me because I saw people healed after converted to Christianity. I was praying to God for healing. When I was a Muslim, I was looking for healing, but I could not get it. I got healed when I came to Christianity.
P14F	My brother was paralyzed because of sickness that was caused by unknown cause. Then he took the Bible for himself and read. He converted to Christianity

	through reading of the Bible; after conversion, he was healed. All our family toughed by the healing power of God; then all the members of my family including me came to the Christian faith.
P18F	I was under the bondage of Satan and I was sacrificing for him. I could not make any major decision without the consultation of the demon. Since I suffered for many years, I thought Jesus can break my bondage and free me from this demonic oppression. When I came to Christianity, the power of God set me free.
P19F	Since demon destroyed the life of my daughter, my desire was to get a powerful God who can give me victory over demons. I went to the sheik seeking power of healing from demonic attack, but the sheik used his demonic power and took my daughter without my consent. He made her the servant of demon.

### Sub-Theme: Quest for Blessing/Baraka

Interview number	Quotation from the interviewees
P01M	Since I could not live happy life, I was jealous of the Christians' life style. I was desperately seeking fulfillment in life and the blessing God.
P03M	I was desperately seeking physical blessing.
P05F	My brother was a hard worker, but he did not have blessing. However, the blessing of Christians impressed me and I realized that God is at their side.
P11F	I was seeking for the physical blessing of God for several years.
P12M	I was sincerely seeking the kind of love and fellowship the Christians had, physical blessing, and peace. Even though I was interested in the blessing of Christian God, I did not approach them because I thought they will not enter paradise. I thought their claim of Jesus deity is an apostasy so that I hated them. But latter on the quest of blessing led me to come to the Christian faith.
P13M	I sought the blessing of God for long time.
P18F	I tried to get the blessing of God. For this reason the Sufi sheik told me to take a stone from a river and keep it in my box. I was also told not to change my cloth for 140 days in order to get the blessing of God. I had suffered with the dirt of the cloth for all these days without changing or washing it. The worst thing is that I lost my properties without gaining any thing. This quest of blessing led me to look for another God who can bless me and my family. Of course God blessed me with money after my conversion.
P19F	I thought God will bless my children and my economy if I came to the Christian faith. I saw when people blessed when they believe in Jesus Christ.

### Sub-Theme: Quest for Peace

Interview number	Quotation from the interviewees
P01M	I was restless person because I did not have peace and joy, filled with hatred, all my mission was to fight the Christians; I could not live happiest life even if I had much money. I felt I missed some thing that the Christians had. I was disturbing in many cases because all my dreams and plans were to kill non-Muslims. This quest of peace has led me to commit my life to Christ and to persevere in difficulties after conversion.
P02M	I was seeking peace, joy, good relationship, love, and overcoming sin. But I

	could not get them. There was big trouble in my life. When I read the Bible, it helped me to come to faith by giving assurance of peace, joy, and salvation.
P03M	I thought I may get peace if I come to Christ.
P12M	I liked the love, fellowship, physical blessing, and peace of Christians. Even though I hate them because of their teaching, their life style and the peace they had impacted me a lot.
P13M	I was seeking peace because I was troubled with economic problems and quest of truth.
P17F	In Islam, I was longing for peace and hope, but I could not get them.

### **Sub-Theme: Quest for Fellowship**

Interview number	Quotation from the interviewees
P01M	I was touched with the love and fellowship of Christians, I sought different ways to be like them but I could not make it.
P03M	I was interested with the love, and fellowship of Christians. Their life style was very attractive for me and even for Muslim clerics.
P12M	I like the love, fellowship, physical blessing, and peace of Christians. Even though I hate them because of their teaching, their life style and the peace they had impacted me a lot.
P13M	I was attracted by the fellowship and love of Christians in my village. They are closely related and share what they have, which is very different from Muslim community.
P16F	I was attracted by the life style and love of Christians.

### **Theme: Encounter**

#### **Sub-Theme: Evangelist and Missionary**

Interview number	Quotation from the interviewees
P03M	Missionaries included Bible study in the curriculum of the school in Kuyera. I was offended when I was hearing Jesus as savior. When I met the missionary's two house workers who were devout Christians, they shared me the gospel. I could not hear them because in my culture, women were not allowed to teach men especially religious matters. But they told me the saving gospel clearly. There was no church in that area, SIM missionaries were trying to plant a church.
P04F	I was convinced about death of Christ after I have conducted several discussions with the evangelist. Some Christians were coming to my village from the town and shared me good news.
P10M	The whole family persecuted my elder brother because of his faith, but at the midst of this persecution, I started to read the Bible. One day, my brother invited me to join the home fellowship of MBBs. There was a converted sheik teaching the new converts and interested Muslims about the Bible and Isa Al-Masih. He taught us from the Qur'an and the Bible for one week. In that moment, was confused about Islamic teaching when I read Sura 10:94, and 43:61. These Qur'an passages led me to read the Bible deeply. Then I started to read the Bible

	by myself because I got the testimony of the Quran about the authenticity of the Bible. Even though I did not know the reason, I was weeping when I read the Bible.
P11F	I heard the gospel since 2005, but I was very nervous when I was hearing the gospel message. But three years ago my elder brother who was Muslim convert invited me and my brother to go to Addis Ababa to receive religious teaching from a sheik who was converted to Christianity.
P13M	There was an evangelist in my neighborhood that shared me the gospel and gave me Arabic tracts and books. But other Christians did not approach because they afraid to share me the good news. After I resisted for some time, I became open to the gospel message. I also asked him several theological questions in order to know the difference between Islam and Christianity. Then He took me to an evangelist. The evangelist talked me humbly and gave the Bible. Then, after some hours of discussion, he took me to a sheik converted to Christianity. Then the sheik brought his Quran and showed me Jesus is the only way to heaven. I started to relate his message and the dream I saw before. I was convince that Jesus is the savior of the world and confessed immediately after this discussion.
P14F	I heard the gospel from the evangelist who was serving in a church in the nearby village. There were some Christians in my area; however they were not bold enough to share the gospel because of social pressure. I love to sing spiritual songs and to have fellowship with Christians.
P19F	God revealed the work of demon to an evangelist who came from Wollega. I worshiping demon through power object called "Chelle." I was sacrificing a goat or sheep every year and immerse the object in the blood of the animal. Then the evangelist told me to burn the "Chelle". He warned me that if I keep the object it will harm me more. Then in the presence of my Christian children, I burnt it. When I heard the message from evangelist who had no knowledge of the matter, I realized that the Christian God is near and reveal the secret.
P20F	An evangelist in the nearby village shared me the gospel message for the first time. His preaching created an interest in me to know more about Christ.

### **Sub-Theme: Family members**

Interview number	Quotation from the interviewees
P07M	Since my elder brother was a Christian, he influenced me to come to faith. My encounter with him led me to read the Bible and to find out the truth for myself.
P10M	The whole family persecuted my elder brother because of his faith, but at the midst of this persecution I started to read the Bible. One day, my brother invited me to join the home fellowship of MBBs. There was a converted sheik teaching the new converts and interested Muslims about the Bible and Isa Al-Masih. My brother testimony helped me to know more about the good news. Eventually, that helped me to know about the Bible and Jesus. He used the Quran as a bridge to share me the gospel message. The life style of my brother also impacted me to follow his foot steps. Through his exemplary life, I realized that Christ is the prince of peace. Even though I learnt about peace in Islam, I could not experience it.
P11F	I heard the gospel message since 2005, but I became very nervous when I hear it. But three years ago my elder brother who was Muslim convert invited me and my brother to go to Addis Ababa to receive religious teaching from a sheik. But

	the sheik was a follower of Isa. My brother's life style and the teaching I received changed my perception of Christianity.
P12M	I came to faith in 2005; I read a booklet teaching about salvation. I did not hear the gospel message from any body. I started to read the booklet from 2002 and I received the booklet from my uncle who was a seeker of God. The book says make fellowship with those who love God. In between I was visiting the church with my Christian relatives. My uncle and relatives played a significant role in my conversion to the Christian faith.
P13M	My relatives from my father side were Muslims but from my mother side they were Christians. I did not want to meet my Christian relatives because I do not want to hear about Christianity. I hated them so that I did not want to take anything from them. My sister converted to Christianity and we rejected her. She was living in Assela town. I went to that town looking for work. Then she pleaded me to live with her and gave me one room with all its facilities. She played important role to show me exemplary Christian life.
P15F	My brother shared me the gospel message, but I responded him t saying, "your God will speak to my heart in his own way." Of course, God spoke to me in a way I might understand.
P17F	I heard the gospel message from my family members and friend from school. However, I did not like to hear the gospel message so that I did not hear them attentively; rather, I was arguing with them to defend my faith. I was insulting those who share the gospel, but the response of the Christians was very polite so that their patience attracted me to hear their preaching.
P18F	My two step sons and my son came to faith. These children shared me the gospel message and through their preaching and other factors, I decided to follow Christ.
P19F	My children got saved before my conversion and they shared me the gospel message for several years. However, I have resisted coming to Christianity until I got crisis in my life and look for other option. I understood that the Christian God is powerful to deliver from any kind of demonic oppression.

### Sub-Theme: Friends and Neighbors

Interview number	Quotation from the interviewees
P02M	There were few Christians in my village but no one recognized them as part of the community. However, their life testimony was powerful. I have heard the gospel message from a Christian person who was chewing "Chat" and dance with us, which is a forbidden act among protestants. He gave me the Bible to read, and then he went to university. He did a lot in my conversion to Christian faith.
P04F	I came to understand the savior after two years of contact with Christian friends.
P05F	There were Christian friends who shared me the gospel message in the school. Their preaching led me to be more interested in Christianity.
P06M	One day a woman came to my home from the neighborhood told me that "if you believe in the savior, you will be healed from your sickness." Then I came to faith and saw a dream in the same day. I was healed after Christians prayed for me.
P08M	I heard the gospel from my friends when I was at high school, but I was not interested with their preaching.

P09M	My first encounter was with my Christian friend in the village. Through his preaching, I came to faith. I am the first convert in my family.
P13M	My friend shared the gospel and prayed for me when I was sick. He gave me the Bible. His preaching and life style was so profound. One day, When I visited his home, all his family received me respectfully and provided me food even though I insulted them. Then their love and fellowship impacted me tremendously.
P16F	I had Christian friends who shared the gospel and took me to the church.
P19F	My friend from the seven day Adventist church shared me the gospel message long ago (about 30 years). His preaching helped me to know little about Christ, but I stayed for 30 years without coming to faith.
P20F	My Christian friends from my village shared me the gospel message.

### Sub-Theme: Supernatural Intervention

Interview number	Quotation from the interviewees
P01M	I did not hear the gospel message from Christians; rather, I came to understand the truth through reading the Bible. When I was reading the Biblical stories and observing the life of Christians, I was so impressed and encouraged to come to faith.
P02M	When I was reading the Bible I was getting the answer for my questions about salvation, but the main obstacle for me to come to the Christian faith was deity of Christ.
P03M	Even though the Bible study class that was offered by missionaries had no much impact in my life, I have experienced supernatural encounter when our teacher asked me, “what was the purpose of Christ death on the cross?” Before the oral Bible study exam I told to six of my Muslim friends to answer Jesus died for himself not for our sins. My fellow Muslims answered as I told them. In my turn, I encountered supernatural power, and shivered and afraid to do the same. I answered to my teacher “I do not know why he died.” Then my friends offended and departed from me.
P04F	When I read the Bible, I got answers for my question.
P07M	In 1995, I have visited my brother’s house. When I saw a Bible, I have thrown it to the ground. But after some minutes I heard a voice saying “read it”. Then I started to read the Bible to find out fault and I kept it under my mattress. When I was reading the Bible, one day, I saw Jesus film in Christmas holiday in cinema house. In that film, I came to understand how the love of Jesus is so great giving himself for the sin of all humanity. This led me to read the Bible deeply. After this event (when I was 16 years old), I became God seeker. I was weeping as I read the Bible. After these events, In the 18 <sup>th</sup> day of Ramadan, I heard an inner voice calling me to come to faith in Christ. However, my brother warned me not to convert to Christianity. When I was praying at the Mosque, I was praying in my local language and interceding for other fellow Muslims. One day in 1996, after I engaged religious discussion with Christians, I saw Christians going to attend conference. Then I followed them to the church compound in order to know what they were doing. When I heard songs and word of God, I felt happy. After hearing the word, I heard prophecy about me and the preacher invited me for public confession, but I have resisted. I decided not to return to church, but in lunch time the Holy Spirit driven me to go again, which was out of my control.

	In the afternoon session, prophecy about me came again for the second time and the preacher called me to make a decision. Then I have decided to confess Christ publicly.
P08M	When I was second year university student, I heard Christian song and touched my life. Since I liked to sing secular songs, it influenced me to hear Christian songs too. My conversion was instantaneous because when I heard Christian song in the eve of Christmas, I encountered supernatural encounter. Then I decided to follow Christ immediately.
P10M	The whole family persecuted my elder brother because of his faith, but at the midst of this persecution, I have started to read the Bible. My eyes were full of tears when I was reading the Bible.
P13M	When I was living with my Christian sister, I saw a dream and shared it to my sister. Then she told me saying "Jesus met you in a dream and you will come to the Christian faith." I was upset with her interpretation and left her house. Then I came to Shashmene town, and I saw the same dream again.
P14F	I saw a man in vision when I was walking to the market place. He was with a white robe sat on the tree and spoke to me saying "My daughter I am the way, come to me, this is the way" and disappeared immediately. Then I saw the same man in my dream several times calling me to him.
P15F	I saw a dream when I was struggling with different religious ideas concerning the right path. In my dream, I saw when I was travelling to the mosque; I had worn a dirty soak. Then I removed it, thinking I could not enter the mosque with this dirty sock. After this dream, I tried to pray and fast more by aiming to a good Muslim, but I felt emptiness inside my heart. I saw another dream again when I was going to Full Gospel Church that was located in my village. After the dream, I prayed to God for one year to show me the right path. In this time, I quitted praying the Islamic ritual prayer. For the third time, I saw a dream when people crossing two bridges. The Muslims were crossing on a decay wooden bridge, whereas, the Christians were crossing on the iron bridge with great joy, singing, and with white robes. I prayed within the dream by saying "O God! Would you allow me to cross on the iron bridge because I feared the wooden bridge that was decayed and it may collapse?" When I step on the iron bridge, I woke up from a sleep. In another day, I saw the fourth dream; in my dream, I went to a mosque carrying empty pot and put it inside the mosque and returned back to my home. Then the next day, I have decided to follow Christ. I saw the second dream one year after the first one, the third dream one month after the second one, and the last dream one year after the third one. After seeing these consecutive dreams, I was convinced that Jesus is the savior of the world.
P17F	I read the Bible in quite times and touched my life in mighty way. Then I have decided to follow Jesus because the Bible answered all my questions. I realized that Jesus is the only way to God through the reading of the Bible.
P18F	God encountered me in a dream calling me to believe in the savior.



**Theme: Interaction****Sub-Theme: Fellowship with Christians**

Interview number	Quotation from the interviewees
P01M	I had no daily personal contact and fellowship with Christians. One day, I had wounded a Christian person who insulted Muhammad when sharing me good news. My plan was to wipe out all Christians from this earth. I did not engage in religious dialogue.
P02M	I had little interaction with Christians; my perception towards Christians was negative. I hated Christians even though I like their fellowship and cooperation.
P03M	After I encountered supernatural power, Even though I did not accept Christ immediately; I was attending church for one year together with other Christians in missionary compound.
P04F	I was visiting Christian homes in Christmas. I attended the Christian funeral ceremonies. Then my interest towards Christianity grew gradually through my interaction with them.
P05F	Through my interaction with Christians, my love towards Christians has grown. I did not go to any Christian fellowship or religious events before conversion. I have participated in Christian-Muslim dialogue in the village where I live, but fellow Muslim could not able to answer the Christians' questions. After the dialogue was ended, I have quitted praying the Islamic ritual prayer (Salat).
P06M	I was insulting Christians because of their teaching about Jesus thinking that they raised man (Jesus) to the status of God. There was no Christian in my village except the woman who shared me the good news. I did not involve in religious public discussion.
P08M	I heard the gospel from my friends when I was at high school, but I was not interested with their preaching.
P09M	I have involved for some days in Muslim-Christian dialogue, but it was difficult for me to go to the church at that time even though I was interested in the Christian faith.
P10M	When the quest of truth grew inside my heart and could not get answer from my religious teachers, I started to ask Christians about Christian faith. I had good interaction with Christians.
P11F	My elder brother was a Christian, but I was persecuting him. When I attended the Christian marriage ceremony, I was touched with their marriage commitment to live together for life time. This event attracted me to interact with Christians more.
P13M	I had developed good friendship with my Christian friend. I stayed with him for three years and my interaction with him has drawn me to love Christians. He did not discourage me to abandon Islam; rather, he showed me love and care. He also provided my needs whenever I need his support. His love changed my attitude towards Christians. I had involved in group religious dialogue, but I was furious against Christians. I liked their life style but I did not want to hear their preaching. I was attracted by their financial management, family love, and faithfulness in their marriage relationship. I was comparing the family life of Muslims and Christians.
P14F	I had little positive interaction with Christians.
P15F	I had continuous interaction with my Christian brother. His love and life style

	impacted my life. His exemplary life had impacted me rather than his preaching. Two of my daughters came to faith secretly before me, but I rejected their conversion. However, in the time of my conversion, their exemplary life encouraged me to follow Christ.
P17F	I liked their life style but hate their preaching, argument, and immodest dressing style of Christian women.
P18F	I did not have interaction with Christians except my Christian children. The teaching in the mosque led me to hate Christians, but the life style of my children attracted me to follow Christ.
P19F	I had interaction with Christians from my family and from the village. I have involved in Christian wedding, funerals, and evangelistic conferences. These interactions brought me closer to Christianity.
P20F	I had some interaction with my Christian friends in the village.

### Sub-Theme: Effect of Interaction

Interview number	Quotation from the interviewees
P01M	My interaction with Christians was negative, but their love toward me challenged my life, for instance when I wounded Christian man, he responded to me by saying “God bless you”. His response challenged my life. Since his response touched my heart, I thought that there may be truth in Christianity. I did not have Christian friend, family, or neighbor. Even though I hated Christians, I was attracted by their life style
P04F	My interaction with Christians impacted me positively.
P05F	Through my interaction with Christians, my love towards Christians has grown.
P08M	Through my interaction, I observed the Christian love, fellowship, honesty, and unity. This affected me positively.
P09M	I liked their fellowship, prayer, moral life, and integrity.
P11F	I was praying to Allah to curse my brother and other Christians in my village. I hated the Christians women’s dressing, but I liked their fellowship and love. I did not like to hear their preaching. I never participate in group Muslim-Christian dialogue. But When I participated in Christian wedding ceremony, my heart moved and I made the final decision to convert to Christianity. The marriage vow that is made by the two couples attracted me because unlike Islamic marriage, Christian marriage agreement is a life time contract that is based on love and commitment.
P12M	I hated the Christians, but after reading evangelistic booklet I started to love both Muslims and non-Muslims. After reading the booklet, I realized that Jesus is the right path to paradise. Even though I heard the gospel from my friends and relatives, I did not accept their witness. I was neither arguing with them nor accept their claim. Their role was insignificant, but group dialogue helped me to know more about Christianity and led me to conversion.
P13M	My friend’s kindness and good treatment changed my attitude towards Christians. Because of his interaction, I started to visit Christian homes. Whenever I was acquainted about the life of Christians, I became more interested with the Christian faith.
P15F	I had continuous interaction with my brother. His love and life style impacted my life. His exemplary life had more impact than his preaching.

P17F	The exemplary life style of my mother and sisters attracted me to imitate their life style.
P19F	The presence of Christians in my village gave me access to compare the life of Christians and Muslims. There was huge difference between the life of Christians and Muslims. Christians were the role model for religious life that has drawn me to Christianity.
P20F	The life style and teaching of Christians attracted me so that it initiated me to come to the Christian faith.

### **Sub-Theme: Period of Interaction**

Interview number	Quotation from the interviewees
P01M	I had little interaction with Christians for five years.
P02M	I have spent five years from the first day of hearing the gospel message to conversion. It took five years for conversion
P03M	I have strong interaction with Christians for about two years.
P04F	I had positive interaction with my Christian friends for one and half years.
P05F	I had good fellowship with Christians more than two years.
P08M	I spent four to five years hearing the gospel. Even though my conversion was instantaneous, the exemplary life of my school friends influenced me a lot.
P09M	I had some interaction with Christians for three years.
P10M	My interaction with Christians took one year until my conversion
P11F	I have interaction with Christians for two years.
P12M	I have spent reading the Bible, booklets and interacting with Christians for two and half years.
P13M	I had interaction with Christians for nine years; some time it was mild but in other times it was strong.
P14	I had little interaction with Christians for three years.
P15F	I had interaction with my Christian brother for four years; however, I did not have interaction with other Christians.
P17F	I had about seven years of interaction with Christians especially from family members.
P18F	I have interacted with Christians for 30 years.
P19F	I was involving in the social affair of the Christians and had positive interaction with them for about four years.
P20F	I had interaction with Christians for one year.

### **Theme: Commitment**

#### **Sub-Theme: Challenges to make decision**

Interview number	Quotation from the interviewees
P01M	My main challenge for my conversion was fear of my family and community, and doubt about the straight path.
P02M	Since Christians were minority, I hesitated to come to faith because they did not have burial ground and despised by the community. I was also offended when I

	saw the cross.
P03M	It was difficult for me to commit my self to Christ because of fear of social pressure.
P07M	When I was struggling with the inner call of the Holy Spirit, I heard another voice in the break of Ramadan prayer session saying, “how can you live with out your community?” There was inner struggle to leave my community by accepting Christ. I spent some time struggling with these two inner voices.
P08M	I disliked the conservative life style of the Christians; I want to enjoy my young life. It was difficult for me to abandon secular music, which is not acceptable in protestant churches.
P16F	I was worshipping the Lord secretly for two years without going to the church or without telling to the Christians about my conversion due to fear of my family.
P20F	I was the first convert in my family and village so that I struggled to come to faith with fear of the community pressure.

### **Sub-Theme: Most Important Factors for Conversion**

Interview number	Quotation from the interviewees
P01M	The most important factors for my conversion are: Bible reading, dream, lifestyle of Christians, life crisis, and quest for truth.
P02M	I was also interested with the life style of Christians despite I hated them. My friend approached me in contextual way by doing what I was doing even though it was not supported by other Christians. I was also impressed by the endurance of one Christian boy who was tortured by his Muslim community.
P03M	The main factor for my conversion is the love and unity of Christians despite they have ethnic diversity.
P04F	The main factors for my conversion were seeking the way of salvation, power encounter, and the exemplary life of the Christians. The Christian life style attracted me the most. I was dissatisfied by Islamic teaching and practices, I hate polygamy in Islam; and this lead me to look for another option. Since my father was polygamous, I had faced all the family problems related to polygamy, such as jealousy. I hated the evil acts of the Muslims because they were living a life different from what they spoke and taught.
P05F	I wanted to leave Islam due to loss of hope because the Muslim clerics taught us that only few Muslim women enter paradise. I was also upset with the hypocrisy of Muslim religious leaders; they did not care for us even though Islam teaches to care for orphans. The Christians’ fellowship, their physical blessing, and their love impressed me. I hated their preaching but liked their life style.
P09M	The main factor for my conversion was the good news that I heard from Christians.
P10M	The main factor for my conversion was searching the truth.
P11F	The main factor for my conversion was the teaching of the sheik who was converted to Christianity. Some of the Qur’anic verses Quran led me to read the Bible and to believe the saving work of Christ.
P13M	The most important factors that played the greatest role in my conversion are Qur’anic teaching about Christ, the exemplary life of Christians, dreams, and search of God’s blessing.
P14F	Adverse teaching of Islam about women is the main reason that led me to seek

	other option.
P15F	The preaching of my brother and dream were the main factors for my conversion.
P16F	The Love of Jesus and the Christian way of life were the main factors that have drown me to Christianity. I hated Islam and Islamic way of life because it is full of hypocrisy.
P19F	The exemplary life of my children impacted me the most to come to Christians.

### Sub-Theme: Decision Making

Interview number	Quotation from the interviewees
P01M	After God rescued my life from the hands of gorilla fighters and saw dream for the second time, I went to church in the next day. On my way to church, an elderly man guided me which church I have to go when I was wondering on the street looking for a church. Then I committed my life to the Lord publicly.
P02M	When I was drinking coffee with my family and religious leaders, I declared saying, “after this moment I am a Christian.” But I do not know why I said this. Then my family and the religious leaders insulted me and chased me out from my home. Then I went to my uncle who was living in Shashmene town. After three days he found out that I am a Christian. He also chased me out. When I was wondering on the street, I saw Christians entering to a church compound. Then I entered the church and worshipped with them even though I was shocked with mixing of women and men. Then I commit my life to Christ after the worship service.
P03M	I went to the mission compound and accepted Christ as my personal savior even though there was social pressure. I did not realize the consequences of my conversion, but persecution broke out immediately.
P04F	I decided to follow Christ while I was attending an evangelistic conference. In this conference there was exorcism and power encounter. This assured me the presence of God’s power in Christianity.
P05F	Fortunately, when I was going to the market place I enter the church compound where there was an evangelistic conference. Then I heard the word of God and decided to follow Christ.
P06M	I committed my life the Lord in church worship program.
P07M	Since my elder brother warned me not to convert to the Christian faith, I made a confession secretly by my own in 1996. One day in 1996 after the religious discussion, I saw Christians going to the conference place, and followed them to the church compound with fear. When I heard songs and word of God, I became happy. After hearing the word, I heard prophecy about me and the preacher invited me for public confession, I decided to follow Christ publicly.
P08M	I went to my Christian friend and asked him to take me to church for decision making. I heard the gospel message from my Christian friends. I was defending my faith whenever the Christians share the gospel. But this song leads me to decide, because I encountered supernatural power. The exemplary life style of my friend influenced my decision making positively. I came to faith in Jijiga town in the afternoon program. After conversion I never miss student fellowship program and church program.
P09M	When I was making a charcoal in the bush, two Christian friends encouraged me to accept Christ as my personal savior in the bush. I worshipped the Lord secretly for five months. I secretly go to the near by town and praying in

	Christian homes.
P10M	After one year of worshipping the Lord secretly, I was exposed, but my plan was to continue sharing good news secretly. I was praying with the Muslims with my mother tongue with a different content. Finally I confessed faith publicly in the home fellowship.
P11F	After receiving religious teaching for one week about Jesus from the Quran, I believed that Jesus is the savior of the world. My life gradually changed after this visit. Then I came to faith after five months of getting that religious teaching. I have decided to come to faith in home fellowship program in one of the church leaders' house in Aje Town. I have stayed secretly for several months.
P12M	After I learnt about the difference between Sunday worship of Protestants and Saturday worship of seventh day Adventist from an evangelist, I came to faith in his house. Since I thought there will be persecution, I have decided to sacrifice every thing for my faith.
P13M	An evangelist from my neighborhood invited me to see a converted sheik for discussion. We had three hours discussion; then I was convinced with his answer and committed my self to the Lord. I did not go to church immediately because of fear of persecution; rather I preferred to preach the gospel secretly. The sheik who is a Christian now also advised me not to expose myself immediately; for four months I did not tell my conversion to my mother.
P14F	The evangelist shared the gospel to my husband. Through long discussion and interaction with the evangelist, my husband got saved. Since he had two wives, after his conversion, he told us about his plan to divorce one of us and live with the other. However, he invited us to believe in Christ. Since I was interested with Christianity before, I immediately responded to his call. This was a great opportunity for me to come to Christianity. I and my husband went to the church and got saved, but for some months we were attending the church secretly because of fear of persecution from the Muslim community and family.
P15F	Even though I saw several dreams pushing me to Christianity, I struggled to go to church. But a Christian woman led by the Holy Spirit to my house and revealed the secrets of all what I saw in the dream, and my struggle for making decision. Finally she invited me to make decision. God revealed my situation to her before coming to my house. I was so amazed with God's prophetic gifts. Then I immediately decided to follow Christ. She prayed for me and connected me with church leaders. Then the evangelist taught me confession of faith in my house without going to the church for six months. After baptism, I started to go to church.
P16F	I have committed my life to Christ in Kerara Kale Heywet church together with my husband and my sister in law.
P17F	I committed my life to Christ at my home in the presence of one of my Christian relative. I came to the Lord through reading of the Bible. When I have decided to follow Christ, I called my Christian relative to pray for me in my home.
P18F	After I saw the dream, I went to the church to commit my life to Christ in public. I confessed faith in Christ in Sunday worship program.
P19F	No one invited me to the church, but I went to the church when I decided to follow Christ. I committed my life to Christ in Sunday worship service.
P20F	I heard the voice from inside telling me to convert immediately. I was singing the Christian song that I received in my dream. I stayed for two months struggling with the inner voice commanding me to come to faith. My families

	<p>suspected me as a Christian even though I was a Muslim, because they were worried with the visit of my Christian relative. For one week, I battled with my inner being to decide to follow Christ. When I was in this situation my brother thought that I am converted to Islam. He asked other Muslim what things the Christians do not do in order to test my conversion. He checked out my conversion in different ways. The first thing he did was he slaughtered a goat and commanded me to drink the blood of the animal because he heard that the Christians are not allowed to eat blood. I have pretended as if I drunk the blood. Then I started to evangelize other Muslim girls to come to faith; my intention was to get company. But the girls fear the community pressure and delay of marriage partner in Christianity because I was the only supposed convert in the village. I called an evangelist from other village on the market day when there was no one in my home. The evangelist encouraged me to accept Christ as my personal prayer; then I followed him with confession prayer. My families' pressure hardened my heart to decide; whenever they tried to force me, I became stronger in my decision. The evangelist led me in prayer; I have vowed not to abandon Christ even if the Muslims threaten me to death. After prayer, whenever I face difficulties the covenant I made with the Lord came to my mind.</p>
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### Sub-Theme: Ritual

Interview number	Quotation from the interviewees
P01M	I never participated in any Christian religious rituals before conversion, But I was baptized publicly. I have also married in Christian way in the Church.
P02M	We (I and the sheik who converted after our discussion) were baptized after finishing learning confession of faith.
P03M	I came to faith in 1971, but I was baptized in 1973. I have learnt confession of faith for one month and started serving the Lord even before my baptism. I was sent to Wondo Genet and bale province to teach basic literacy and Bible course for two year. Then I was sent to be a missionary to the Bible school for two years. Since 1972 I am an evangelist.
P04F	I participated in celebrating some Christian holydays especially Christmas. I have not baptized yet because of the inconveniences happened in my work place. I felt that I am not fully part of the believing community.
P05F	I was baptized in the church after finishing the confession of class together with other converts.
P06	An evangelist taught me confession of faith and be baptized in public.
P07	I was baptized in my church.
P08M	I never went to the church or student fellowship before conversion because I fear my family. I was baptized in the nearby church when I was in Jijiga university.
P09	I was baptized in public after six months of my conversion.
P10M	I was baptized secretly in Arsi Negele town, because if my family knows my baptism, they will persecute me badly. They think baptism is a complete conversion to the Christian faith.
P11F	I was taught the confession of faith by evangelist who was sent by Kale Heywet Church in my rented home in the Aje town. I was baptized in Arsi Negele town with other Muslim converts.
P12M	I was baptized in public with other converts after six month time in Aje town Kale Heywet church.

P13M	I was baptized in public when I finished the discipleship class in Awassa town, which is 30 kilometers from my village.
P14F	I and my husband attended discipleship program in the church and baptized in public.
P15F	I did not participate in any Christian rituals before conversion. But I was baptized in my church.
P16F	I was baptized in Kuyera one year after getting discipleship training.
P17F	I was baptized in public in my church after finishing the discipleship class.
P18F	The church taught me confession of faith for eight months and baptized me in public.
P19F	I have learnt confession of faith for six months and baptized in public.
P20F	I have attended discipleship class for one year and baptized in Aje town.

### Theme: Consequences

#### Sub-Theme: Life Change

Interview number	Quotation from the interviewees
P01M	I have experienced great joy, peace, and power of God in my life immediately after conversion, which I sought it for many years. I got immense courage to face any kind of persecution. Since I was filled by love of God, I went to people whom I mistreated before to seek forgiveness. All the distresses, hatred, and confusion about right path was also disappeared immediately.
P02M	I felt hope, love, good relationship, joy, peace, assurance of salvation in my inner being.
P03M	When I came to faith peace filled my heart, and I started to sing spiritual songs day and night. The disturbing spirit and bad dream has gone after conversion.
P04F	When I commit myself to Christ, joy flowed in my life. My life was totally changed and I started to live in peace with other people. This never happened when I was a Muslim. I pray with Christians in Sunday worship and other church programs. After some days of my conversion, even Muslims testified about my life change. When I did not get some thing, I was quarreling with my family. But now I pray to God.
P05F	I felt happy and filled with great joy. There were various changes in my life, such as joy, deliverance from evil spirit, physically blessing, breaking of ancestral curse, healing of my mother, love of God and other people, and assurance of salvation. Before the healing of my mother, she became paralyzed for four years because the family spirit was angry at her. I was a nominal Christian at that time, but when my mother was healed after conversion, I became devout Christian
P06M	I was not healed immediately, but on the other day, the women whom shared me good news came to my house and gave me the Bible. When I was reading the Bible and the Christians prayed for me, I was healed from my disease, within one month I was completely healed. When I accept Christ, I felt great joy in my heart.
P07M	I felt joy and peace in my heart during my conversion. I did not go to the church because of fear of my brother and other Muslims. I was reading the Bible and praying by myself.



P08M	God broken the curses from my ancestors and I am free from that curse. After my conversion my social relations and my love to other were improved. I hated others when I was a Muslim.
P11F	When I realize Jesus as the savior of the world, I started to love Christians. When I decided to follow Christ, I was filled with the Holy Spirit and fall down at the midst of the group. When I came to faith, I filled with faith and became sure of my salvation. I hated non-Muslims, but now I love every body. I was not sure of my salvation, but after conversion, I realized Jesus is the only savior of the world.
P12M	I immediately felt that I am transferred from darkness to light and experienced joy in my heart.
P13M	I experienced great joy and peace. All my fears have gone away. I got confidence and became bold enough to testify about Christ. But I was disturbed when the Muslims challenged me about the deity of Christ.
P14F	I felt great hope, and experienced compassion to others. Our marriage life also became sweeter. We did not have open discussion in family matters. After conversion through reading of the Bible and the teaching of the Church, our marriage life is rebuilt again.
P15F	I experienced great peace and joy, and filled with love of people. I was a widow and worrying about my life and my family. However, when I came to faith, I thought that God is the father of my children and my provider. This faith strengthened my confidence in God and gave me peace in my heart.
P17F	I experienced peace and joy, got freedom to read the Bible. I started to give attention to my studies; consequently I could able to join university. I started to live a purposeful life. Now I realized that I have a known destiny and working towards that end.
P18F	I became patient in the face of aggression, became truthful, honest and compassionate.
P19F	I experienced peace and all my troubles have gone immediately. The Holy Spirit motivated me to share the gospel to other Muslims.
P20F	Right after conversion, every thing looked different for me, such as people, trees, and animals. I became so patient even though my brother insulted and bitten me several times because of my faith.

### **Sub-Theme: Persecution**

Interview number	Quotation from the interviewees
P01M	After two days of my conversion, I started to face physical and social problems. I have been persecuted by my family and community immediately. I started to live in the church compound in Shashmene town, but my cousins and friends were looking to kill me. I have also faced hunger because of lack of concern from the church side. My uncle tried to shoot me twice, but God rescued me miraculously. Since I was jihadist before my conversion, the church suspected the genuineness of my conversion.
P02M	Then after a month of my conversion, my family sent a sheik to convert me back. Then we stayed in a hotel for that night and discussed about Christian faith. Then we started to live in the church compound for twelve months learning confession of faith. After seven months of my conversion, I and sheik went to my village. Then the community bitten us; the hand of the sheik was broken and

	they imprisoned me for fifteen days. When I was in that situation, my wife came with the community leaders to divorce me. She gave me a choice either to return to Islam or to divorce her. I expressed my love to her and my new faith, but she divorced me and married another man after three days of divorce. It was a painful experience for me. My family also chased me out again. Then I and the sheik went to Wondo Wosha. We suffered physically in this time, and we were sleeping in a bench
P03M	My family, friends, and all the community rejected me. My communication with the family was broken for several years. Since they observed change in my life, they invited me to advice their children who were act immorally.
P04F	When I came to faith, all the family insisted me to return to my former faith. When I refused to return back, the society rejected and abused me verbally. But I persisted on my faith.
P05F	When the entire household came to faith, persecution became more severe. The Muslims were throwing stones as we were praying. Through endurance and exemplary life, latter on the Muslims regretted by their actions and sought forgiveness for their wrong they did on us. Eight people in my house hold accepted Christ in the last four years time.
P06M	My parents chased me away and stayed in the first night with Christians. Then I came back in the second day to my father and challenged him that religion is individual matter. Then he allowed me to come back, but I was not allowed to pray at home so that I was praying in the bush. I am supporting my family by the income I earn from day work because my father refused to give me a land of my share.
P07M	Within a week of my conversion, all Muslims found out that I am Christian. But, my mother encouraged me to join Christianity for the sake of moral change. When the persecution became more intense, God spoke to us that my brother who was mistreating me and my sister will loss all his properties and will live in the countryside. That prophecy was fulfilled immediately. After this event, I was not persecuted from my family. But other Muslim in the community came to argue with me and threatened my life so many times. I reasoned out my faith for any of them. So, the Muslims continued insulting, bitted and looking to kill me until today.
P08M	My family knew when I came for summer break from university. Then my family gave me one week time to recant my faith or warned me my fate is in my hand. Then my brother wrote a letter to leave our home otherwise he decided to kill me on the same day. Then I left my home and went to Christian friends home. When I was in university, some Christian girls also tried to tempt me to commit premarital sex. This was the greatest challenge I faced from my Christian friends in the university when I flee from persecution.
P09M	After my conversion, my step brother called me from the church and bitted me by a stick. In a funeral program one of my friends, new convert, was bitten by Muslim community. Then my brother caught me and binds my hands and legs. My friend recanted his faith because of the severity of the torture, but I refused to convert to Islam. Then they called my mother to decide on my fate. My mother also agreed with Muslims to lash me necked. Then all the family and the Muslim community rejected me and appointed people to follow up all my activities. I decided to go far place and never come back again because of the hardship I have passed through. Then I told my decision to my mother. Then my mother allowed me to believe in Christ secretly. When I was circumcised, the Muslims

	made a magic on the milk I drank. But I was well and nothing happened. My mother went to “Qalicha” or witch doctor to witch me to convert back to Islam. When it did not work, my mother confessed that she could not convert me because of the power of her God. After all hardship, I married Christian women and I have five children with her.
P10M	I was persecuted by my family and society. I have experienced verbal insult, hate speech, and our relatives come together to attack us, but God protected us so far.
P11F	All my friends rejected me because of my faith, but being in the school far from my village gave me opportunity to grow in my Christian faith. My family initially hoped that I will return back to Islam, when they lost hope the real persecution came up.
P12M	Since my conversion my mother is insisting me to convert back to Islam. My family chased me out from my home and quitted supporting me. Some family members were sympathetic towards me. Then I rented a house and get my living, study expenses, and house rent from a small farm I have, and contribution from the church and fellow Christians.
P13M	After nine months of my conversion, my family and the Muslim community found out I am Christian through change of my life style and preaching. In the mean time, I was learning confession of faith secretly. The evangelist advised me to pray (Salat) with Muslim with a different content, but he told me not lead the prayer session. However, the Muslims found out my conversion through serious investigation so that they brought a Muslim girl to convert me back. They also offered me scholarship if I convert back to Islam. When they saw my commitment to Christianity, they tried to kill me. By guidance of God, my Christian friend advised me not to sleep in my home in that evening; then I went someone’s house. In the same evening, the Muslims came to my home to with sword to kill me. But they could not find me there. God protected me in that night. Then both my family and the Muslim community chased me out from my house, took my land, and confiscated all my properties. After this event, an evangelist invited me to live with him, and latter other Christians rented a house and provided me food and other basic needs for the last two years. I am under persecution and cannot able to visit my village. They speak hate speech in the mosque and insult me.
P14F	I have attended the church secretly for some months, but one day a Muslim person saw me entering a Christian home. Immediately he reported to the Muslim leaders and they came to me with sticks and sword. They have bitten me badly. They have bitten other new converts and forced them to back slide. Since I determined to follow the Christian faith, I was rejected by the community and live alone. I did not have any social relations with the community for three years. Then one family came to faith; and our numbers started to grow and the Muslim community recognized our presence after several years of persecution. Muslims witched my husband through herbal medicine, and then he became sick for several months, but God healed him miraculously. This was the biggest challenge for us after conversion. In 1994, I became blind, and then the Muslims mocked at me and insisted my husband to divorce me and marry another woman. But he was so faithful to me. After nine years of blindness, God healed me with simple medical treatment.
P15F	When I was converted to the Christian faith, I prayed to God to control the entire situation not to face persecution. God heard my prayer and I did not face any

	rejection from my family and the Muslim community. However, when my five children came to faith after some years of my conversion, they faced persecution from the community. Since all our neighbors were Muslims, they were throwing stones when we pray and sing.
P16F	I did not face severe persecution except verbal abuse.
P17F	My Qur'an teacher talked to me about my faith, but I shared him the gospel. He insulted me and since my conversion he turns his face on me. All my school friends rejected me so that I built good relations with Christians.
P18F	The Muslim community rejected me and chased me out of all social life; they accepted us to participate in social life after some years of persecution.
P19F	Muslims tried all their best to chase me out from the Social life. They insulted me several times. My neighbors throw stones when we pray at our home.
P20F	On the day I came to faith, my families forced me to eat goat blood to prove my conversion. I have refused to eat the blood. However, My parents did not identify my conversion for five months. In this period of time, I worshiped the Lord and had fellowship with Christians secretly especially on market days. I have visited Christians in my way to market. On Sunday, I have come to Aje town, which is far from my village. One the same day a Muslim girl informed to my family who saw me entering the church compound. At the end of the worship service, my mother cried at church compound. The Muslims also came to attack me. Then the local police intervened and took me to my family for reconciliation. My parents signed before the local police not to attack me and returned me home. Then my mother and brother have bitten me every day. At the end, they wounded me badly and the police intervened again. But I continued my faith for four months while I was at home. One evening, my brother bitten me badly and brought sword to kill me. When I was crying the neighborhood came and rescued me. Then in that night Christians took me hospital; I was admitted there for two weeks. Then a Christian family adopted me as their child in Aje town and continued my studies. God rescued my life; and now I am living in Aje town. I have tried to build relationship with my family, but they continued rejecting me till now.

**Research Question 2: What are the most important areas of change in the Arsi-Oromo converts' life for five years after their conversion to the Christian faith?**

**Theme: Most Important Changes**

**Sub-Theme: Change of Allegiance**

Interview number	Quotation from the interviewees
P01M	My understanding and assumptions about God, sin, humanity, salvation, last judgment, and law is completely changed. Initially, I have changed some aspects of Islamic culture like food and clothing, but latter on through the teaching I gained from evangelist I resumed eating the Muslim food and Islamic dresses. I am involving in any cultural practices that are biblically permissible.
P03M	After conversion my cousin was killed by the member of other clan, and then my clan asked me to contribute money to revenge the other clan. I refused to contribute because the money will go for killing people from another clan. I kept

	my allegiance to the Lord and identify myself with my community with certain things only. Because of my commitment to the Lord, some of my relatives disowned me, but some of them understood my position and supported my decision. I am involving in social affairs that are not contrary to the Biblical teaching. After some years, the Muslims understood why I refused contributing money. In my wedding ceremony three of my family members accepted Christ. Then ten of my relatives came to faith through personal evangelism.
P04F	I put all my trust on God, but I have preserved my cultural heritage especially dressing and food. I am involving in some of the social affairs; this enabled me to interact with the Muslim. When I offended some one, I immediately seek forgiveness and amend the wrong doing.
P06M	Even after my conversion, I went to the medicine man and he gave me medicine. I did not get healing from the medicine. Then I trusted God for healing; they after Christian prayer I was healed. I have shifted my allegiance to God alone. I realized that Jesus is Lord and God, the Bible is the word of God. My perception about salvation, and about Christians and Christianity changed
P07M	Muslim found out my conversion and they immediately rejected me, but I continued identifying with the community.
P10M	Some Christians consider us some kind of deviant Muslim, but we are theologically identify with Christians, but culturally we identify with Muslims. Because of pressure from the church, some of the converts joined the existing churches. When we identified with Christians, the Muslims persecuted us severely. Because of this reason, 9 Muslim background believers back slide to their former faith. Some of us chased away from the Mosque, because the Muslims fear that we may convert more Muslims to the Christian faith.
P11F	We did not expose ourselves as Christians. We call ourselves as followers of Isa. I abandoned praying in the mosque, but my dressing style is Islamic except wearing a Hijab. But the Muslims rejected me not to participate in some of social affairs because they consider me as impure. We are not full member of any church, but we attend Sunday worship in Aje Kale Heywet Church. When we identify with Muslim, it is easier to get converts. Since some Christians see us as deviant Muslim, I want to be member of the church.
P13M	I tried to live in my community without changing my cultural heritage. But my community chased me out since I continued my allegiance to Christ.
P14F	When I changed my allegiance, the Muslim community rejected me and my identity changed to Christianity but they did not reject my ethnic identity.
P17F	I did not like to hear the phrase “Jesus is Lord.” But through personal study of the Bible I was convinced that Jesus is the savior Lord and God.
P19F	I had quitted any worship practices related to demon or any Islamic religious practices.
P20F	When I continue to keep my allegiance to Christ, my community refused to accept me as one of them.

### Sub-Theme: Love for Others

Interview number	Quotation from the interviewees
P01M	I was experiencing low self esteem and enjoying the suffering and killing of Christians before conversion. However, after conversion, I experienced new life of joy, compassion, love and concern for all humanity. I quitted participating in

	inter clan fight. Since I abandoned ethnocentric attitude, I accept everyone as my brothers and sisters and treat them with equality and dignity.
P02M	I was arrogant but now I became more humble.
P05F	Now I am calmed down and I treat people with respect and love.
P06M	I abandoned drinking, chewing “chat,” stealing from my mother and neighbors.
P12M	I was a bad boy quarreling with people, but God changed my bad behavior immediately after conversion and my heart filled with love and compassion towards others. I also became patient even though my families and friends mistreated me. I was fighting with family members and friends, but now my behavior is changed.
P13M	I was aggressive before, but now I became humble. I also visit my mother occasionally. My mother greets me secretly because I tried to share love by providing her needs from the little I have. My mother’s attitude is slightly changing.
P14F	I was aggressive and biting my children. But Christianity changed my life; I do not bit them instead I care for them in any means I can.
P18F	I abandoned chewing “chat,” cursing, and insulting others.

### Sub-Theme: Socio-Cultural Change

Interview number	Quotation from the interviewees
P01M	My attitudes towards non-Muslims completely changes; I have started to preach Christ to other Muslims and built good relation with Muslims. My perception about Christ, God, last days, sin, and humanity is changed. My relationship with others was changed because my theology was changed. I approached God as my father, but my relation with God was master-slave relationship. I was very happy to kill myself and other because I want to be religious hero by waging Jihad against Christians. But after conversion, I realized that love is the greatest commandment of God and abandoned all evil thought towards others. I started sympathizing with others. This change of worldview led me to build good relationship with God and man, to trust the Lord and experience God’s love in my life.
P02M	My perception about Christ, God, man, sin and nature changed. I was ethnocentric, but now I respect other’s culture. All these helped me to grow in my Christian faith. I want to be a hero by killing non-Muslims, but now I love all people. In the beginning it was very difficult to change my culture, but through time I engaged in Christian culture.
P05F	I abandoned wearing hijab, sacrificing for Islamic saints, celebrating Islamic holy days. But I am participating in some social affairs, foods, and have fellowship with Muslims.
P06M	When my father allowed me to come back home and live with him, my brother was seriously sick and witnessed to him. Then he told me to bring an evangelist, but the evangelist couldn’t come with unknown reason. I thought the need for power encounter because I had experienced the power of God in the time of my sickness. I was confident on God’s healing power, which I never experienced while I was Muslim. Then I took cup of water and prayed on it, and gave it to my brother to drink. When he drank the water he was immediately healed. He came to faith through this power encounter. I have quitted dressing Jelebiyat. But I am involving in all social affairs. I have married a persecuted MBB girl

	who cared me in the early days of my conversion.
P09M	I abandoned all Islamic worship and traditional practices after conversion. There was small home fellowship and I grew up in my faith by worshiping the Lord secretly. When the fellowship grew in number, we built a church building in my village. Now I am a church leader.
P10M	When I came to faith, I realized that I was in darkness. Immediately I started to preach the gospel by using the Quran. I abandoned praying the mosque, but I adopted Islamic practices that are not contrary to the biblical teaching. After my conversion (within three years) about 24 Muslims came to faith in my village mostly high school students. In the school we have secret home fellowship. We are inviting Muslims to join our fellowship and some Muslims responded to faith through this program. We want to form MBBs church/Mosque in our context. We kept our relation with both the Muslim community and Christians.
P12M	I abandoned most of Islamic religious practices, such as ritual prayer, fasting, Shahada, etc. I continued some cultural practices with are biblically permissible.
P13M	I have kept most of my culture, such as cloths, food, and social customs. However, I rejected those cultural values that are contrary to the biblical truth, such as ethnocentrism.
P14F	When I came to faith together with my husband, the other wife also came to faith hoping that he will continue the normal marriage life with her. The church taught him to send one of us. Then my husband continued to live with me and gave her a land and property without marital relations. But she insisted him to continue his marital relation with both of us. Because of this conflict, he and the second wife converted to Islam again. I remained Christian, but after some months, he got sick seriously. In a dream, he saw a man with white robes sat on a big building came down to rescue him from the attack of evil people. The man commanded him to confess his sin. Then in the second day, he returned to the Christian faith. Since lost hope of marital relationship with him, she left him and married a Muslim man. She loved him so much and was willing to live with him if he continues his marital relation with both of us. The tradition of the church has broken their marital relationship, which we were living in harmony and peace. I do not think it is God's will to break marriage relationship and pave the way for people to return to Islam.
P15F	I did not make any change in clothing and food. My involvement in the social affairs of the Muslim community is still strong.
P16F	I have rejected all Islamic culture and way of life.
P17F	I started to wear trouser in addition to some Islamic dressing. Since I am living in city context, I have adopted the city dressing style, which is common to both Christians and some Muslims.
P19F	I had quitted any worship practices related to demon or any Islamic religious practices, but I have retained my cultural heritage, such as food, clothing, and social interaction with Muslims.
P20F	Since I was rejected by my community, I did not have any social contact with my community. I am totally immersed in the church socio-cultural context.

**Research Question 3: How do the western Arsi local churches engage in helping Arsi Oromo converts to adapt to the existing church context?**

**Theme: Church's engagement**

**Sub-Theme: Church's Response to Conversion**

Interview number	Quotation from the interviewees
P01M	Initially the Christian welcomed me warmly but after some days they suspected me as a Muslim spy. Suspicion of the church destroyed my life. One day, I went to the church to attend the night prayer program, but the church leaders assigned one person to watch over me because they suspected me as a thief or a messenger from Muslims. That was the worst experience I had because I was facing death from my Muslim community, but the church did not trust me.
P02M	The church's response was not encouraging in Shewaber Kale Heywet Church especially the first month of my conversion. The church guard gave a place in his room and provided me food, but no one from the churches cared for me. However, when I and the sheik converted in his visit to convert me back, went to Wondo Kale Heywet Church. This church cared for us enormously.
P04F	The church closely followed me up, but I did not take confession class because of my work situation. I am planning to learn confession of faith and be baptized. Some Christians are visiting me in my work place. But my church leaders or evangelists did not visit me in my place of work. Other church in the near by area promised me to visit me but they did not show up yet.
P07M	The church people warmly welcomed me initially, but after one year the church leaders labeled me as heretic and rejected me not to serve in the church. They also refused to support me in Muslim out reach ministry so that I have suffered financially. The church leaders did not support me when I was serving in high school fellowship. The reason for their rejection was because of my bold speech about leadership problems. The town churches are mainly came from southern part of the country and their concern is not to reach out the Arsi Oromo who is living in the villages. Since I have challenged this status quo, the church leaders labeled me as heretic.
P13M	The church welcomed and provided me a house. The evangelist and the church people addressed my physical and spiritual need for the last two years.
P15F	The church was very happy in the time of my conversion and promised me to visit and support me in all my needs. But this did not happen anyway. Individual Christians supported me in the time of my need and uplifted me through their prayer and visitation.
P18F	The church's response was very positive and continued until now.
P20F	The church rescued my life from the hand of the Muslim community. I have left my family, but the people of God accepted me and engaged me to be part of the Christian community. All my physical and spiritual support comes from Christians.



**Sub-Theme: Addressing the Needs**

Interview number	Quotation from the interviewees
P01M	Suspicion of the church destroyed my life a lot, but after several proofs of the genuineness of my real conversion, the church helped me to engage in social life, church services, and providing day work to earn my living. However, the church did not give proper attention to address my physical, spiritual, psychological, and social needs. I did not receive special lesson that may address my former religious life, I suffered physically, and psychologically damaged by suspicion of the Christians.
P02M	The guard of the church gave me a place to stay with him and bought bread for me for one month. The guard cared and taught me, but the church abandoned me. After the conversion of the sheik that was looking for me to convert to Islam, we went to Wondo town. Demon was exorcised from him. One of the church leaders kept us in his house for a month. The individuals from Wondo Kale Heywet Church tried all their best to address our needs, but the church as an institution did not play important role to address our needs.
P04F	The church closely followed me up, but I did not take confession class because of my work situation. I am planning to learn confession of faith and be baptized. Some Christians are visiting me in my work place. But my church leaders or evangelists did not visit me in my place of work. Other church in the near by area promised me to visit me but they did not show up yet.
P05F	The church taught us in our home, visit us regularly, pray for us and helped us to engage in church service and social life.
P06M	I went to a rural village where my Muslim relative living, because I was upset with evangelists and church leaders for neglecting me. God spoke to me to return to my place.
P08M	The student fellowship cared for me and supported me financially, spiritually and mentally.
P13M	Allelu Kale Heywet Church provided me with food, house, clothes, and psychological support. Christians helped me to engage in the community and serve in the church. They identified my gifts and encouraged me to serve the Lord so that I could serve under the Muslim evangelism ministry of my local church.
P14F	The church supported us both financially and spiritually. In some occasions my local church asked the support of other churches from southern Ethiopia to support us in our times of financial crisis. The church also paid the medical bills of some Muslim background believers including myself when we were attacked by fundamental Muslims.
P15F	The church's role in addressing my needs and readjusting to the church context was very weak. I did not receive any physical support from the church, even if we had various needs.
P16F	The church closely followed up me when I was new convert. Evangelists often come to my house, encourage, pray, and teach me the word of God. I am so glad for the treatment of God's people. I was engaged into the church context easily.
P19F	The church helped me to engage in the social life of the church. Some Christians from the church come to my home and pray for me. We have home fellowship with the neighboring Christians.
P20F	In some occasions, the church paid my school fees and bought learning materials.

	Most of my study and living expenses is covered by the Christian family whom adopted me as their child. Because the support of Christians and church, I could ale to pursue my studies without any difficulties.
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**Sub-Theme: Discipleship**

Interview number	Quotation from the interviewees
P01M	I have attended 10 months discipleship class before baptism. The teaching was not designed for Muslim background believers. The discipleship class did not consider the age difference or academic, and religious background. It was mainly focused on doctrines, so it did not help me to grow spiritually. After some years of service in the church, I had joined Bible school, theological college and seminary in certificate, Diploma, and Bachelor level. I have served as evangelist in Local church and now I am serving as Muslim outreach trainer in the central office of my denomination.
P02M	We (I and the sheik who converted after our discussion) were baptized after finishing learning confession of faith. Right after Baptism the central office of our denomination sponsored us to join Jimma Bible School for two years program. After graduation I was sent to serve in Jijiga town (Somali region) and then to Arsi Oromo. The discipleship lesson I gained in the local church and the theological training I attended in the college helped me to grow in my faith in Christ.
P04F	The church closely followed me up, but I did not take confession class because of my work situation. I am planning to learn confession of faith and be baptized. Some Christians are visiting me in my work place. But my church leaders or evangelists did not visit me in my place of work. Other church in the near by area promised me to visit me but they did not show up yet.
P05F	I was interested with the curriculum, way of teaching, and the content of the discipleship class. It helped me to grow in my Christian faith.
P06M	An evangelist taught me confession of faith and be baptized in public.
P07M	I am not comfortable with the discipleship class, because was not able to answer the questions I encountered in discipleship class, the curriculum of the confession class does not fit with the Muslim context, and my teacher presented Trinity as three Gods. That created confusion in my mind. My personal study of the Bible helped me to understand basic Christian teaching.
P11F	I was taught the confession of faith in my rented home in the Aje town by an evangelist who came from the church. I was baptized in Arsi Negele town with other Muslim converts. The curriculum and lesson I received from confession class is helpful and contextual.
P12M	The evangelist taught me confession of faith alone in his own house. The curriculum and the way of discipleship class were very interesting and helpful.
P13M	I have attended discipleship class for five months. The evangelist taught me individually and helped me how I can read the Bible for myself and share the gospel message to Muslims in culturally relevant ways. I was baptized when I finished the discipleship class. Before baptism I preached the gospel to several Muslims and fifteen Muslims came to faith through personal evangelism. One day, Muslims appealed to me to convert one Muslim background believer to Islam. They did not realize I was Christian. Then I started sharing the gospel through the Qur'an and invited them to go to the evangelist house and in that day

	four Muslims came to faith. My teacher had good knowledge of the Qur'an and the Bible so that his teaching enables me to understand Christianity better and share the gospel to Muslim effectively. Since my conversion (in two years) fifty two Muslims came to Christ through my personal contact and sharing the gospel.
P14F	I and my husband attended discipleship program in the church. The church leaders and evangelists were visiting and encouraging us.
P15F	The teaching of the evangelist helped me to grow in my faith.
P17F	I have learnt the discipleship class for six months together with other converts. The Church leaders and evangelist visited me several times. In school fellowship, the fellowship leaders encouraged me to serve in prayer groups and outreach programs. Since my baptism I am serving in these ministries.
P18F	The church taught me confession of faith for eight months and baptized me in public.
P19F	I have learnt confession of faith for six months and baptized in public. The evangelists mixed the Muslim background believers with Orthodox background believers so that this mixture created confusion when questions were raised from different perspectives.
P20F	I have attended discipleship class for one year and baptized in Aje town.

## **CURRICULUM VITA**

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### **EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND**

2009-2011 Master of Arts in Mission Studies (Islamic Emphasis) at Africa International University  
2003-2005 Advanced Certificate in Christian-Muslim Relations (Mekane Yesus Theological Seminary)  
1999-2003 Bachelor of Theology (Evangelical Theological College)  
1994-1996 Diploma in Agricultural Engineering and Mechanization (Awassa Agricultural College)  
1990-1994 Secondary school (Gunchrie Secondary School)  
1982-1990 Primary school (Meger Weyra Junior School)

### **PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE**

2005-2009 Muslim Outreach head at the Central office of Ethiopian Kale Heywet Church  
2000-2009 Part time lecturer at various Bible Schools and Theological Colleges in Ethiopia  
2005-2008 Author of two books in Amharic language  
1997-1999 Registrar clerk at Goal Ethiopia Third World Relief And Development Organization