

Primal Religion of Wolaitta in African Context

Abesha Shirko Lambebo, Ratnakar Mohapatra

Abstract: *This article is intended to analyze primal religion of Wolaitta in African context. It has unique ritual characteristics which is overlooked by most of the the current community members. In order to investigate the primal religion of Wolaitta in African context, oral and written sources were used. The sources are intensively used to validate the concept of primal religion of Wolaitta in African context. The concept of theism in primal religion of Wolaitta is masked by the domination of Christianity since in the 20th century. The religious practices and belief is known as eqqa. Primal religion of Wolaitta believes that Tossa (God) is the Supreme Being, and humans live in their own life-circle known as qadda (fate) and the rest creations going in their own phases as of the knowledge of Tossa (God). The primal religion of Wolaitta believe that morality and ethics as core issues which emanates from Tossa (God). Spirit in the primal religion of Wolaitta emanates from Tossa (God), mereta (nature), and the ancestral spirit of respective clans. The sacrifice (yarishuwa) is a basic ritual practice in primal religion of Wolaitta in African context. Therefore, this article describes the indigenous wisdom of primal religion of Wolaitta to understand the material and spiritual world.*

Keywords: *Primal religion, God, spirit, divination, Wolaitta, African context*

I. INTRODUCTION

African primal religion was dependent on the believe of supernatural power and its diviners in each society. As elsewhere in the world, religion was a source for moral values, and moral values regulated and harmonized human life. Up to present, there is no a particular founder for the primal religion of Africa (Mbiti, 1989, 1991). Each tribe or ethnic group had its own way of belief, understanding and practices to religious matters due to the cultural variations. The primal religion of Africa had the continuous participation of myths and rituals from generation to generation. African primal religion believed in Supreme Being, and the rituals in spirit and divination. It also had a belief of the cult of ancestors, practice of magic and spiritual powers. Even though primal African religion had no unifying element, the belief in Supreme Being, the activities of spirits and the practice of diviners were similar. It has moral code for human life. It has a belief of Supreme Being (god or God), the ancestors, and any spirits and power was invisible world. The inhabitants of invisible world was force of life. Supreme Being provided force of life. However, the immoral life and evil activities threatened the life force (Turaki, 2000; Beyers, 2010).

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Scholars such as Mbiti (1989, 1991) believed that African primal religion was monotheistic without the concept of Trinity in Christian religion. This argument further states that there is one God or Supreme Being as similar as the belief during old Testament. The African concept of God as a singular Supreme Being was expressed in proverbs, short statements, songs, prayers, names, myths, stories, and religious ceremonies (Mbiti, 1989; Han and Beyers, 2017). As part of an African community, Wolaitta society believes Tossa (God) as their only Supreme Being, and believes ayana (spirit) and divination of sharechuwa (witchcraft) and/or mala (the magic) as part of the religious obligation to Tossa (God). They also believed that all things were Tossa-merreta (God-creation) and, it was difficult to reach Tossa. According to primal religion of Wolaitta, nobody imagine and knows the nature of Tossa.

The primal religion of Wolaitta was masked by the domination of Christianity religion since the beginning of 20th century. In this period, the kingdom of Wolaitta was defeated by the unifying forces of Ethiopia led by Emperor Menelik. After Wolaitta was incorporated to the state of Ethiopia in 1894, the socio-cultural way of life was changed, particularly the practice of primal religion. Before the incorporation, Wolaitta was the followers of primal religion, and the incorporation to Ethiopian state led Wolaitta to accept the state religion (Ethiopian Orthodox Church) either peaceful or forceful way of conversion. Besides, in 1928 the protestant Christianity by Sudan Interior Mission introduced, and later on various sects of protestant religious groups dominated Wolaitta which endangered the primal religion of Wolaitta. Currently, Wolaitta was dominantly the followers of Christianity religion which masked the memory of primal religion of Wolaitta. Therefore, this study explains the nature of primal religion of Wolaitta in African context.

II. METHODOLOGY

The ethnographic survey is used in Wolaitta zone (sub-province) which have 15 districts. Wolaitta is found in the South Ethiopia (Ethiopia is found in east Africa). The study used both written primary and oral sources. Since this study mainly focused on ethnographic approach, it used community elders who have basic knowledge about Wolaitta past. The key informants were selected based on accumulated experiences and their consent. The written sources or documents were collected from Wolaitta Religious centers, Wolaitta Zone Culture, Tourism and Government Communication department, and various libraries and cultural centers in Wolaitta Soddo and national museum as well as libraries in Addis Ababa. The data collection method used include interview, focus group discussion, document-analyses and observations on Primal religion of Wolaitta.



After collecting the necessary data, qualitative interpretation was employed to explain the primal religion of Wolaitta form the African context.

III. COSMOLOGY OF PRIMAL RELIGION OF WOLAITTA AND ITS PRACTICES

The theism of Primal Religion of Wolaitta was/is God (*Ṭossa*). God (*Ṭossa*) is the source for all religious rituals. According to Primal Religion of Wolaitta, morality and ethics emanates from God (*Ṭossa*), and next to *Ṭossa* (God) or *medha* (creator), *ayana* (spirit) plays a vital role. The *ayana* (spirit) is manifested by the divination of *mala* and/or *Sharechuwa* (witchcraft or magician) who served as a mediator. Wolaitta believed that all spirits emanates from *Ṭossa*, and *Ṭossa* provided all things to human being. The early Wolaitta believed that the *merreta* (creation) in the *salo-guffantua* (universe) are beyond their control and it is fearful. The beginning of religion in Wolaitta was related with the belief of supernatural power and fear to creations in the universe. For this reason, ancient people of Wolaitta believed and accepted the concept that there was the controller of the universe in general and human being in particular.

Human being faced great challenge from the environment on which they lived and frightened them. Among the challenges natural calamities such as rain, erosion, landslide, death, disease, wind, rivers, lakes, waterfalls, hill, hole, thunder and the like enabled humans to think, to trust and to believe on it as their saver from these calamities. They also feared the attack of animals. Due to these factors, they sought to worship on supernatural power who controls the entire universe. This super natural power is known as *Medha* (creator). As informants states that in ancient Wolaitta it was forbidden to call the name of the *Medha*, and its name is not called here and there because it is a sign of fear and respect. Through gradual process, people begun to call his name as *Salo-Ṭossa* (sky God). The concept of *Saluwa* (sky) in Wolaitta tradition is related with the place where creator found above them. For Wolaitta community, *Salo-Ṭossa* was the controller of the universe, and to save them from any calamities, they presented gifts and sacrifices to the *Salo-Ṭossa*, later they use the word *Ṭossa* (God) (Balisky, pp. 2009:70-71).

Ṭossa (God or one creator) is Supreme Being, and they have a practice in their clan spirit (*ayana*) next to *Ṭossa*. The belief on the practice of religious rituals was and/is known as *Eqqa*. According to oral tradition and written sources, Wolaitta concept of religion consists of three fundamental elements with different status. They were *Ṭossa*, *Ayyana* and *Mala* and/or *Sharechua*. *Ṭossa* is the Supreme Being of the *Wolaitta*, equivalent to the Almighty God of the Christians or Allah of the Muslims. He was believed to be the creator of all things. It is believed that *Ṭossa* punishes if human being break the natural laws and do not obey *Ṭossa*. According to Primal religious belief of Wolaitta, *Ṭossa* allows natural or social factors for His punishment.

Informants insist that *Medha* (the creator, God) is preferable than calling *Ṭossa* but through the gradual process of time, the community left calling creator as *Medha*, and customized calling "*Ṭossa*." *Ṭossa* (God) is

highly respected, honored and feared. The name of *Ṭossa* (God) is not mentioned or raised for simple cases. His name is above all names and is not allowed to call in all day to day activities. It is believed as *balla* (mistake) to call "*Ṭossa*" for simple cases and he or she has to take *marotta* (purification) unless it may lead to *gome* (curse and punishment) and *nagaraa* (sin). He lives on sky, knows every thing (omnipotent), and he is above all.

Ṭossa is believed to be living forever, nobody knows his beginning and end. He is spirit, righteous, just, and good. Wolaitta people believed that He is above all diets and spiritual activities, and community refers him as *Saluwa-Ṭossa* (*Ṭossa* of the sky) or *Bolla-Ṭossa* (the *Ṭossa* of the universe). The concept of *Ṭossa* (God) in primal religion of Wolaitta is complex and beyond thinking. For this reason, Balisky (2009, p. 71) states that "He (*Ṭossa*) remains beyond their (Wolaitta) depiction." Before the introduction of Christianity, Wolaitta people believed in him who lives in far distance and next to him there are agents to practice religious rituals. It seems for this reason that Balisky (2009, pp.70-71) states *Ṭossa* lives far away from earth because of the sinful and bad behavior of human being.

Furthermore, *Ṭossi-Erro* (God know it) is the oath that is final oath in Wolaitta culture. Everybody expresses his/her wishes of good will of creator which is said to be *Ṭossi-giko* (if it is the will of God) is their common saying because they believed that knows, sees and hears whatsoever at any time. It is accepted belief that only any thing happen when the will of creator prevail over it. Balisky (2009: 70-71) states the concept of *Ṭossa* in indigenous belief of Wolaita as "the highest level is where the Wolaitta high God *Ṭossa* dwells. He is the creator God who lives high above his creation and his greatly feared by all...*Ṭossa* is also all knowing." The notion indicates primal religion of Wolaitta accepts *Ṭossa* as the only Supreme Being despite denying people has belief in various spirits.

The concept of primal religion of Wolaitta was *ayana* (spirit). According to Wolaitta tradition, God was not represented by any symbol anything else. *Ayana* (spirit) had manifested as either God (*Ṭossa*) or the devil. According to Chiatti (1984, p.70) God was believed to be "existing forever, and is omnipresent and omnipotent." *Ayana* was/is the replacing or representing matter of either *Ṭossa* or *Ṭalahiya*. There were/ are two *ayana*. These were *tilo-ayana* (benevolent spirit) and *ita-ayana* (malevolent spirit). It was believed that *tilo-ayana* assist every good doings and right achievements of the community where as *ita-ayana* is responsible for all bad and wrong actions. It is believed that the source for *tilo-ayana* is *Ṭossa* and the source for *ita-ayana* is *Ṭalahiya* (Davis, 1966; Belete, 2000). They believe that it could affect a person if he was a murderer, thief, adulterous or who failed to respect his parents and so on.

After introduction of Christianity, the concept of *Ṭalahiya* (devil) became the big deal in Wolaitta in primal religion. Wolaitta people believed that *Ṭalahiya* had power to destruct the community. It is also believed that the spirit of *Ṭalahiya* is present and living in *cima* (depression/deep

hole), around *mitta* (big trees), *kaka* (precipice or cliff), *abba* (lakes), *shaafa* (rivers) and *dara* (dense forest). The big rivers such as Uma (Omo), Deme, Bilate, Mane'isa and the like were considered active places of *Ṭalahiya*. People feared *Ṭalahiya* and worshiped to it in order to escape from all evil or wrong fortunes it may impose on them. For instance, poverty, famine, disease, death, physical attack on some of the body part and other evil circumstances were believed to be imposed by *Ṭalahiya*. *Gormotyā* (sorcerer). There is a belief by the society that the *Ṭalahiya* didn't touch if there is slaughtering of goat and cattle or animal to it as sacrifice mostly a nearby river, lake, mountain, big trees and so on. Apart from this, the evil spirit was believed to be manifested on some individuals as *goromotiya* or *higisha* (sorcerer).

Some of the specific places were honored according to primal religion. These are *makana* (cemetery or burying ground), *gutara* (sociocultural meeting place), *garuwa* (palace), *mita* (port, boundary) and the like. Thus, grasses, trees, animals, birds and the like in this places weren't hunted. In some times people even put food in this areas as a symbol of sacrifice and honor to it. In the same manner people sacrifice and honor *ita-ayana* (Dea, 2005; Meleku, 2007; Lambebo, 2016). This because people feel that *ita-ayana* may cause disaster. It was for this reason that Kaplan (1984) argued that Ethiopian society worshiped for devil when they face a challenge, and Wolaitta society also had such experience when they were destructed by calamities. The division of spirits into *ṭilo-ayyana* (good spirit), *ita-ayyana* (evil spirit) and *awa-ṭossa* (ancestral spirits) probably appeared after the introduction of Christianity. After, Christianity, primal religion believed that *Ṭalahiya* has given power from *Ṭossa* (God) to control its agents, and *Ṭossa* (God) permitted for *Ṭalahiya* to do what ever it like on its adherents. Contrary, *ṭilo-ayana* (good spirit) is always doing good and all good things were created by *Ṭossa* (God) through *ṭilo-ayana* (good spirit) (Lambebo, 2016).

Thus, some clans of the Wolaitta worshiped their ancestral spirits called *Awa-Ṭossa*. It is said that the ancestral spirits had the power and authority to prevent them distraction. For instance some of the selected clans such as *Adda*, *Agarshowa*, *Gada* and the like believed in spirit of *wolqanta* (Lightening) and *dada* (Thunder); *Agawu*, *Amara*, *Angotiya*, *Badaditiya*, *Badigadala*, *Fatagara*, *Masha*, *Maraqwa* and the like believed in spirit of *giorgissa* (syncretism of the Saint George); *Angotiya Zatuwa*, *Zutuwa*, *Warareta* and the like believed in spirit of *Abboroda*; *Ayfarsuwa*, *Qesigga*, *Hirayituwa* and the like believed in spirit of *kitosa* (syncretism of the Christ after influence of Christianity); *Bubula* believed in spirit of *Mulugusha*; *Dohaya*, *Damota*, *Masireya*, *Womogira* and the like believed in spirit of *Hamibazza*; and *Ganziya* believed in spirit of *Hallla*.

Besides, *Golla*, *Herigera* and *Hili-Malla* were believed in spirit of *Aulachuwa*; *Gurimala* believed in spirit of *Ashelo*; *Hirayituwa* believed in spirit of *Homboba*; *Larusuwa* believed in spirit of *Kama/Womba*; *Maka* believed in spirit of *Magera*; *Moghiya* believed in spirit of *Aljanuwa*; *Wolaitta-Malla* believed in spirit of *Boshasha*; *Womanaqqa* believed in spirit of *Dumbubo*; *Woshesha* believed in spirit

of *Ingilala*; *Wucha* believed in spirit of *Yaferro*; *Yagayiya* believed in spirit of *Dosha*; *Zantala* believed in spirit of *Andiya*; *Zambocha* believed in spirit of *Hauzula*; *Zaminiya* believed in spirit of *Gamana*; *Zagotadiya* believed in spirit of *Landiya*, *Argama* believed in *Awa-Kada* and so on. In Wolaitta oral history this spirits were believed to be very active until the coming of Protestant Christianity religion to the area (Chiatti, 1984; Gutulo, 2003; Amado, 2003; Geramo, 2009; Babanto, 1979). In Wolaitta oral history this spirits were believed to be very active until the coming of Christianity religion in the 20th century to the area (Walelu, 1956; Wakasa, 2008; Balisky, 2009; Geramo, 2009).

Majority of clans also believed on spirits of some natural creations and resources such as *Awa* (sun), *Agina* (moon), *Ṭolinitiya* (star), *demba* (plain), *deriya* (hill), *Dada/Wolqanta* (Thunder and/ Lightening), *Mitta* (big trees), *shuchcha* (stone), *mizza* (cattle), *zula* (rainbow), *kaffiwa* (birds), *paliyabatta* (insects), *medosata* (some animals) and *dozata* (plants). Besides, some clans commonly believed on spirits of creations. For instance, clans such as *Agura*, *Arachia*, *Kawuka* and *Qalicha* believed on the spirit of *geleshuwa* (monkey), clans such as *Kanchachiliya*, *Lonto-Malla*, *Maka* and others believed on the spirit of *Etta* (Sycamore Fig) tree, clans such as *Boshiya*, *Tigriya* and *Gollo-malla* believed on the spirit of *Awa* (sun), clans such as *Martoqa* and *Mugareta* believed on the spirit of *mizziyo* (cow), clans such as *Bohaliya* and *Wageshuwa* believed on the spirit of *Worqa* (Gold), clans such as *Gajja* and *Wojjuwa* believed on the spirit of *deriya* (hill), *Agawu* clan believed on the spirit of *shuchcha* (stone), *Awirareta* clan believed on the spirit of *sa'a* (land), *Ganziya* clan believed on the spirit of *dureta* (prosperity), *Gonduwa* clan believed on the spirit of *zula* (rainbow), *Gawuraruwa* clan believed on the spirit of *aba* (lake), *Gisha* clan believed on the spirit of *lehiya* (pumpkin), *Mayiliya* clan believed on the spirit of *kana* (dog), *Qogo-Malla* clan believed on the spirit of *korasiya* (crow), *Qessiga* clan believed on the spirit of *sosuwa* (waterfall), *Kominiya* clan believed on the spirit of *shararotiya* (spider), and rest clans had believed on different spirits (Abate, 1980, Ali, 1990, Wagesho, 1994, Meja, 2008; Balisky, 2009). Informants list these ancestral spirit, and they stated many other spirits might have been forgotten in the social memory. Moreover, some objects, places and creations which had spiritual or soul essence to living things. As stated in this paper, Wolaitta traditional religion had believed on the influence of spirits and/ power of some plants, animals, rivers, mountains, rocks, other natural creations such as thunder, lightening, hurricane, snow-rainfall and so on. Besides, Wolaitta community had believed that after the death, the soul of living things especially human-being had influenced the world. For this reason, they had the belief and sacrifice to the ancestral spirits such as *moyitiliya* (died spirit) and *makana* (burial place). The *ayana* was believed to be emanated from *Ṭossa*, *Ṭalahiya*, ancestor and various creations. Hence, *ayana* was the main issue of Wolaitta traditional religion and the concept *ayana* in Wolaitta was almost similar to speaking of God.

The third concept in Wolaitta was the concept of divination of spirit medians of *sharechuwa* (witchcraft) and/or *mala* (the magician). According to informants, it was impossible to directly contact with either with the creator, and hence, creator is reached via the agents or spirit of medians known as *sharechuwa* (witchcraft) and/or *mala* (the magician). Both terms possessed power and authority from *ayana*, and they serve as agents for it. The *sharechuwa* had no interaction and connection with the people in social way of life. This was because it was believed that the spirits weren't active if the *sharechuwa* didn't keep him self from such interaction and he didn't shake the hand or body of others. Thus, he was appearing in common place and social occasions everywhere. He didn't cut and remove his hair from his body.

In Wolaitta, *sharechuwa* and/or *mala* is mostly male and isolate himself from community. Though the practice of *sharechuwa* and/or *mala*, he had interaction with social occasions and other way of life. It was believed that both *sharechuwa* and/or *mala* could have power to bless and bring curse on individuals life; what ever he say might happened on an individual. It was believed that *mala* and/or *sharechuwa* had the ability to differentiate the nature of spirits and had power to an individual. *Sharechuwa* and/or *mala* was known in to different names and functions include *Borrodiyaga*, *Marachiya-ṭaliyaga*, *Shucha-qoryaga*, *Muruniyaga*, *Qalicha* and the like.

The *sharechuwa* and/or *mala* of *Borrodiyaga* was a man who could speak in strange languages or tell prophetic words that would come against individuals. He had an ability to reveal individual sins and could predict its subsequent punishment. The *sharechuwa* and/or *mala* of *Marachiya-ṭaliyaga* could read an intestine or entrails from a slaughtered sheep or goat and predict the future of an individual or whole the community. The *sharechuwa* and/or *mala* of *Shucha-qoryaga* could predict about the future or discover the cause of a misfortune by counting pieces of stones (gravels). The *sharechuwa* and/or *mala* of *Muruniyaga* believed to be the makes interpreter of complex-social aspects and he could make things to be complex on whom its spirit was said to be hate. It is believed that all spirits did not possess equal power and ability to benefit or harm a person or a family or the society. Similar way of *sharechuwa* and/or *mala*, there were interpreters of world and semi-spiritual practices in Wolaitta. These include *Guuda* (interpreter of some matters of man-made and natural events and believed to be semi-spiritual), *Hiraga* (prognosticator) and *Qalicha*. It was believed that of His ritual service took place in a special ritual ceremony took place only on Friday.

The development of complex-social environment enabled Wolaitta people to use spirit medians to give *yarishua* (sacrifice) to the creator. Before the existence of the spirit medians people presented sacrifice around big trees, rivers, mountains, forests and the like. The practitioners of the spirit medians claimed that they had right and responsibility to connect the traditional religious practice of Wolaitta people with the creator (Chiatti, 1984; Awato, Banjawu, Shiferew and Ansebo, 1991; Mojja, 2007; Balisky, 2009; Dea, 2005). The sacrifices of the Wolaitta traditional religion was to escape the calamities and to give thank. The

primary concern of the belief was first to save themselves in from danger, and and the sacrifice was offered. The other purpose of traditional religion were to secure all matters of the material world and eternal life; i.e life after death. As it was in ancient Egypt and other parts of the ancient world, Wolaitta believed on the fate of life after death.

Informants asserted that moral doings on the earth determines the scenario of life after death. The practices of morally right doing during life time was the basic principle to achieve safe life after death. If the one had died in Wolaitta, the community expressed their wish to be his/her soul in rest in the following phrase; "*Tossay shempuwa marroo*" meaning May God give mercy for his soul (May God put his/her soul in peace. After the death of somebody, community members pray for pardon of his/her soul of any wrong doings which he/she might have committed when he/she was alive. The community believed that creator would heard their pray. This expression confirms that Wolaitta believed that there was/is life after death, and indicates primal religion was/is consciousness about the life after death and every moral doings were associated with life after death. For this reason, primal religion of Wolaitta believes on the principle that states morally right doing would make safe life, after death. On the other hand, wrong doings would led to punishment of life after death, however, the primal religion do not define what kind punishment it may wrong doings cause after death.

Moral wrong doings would lead to the punishments and curse from *Tossa*, and due to this, Wolaitta community was extremely depended on moral guides. This was because no written script found in Wolaitta traditional religion. The wrong activities may lead to *gome* (similar to the word curse) and *nagara* (sin that leads to punishment from creator). Wolaitta people practice a praying ceremony known *wossa* either individually or in group. For instance, if there is no rain they pray "*iree woze*" meaning they were in need of rain, and they believed that the disobedience to creator led to lack of rain in harvest season. For this reason, they ask pardon from creator by saying "*Toosso maara*" meaning May God allow your mercy on us. This was one of the traditional praying way of Wolaitta to *Toosso* for his forgiveness unto sins or any punishment which was believed to be sent by creator. As the sign of submission and reconciliation with creator, Wolaitta people conduct *yarishuwa* (sacrifice). It is mostly done by giving the elder bull, goat, sheep and the like which must be symbolic and genuine. Thus, it was believed that at the end the ceremony of *yarshuwa*, sin would be canceled and either individual or group would make oath not to conduct it again. Thus, *gome* (curse and punishment) and *nagaraa* (sin) would be erased and a person who had under this circumstances were believed to be free after offering the *yarshuwa*.

Yarishuwa was also offered after the keeping of their material from the attack of humans. Wolaitta community had the belief of *giga* (covenant to sacrifice for spirit due to its protection of property especially crops from human and animal attacks). In *giga* process, covenant to offer various

sacrifices to the ancestral spirit was/is made. For the keeping of properties from human and animal attack for specific time interval, the owner provide sacrifice to its respective ancestral spirit. *Giqqa* was symbolized by three and above meters scared stick-wood. *Giqqa* scared stick-wood would stand on the middle of crops until it would be collected. After the collection the crop, the owner take the *gatuwa* (offer) to the practitioner of ancestral spirit. Besides, *yarishua* (sacrifice) was/is offered in household level by the elder of the family or by the chief of the clan. *Yarishua* (sacrifice) was offered for all day today practices but especial sacrifice was offered when the crop or cattle reproduced; increase in trade profit; get fertility of land; normalization of seasons; fertility of the first marriage; new born baby especially, birth of male; constructing new hut; increment in wealth; and any other positive things happens.

The *yarishua* was believed to be precious, must be carefully prepared and acceptable offer by the spirit. This was one of the indication that Wolaitta people believed in assistance supreme God and in various agents. For this reason, Balisky states the following witness on Wolaitta traditional religion sacrifice to the creator:

The primal religion of Wolaita is a living religion that is vitally involved in all aspects of community life like Christian religion; it has a concept of the high God, the need for sacrifice, a code of moral behavior, community dynamics in repentance, a reverence for the cycles of nature, specified ritual in worship, on a strong belief in the power of evil... They (Wolaitta) gather together at a designated place and offer an animal as a sacrifice and then repent of their sins, beginning *Ṭossa* for forgiveness. In the Wolaitta language this ritual is called *sigeta*, meaning 'reconciliation,' between God and the people (Balisky, 2009, p.80).

All activities of day today either bad or good associated with *ayana* and were believed to be below God. For the reason of the daily activities sacrifices were offered to *ayana*. The days in Wolaitta such as *Sagga* (Monday), *Wolila* (Wednesday), *Bizza* (Friday) and *Wogga* (Sunday) were believed to be special days in which any calamities may happen and considered as ritual days. These days were called as *Atuma-Wonata* literary male days, however, the reality is to indicate these days were evil days. The *Ṭalahiya* was believed to be the source for all bad things. It was manifested by various things. For instance, one of the manifestation was *Mimmintiya* (leviathan) which rise from Lake Abaya and stretches to eat star on the sky. Due to this people frightened for *Mimmintiya*, and other bad spirits from lake Abaya as well as from land. The traditional Wolaitta religion had a belief of good spirit and they offer the sacrifice to it too (Chiatti, 1984). For this reason, Wolaitta had different agents of spirit as individuals and deities.

IV. MONOTHEISM CONCEPT OF PRIMAL RELIGION OF WOLAITTA

Wolaitta tradition religion has complex ritual process its concept but it was/is monotheism. It was labelled with deism in sense that *Ṭossa* (God) created the universe and left it to be operated by natural laws under the general direction of God himself. Primal religion of Wolaitta

believed *Ṭossa* was/is male and father. This was because they associate strengthen with male and father as the head of family. As males rule and govern, the father was a one who controls all things in a given family, and he is the supreme over a given family. For this reason Wolaitta people had the concept to accept God as supreme and father of all thing in the universe. He was also the only super power and the rest were under His control. Thus, primal religion of Wolaitta has the concept of monotheism with the honoring the spirit below *Tossa* God. It seem for this reason that Chatti puts the character of Wolaitta tradition God and belief in the following manner: "He (*Tossa*) can be considered as a 'deus otiosus' ('idle god') (Chiatti, 1984, p.73).

Furthermore, primal religion of Wolaitta believes that *Ṭossa* (God) leave the universe to be regulated by natural law. For this reason people belief various spirits. This was led to the beginning of worshiping on many ancestral clan spirits and belief in spirits. The ancestral clan spirits was/is believed to be operating for their respective clans. In this regard, a small collection of respective ancestral spirits were believed to be powerful for the respective events in the community. Wolaitta people believed in one creator but practice the religious rituals via spirit medians. Through gradual process they begun to respond only to ancestral spirits and spirit medians. *Ṭossa* was the creator and all spirits are below him. For this fact they honor *Awa-Tossa* (ancestral spirit) in all *eqqa* (faith).

The concept of *Eqqa* is "broadly translated as worshipping or faith" (Dea, 2005, p.4) was/is vital element of Wolaitta traditional religion. It is performing of religious rituals and its ceremony as a mandatory code of conduct in Wolaitta traditional religious life. The primal religion have principles of respect of humanity and nature. It is the performance of religious ritual having the belief that spirit medians had the authority to exercise the power vested by the creator to do so. Through the process of time, Wolaitta community depended and accepted that spirit medians as a short cut to meet with creator and its spirit. Due to this people believed that is near to reach spirit medians than creator and obeyed all thing to spirit medians and each clan associated its ancestral spirit to creations in the universe. The ancestral spirits of clans were associated with some creations such as sun, moon, star, rain, river, lake, soil, mountain, plants, animals and so on. Indeed regard, primal religion has association with animism. Similar to this, Awolalu (1975) stated that African primal religion has animistic nature. As part of Africa, Wolaitta primal religion had the animistic character, and the religious spiritual mythology next to *Ṭossa* (God).

However, this doesn't mean Wolaitta primal religion had a belief in one creator, and the people believed that these animism were the agents of the creator who were considered as spirit medians. The people believed spirit medians as agents of creator and animism of creation. Though there was no concept of evil spirit in primal religion originally, people associates such spirit with bad coincidences. Thus, the community call such evil spirit as "*ita-ayana*" which

emanates from *Talahiya* (Devil) as they believe.

In order to escape from such bad coincidences, its believers offered *yarishua* (sacrifice) to *Talahiya*. The primal religion in Wolaitta was called as *mayza-egqa* or *mayza-amanua* (indigenous belief), and its creator was *Mayza-Tossa* or *Salo-Tossa* (creator of all). The ritual activities of primal religion in Wolaitta. At present, the practice of primal religion was currently limited to Kindo and Koyisha districts among 12 rural districts of Wolaitta. Currently, majority of Wolaitta are protestant Christians (Dea, 2005; Lambebo, 2016).

V. CONCLUSION

The primal religion of Wolaitta has the concept of theism in which *Tossa* (God) is the Supreme Being. The adherents believe that *Tossa*, who owns the universe, created all things, knows everything and controls all. He lives permanently in *Degara-Saluwa* (beyond Blue-Sky) but can appear in everywhere invisible form. Spirit (*ayana*) and divination of *mala* and/or *sharechuwa* (witchcraft or magician) are also integral parts in primal religion of Wolaitta. The concept of monotheism in primal religion of Wolaitta is masked by the domination of Christianity since in the 20th century. The *egqa* (overall ritual practices or belief) in primal religion of Wolaitta is defined from the view point of *Tossa* (God). Next to *Tossa* (God), *ayana* (spirit), divination practices of *mala* and/or *sharechuwa* (witchcraft or magician) and *yarishuwa* (sacrifice) are the basic themes of primal religion of Wolaitta, and influence the activities of humans. In Primal religion of Wolaitta, *Tossa* and *ayana* are reachable to the community via *mala* and/or *sharechuwa* (witchcraft or magician) or via ancestral spirit of their respective clans. The *yarishuwa* (sacrifice) is an offered (*gatuwa*) to honor, to escape *gome* (curse and punishment), to avoid *nagaraa* (sin), to accept *anjuwa* (blessing) and other spirit related obligations in usual business. Primal religion of Wolaitta had vital moral and ethical values to humanity and its environment. Its principles emanates from God. Currently, majority of the community in Wolaitta has forgotten the role of primal religion of Wolaitta in spiritual realm due to the domination of Christianity since 20th century.

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