

SCHOOL OF MISSION AND THEOLOGY OF STAVANGER

**CHRISTIAN-MUSLIM RELATIONS ON PERE PLAIN: CHALLENGES
FOR THE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN CAMEROON
(E.L.C.C.)**

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DEDICATION

This Thesis is dedicated joyfully to my Dear Late Father **BOUKAR** and Mother **BIBA**.

ACRONYM AND ABBREVIATION

ACIC: Association Culturelle Islamique du Cameroun (Islamic Cultural Association of Cameroon)

ATR: African Traditional Religion

CWME: Commission for World Mission and Evangelism

ELCC: Evangelical Lutheran Church in Cameroon

NGO: Non Governmental Organization

NMS: Norwegian Mission Society

WCC: World Council of Churches

Cor : Corinthians

Deut: Deuteronomy

Ed./Eds. : Editor/Editors.

Exo: Exodus

Gn: Genesis

Is: Isaiah

Jn: John

Kor: Koran

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background to the Study and Motivation

Today the worldwide religious communities are experiencing the inevitable reality of religious pluralism life that launches many challenges in all the levels of the life. Such as competition, rivalry and missionary egoism are taking place and grow more and more sometimes becoming worrying even dangerous. The fact could be set notably clearer when we take into account the particular Christian-Muslim's relation as could be read in Calvin E. Shenk's declaration:

For many Christians, Islam is an enemy. Often Islam is defined by ways it differs from or opposes Christian faith. Christians resist Islam's claim to have fulfilled and gone beyond Christianity. Some Christians are troubled by political forms of Islam which espouse values antithetic to traditional Christian ones. For other Christians, Islam as a missionary religion is in competition with Christian witness. Unfortunately such partial perspectives of Islam engender fear and hatred and poison relationships between Christians and Muslims.¹

In Cameroon within the total population estimated over twenty million inhabitants (20.549.221),² Christians and Muslims constitute the main religious groups about respectively 70% and 21%³ of the whole population. Only about 9% of the population embraces other religions. One can see how the religious arena is becoming more and more competitive where every religion seeks to gain the place and the population. However, this way of gaining place and people is not accomplished always in a simple manner where people come to religion by self-conviction, but some times by other means seeking to underestimate other's religion in a way to attract its members. The situation is as others have no right to exist in the area or to promote their faith any way. Inevitably a climate of a certain feelings animate different religious groups: the small groups fear the big ones and a kind of hidden tension exists between different religious groups in general and between Islam and Christianity in particular. Therefore, these challenges in question become very imposing and interpellant in a way to call both groups to a new way of conceiving the matter of interreligious communication in its true sense in order to lead to a peaceful religious cohabitation. As Père plain is the point of

¹ Calvin E. Shenk in Gordon D. Nickel, *Peaceable Witness Among Muslims* (Waterloo: Herald Press, 1999), 9.

² Cameroun, "Statistiques et Carte"; available from <http://www.statistiques-mondiales.com/cameroun.htm> ; Internet; accessed 09 November 2013.

³ Religion in Cameroon, "Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia" available from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion_in_Cameroon; Internet; accessed 09 November 2013.

departure for my development in the thesis, it deserves a particular attention from the beginning of the work. The reason is, that of its whole population of fifty thousand inhabitants, Muslims are the main religious group about 50% whom have in one way or another, influence over Christians represented only by 30%.⁴ The other remaining 20% been covered by African Traditional Religion members.

My motivation for such a study is to investigate the relation between Christians and Muslims living in the concerned area. The concerned investigation will help us to find the causes that render relation difficult in a way to attempt to contribute in proposing new ways of perceiving and understanding other in a new religious context. In doing so, we hope to provide a material of work and teaching for the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Cameroon that experiences the matter of cohabitation with other faiths in general, and with Islam in particular to promote peace, dialogue, and a way to do mission properly in a multireligious context that is, ethically according to the new context. Given that the research has been done not only in Christian side but also in Muslim side, we hope that this material could be useful equally to Muslims so that they also could be aware of the challenge of peaceable religious cohabitation.

1.2. Problem and Purpose of the Study

The problem we are going to discuss in this thesis is the relational issue. How can two or many religious groups from different world views, different cultures, and different ideologies live together without neglecting other's personality and other's religion? The specific case of Christian-Muslim relation in Pérè plain is of great interest when we know that these two religious groups lived and will continue to live together in the same place. Therefore, if there is no frank dialogue, no consideration of other's religion and other's way of thinking, there cannot have peace in the area. It occurs then a contrast when both Christianity and Islam are promoting peace whereas practically there is lack of confidence between them leading in some cases to negative struggles. In order to avoid that, an investigation is needed for some suggestions that could repair the problem and maintain peace. In order to attain our goal, some main leading questions need to have answer:

- What characterizes the relation between the Christianity and Islam in Pérè plain?

⁴ The number of population and percentages of different religious groups in the plain are from the Mayor of Mayo-Baléo.

- Are there any positive or negative element in this relation?
- What are the main challenges?
- What does the church do to address these challenges?
- And how could the church address these challenges?

As living together becomes inevitable for Christianity and Islam, it involves challenges anyway. In fact these two communities have neither the same doctrine nor the same perception of neighborhood. It occurs then challenges of understanding other and his/her religion in order to build a peaceable cohabitation. This investigation aims to expose these challenges in order to contribute with knowledge, understanding and reflection on how to face these challenges with new view of the matter; each group could be given all chance to do mission freely and in a right way without worrying other. We could then avoid in the region religious relationship difficulties that happen in other neighboring countries. To reach this point we need to investigate in both sides in order to put on surface what are the strengths and weaknesses that exist in a way to bring both Muslims and Christians to a peaceful cohabitation in continuing each group one's own missionary task without regarding other as real problem of one's own existence and development. That is why we need to know about the setting of each religious group in this region, the beginning of misunderstanding even the part of the government responsibility in this matter before proposing some suggestions to release the situation in a way to find in religions the nature of peace holders. However, this research cannot lays as ideal for understanding the whole Christian-Muslim relation in this area because it has its limits that others further research could complete.

1.3. Delimitation

Academically this study is located in the field of theology principally in the discipline of missiology in accordance with J. Andrew Kirk's view that

The theology of mission is a disciplined study which deals with questions that arise when people of faith seek to understand and fulfill God's purposes in the world, as these are demonstrated in the ministry of Jesus Christ. It is a critical reflection on attitudes and actions adopted by Christians in pursuit of the missionary mandate. Its

task is to validate, correct and establish on better foundations the entire practice of mission.⁵

It wants to understand the matters of misunderstanding between the two great religions of the world that are Islam and Christianity. In scrutinizing both sides of opportunity and weakness we will be led to criticize weaknesses that poison the relation and based on some points of forces we will provide some advises in a way to foster more harmony and peace between Christianity and Islam.

Geographically the study covers mainly Péré plain that will be presented more widely in the second chapter of the thesis. However many data and examples from other regions will be used in this work in order to understand more clearly the matter of Christian-Muslim relationship in Péré plain.

1.4. Previous Research, Sources and Relevant Literature

Before my present attempt to discuss of this topic many researches have been done on it even if concerning other wider areas than the specific narrow area of Péré plain. However, it is important to mention that the nature of Islam influence and of the relation between Christians and Muslims is generally the same in Péré plain as it is in Adamaoua region and almost in the whole country. It means that, as we did not accessed to a relevant document concerning Christian-Muslim relation in Péré plain, realities around Péré plain will serve us to assert and sustain properly that of the very plain. The materials we accessed so far and could be relevant to our concern are that of:

- Nyiwé Thomas on “*La Stratégie Missionnaire de l’Eglise face aux Traditions Musulmanes dans l’Adamaoua*”. The author managed to retrace the history of the region from the beginning to its contact with Islam that took earlier a sudden growth and impulse in the region in mentioning the establishment of the church with special fight against the increasing slavery of that time. In his approach especially in chapters 7 and 8 he did not drive our view on how to attain Muslims with the evangelical message in terms of strategies but put on light differences and resemblances between Islam and Christianity to take into account to avoid drama and initiate dialogue from a good basis. It is a material to understand Islam well before engaging any missionary task toward him in a way not to fall in error.

⁵J. Andrew Kirk, *What is Mission ? Theological Explorations* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1999), 21.

- Nygandji Ndi Samuel on *“Pourquoi les Kirdi du Nord-Cameroun ont-ils préféré le Christianisme à l’Islam ? Le cas des ‘Habe’ de Bankim »*. In showing the background of social organization and the different conceptions of God, man, world sacrifice of the main tribes in question namely Tikar, Mambila and Kwanja the author signifies the ready-made character of these people with whom the contact with Islam will not be easy. Some of the reasons are the ways by which Islam attained the people (force way) and the implication of colonial power in empowering Islam particularly in northern Cameroon over Kirdi⁶. However cohabitation between the two religious groups is inevitable in this region. For that, some recommendations are done giving to each group (Islam, Christianity, and the Government) his responsibility to repair the past bad thing and to promote peace and dialogue.

- Simbé Nicodème on *“Le Maraboutisme dans l’Adamaoua et son Influence sur la Communauté Chrétienne”*. The main concern developed in the thesis is the psychological influence of Islam (Maraboutism) over Christians. He points essentially to the spiritual weakness of Christians who put enormously confidence on Marabout rather than on Christ. This fact led not only to spiritual issue but also social problem principally of poverty because most part of their income goes to Marabout for protection and wealth seeking.

- Ngayap Moïse on *“Christian Witness in a Pluralistic Context: Missiological reflections on religious challenges facing the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Cameroon in Urban zones with specific reference to the city of Ngaoundéré”*. The writer dealt with pluralistic experience facing the church in Ngaoundéré city with many components. What we found important to contribute to our development are the strategies used by Islam to gain the ground in that part of the city. In return some strategies supposed to be used by church to be in dialogue with Islam and to bring gospel message to Muslims are proposed since the two religions are missionary religions.

- Nickel Gouillon D. on *“Peaceable Witness Among Muslims”*. What appear of great interest in the document is mainly the difficulties that a Christian missionary could face when presenting Christ to a Muslim. These difficulties constitute generally barriers for witnessing to Christ in Islamic milieu. Among many other important views on Christian-Muslim relationship some preliminary considerations mentioned are to be taken into account by Christian’s

⁶ The term comes from Baguirmi language of Chad and means literally idolater or non-Muslim. It was introduced in the region by French colonizers to designate Monts Mandara populations before becoming a generic term for non-Muslim aboriginal people of Northern Cameroon according the explanation of Hamadou Adama, quotation 12, page 20.

missionaries in order to present peacefully Christ to Muslims. In sum, the previous researches dealt with the important aspects of the two great religions in stating mainly on:

- Their beginning and how they encountered the local people and their ancient beliefs.
- How mission has been done by the two religions all over the region and beyond through multiples strategies?
- How the two religions interacted during their cohabitation either in a good or a bad way in stressing above all, the everlasting cohabitation of these religions.
- As the two religions claim to be missionaries, some strategies are proposed particularly to the church on how to live in peace with Islam and how to witness Christ to Muslims without hurting them. From all these developments the necessity of dialogue stands a permanent challenge for peaceful cohabitation of Christianity and Islam.

Many sources are used in order to achieve my thesis on this important and actual subject of religious relation.

► Empirical material that is the material created through interviews I did in the field. The importance of this source lies on the fact that it gives more recent information in the concerned field. Interviewees are of great contribution in this level.

► Various documents related to the subject treating of Christian-Muslim relation in general.

These sources stand equally important for written testimonies on the topic of Christian-Muslim relation in general, including Internet links and are set at the same time as relevant literature. To mention some:

■ Studies on Islam and Christianity in Cameroon and Adamaoua area on historical and contemporary situation.

- Boutrais, Jean. « Peuplement et milieu naturel en zone Soudanienne : Le cas de la plaine Koutine (Cameroun) in *Cahier O.R.S.T.O.M., Série Sciences Humaines*, Volume XV, no 2, 1978. This document found through internet is important to retrace the history of Père and the various relations they had with their different conquerors.

- Lode, Kâre. *Appelés à la liberté: Histoire de l'Eglise Evangélique Luthérienne du Cameroun*. Pays-Bas: IMPROCEP éditions, 1990. It is the main document to review the

efforts of the church to implant Christianity in the plain even if after all we felt a kind of weakness of Christianity vis-à-vis the permanent growth of Islam in this part of the region.

- Adama, Hamadou. *L'Islam au Cameroun: Entre tradition et modernité*. Paris: L'Harmattan, 2004.

- Ngongo, Louis Paul. *Histoire des Forces Religieuses au Cameroun: De la Première Guerre mondiale à l'Indépendance*. Paris, Editions KARTHALA, 1982.

These two books are important in this sense that they provide information concerning the influence of the administrative policy over Islam in a way to give it a particular value more than other groups of religion. It could be from this approach that Islam gained more ground and people all over the country.

▣ Documents related to more general studies on Christian-Muslim relations from anywhere.

- Bosch, David J. *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*. New York: Maryknoll, Orbis Book, 1991.

- Knitter, Paul F. *Introducing Theologies of Religions*. New York: Maryknoll, Orbis Books, 2002. These two materials are the basic documents that show through history the struggle of the church toward a neat understanding of its existence and its mission in the world reaching thereby the frame of possible dialogue with other religions notably Islam. Particularly the shift through the four models of truth conception in Knitter writing are both a remarkable steps toward a better self-definition and understanding of others; namely the Replacement model, the Fulfillment model, the Mutuality model and the Acceptance model. The replacement model especially promoted by Fundamentalist of Evangelical Christian communities, has the idea that there is only one true religion, thus Christianity. The Fulfillment model promoted by mainly by the Lutheran, Reformed, Methodist, Anglican, Greek orthodox and Roman Catholic churches is moderate with the idea that Christianity fulfills the truth available in other religions. The mutuality model is more improved than the first ones in that is conceives that because there are many true religions, this calls to dialogue necessarily. This model reflects in terms of God love for all than in term of Jesus Christ uniqueness. The last model of Acceptance lays on the fact the plurality of true religions and thinks that there is not a matter of simply dialoguing, but moreover it is a matter of accepting this reality as it is.

☐ Documents treating of mission in Islamic or in multireligious context.

● Nickel, Gordon D. *Peaceable Witness Among Muslims*. Waterloo: Herald Press, 1999.

● Pachuau, Lalsangkima, and Jorgensen, Knut (eds.). *Witnessing to Christ in a Pluralistic Age: Christian Mission among Other Faiths*. Oxford: Regnum Books International, 2011. These documents furnish skills for Christians that are doing mission in the multireligious context in order to do mission in a right way. They hold Christians aware of the new context of religious life and the influence that makes in the way of doing mission.

☐ Various studies on interreligious dialogue.

● Phan, Peter C. *Being Religious Interreligiously: Asian Perspectives on Interfaith Dialogue*. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis books, 2004.

● Volf, Miroslav, Muhammad, Ghazi bin, And Yarrington, Melissa. *A Common Word: Muslims and Christians on Loving God and Neighbor*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2010. From these sources, all religions are taught to be dialogical, Christianity and Islam as religions of mission in particular. Without dialogue between religions of mission, there can be no peace in the world.

▶ Secondary literature that is what my predecessors have written on the topic particularly in this region of Adamaoua for instance, constituted significantly of those theses already mentioned in previous research.

1.5. Outline

The thesis is organized into seven chapters. The first chapter that is, the introductory one deals with preliminaries of the thesis. It takes into account the background and motivation of the study, purpose and problem of the topic, and finally the delimitation, previous researches and the outline of the thesis. The chapter two concerns the methodological approach focusing principally on method in used for collecting data, method for analyzing them with some focus on the informants, research ethical consideration. The third chapter entitled Theoretical and Theological perspective deals with as the title indicate some theoretical and theological considerations that will intervene and influence the development of this work. In chapter four, it is a question of presenting a historical overview of the plain through presenting the land and the people with his contact with other peoples, the introduction of Islam and Christianity and

their first relation in marking the particular contribution of the government to Islam reinforcement in that part of the land. The chapter five is devoted to the presentation of the results from the fieldwork directed mainly toward perception and description of the Christian/Muslim relation, the way they do mission and some views on mixed marriage and conversion. The chapter six is dealing with Analysis and discussion of the findings in light of previous research and the role of the church face to some challenges and opportunities in this Christian/Muslim relation. And in chapter seven we deal with some more constructive theological discussion on dialogue before proposing some suggestions for the church based on our analysis and discussion. Then the conclusion will come to end all the work.

CHAPTER TWO: METHOD

2.1. Theoretical Approach

The research method I used to my thesis is the qualitative methods. “Qualitative research is a method of enquiry employed in many different academic disciplines, traditionally in the social sciences, but also in market research and further contexts. Qualitative researchers aim to gather an in-depth understanding of human behavior and the reasons that govern such behavior...”⁷ Therefore, as scientific research it consists of an investigation that seeks answers to a question using systematically a predefined set of procedures to answer the question; collects evidence and produces findings that are applicable beyond the immediate boundaries of the study. Its importance comes from the fact that “it is especially effective in obtaining culturally specific information about the values, opinions, behaviors, and social contexts of particular populations.”⁸ There are at least three most common qualitative methods used in research: firstly, the *participant observation* is appropriate for collection data on naturally occurring behaviors in their usual contexts, the *in-depth interviews* are optimal for collecting data on individuals’ personal histories, perspectives, and experiences, particularly when sensitive topics are being explored, and the *focus groups* are effective in eliciting data on the cultural norms of a group and in generating broad overviews of issues of concern to the cultural groups or subgroups represented. For my research, I used the in-depth interview to collect needed data for my analysis. This kind of interview is efficient in that, it uses a restricted circle in which interview is done giving thus more possibility both to researcher and informant a frame to express freely one’s feelings and opinions.

2.2. Informants

Concerning informants, the official number of informants previously planned to meet for interview was 14 people. However, other informants have been adjusted for complementary information that the interview guide did not considered. The names of informants are anonymized into from letters A to E (for group reference), followed by a digit (for personal

⁷ Qualitative research, “Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia”; available from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Qualitative_research ; Internet; accessed 10 October 2013.

⁸ Qualitative research methods, “A data collector’s Field Guide”; available from <http://www.ccs.neu.edu/course/is4800sp12/resources/qualmethods.pdf>; Internet; accessed 21 March 2014.

reference) according to the different groups of persons interviewed, and ended by the date of interview. Thus (A) is for Church leaders, (B) for Mosque leaders, (C) for ordinary Christians, (D) for ordinary Muslims, and (E) for former Christians. The anonymizing comes for the sake of personal identity due to the complexity of the topic. This indication will be very accountable in the section of the presentation of the results from fieldwork.

Given that the matter is related to the question of religious relation and interaction, it was important for us to meet and enquire both two groups to have personal perception of each group before coming to combine and analyze the findings. This could be justified by the need to get a more equated data or point of views to analyze because doing interview only within Christians for the reason that I am Christian would be partial research and therefore would put in doubt the quality of analysis and what follows as suggestions.

Those I interviewed were between 25 to 65 years old. This age group is chosen for the main reason that they could have some experiences in religious life. And because they could have experiences, they could equally have different perspectives concerning Christian-Muslim relation. That is why hoped that they could both efficiently and enormously contribute to the topic principally in this area. Every interview lasted about 30 minutes.

The matter of gender was also taken into account for interview. In putting side by side men and women, we needed to take into account the matter of gender that is of great interest in matter of giving point of views a given concern. It highlights the problem of both divergence and complementarities that play an important role in matter of research and final analysis after the confrontation of data.

We took into account married and single men and women in order to weigh the depth of perception and experience of mixed marriage as one of the strategies employed by Islam to accomplish the Islamization of Christians and non-Christians.⁹ Married women for instance have experience from inner (those who have been Muslim's wives and constrained to convert to Islam), and singles have experience from outer (they are promised not to be converted to Islam when marriage takes place). These two experiences give way to a quite just analysis of what is going on in mixed marriage.

The contact with informants was done by the interviewer himself in the major case. A first round in the field permitted me to have contact directly with some of the informants who did not hesitate to receive me at the moment for interviews. However, there were those

⁹ According to a minutes of Islam Youth Conference: Cameroun, « la jeunesse musulmane 'gestaposante' et son 'plan de lutte contre les chrétiens' »; available from <http://www.coranix.org/archicoray/2004/06jun/1026.htm>; Internet; accessed 10 May 2013. See Appendix 2.

who I missed this first fieldwork round. For those I missed the first round, I made use of letter with ample explanation on the motivation, the conduct and the scope of the research to prepare them for our appointment. However, we must note that it is not about all themes that we got more materials, that is why some themes presented in the findings are shorter than others.

2.3. Method for Collection of the Material: the Interviews

The interviews related to our thesis aims to collect empirical data needed in our field of research that could be relevant to the topic in question. In order to get actual and fresh reality, there were need to get contact with people living in the field as object of our study, so that information in connection with our thesis could be accurate, vivid and of current reality. The interview is a way to perceive things from the very field of research to establish difference between assumption and reality. This way of doing permits to found the essay on a solid base that is, touching the real issues of the field. The advantage in doing interview is also that, one finds a way not to unique information written down in text as in books, but one can go furthermore in asking for other important information that one may miss in some documents. In addition, the chosen topic to develop is related to a determined area and people that a fieldwork was particularly important to find information from the basis through interview.

To conduct my research, I used the semi-structured interviews; the one mainly used in the social sciences to collect qualitative data through an interview that allows a respondent the time and scope to talk about his/her opinions on a given subject. The focus of the interview in this process is decided by the researcher and there may be areas the researcher is interested in exploring. The researcher has as objective to understand the respondent's point of view in using "open-ended questions, some suggested by the researcher ("Tell me about...") and some arise naturally during the interview ("You said a moment ago...can you tell me more?")".¹⁰ Its relevance could be seen through the fact that it embodies many characteristics allowing the researcher for finding the desired result:¹¹

1. Positive rapport between interviewer and interviewee. Very simple, efficient and practical way of getting data about things that can't be easily observed (feelings and emotions, for example).

¹⁰ Sociological Research Skills, "Research Methods"; available from <http://www.sociology.org.uk/methfi.pdf>; internet; accessed 29 September 2013.

¹¹ Sociological Research Skills, "Research Methods"; available from <http://www.sociology.org.uk/methfi.pdf>; Internet; accessed 29 September 2013.

2. High Validity. People are able to talk about something in detail and depth. The meanings behind an action may be revealed as the interviewee is able to speak for themselves with little direction from interviewer.
3. Complex questions and issues can be discussed / clarified. The interviewer can probe areas suggested by the respondent's answers, picking-up information that had either not occurred to the interviewer or of which the interviewer had no prior knowledge.
4. Pre-Judgment: Problem of researcher pre-determining what will or will not be discussed in the interview is resolved. With few "pre-set questions" involved, the interviewer is not "pre-judging" what is and is not important information.
5. Easy to record interview (video / audio tapes).

The preparation of the interview began with conceiving an interview guide concerning (what to ask and how to ask?). Questions were then related to the main concern of the relation between Christians and Muslims in a way to find out what functions well and what functions bad as challenge to face. About "how to ask", I dealt with the matter of order of questions in a way to have a quite progressive course of question and answer during the interview (from the general to the particular questions).

After making everything ready, time for carrying out interview came. At this level I considered principally the concern of security and openness. Interview was done far from the presence of other people and only by two (a face to face dialogue between the interviewer and the interviewee). This method helped me to secure at the same time the informant, the researcher, and the information given in that occasion because most of them particularly Muslims and former Christians were more risked to this kind of insecurity and fear to be exposed to any risk. Other advantage of this procedure as mentioned above is to allow the maximum of openness of the informant who in retired place feels free and secured in giving answers to my questions that sometimes were complex and sensitive, not allowed to be answered publicly.

2.4. Role of the Researcher

This section seeks to raise some facts linked to the personality of the researcher, and that have somewhat influence on the research process whether positively or negatively.

My personality as pastor played double role in this research. First, toward Christian community it fostered easier communication and more confidence in interview dialogue. In Muslims' side it became almost a barrier in communication because there were

lack of confidence in dialogue and the scope of the interview at the end that is, how the answers given during the interview will be handled (fear of misuse of answer afterward).

The fact that some informants perceived me to be somewhat more educated than they are, posed in a certain moment the problem of complexity of inferiority. This led them to adopt a character in which they were not more open to give objectively certain answers to questions.

Other fact that influenced negatively the course of interview is the relation man-woman that is, the fact of being a man and posing questions to a woman made some women reluctant to give answer because of shame face to a man. Also as son of the locality, the research process was not taken into account by certain informants sometimes just because we were more familiar.¹²

To overcome these issues, I had to explain to Muslims that the aim of the research is not to confront Christians and Muslims, but to find a way to better cohabitation. With those who felt less educated than I am, I used mother tongue to be closer to them. Finally, with women influenced by the matter of gender, I sometimes used a woman to address to women so that they could be more open in answering questions. However, it is also important to consider the inner of people that is not at all accessible in research as noted by Thomas Hylland:

It should be added at this point that the anthropological emphasis on everything public and social does not necessarily mean that nothing private and 'inner' exists. Many writers distinguish between the public and private self; the latter being the 'I' as it sees itself from the inside, which is not, of course, available for direct observation by an anthropologist.¹³

To avoid failing in my research process due to these influences, I had to be closer to the interviewees and more open with them in order to explain them in a more detailed way the reason and the goal of this enterprise in religious context. Through this explanation, I succeeded to regain the confidence of some interviewees even if other remained suspicious on the matter.

¹² Comparatively to what was said about Jesus in Mark 6:1-6.

¹³ Thomas Hylland Eriksen, *Small places, Large issues: An introduction to social and cultural Anthropology* (London: Pluto Press, 2010), 58-59.

2.5. Method for Analysis of the Material

To achieve my work on the relation between Christians and Muslims in Pérè plain, I had to collect some main relevant sources related to my topic.

Firstly, the empirical source that is data found from the fieldwork. In doing fieldwork, I was looking for some themes and issues in the very area that should be relevant for my analysis of the problem. This source is the basic one that the main elements for analysis will come from; because they are elements revealing current reality in connection with the matter of Christian-Muslim relation on the concerned area of our study.

Secondly, written sources constituted of various studies in connection to the topic and previous researches in the area. My method for analyzing the material will consist then to combine these two major sources namely, findings from the fieldwork on one hand and elements from previous researches and various writings on the topic on the other hand. In other terms, elements from fieldwork remain proper reality of the zone and basis on which analysis takes place and, written sources of various studies on the topic from various areas all over the world will come in second plan to elucidate, to assess and, to sustain the empirical source.

2.6. Research-Ethical Considerations

The importance of this section lies on the good way of doing research that the researcher has to take into account to do ethically that is, considering almost all the aspects that could make any problem before, during or after research process. First of all was the matter of relation between the two religious groups. Being aware of the risk of tension and suspicion that exist in the area, there necessity to make sure that the fieldwork process will not trigger any relational issue. That is why, I made my best caring in everything in order not to increase the tension, but to do everything in peaceable way. Beyond this risk of tension to avoid, many other considerations were taken into account in order to do properly the fieldwork.

For the sake of the informed consent matter, I took care of informing in advance all my informants I had to encounter in order to let them aware of the subject we are going to discuss during our encounter. This way of doing permitted me to have the consent of my informants before interviewing them in a right way. Those who were not ready for interview withdrawn freely, sometimes in suggesting me other informants to be interviewed on their

behalf. In doing so, I avoided to do research in a hidden way without most or all of the participants being aware that research is taking place at the moment.

The question of privacy was equally important in the process of the research in this sense that interviews were not done in public places like market place, parks and so on; rather in private places notably in rooms, secured places where there are no people... This had to be done in this way because the topic related to my research needed private conversation allowing informant to be free and secured in answering to questions, a way to not make public¹⁴ that is private because there are sometimes undesirable long-term consequences notably on the informant.

Other issue related to research and that could influence negative process of interview is harm. My informants were given a large portion of respect and none of them was harmed in the process of interview. Harming has also its consequences both in the current answers needed and on the future research. In the current answers because when the informant is harmed, whether he/she gives non exact answers to questions or he/she does not at all continue dialogue in the process of research. The consequence on the future research lies on the fact that he/she will make other neighbors aware of this bad practice that closes any other access to informants in the future. This fact played a great role in my research about taking notes. In the level of taking notes, it has been revealed that Muslims in this area do not like their voices been recorded to prevent any misuse in the future. So the major part of my enquiry I dealt with writing down on my note book the answer to questions. In this situation, I was obliged to take note quickly in abbreviated terms before rewriting the entire quotation into complete words. Other procedure was to be slow in writing down the quite totality of the answer given by the informants, and that led me to ask to informants to repeat the same answer permitting me to achieve taking note. I did both depending the situation I encountered in the field. The same remark was done even in the side of former Christians who became curiously more conservative than ancient Muslims. For some Muslims, what is recorded is more efficient than what could be written down that is, there is risk that their voices could be recognized by other people in case of misuse of records. That is why they preferred that their answer should be written down than being recorded.

The reason at least for former Christians could be the zealotry of all new converters to a new expression of the faith that could be observed even in other religions: at

¹⁴ Martyn Hamersley, Paul, Atkinson, *Ethnography: Principles in practice* (London: Routledge, 2007), 209-214.

the beginning one seems to be more jealous to one's new religion and at last there is a kind of "stability of faith" where the zealotry reduces to be "normal" faithful. Only Christians were free in speaking and accepting that the interview could be recorded. In fact, I accepted to do according what Muslims conscience imposed to me (no recording at all) because if I break this rule I will also fail in my enquiry enterprise and I might lose the target anyhow.

Finally, there was necessity to let people know that research does not aim to exploit informants and their resources; in a way to get only one's degree in a given field as we can read: "Sometimes it is claimed that research involves the exploitation of those studied: that people supply the information which is used by the researcher and yet get little or nothing in return."¹⁵ After all, I could feel that I did my research in a right way because I made my best to take into account these research-ethical conditions necessary for a successful research process.

¹⁵ Hamersley, Atkinson, *Ethnography*, 217.

CHAPTER THREE: THEORETICAL AND THEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES

This short chapter is divided into two main parts. In the first part (3.1), I would like to present some theories commonly used in the domain of research that could be helpful for my research in the field. At least two of theoretical approaches have been useful to state the problem for this thesis. The second part (3.2) presents some theological considerations that will influence one way or another, the analysis in this thesis.

3.1. Theoretical Perspective

3.1.1. *Social Conflict Perspective*¹⁶

This perspective is relevant to this project because it helped to perceive the problem that exists between Christians and Muslims and puts the two religious groups in a sort of conflict. It is when the problem is known that we can propose effectively some solutions or ways to release the problem we discuss about. The social conflict perspective is a Marxist-based social theory that analyses the facts of struggle that could occur between two groups in which generally the stronger dominates the weak. Here, this perspective regards religious groups. This perspective might be a help in the analysis of the power relations between Christianity and Islam at the Pérè plain.

3.1.2. *Symbolic Interaction Theory*¹⁷

This perspective discusses the symbolic meaning that people develops and relies upon in the process of social interaction. Symbolic interaction theory analyses society by addressing the subjective meanings that people impose on objects, events, and behaviors.¹⁸ One may add

¹⁶ Sociological Approaches in Sociology, "Term Papers- Kaitlinlayton11"; available from <http://www.studymode.com/essays/Theoretical-Approaches-In-Sociology-1029647.html> ; Internet; accessed 10 October 2013.

¹⁷ Sociological Approaches in Sociology, "Term Papers- Kaitlinlayton11"; available from <http://www.studymode.com/essays/Theoretical-Approaches-In-Sociology-1029647.html> ; Internet; accessed 11 November 2013.

¹⁸ Sociology, "Symbolic interaction theory"; available from <http://sociology.about.com/od/Sociological-Theory/a/Symbolic-Interaction-Theory.htm>; Internet; accessed 21 March 2014.

that "Subjective meanings are given primacy because it is believed that people behave based on what they believe and not just on what is objectively true."¹⁹ In other words this perspective is helpful for understanding why this group or this other group behaves like we see in face. It is a matter of raising up the reasons that make people behave like they do even though in right or bad way that is, by good reason or false reason.

Dealing with the problem of relation between different groups and what occurs as result in their behavior over one another, these methods are important tools to move within the communities with full contact, to question and dialogue confidently with people in a way to get the very problem influencing their relation of everyday. From this in-depth knowledge one can be aware truly of the matter and there from to propose some suggestions that could release the situation and improve interreligious life.

3.1.3. Religious Freedom and Conversion

Taking into account religious freedom and conversion is a way to be in peace with other people. The terms would like to say that one is free to belong to a religion of one's preference and to leave it dependently to one's decision. That is why conversion is not strictly defined as an event, but as a process because the convert has both a history and a future.²⁰ Even though friends and groups²¹ intervene in the life of someone to convert, the central pole of decision is the convert him/herself since according to Meredith,

Several personal and situational factors can predispose people to conversion by making them aware of the extent to which their prior meaning system seems inadequate to explain or give meaning to experiences and events. By contrast, if individuals can satisfactorily 'handle' experiences and events within the framework of their meaning system, they have no desire to seek alternative meanings for their lives.²²

In one case or in the other, the scenario remains quite the same: the convert does not stop completely to think according to his/her previous religious elements in consolidating or reaffirming them in the new religion as McGuire notices it.²³ Thus, conversion is a complex

¹⁹ Sociology, "Symbolic interaction theory"; available from <http://sociology.about.com/od/Sociological-Theory/a/Symbolic-Interaction-Theory.htm>; Internet; accessed 21 March 2014.

²⁰ Meredith B. McGuire, *Religion: The social context* (Belmont: Thomson Learning, 5th ed., 2002), 79

²¹ In many other cases, there is no personal conviction but people come to convert by external pressures from various relatives based on certain purposes.

²² McGuire, *Religion: The social context*, 80.

²³ McGuire, *Religion: The social context*, 74.

matter that does not allow any rule of conduct, but needs to have a wide frame of freedom in which it has its proper sense: people can go walking through many religions and come back to the initial one if the others do not fit their expectation. To this regard, it is important to be accountable to the United Nations Declaration of Human Right of 1948 put as follows:²⁴

Article 18

Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion of belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.

Article 19

Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.

Article 20

1. Everyone has the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association.
2. No one may be compelled to belong to an association.

From this perspective, one may probably prevent threats over those who leave their religion, going to other or those who are constrained to convert to another religion against their will due to some religious enthusiasm and fanaticism of religious leaders.

3.2. Theological Perspective

3.2.1. *The Impact of the Pluralistic Context of Religion on Mission*

Since awareness of religious plurality came to religious people, it was undeniable that many things need to be revised in religious domain to fit the actual context. The appealing situation is set clearer with Wilfred Smith:

...We are about to enter a new situation with regard to the other religious traditions of mankind. The time will soon be with us when a theologian who attempts to work out his position unaware that he does so as a member of a world and society in which other theologians equally intelligent, equally devout, equally moral, are Hindus, Buddhists, Muslims [and, one could still go on-Jews, adherents of African Religion and of other primal religions, etc.], and unaware that his readers are likely perhaps to be Buddhists or to have Muslim husbands or Hindu colleagues-such a theologian is

²⁴ "Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Adopted by United Nations General Assembly Resolution 217A (III) of 10 December 1948," in *Bridge or Barrier: Religion, Violence and Visions for Peace*, eds Gerrie Ter Haar and James J. Busuttill (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 302-303.

out of date as is one who attempts to construct an intellectual position unaware that Aristotle has thought about the world or that existentialists have raised new orientations, or unaware that the earth is a minor planet in a galaxy that is vast only by terrestrial standards.²⁵

Therefore, any attempt to reflect theologically on other faiths must take into account this new sphere of religious matter in order to be equitable in religious thoughts and deeds. The time has come to shift from the old manner of seeing one's religion as the only true religion to the better manner in which others religions have to be considered equally in dignity and value. The consultation of Bangkok puts the point clearly in these words:

Exaggerated church growth figures have, in the past, misled some into thinking that Christianity would simply make other religions disappear from the face of the earth so that it could some day become the dominant, conquering faith. Describing the resilience of other faiths against attempts by Christianity to annihilate them, Wilfred Smith uses an Old Testament incident: "We have marched around alien Jericho the requisite number of times. We have sounded the trumpets. The walls have not collapsed."²⁶

Therefore, religious communities in general are called to a new theological perspective that considers the presence and value of other religions, thus inviting somehow to dialogue. The reasons for this new theological perspective are set as follows by Hance A. O. Mwakabana:²⁷

- because they are there, and will continue to be there. To ignore them or continue to wage "missionary war" against them cannot be the answer to our quest for a Christian theology of other faiths;
- because that is the right approach, especially if we want to engage them in authentic dialogue (in all its forms and at all levels);
- because it is the right course of action if we want to contribute to the common good of humanity through a common focus on the human needs in our communities;
- because true reconciliation is only possible where each takes the other *seriously*;
- because a dialogue arising out of genuine mutual respect and understanding helps us to formulate a theology of mission. It helps us to find approaches on how to relate to people of other faiths in a more honest manner that is no stumbling block for future relations as so often in the past.

²⁵ Mwakabana, Hance A. O. "Introduction: Theological Perspectives on Other Faiths," in *Lutheran World Federation Document: Theological Perspectives on Others Faiths*, ed. Hance A. O. Mwakabana (Geneva 2: Lutheran World Federation, 1997), 18-19.

²⁶ Mwakabana, Hance A. O. "Introduction: Theological Perspectives on Other Faiths," in *Lutheran World Federation Document: Theological Perspectives on Others Faiths*, ed. Hance A. O. Mwakabana (Geneva 2: Lutheran World Federation, 1997), 17.

²⁷ Mwakabana, Hance A. O. "Introduction: Theological Perspectives on Other Faiths," in *Lutheran World Federation Document: Theological Perspectives on Others Faiths*, ed. Hance A. O. Mwakabana (Geneva 2: Lutheran World Federation, 1997), 16.

Rev. John Onaiyekan, aware of the reality of the inevitable presence of other faiths on one hand, and the practice of shari'ah in Nigeria put his reflection as follows:

God did not make a mistake when he put us all together here in one geographical zone. Since we all invoke Him, albeit under various Names, we must meet the challenge we have assumed to live in unity and harmony as one indissoluble sovereign Nation under God [a reference to the Nigerian constitution]. This is a duty we owe to ourselves, to the coming generations, to mankind, and to God Himself²⁸

3.2.2. *God as Unique Object of Religions*

To theologize objectively, and to take into account the value of all world religions, we need to consider as point of departure of our theology, the uniqueness of God. God is unique albeit represented by other figures in other religions. However, our concern being the relation between Christianity and Islam, it appears important to underline this fact uniting these two great neighbor religions all over the World. In addition of the uniqueness of God shared respectively by Islam (Kor.112: 1-4, 16: 51) and Christianity (Exo 3:4, 6: 4, Deut 5: 7, Is 45:2, 1 Cor 8: 6...) they share the great commandments that are the very will of God for himself and for humankind: the love. By this love, God created all that exists as John Calvin puts it: "If you ask why the world has been created, why we have been placed in it to rule over the earth, why we are preserved in life to enjoy innumerable blessings, why we are endued with light and understanding, no other reason can be given except the free love of God."²⁹ In all things, God is the first one to Love humankind, and he calls in return humankind to love him and to love neighbor. This implies and influences the way religious people may leave in relation with God and in relation with neighbor, synonym of themselves.

3.2.3. *Equality of Humankind before God*

Other important preliminary consideration is to maintain the reality that no particular race or tribe is more important than others are to be discriminated with his culture and way of life. This point of view wants to give equal advantage, equal dignity, and equal consideration

²⁸ Quoted in Haafkens, Hans. "The Direction of Christian-Muslim Relations in Sub-Saharan Africa," in *Islam in Asia : Perspectives for Christian-Muslim Encounter*, eds J. Paul Rajashekar and H. S. Wilson (Geneva 2: Lutheran World Federation, 1992), 137.

²⁹ John Calvin quoted in Volf, Miroslav. "God is Love: Biblical and Theological Reflections on a Foundational Christian Claim," in *A Common Word: Muslims and Christians on Loving God and Neighbor*, eds Miroslav Volf, Ghazi bin Muhammad, and Melissa Yarrington (Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company), 128.

before God and within human societies. Thus, marginalized groups usually named as vulnerable people, youth and women can recover their identity and partaking in all societal organization and in religious matters because a right dialogue begins when both groups are put on same level of value. One way of stressing this equality is the follows: “God created human beings equal to each other in dignity and responsibility. Therefore any act or situation created by human beings that reduce the dignity of any one of them must be acknowledged as an act of atrocity and ultimately an act against god, regardless of who the person (s) may be.”³⁰

³⁰ Mwakabana, Hance A. O. “Summary Report From the Working Group on Islam,” in *Lutheran World Federation Document: Theological Perspectives on Other Faiths*, ed. Hance A. O. Mwakabana (Geneva 2 : Lutheran World Federation, 1997), 173.

CHAPTER FOUR: ISLAM AND CHRISTIANITY IN THE PÈRE PLAIN

Introduction

In this chapter we intend to present the most historical part of the thesis. The chapter is divided into four parts. In the first part (4.1), it will be a matter of presenting the Père land and Père people with his first contact with other people in the land in terms of slaving and Islamization. The second part (4.2) addresses the matter of the introduction and development of Islam with a particular accent on the government influence on spreading Islam. The third part (4.3) addresses the introduction of Christianity in the plain namely the Catholic Church and the Protestant Lutheran Church, with the activities of each Church. In the fourth part, we present the relation Christians and Muslims had at the beginning of their living together in the plain. French documents have been used mostly in this part to retrace this historical line. That is why it is important to signalize that all the French quotations in this part have been translated into English by me. The translated English versions are put in the text and the original French versions are sent to footnotes with the precision (translated by me) in the first quotation of the section.

4.1. Brief Presentation of the Père Plain

4.1.1. *The Land*

Père plain is located in Adamaoua Region (Northern Cameroon) precisely in the Faro et Déo division uniting two subdivisions: Mayo-Baléo and Tignère. It is the remote low land that extends from the slope of the plateau of Tignère to Kontcha, opening gradually northward whose measures are estimated at 50 km wide, 70 km long, and 8500 km² size.³¹ In other documents, it could be referred to the plain of Mayo-Baléo because Mayo-Baléo is the center city of Père plain. That is why Rachel Balé describing the location of the plain said that

The plain is limited in the North by the subdivision of Poli, in the West by Nigeria, in the East by the subdivision of Tignère and in the South by the subdivision of Galim-

³¹ Boutrais, Jean. « Peuplement et milieu naturel en zone Soudanienne: Le cas de la plaine Koutine (Cameroun), » in *Cahier ORSTOM, Série Sciences Humaines, volume XV, no 2*, eds Jean Boutrais, Pannard C. Blanc, Y. Marguerat, J-L Piermay and B. Guillot (Paris : ORSTOM, 1978), 105.

Tignère. The landscape is mostly constituted by mountains: Tchabal Mbabo (1960 meters), Guenfalabo (1600 meters), Dzilempai, NawaNgoum, Sengout, Ngombote (Sali 2002). The assembly of mountains North-South cut off completely the plain from the Dodéo. The Guenfalabo closes the opening of the plain to the Northern part. In the East and the West, two other assemblies of mountains close completely the plain.³²

Even these last years, displacements become common and easier by Motorbikes than by vehicles because the main road connecting Tignère to the plain until Kontcha seems to be impracticable in rainy season. This situation made difficult the communication system both through road way and telecommunication way. Some of the civil servants muted to the plain are generally worried because the communication is not easy with other parts of the region. That comes to confirm what Jean Boutrais declared: "It is still today one of the most poorly understood regions in Cameroon due to almost total isolation 'Zone very' end of the world wrote Lembezat, where the last Koutines continue to conduct, at the foot of the cliff, a life outside of the ages"³³ The plain might be delivered of this situation if the paved road reaches the area in an indefinite moment. The connection to the telephone network the last November 20th, 2013 is one more step toward the development of the region.

4.1.2. *The People*

Due to the fact that, this people is small in number and non-active earlier above all in administrative life, his history seems to be forgotten in many levels and quite dark as it can be read in Jean Boutrais' statement: "The history of Koutines before the nineteenth century getting lost in the oblivion of elders, we are reduced to assumptions"³⁴ The words of Boutrais stress how difficult to retrace the history of Père from the very beginning. It is with respect to this issue that Saidou Sarki Fada for his part situates the origin of Père people only in Nigeria when stating that

³² Rachel Balé Guengue, *The Sourga within the Socio-Economic life of Père people living in the plain of Mayo-Baléo; Northern Cameroon*, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Tromsø, 17.

³³ Boutrais, Jean. « Peuplement et milieu naturel en zone Soudanienne: Le cas de la plaine Koutine (Cameroun), » in *Cahier ORSTOM, Série Sciences Humaines, volume XV, no 2*, eds Jean Boutrais et al. (Paris : ORSTOM, 1978)105. « C'est encore de nos jours l'une des régions les plus mal connues au Cameroun à cause d'un isolement Presque total. 'Zone très 'bout du monde' écrit Lembezat, où les derniers Koutines continuent de mener, au pied de la falaise, une vie hors des âges », (my translation).

³⁴ Boutrais, Jean. « Peuplement et milieu naturel en zone Soudanienne: Le cas de la plaine Koutine (Cameroun), » in *Cahier ORSTOM, Série Sciences Humaines, volume XV, no 2*, eds Jean Boutrais et al. (Paris : ORSTOM, 1978), 114. « L'histoire des Koutines avant le XIXe siècle se perdant dans l'oubli des anciens, nous en sommes réduits à des suppositions. »

Père would come from the Kano region of Nigeria. After long migrations, they arrived at the foot of the mountain Guenfalabo in the region of Kontcha.³⁵

However, Père experienced there in this region three major times of encroachment with three different groups of other people qualified generally as his dominators. The first one should be the Djoukoun³⁶ people who dominated the plain in the 18th century. The second group of dominator is Potopo³⁷ coming from the Far North of Cameroon by the borders of the river Déo and reached Père then dominated them strongly in their own area. It is from this second encroachment that the sad history of slavery began for Père people when "Père were taken by Potopo to be exchanged in the North side by horses and clothes."³⁸ In the 19th century one of the Foulbe group that came also by the river Déo reached Kontcha and installed there close to some Potopo, chasing them away through domination. It could be probably this group of Foulbe that came until Père's Land and delivered them from the battle against Potopo. For this reason Père accepted Foulbe as friends to live together as expressed clearly by some elders: "They gave themselves up to the hands of Foulbe"³⁹ But this coexistence will not be longer maintained peacefully because the Foulbe will turn against Père in applying over them many kinds of slaving. In addition, Père should give forcedly their income of farm and animal husbandry products to the Foulbe as taxes or a sort of zakat. It is important to note that Foulbe succeeded to dominate Père people in pacific way in appointing some Père as responsible of main post in different Lamida. From this polity, they made many Père slaves because those appointed in the Lamida were threatening their own families in order to please to Foulbe.

³⁵ Saidou, Sarki Fada. « Les Père (ou Koutine) de l' adamaoua, » in *Peuples et cultures de l'Adamaoua (Cameroun) : Actes du Colloque de Ngaoundéré du 14 au 16 Janvier 1992*, éd. Jean Boutrais (Paris : Co-édition de ORSTOM/Ngaoundéré Anthropolos, 1993), 177. « Les Père seraient originaires de la région de Kano au Nigéria. Après de longues migrations, ils se trouvent au pied de la montagne Guenfalabo, dans la région de Kontcha .»

³⁶ Djoukoun People were great fishers in the Benoué region.

³⁷ They are also known under the name of Kotopo or Kpotopo in other documents.

³⁸ Boutrais, Jean. « Peuplement et milieu naturel en zone Soudanienne: Le cas de la plaine Koutine (Cameroun), » in *Cahier ORSTOM, Série Sciences Humaines, volume XV, no 2*, éd. Jean Boutrais et al. (Paris : ORSTOM, 1978), 116. « Les Kotopo s'approvisionnèrent chez les Koutines pour les échanger vers le nord contre des chevaux et des vêtements. »

³⁹ Boutrais, Jean. « Peuplement et milieu naturel en zone Soudanienne: Le cas de la plaine Koutine (Cameroun), » in *Cahier ORSTOM, Série Sciences Humaines, volume XV, no 2*, éd. Jean Boutrais et al. (Paris : ORSTOM, 1978), 117. « Ils se livrèrent aux mains des Foulbé. »

4.2. Introduction of Islam in the Area

4.2.1. Introduction by Peaceable Way

The beginning of the relation between Péré and Foulbe (arrived there as holders and promoters of Islam) seems to be ambiguous to determine exactly. In reading what Jean Boutrais wrote, it could be in the beginning of 19th century that the Foulbe (Vollarbe) coming from the Benoué region installed themselves in Kontcha chasing the group of Potopo established in this area:

In the early 19th century, the pressure of Bata on Tchamba was relayed by the Fulani, first insinuated in the alluvial plains of the Benué and Faro. The Bata of Benué were pushed downstream, those of Faro subjected. Going up the course of mayo Déo, a fraction of the Fulbe Vollarbe moved to Kontcha near Kotopo, chasing them. Most Kotopo, preferring to flee rather than be enslaved in turn, climbed the plateau and headed toward the south through Niam-Niam in Galim and Bouté of Seuté (5). The Koutines delivered from Kotopo, welcomed favourably their liberators. »⁴⁰

From this statement, it seems clear to situate the contact between Péré and Foulbe before the great Jihad of Fombina decreed in 1804 and applied effectively since 1809 in Adamaoua region through Adama, the one appointed as war leader in this area by Ousman Dan Fodio. This manner of seeing thing lead us to conclude with Hamadjouldé that

Fulani domination over Péré effectively took place. Only it is done peacefully resulting to political compromise between Péré and Fulani. It was then an agreement which required Péré to pay customary fees to Foulbé to prevent any declaration of war against them. These customary charges were based on the delivery of agricultural products, livestock and the performance of services by Péré.⁴¹

One must also note that the dominion of Foulbe upon Péré had nothing to do with religious concern necessarily in a way to impose them Islamization, rather it was a matter of controlling

⁴⁰ Boutrais, Jean. « Peuplement et milieu naturel en zone Soudanienne: Le cas de la plaine Koutine (Cameroun), » in *Cahier ORSTOM, Série Sciences Humaines, volume XV, no 2*, eds Jean Boutrais et al. (Paris : ORSTOM, 1978), 116. « Au début du 19e siècle, la pression des Bata sur les Tchamba fut relayée par celle des Foulbé, d'abord insinués dans les plaines alluviales de la Benoué et du Faro. Les Bata de la Benoué furent refoulés vers l'aval, ceux du Faro soumis. En remontant le cours du mayo Déo, une fraction des Foulbé Vollarbe s'installa à Kontcha près des Kotopo, puis les chassa. La plupart des Kotopo, préférant s'enfuir plutôt que d'être asservis à leur tour, gravirent le plateau et se dirigèrent vers le sud en passant chez les Niam-Niam de Galim et les Bouté de Seuté (5). Les Koutines délivrés des Kotopo, accueillirent favorablement leurs libérateurs. »

⁴¹ Hamadjouldé quoted by Rachel Balé Guengue, *The Sourga within the Socio-Economic life of Péré people living in the plain of Mayo-Baléo; Northern Cameroon*, 18-19. « La domination peule sur les Péré a effectivement eu lieu. Seulement elle s'est faite de manière pacifique résultant du compromis politique entre Péré et Foulbé. Il s'agissait alors d'une entente qui obligeait les Péré à verser des redevances coutumières aux Foulbé afin de les empêcher de leur déclarer la guerre. Ces redevances coutumières étaient basées sur la livraison des produits agricoles, d'élevages et sur les prestations des services par les Péré. »

power. Conversion to Islam was then done pacifically at the beginning through two main ways. First, the way of conversion of population when the chief of village or the chief of family becomes Muslim as Hamadou adama puts it:

One thing is constant here as a pre-written scenario. Throughout the campaign, comes an important factor, that of converting a conquered chief and his rallying. Converting a Kirdi leader promotes and accelerates the conquest of his territory that therefore adopts a Muslim structural form of Lamidat henceforth placed under the control of a Muslim leader.⁴²

Secondly, the way of mixed marriage in which all children born in the couple become automatically Muslims. Nyiwé Thomas alluding this way says: "Being of very peaceful nature, they had not sought to oppose the Fulani invasion but had pursued a policy of 'alliance' and marriage."⁴³ Even though applying the policy of marriage with Foulbe in order to benefit of their clemency, Péré people nevertheless underwent slavery imposed onto them by Foulbe. In a way to underline the fact, Saidou Sarki Fada mentions: "During almost a century, Péré suffered mistreatment by the Fulani (slavery, removal of goods)."⁴⁴ Only after this long period of slaving and above all from a historic event in the time that Péré will recover their dignity they lost; the remarkable event of liberation of Péré that happened in 1950 when almost 200 Péré were released thanks to the intervention of Baudelaire will remain in the mind of Péré as shown through the testimony of Bakari Etienne:

Saturday morning, after having verified that everyone was there, Baudelaire made us align. The crowd of mostly young men and young women was large. When the order was given to leave, we walked in single file and walked out Kontcha. Today when I remember this output from Kontcha I liken directly to the output of the Jewish people from Egypt, as the Bible says.⁴⁵

⁴² Hamadou Adama, *L'Islam au Cameroun : Entre tradition et modernité* (Paris : l'Harmattan, 2004), 22. « Une constante revient ici comme un scénario écrit d'avance. Durant toutes les campagnes, intervient un facteur important, celui de la conversion d'un chef conquis et de son ralliement. La conversion d'un chef Kirdi favorise et accélère la conquête de son territoire qui épouse alors une forme structurale musulmane en devenant un lamidat placé désormais sous le contrôle d'un chef musulman. »

⁴³ Nyiwé Thomas, *La Stratégie Missionnaire de l'Eglise face aux Traditions Musulmanes dans l'Adamaoua*, Faculté de Théologie de Yaoundé, 1983, 14. « De nature très pacifique ils n'avaient pas cherché à s'opposer à l'invasion peule mais avaient pratiqué une politique 'd'alliance' et du mariage. »

⁴⁴ Saidou, Sarki Fada. « Les Péré (ou Koutine) de l'Adamaoua, » in *Peuples et cultures de l'Adamaoua (Cameroun) : Actes du Colloque de Ngaoundéré du 14 au 16 Janvier 1992*, éd. Jean Boutrais (Paris : Co-édition de ORSTOM/Ngaoundéré Anthropos, 1993), 177. « Durant presque un siècle, les Péré ont souffert des mauvais traitements infligés par les Foulbé (esclavage, prélèvement de biens). »

⁴⁵ Guengue, *The Sourga within the Socio-Economic life of Péré people*, 20. « Ce samedi matin, après avoir vérifié que tout le monde était là, Baudelaire nous fit aligner. La foule composée en majorité des jeunes hommes et de jeunes femmes était nombreuse. Quand l'ordre fut donné de partir, nous marchâmes en file indienne et sortîmes de Kontcha. Aujourd'hui quand je me rappelle de cette sortie de Kontcha, je l'assimile directement à la sortie du peuple Juif d'Egypte, telle que raconte la Bible. »

Although this great event marking the end of the slavery upon Péré people, the phenomenon continued to exist till these last years. Anne Trydal Hansen and Ingeborg Madla, missionaries at that time in Gadjiwan wrote to the Governor of Adamaoua reporting yet this practice:

We come to you to tell you about one of our concerns: we are two missionaries of the Norwegian Protestant Mission / ELCC who are serving in Cameroon since 1985 and 1993. Last year we both returned from a trip to Norway. Shortly after our arrival at Gadjiwan we heard from several sources around us concerning a practice of forcibly remove of girls of non-Christian families by the Lamido of Tignère to keep them in the Lamidat ... We would like to help our sisters in which we operate. We would also help the parents of these girls locked. They highly fear the return of slavery in the Lamidat of Tignère, and we share their concern.⁴⁶

Considering all these parameters, we can easily conclude that Péré come to acquire Islam religion willingly; because of their cohabitation with Foulbe and not that this was inflicted to them by force. The benefit of Foulbe in this cohabitation with Péré is mainly in using them in their jobs. In order to maintain as long as possible a great number of slaves, Foulbe sometimes did not want to convert "Haabe" to Islam because it implies automatically a reduction of slaves. Furthermore, Thomas Sundnes Drønen signalizes another case in which Islam was not imposed to people because they did not resist to Islam as we read: "In 1820, the Fulani chief Sambo, who also held a white flag, arrived at Tignère where he found only small villages. It did not impose Islam to the people in the region, but was happy with their political submission and contribution to his army. »⁴⁷

However, one may not absolutely affirm that the force way of Islamization has not been present in the plain. When talking of the Islamization of Adamaoua in general through jihad acts by Hama Gabdo, one notes the presence of two of his sons namely Bakari and Atikou in Péré plain as Islamic administrators.

⁴⁶ A letter addressed to the Governor of Adamaoua dating on 08/12/00. "Nous venons auprès de vous pour vous faire part d'une de nos inquiétudes: nous sommes deux missionnaires de la Mission Protestante Norvégienne/EELC qui sommes en service au Cameroun depuis 1985 et 1993. L'année passée nous sommes toutes les deux revenues d'un séjour en Norvège. Un peu après notre arrivée à Gadjiwan nous avons suivi de plusieurs sources autour de nous d'une pratique qui consiste à enlever de force des filles des familles non Chrétiennes par le Lamido de Tignère pour les garder dans le Lamidat... Nous voudrions bien aider nos sœurs parmi lesquelles nous travaillons. Nous voudrions aussi bien aider les parents de ces filles enfermées. Ils craignent fort le retour de l'esclavage dans le Lamidat de Tignère, et nous partageons leur crainte."

⁴⁷ Thomas Sundness Drønen and Jean Koulagna, *La voie de l'Islam et la voie de Christ: La croix et le croissant en Afrique de l'Ouest*, SIL, 2002, 62. « Vers 1820, le chef peul Sambo, qui portait aussi un drapeau blanc, arriva à Tignère où il ne trouva que de petits villages. Il n'imposa pas l'Islam au peuple dans la région, mais était content de leur soumission politique et de leur contribution pour son armée."

4.2.2. *The Impact of the Government Policy*

One must point necessarily to this historic period of governmental polity that marked the relation of local people with Islam all over the country. From the beginning, Islam was taken by different Administrations as way to enhance their power, making of Islam, a religion of people. The fact is clear yet from German Administration as stressed:

To get to the point, we note that the introduction of indirect administration system by the German colonizers had first consequence to strengthen, firm and consolidate Muslims power at the expense of animist populations. Thus, since the socio-political organization set up by the Muslim theocracies before the arrival of the Germans was not questioned, "the pagan peoples" continued, as in the past, to rely on *laamiibe* who could now count necessarily, on the German armed forces to safeguard their authority and consolidate it in many cases where it had to be faulty.⁴⁸

Therefore, instead of treating equally all religious groups found in place in a way to promote peace and better collaboration, German administration worsened rather the conflict between existing ethnic groups as Hamadou puts it more clearly: « In total, far from calming the existing ethnic tensions, the German administrative policy had the effect of further inflame the already tense relations between Muslims (*julbe*)⁴⁹ and non-Muslims (*haabe*)⁵⁰, and to inspire in them a heightened hostility manifested against the colonizer as well as against Muslim. »⁵¹ The same scenario colored France administration, putting Islam higher over other religious groups. Louis Ngongo can stress that

Here the policy of the French colonial administration remains constant: do not shake Islam where Islam reigns as supreme master. And to express into the official texts the compliance to the specific properties of Muslim in the north of the country, the decree of 26 May 1934 distinguishes only two forms of marriage, Muslim and non-Muslim. Christians have not failed to protest against this privilege.⁵²

⁴⁸ Adama, *L'Islam au Cameroun*, 146. « Pour aller à l'essentiel, on retiendra que l'instauration du système d'administration indirect par le colonisateur allemand eut pour conséquence première de renforcer, d'affermir et de consolider la puissance des musulmans au détriment des populations animistes. Ainsi, puisque l'organisation socio-politique mise en place par les théocraties musulmanes avant l'arrivée des Allemands ne fut pas remise en cause, « les populations païennes » continuaient, comme par le passé, à dépendre des *laamiibe* qui pouvaient désormais compter, au besoin, sur la force armée allemande pour sauvegarder leur autorité et la consolider dans les nombreux cas où elle venait à être défaillante. »

⁴⁹ It means in Fulany language "Mohammetan".

⁵⁰ The term designates all those who are not Muslims.

⁵¹ Adama, *L'Islam au Cameroun*, 147. « Au total, loin de calmer les tensions ethniques préexistantes, la politique administrative allemande eut pour conséquence d'envenimer davantage les relations déjà tendues entre les musulmans (*julbe*) et les non musulmans (*haabe*), et de susciter chez ces derniers une hostilité exacerbée qui se manifesta tant à l'encontre du colonisateur que du musulman »

⁵² Louis Ngongo, *Histoire des Forces Religieuses au Cameroun: De la Première Guerre mondiale à l'indépendance (1916-1955)* (Paris : Editions Karthala, 1982), 165. « Ici la politique de l'Administration coloniale française reste constante : ne pas bousculer l'islam là où il règne en maître. Ainsi pour traduire dans les textes

A playback on Ahidjo's regime reveals same traits of policy and behavior. The wall of inequality and reluctance between groups was reinforced to the advantage of Islam over Christianity and other traditional religious groups. We can read it again in Hamadou Adama's words: «The scheme was willingly generous towards Muslim authorities by multiplying symbolic acts designed to mark its support in favour of Islam. Among the actions taken, there has undoubtedly the creation by the decree in 1963 the Islamic Cultural Association of Cameroon (ACIC). »⁵³ Furthermore, Thomas Drønen, referring to Norwegian Mission Society Conference report of 1949 about Ngoundéré city highlights the fact as follows:

The effort of the administration to build a mosque in the centre of the city encouraged the Mohammedans to practice their religion more passionately. The fact that those who govern show such an interest in the Mohammedans and dedication, but no interest for Christian mission, must naturally give the impression that the Mohammedans religion is the national religion and preferred by those who are important. This "belief" is also true. The willingness and interest of those who govern vis-à-vis the Mohammedans today must be seen as a tragic comedy. Time will let us see the fruit. They will hardly fit, at least not for the work of the mission.⁵⁴

In addition, it came that to access to government function, and to have a good position in the administration sphere, the necessary condition was that of becoming simply a Muslim. This was another way of spreading Islam that has made many other people Muslims. Since becoming Muslim implies changing also one's name, most names in this period were Muslim names that give opportunity to get job. Simbé Nicodème puts the scenario in these terms: "...During the same period Muslims were appointed to most important positions in the government and army. Christians and adepts of different religions were sometimes asked to

officiels le respect de la spécificité musulmane dans le Nord du pays, l'arrêté du 26 mai 1934 ne distingue que deux formes de mariage, musulmane et non-musulmane. Les Chrétiens n'ont pas manqué de protester contre ce privilège. »

⁵³ Adama, *L'Islam au Cameroun*, 156. « Le régime se montrait volontiers généreux à l'égard des autorités musulmanes en multipliant les actes symboliques destinés à marquer son ancrage en faveur de l'Islam. Au nombre des actes posés, il y a incontestablement la création par décret dès 1963 de l'Association culturelle islamique du Cameroun (ACIC). »

⁵⁴ Thomas Sundnes Drønen, *Communication, Conversion et Conservation: Les Dii et les missionnaires norvégiens, Adamaoua 1934-1960*, ILTM, 2008, 167. « L'effort de l'administration de construire une mosquée dans le centre de la ville a encouragé les mahométans à pratiquer leur religion plus passionnément. Le fait que ceux qui gouvernent montrent un tel intérêt pour les mahométans et leur dévouement, mais aucun intérêt pour la mission chrétienne, doit naturellement donner l'impression aux mahométans que leur religion est la religion nationale et préférée par ceux qui sont 'importants'. Cette 'croyance' est aussi vraie. La bonne volonté et l'intérêt de ceux qui gouvernent vis-à-vis des Mahométans aujourd'hui doivent être considérés comme une comédie tragique. Le temps nous en fera voir le fruit. Ils seront à peine bons, tout au moins pas pour le travail de la mission. »

convert to Islam before getting a good position in the government or in the society. Many persons from Mboum, Vouté, Gbaya, Dii, etc, became nominal Muslims.”⁵⁵

4.2.3. *The Internal Actions*

The internal strategy of developing Islam within Péré people in the plain could be summed up through the declaration of Saidou Sarki Fada concerning what Péré benefited from their cohabitation with Foulbe: “The only benefit (if there was) that Péré had from their cohabitation with the Fulbe concerns a commercial sense, learning the Qur'an and knowledge of major languages: foulfouldé and Hausa.”⁵⁶ It sounds quite clear through these words that what Péré heritate from their cohabitation with Foulbe is the way of spreading Islam through the commerce, Koran teaching, new languages. All these things were perceived by Péré as a new look of life for distinctive people, those who left back ancient pagan life for an excellent one. The commerce way was solicited by most Péré because it was a kind of luxurious job through what they have seen on Foulbe occupation; collecting money in time of market or opening store and going to Mosque in time of prayer. It came to mean that in time of prayer those who are not in Mosque are undoubtedly non-Muslims and therefore not considered at all in Muslims circle. As it is recommended to all religious groups a large margin of religious education, many Koran schools were founded earlier in Péré plain in order to educate in maximum children and young Muslims in Islam way and Allah's will almost every morning and evening. The language has influenced in a large part the spread of Islam. Saidou Sarki Fada qualified of “great” the languages (Foulfoulde and Haoussa) Péré people heritated from Foulbe. This manner of conceiving thing made some Péré denying even their own and maternal language because Foulfoulde and Haoussa were seen as heavenly languages. To be a good Muslim is to master or at least to speak and understand these two languages most used in commercial communication and other business sectors. Today it is quite difficult to Péré above all in Islam milieu to express himself without using Foulfoulde or Haoussa language.

⁵⁵ Simbé Nicodème, *The Malloum in Northern Cameroon: The work of the Malloum in Muslims communities in Adamaoua between African Religion and Islam*, Stavanger, 2005, 18.

⁵⁶ Saidou, Sarki Fada. « Les Péré (ou Koutine) de l' adamaoua, » in *Peuples et cultures de l'Adamaoua (Cameroun) : Actes du Colloque de Ngaoundéré du 14 au 16 Janvier 1992*, éd. Jean Boutrais (Paris : Co-édition de ORSTOM/Ngaoundéré Anthropos, 1993), 178. « Les seuls avantages (s'il y en a eu) que les Péré ont retiré de leur cohabitation avec les Foulbé tiennent à l'acquisition d'un sens commercial, à l'apprentissage du Coran et à la connaissance de grandes langues: le foulfoulde et le haoussa. »

4.3. Introduction of Christianity

Before developing this section regarding the introduction and the ministry of the church in the plain, one must state that until the time of the fieldwork, the only official churches present in the area are the catholic and protestant Lutheran churches. That is why the development will focus especially on these two churches. However, the section on Catholic Church will appear short because we did not find a lot of information about it.

4.3.1. *The Catholic Church*⁵⁷

4.3.1.1. Arrival and Establishment

The history of Catholic Church in Péré plain comes with the Father Cosmas Bernhard Maria Dietrich. He arrived in the subdivision of Tignère in 1958. From there he began to explore the Péré plain. Through multiple rounds done all over the plain he established contact with Péré and could launch the task of evangelization from the village of Almé in 1959. In a report of 1966 the Transfiguration Parish of Almé founded in 1960 was having the number of 18 centers or congregation, 228 baptized, 120 catechumens, 12 catechists. The mission succeeded thanks to his devotion and courage to overcome difficulties.

The main task of evangelization was accompanied and sustained by many works of social development such as the cultivation of rice, oil palms. He initiated and developed the husbandry of pig, fish, cow and many other small animals. Because he noticed that Péré were speaking foulfoulde more than their mother's tongue he introduced Péré language at primary school program and participated actively to the translation of the Old Testament in to Péré language.

4.3.1.2. Recent Situation

Development tasks introduced by the Father Cosmas are threatened of reduction even of disappearance after his departure from the plain. At the level of school for instance the increasing number of government schools sometimes free of charge tends to challenge church

⁵⁷ The large part of informations related to Catholic Church has been given to me by Assana Bello Abdias, PhD Programme in the University of Ngaoundéré. Interview conducted 29.07.2013.

schools. The reason could be also because church schools reminded expensive in school fees whereas in government school the fees are negligible and sometimes nothing to pay.

At the church school of Almé the number of pupils decreased from 190 in 2003 to 100 in 2008, let alone the books and other teaching materials that are out of use rendering difficult the educational system. Many other structures are in ruin. In sum it is important to mention that the ruin of structures involves also the fervor of some Christians in the parish exposed to join Islam or remaining inefficient to continue mission. However, one can count today 20 congregations in the Catholic zone and more than 900 Christians (Adult and children included). The Catholic Church had and still has good collaboration with Evangelical Lutheran Church in a way to conduct in a good way the mission of God. This collaboration is shown especially through the translation of the New Testament and some parts of the Old Testament into Péré language as testified Konstane Raen.

4.3.2. The Lutheran Church through the Norwegian Mission Society (NMS)

4.3.2.1. From the First Contact to the Establishment

The first contact of the Missionaries of the NMS with the Péré plain dates from very long although they did not begin to establish the church in the same time. This first contact is mentioned by Kåre Lode when retracing the history of the church in this part of the region writing: "In 1931, Rege came up Kontcha, but it was only in 1946 that the Péré land and Kontcha countries were seriously proposed as places of station."⁵⁸ Meanwhile the plain benefited of sporadic visits of missionaries since opportunity was given first to other areas. But the dispensary existed since 1958 and its workers played also the role of preachers. It seems verified that it is from 1972 with the settlement of the Norwegian couple (Konstane and John Gunnar Raen) that the missionary work began in the Péré plain. John Gunnar while preaching in Fulani language noticed that the interpreter into Péré language was unable to translate religious expressions into Péré language but was using Fulani language. This contact gave to the couple the desire to introduce Péré language study already in 1974. According to Kåre Lode « It was a challenge to define the religious language with the appropriate

⁵⁸ Kåre Lode, *Appelés à la liberté: Histoire de l'Eglise Evangélique Luthérienne du Cameroun* (Pays-Bas : IMPROCEP éditions, 1990), 92. « En 1931, Rege arriva jusqu'à Kontcha, mais ce ne fut qu'en 1946 que le pays péré et Kontcha furent proposés sérieusement comme lieux de station. »

expressions »⁵⁹ The work of the church in Péré plain is generally colored with the neighboring problem with Islam that was making great evolution at that time as it could be seen in the expression “Missionaries noticed that Islam manifested more ... they had to go before the total Islamisation”⁶⁰ Despite this situation the church continued its walk. Many congregations are available all over the plain, the ecclesiastic district of Gadjiwan has in 2012, 19 congregations and lieu of cult with approximately 1.019 Christians⁶¹ in which 266 men, 293 women and 460 children. Let us precise that only two of these (Gadjiwan and Samelecti) remain today the strongest among all in number and activities. Because of the influence of Islam the old congregation of Lougguéré disappeared and that of Wouldé weakens by losing its local members.⁶² Today we could relate the weakness of the Christianity in Péré plain to that assertion in one way or another even if it is a personal point of view of someone: “We note that the work among Péré had started with little effort on the part of the NMS. It would be fair to conclude: too little, too late”⁶³

4.3.2.2. The Social and Educative Works

As soon established in the area the NMS missionaries began to develop the plain through many Institutions. The center of literature of Péré language began in 1974 made Péré loving to learn their own language even if this has not been considered by all.⁶⁴ Many literatures in various fields were produced such as linguistic literature, alphabetization literature, folkloric and historic literature, health books, agriculture booklets, Christian literatures and greatest of all these is the production of the entire New Testament in 1986. Konstanse Raen testified the number of those who studied and received their diploma in Péré language was almost 500 people.⁶⁵ The second way of investment was that of primary Schools. We can signalize in this

⁵⁹ Lode, *Appelés à la liberté: Histoire de l’Eglise Evangélique Luthérienne du Cameroun*, 214. « C’était un défi de définir la langue religieuse avec les expressions adéquates. »

⁶⁰ Lode, *Appelés à la liberté*, 92. “ Les missionnaires constatèrent que l’Islam se manifestait de plus en plus... il fallait y aller avant l’Islamisation totale. »

⁶¹ The statistic is from the Minutes of the District Synod of 2013.

⁶² Here only the catechist’s family is permanent faithful whereas the other local members are leaving instantly the Church because of Islam silent influence. Some tried to hide the Bible when going to church.

⁶³ Lode, *Appelés à la liberté*, 93. “Nous constatons que le travail parmi les Péré avait démarré avec peu d’effort de la part de la NMS. Il serait juste de conclure: trop peu et trop tard. »

⁶⁴ The literature of Péré is perceived by some Péré who are Muslims as a work related to the Christianity, thereby a way of evangelizing people.

⁶⁵ Raen, Konstanse. « Les Activités du Centre de Littérature Péré, » in *Peuples et cultures de l’Adamaoua (Cameroun) : Actes du Colloque du 14 au 16 janvier 1992*, éd. Jean Boutrais (Paris : Co-édition ORSTOM/Ngaounéré Anthropolos, 1993), 231.

domain the schools of Gadjiwan, Ganati, Samelecti to mention only a few. That of Lougguéré begun in 1960 has been transferred to Wouldé in 1969. Because of the influence of Islam in this area, the school existed only for two years and the population demanded a public school, which was established in 1973 replacing the missionary school. In spite of this, we could notice the great advantage given by the missionary schools in the Père plain because most of the main leaders whether in church or the government domain are the fruits of these schools. This could be related to what Kâre Lode said: "In 1981, a statistic was established on the religion of the students in the schools of the ELCC. At Mbé, Ngaoundéré, Galim and Gadjiwan there were schools with more than half of Muslim pupils. There were even schools with 95% Muslim."⁶⁶ But the progressive regression of the missionary school in Père plain is a surprising reality. Of the side of the dispensary that of Gadjiwan fixed since 1958 has marked positively the Père plain. For a long time it remained the unique dispensary to which all the population was referred in case of illness. Even the transfer to Ngaoundéré hospital in case of grave illness became easy thanks to the white nurses serving in this dispensary. A tentative to set a small dispensary in Wouldé failed twice in 1984 and 1991⁶⁷ for the same reason mentioned above. Other development was constructing bridges to facilitate the connection between villages above all in rainy season when crossing rivers becomes nearly impossible. The presence of the sophisticate material as the tractor rendered easier the farm work for those who can use it. However, the ancient system of organizing farm work still exists, namely the "sourga"⁶⁸ one.

4.4. Early Christian-Muslim Relation in the Plain

As it is generally the case everywhere where the first occupant of the place self-declares master of the place, the situation in Père plain was not the exception. Therefore, what comes to mind when talking of the beginning of Christianity in Père plain is, the difficult experiences Christians underwent to set their belief. Among other relational issues, one can note especially those regarding troubles inflicted to Christians by some Muslim leaders curiously sponsored in hidden way by the Administration as Nygandji Samuel puts it:

⁶⁶ Lode, *Appelés à la liberté*, 181. « En 1981, une statistique fut établie sur la religion des élèves dans les écoles de l' EELC. A Mbé, Ngaoundéré, Galim et Gadjiwan il y avait des écoles avec plus de la moitié d'élèves musulmans. Il y avait même des écoles avec 95% musulmans. »

⁶⁷ A2, 25.07.2013.

⁶⁸ Guengue, *The Sourga within the Socio-Economic life of Père people*, 1.

In 1974, we were sent to Tignère, the chief town of the Department of Faro and Déo by the School of Theology of Meiganga for a practicum. After two weeks of work in Tignère we proposed to go around in this region. Our target was the plain Koutine. It was sad for what we had seen and experienced. Some "malams" were affected in each village. They were paid by the Administration in an unobtrusive manner.⁶⁹

Yet, the administration is implied to put distortion between the majestic religion and the young Christianity then in his first steps in the region. One understands easily the fact that Islam became stronger in a way to dismiss any other religious group that can exist in the same place. Muslim community strengthened by the support of the Administration could apply any kind of persecution over Christians. Thereby, the young Christian community could only leave in fear, above all when seeing that even his way and place of worship was violated indirectly by Muslims. That is why continuing in the same vein; Nygandji Samuel elucidates moreover the matter in these terms:

During the celebration of Christian worship, these Malams sent children disrupt the smooth running of worship. They used old boxes and slapped on them by the tower of the chapel. The catechist could not say anything; otherwise he would receive beatings from Muslims. It was formally prohibited for Koutins (Père) to get to Christian worship. Anyone who dared to set foot in a particular church had to pay a fine of ten thousand francs. All this movement was supported by the public authority.⁷⁰

Conclusion

After all the development in this chapter, one can perceive that Père people had the contact with Islam early at the beginning and that this fact should make Père being mainly Muslims because they knew firstly Islam. However, the contribution of the Government to spread Islam in this area is also to be considered seriously if one needs to understand the relation between Islam and Christianity in the plain. One can even state that the fact for the Government to give a particular esteem and support to Islam led to increase the problem of

⁶⁹ Nygandji Ndi Samuel, *Pourquoi les Kirdi du Nord-Cameroun ont-ils préféré le Christianisme à l'Islam? Le Cas des « Habé » de Bankim*, 38. « En 1974, nous fûmes envoyés à Tignère, le Chef-lieu du Département du Faro et Déo, par l'Ecole de Théologie de Meiganga, pour un stage pratique. Après deux semaines de travail à Tignère, nous nous proposâmes à faire le tour dans cette Région. Notre cible fut la plaine Koutine. C'était désolant pour tout ce que nous avons vu et vécu. Des « malams » étaient affectés dans chaque village. Ils étaient payés par l'Administration d'une manière discrète. »

⁷⁰ Nygandji, *Pourquoi les Kirdi du Nord-Cameroun ont-ils préféré le Christianisme à l'Islam?*, 38. « Pendant la célébration du culte Chrétien, ces Malams envoyaient les enfants perturber le bon déroulement du culte. Ils utilisaient les vieilles boîtes et tapaient sur elles en faisant le tour de la chapelle. Le catéchiste ne pouvait rien dire, sinon, il recevrait des bastonnades de la part des musulmans. Il était formellement interdit aux Koutins (Père) d'accéder au culte Chrétien. Tous ceux qui osaient mettre pied dans une église donnée, devaient payer une amende de dix mille francs. Tout ce mouvement était soutenu par le pouvoir public. »

relation between the Christianity and Islam in this area from the very beginning of their history. We can conclude that the problem of relation between Christians and Muslims in Père plain is not a new reality, but is a continuity of a fact dating back to some years ago and transmitted from generation to generation and that what is lived today is the result from ancient behaviours.

CHAPTER FIVE: PRESENTATION OF RESULTS FROM THE FIELDWORK

Introduction

The goal of doing fieldwork was to find materials from the field that will be useful for the analysis that will follow. In this chapter, I am going to present some main themes found through the interviews and that will be relevant for the discussion in analysis chapter. The system is set as follows: presenting themes followed by short explanation of these themes through the content of each quotation. All the quotations in this chapter have been translated by me from Pèrè into English in order to render the document clearer to readers. From Christian side as well as Muslim's side, many themes and issues have been evoked concerning the relation of the two religious groups. I would like to present the result according to the main themes the interviewees emphasized in a way to have an easy entering into the topic. That is why, in the paragraphs that follow, we will present firstly how the groups perceive other and other's religion. The second point concerns how each group describes and perceives its relation to other principally in terms of religious consideration. In the third point, we will talk of the different views on mixed marriage. We focussed specifically on mixed marriage in this point because this is a major issue encountered in Christian-Muslim relation in this area. Point four elucidates the way each group does mission among other in the area. Point five elaborates on the way each religion perceives the conversion of its members to other's religion as well as the reasons pushing to that conversion. Here also, the focus is done in conversion for the reason that this is a recurring issue people deal with in the zone. In point six, we will deal with some suggestions given by informants for a good cohabitation of Christians and Muslims. In the last point that is point seven, it will be the question of what the church does or what Christians think the church should do in order to encounter the challenges which will be addressed.

5.1. Perception of Other

5.1.1. *Christian Perceptions of Islam and Muslims*

On the one hand, according to most of the informants, the Christian perception of Islam and Muslims is generally good. The reason for this, they argue is that no physical attacks are

reported in the concerning religious matter as this Christian informant could put: "I can testify with satisfaction that even there is a slight relational problem; we have never heard about physical attacks between Christians and Muslims in our area."⁷¹ Likely, another Christian highlights the matter in these words: "Muslims are helpful in this sense that they can lend money to Christians who come to them in critical situation like illness..."⁷² On the other hand, some of the informants reflected a more ambivalent attitude towards Islam and Muslims as could put this Christian informant:

Muslims are our brothers as we are their brothers. Nevertheless, they seem to be threatening only in religious consideration that they have toward Christians: Christians are still seen as strangers, people that occupy illegally the area and that are to be extracted to establish the true religion that is Islam. Nevertheless, they could be good neighbors if they can consider our Christianity also as religion, thus deserving respect, proper consideration, and dignity in a same way than Islam.⁷³

Many important issues are included in this statement. By using the word brother to describe the Muslims, this informant emphasizes the close relationship between Christians and Muslims. They belong together in the same family and this fact according to the informant stands capital for maintaining peace through a good cohabitation. However, the other expression "stranger" evokes more negative associations because a stranger occupies illegally the land and is to be extracted from the land to give place to owners that is, those who have rights on the land. Finally, the informant reflects on how the Muslims could become good neighbors. He is talking of relations with Muslims in a way that let us understand that there is something lacking in order to create good neighborly relationships, it is the call to Muslims to consider Christianity and Christians in their whole. In the bottom of the statement, the neighborhood is there, moreover indisputable. However, a condition to render it unhindered is just a call of Muslims to treat Christianity equally as they do with Islam; a call to Muslims to attribute same religious value to Christianity as they do with Islam.

When coming to this other informant, Christian perception of Islam and Muslims is quite the same the same than the previous. However, he evokes more what rendered Islam and Muslims more famous in area. To the question how she perceives Islam, the Christian interviewee can state as follows:

Islam is a religion like the others all over the world. However, in our area particularly Islam is a religion of influence, inspiring in all levels fear to others for the reasons that

⁷¹ C4, 11.07.2013. Translated from Péré into English by me.

⁷² C3, 28.07.2013.

⁷³ A2, 25.07.2013.

first it used force to gain adherents from the beginning and secondly all the high personalities are Muslims. As a result, Islam became a religion of the mass to which people go to be important personality that deserves respect of other peoples.⁷⁴

The interviewee sees Islam like all other world religions at the first sight. However, she signalizes what makes Islam particular in Christian's views: Islam is a religion of influence and fear. Its influence comes from the fact that it encompasses great personalities in dignity; and the fact that the major part of the population belongs to that religion, hence the term of "religion of the mass." This point of view on Islam is shared by many other Christians in this area. As we will see later in section 5.5.2, one can also see through this view, a reason that makes Christians convert to Islam: a way to be famous, and to gain respect of the other people because Islam is the mighty and respectful religion of this area. From this aspect of thing, one understands quickly that members of other religious groups in this area were not considered at all in favor of Islam as principal religion of the zone.

5.1.2. Muslim Perceptions of Christianity and Christians

The way Muslims perceive Christianity and Christians is generally related to the image attributed to Christianity from the beginning on the one hand, and to the fruits of faith or the way Christians live out their faith on the other hand. Many Muslims consider most of Christians as people one can trust in keeping one's thing with them or in sending something through them without any risk of loss. They are said generally, "God-Fearing" or respecting all that belongs to other. One Muslim was highly recommending to his brother: "Whenever you need to send me anything, send it through a Christian because they are confident and I will not lose what you send to me."⁷⁵ In the same vein, other can testify boldly "As Muslim in this area, I do not have a Muslim friend. All my friends I collaborate with are Christians just because there is a kind of confidence they have when one consigns anything to them."⁷⁶

However, beyond this laudable aspect of Christianity, Christians are urged to improve their ethical life when living together with Muslims. This Muslim interviewee does not hesitate to mention as we can read it in his words:

Christianity is not a bad religion in itself because we see in many Christians, some signs of love and transparency. However, they have to promote these qualities in

⁷⁴ C4, 11.07.2013.

⁷⁵ B2, 05.08.2013.

⁷⁶ D1, 11.07.2013.

themselves. I mean they need to respect their respectful religion in being moderate when consuming above all alcohol: it dismisses them from what we see in them and make our relation bland. Religion is recognizable through faithful. This observation constitutes somehow a barrier to communication because dialogue begins from elementary perception⁷⁷

First, the interviewee begins with attributing as many other Muslims do a good image to Christianity in its very essence, and to the effects of this Christianity on Christians' life. However, he stresses that in order to fulfill the image of Christianity; Christians have a lot to do in living according to Christianity teachings related to ethical behaviors, avoiding scandalous life in moderating above all their consumption of alcohol. By saying that religion is recognizable through faithful, he let us understanding that Christians have not to claim for truth in Christianity, but to let people recognize this truth through Christian life. Through the statement of the informant, Christianity is fully a religion to be considered properly. However, Christians have to do their best to maintain the trustfulness of Christianity in living according the prescriptions of the gospel they announce. In other words, words must go together with deeds. Secondly, the informant let us know that the scandalous behaviors of Christians could be a real barrier for dialogue with Muslims. Two other important words addressed by the interviewee deserve a particular attention: "barrier and dialogue". According to him, dialogue is a master-word where people from different views live together. Nevertheless, it does not take place in many cases because there is something that prevents it willingly or unwillingly. In this case, he points particularly to Christian devious behaviors. He goes further in explaining that he uses the words "elementary perception" not in a way to neglect the bad behavior of Christians, but to signify that this behavior is basic for presenting what Christianity is and what Christians are. Another situation that refrains enormously dialogue is the way Muslims have been taught to perceive Christians as revealed by this Muslim informant, Christianity: "We have been taught by our parents that Christianity was as religion of fire that is, hell and all those who belong to Christianity will be consumed by fire the last day."⁷⁸

⁷⁷ B2, 05.08.2013.

⁷⁸ D2, 28.07.2013.

5.2. Christian-Muslim Relation

5.2.1. *Christian Descriptions and Perceptions of their Relations to Muslims*

The section aims to raise issues related to Christian-Muslim relation. And from many informants, one can perceive that Christian relationship Muslims is inevitable, but is troubled in many cases by underestimation and some more negative images applied to Christianity and Christians from the beginning such as religion of fire, stranger religion, unclean people and the like. About the way Christians describe and perceive their relations to Muslims, one should take into account the issue as put by this Christian informant:

Officially we cannot stress that there is problem of cohabitation of these two great religions of this area. There is real collaboration between Christians and Muslims regarding social life in a way to develop the area, to promote individuals and various groups in social and economic way. Good relation can be perceived also through inter-assistance in times of sorrow or joy from both sides. However, there is a hidden cold war when alluding to religious matter because from the beginning Christianity was underestimated and continue to be underestimated. Many bad images were applied to Christianity qualified as stranger religion or Western religion infiltrated in African context fighting against African religion known under the name of Islam.⁷⁹

The informant emphasizes the real collaboration that exists in social level in various situations or various purposes namely assistance in times of sorrows and joy on the one hand, and social and individual development in general on the other hand. The problem occurs when we come to religious relation. There is cold war because this is not openly shown through physical attacks, but its manifestations are surely seen through underestimating other, and qualifying other as stranger. As they are sharing same land and same family background, Christians and Muslims in Pèrè plain have somehow relation each other. Explaining the matter of this inevitable relation with Muslims, the Christian interviewee puts the fact as follows:

We cannot no having relation with Muslims in our village, it might be as they do not exist or we have problem opposing us. We have occasions to be together and pray together the eve of the New Year. Even though there is covered problem, we cannot go beyond this reality imposed by the presence of many groups in the same area: sometimes there are problems, sometimes there is frank collaboration, and we have to deal with it...⁸⁰

This interviewee as many others, shares the matter of religious plurality that became inevitable to religious people. And the consequence of inevitable cohabitation is whether a peaceable cohabitation or a troubled cohabitation. Anyhow, the challenge remains to move

⁷⁹ A1, 28.07.2013.

⁸⁰ C1, 05.08.2013.

from troubled cohabitation to peaceable cohabitation because being together became a key-word in the multireligious context. As stressed by the informant, being in multireligious context without engaging in dialogue or relationship might be as others do not exist” or “there is a problem opposing the two groups. However, the informant signalizes an important thing in talking of being together and praying together with Muslims the eve of the New Year. Even if the initiative of this meeting is not from Christians or Muslims but from the government; it fosters in a certain extent a climate of acceptance and living together. The importance of the statement lies on the fact that this special occasion permits to Muslims and Christians to be in family in order to thank God for his guidance during the ending year, and to recommend the year that begins to God imploring anew his guidance and all the good things for their common life.

More than the previous descriptions, this Christian informant like many other Muslims could attest boldly that the problem of relation between Christians and Muslims is that of underestimation and misjudgment of the most extended religious group (Islam) toward Christianity. In his words we read:

Other form of underestimating Christians and Christianity in this area is manifested through the expressions of “unclean people”. The manifestations of this consideration are shown in many levels. At the very beginning of Christianity in this area, no Christian was allowed to eat Muslims’ food in the same plate with them; this was a strongly prohibited act to be posed by Christians of that time. Only by respect that if someone is the closer member of the Muslim’s family, he/she could be allowed to eat together with Muslims guests. Other way, the case of a closer member of Muslim’s family is rather treated more strictly than an unknown guest because in that stage the Christian guest is qualified as the one who denies in the family the path of God “Allah”⁸¹ to be a “Kufar”⁸² that is, a pagan.⁸³

The underestimation of Christians is based on their uncleanness status because not only they belong to Christ, but they eat what is not religiously recommended to Muslims to eat. This stance poses a real African cultural problem of relationship because a good relation is seen through the fact that one can eat what the neighbor presents as food. Therefore, if someone cannot eat what the neighbor presents to him/ her; there is serious relational issue that must be solved immediately. It is in that way that some Muslims eat together with certain Christian family members to repair this cultural matter. But for others, there is no half-measure in

⁸¹ Canonical name of God from Arabic origin according to Muslims because for Muslims; calling “Allah” by the term “God” is a form of desecration of the unique and almighty one.

⁸² Generally attributed to non Muslims.

⁸³ C3, 28.07.2013.

religious matter and they do not eat at all together with any Christian. This aspect of thing becomes striking when we know that the majority of population in this area are Muslims. It implies directly the weight of underestimation that the minority Christians undergoes from the great Muslim majority.

Going further in the explanation, the other Christian interviewee stresses what is commonly shared among many other Christians:

This underestimation problem does not remain sterile; it leads to other distortion of life relationship. An example of this distortion is the lack of religious dialogue between the two religious groups making finally the relation bland. Let alone the spirit of mistrusting each other because the religious neighbor becomes not a collaborator but a contradictor and everlasting concurrent to fight or to flee. What could be then the result of such a life if nothing is done in order to change the mindset of both Christianity and Islam in Pérè plain when looking at what is happening in countryside?⁸⁴

What we can underline in this declaration is the anxiety of the informant concerning the relationship between Christian and Muslims. When the religious neighbour is distrusted; what follows is commonly the spirit of insecurity, the spirit of fear of a neighbour toward other. Therefore, there is sudden change in the role that plays the neighbour as described by the informant: the neighbour becomes not the one with whom to share or collaborate; on the contrary he or she becomes a potential contradictor with whom no idea can be shared in a way to construct a world. What is more worrying for the informant is the future relationship if nothing is done to prevent any worse situation in any welded society as he evokes the situation of countryside tinted by wars and particularly religious wars. To fight or to flee a contradictor are all synonym of insecurity and instability, hence the necessity to move to a climate of collaboration and dialogue for a more durable peaceful cohabitation. Moreover, one must mention other way where this underestimation has great impact on social life. Addressing the matter, this Christian informant whom view is shared by many others puts the fact as follows:

Undoubtedly, responsibilities are given to Christians in many levels for instance as leader of association, leader of a project of development... However, the matter of conventional leadership is controlled exclusively seriously in all its details. That is why; neither a Christian nor a member of African Traditional Religion could take power over Muslims as "Lamido"⁸⁵ or "Djouro"⁸⁶. This leadership is linked in

⁸⁴ C1, 05.08.2013.

⁸⁵ Highest traditional ruler which could be found in the Regional level (ancient province in Cameroon), the Division level, and the Sub-division level.

⁸⁶ His framework is limited to a village or a sector of village.

Northern Cameroon to Religion and only a Muslim can rule over other people. In accordance with this fact, a former Christian leader was asked to become Muslim if he wanted to continue being member of the Chief court.⁸⁷

Here we have to deal essentially with the issue of religious representativeness in social level. The fact impacts seriously religious cohabitation in the sense that only those represented in this high social class or leadership have word or importance. At this level, Christian voice is not heard at all when there is important decision to attempt; particularly if there something that the government or a non-governmental organization (NGO) intends to give to the well-being of the whole community, or every religious community, Christian community is never well informed of the motive and the way to operate the gift. They act therefore ignoring sometimes the way of how projects are managed. The issue can be compared to a man-authority based society where women do not have any word to address for their contribution to certain important decisions. The consequence of that is, if there were any advantage for Christians, they remain uninformed of that, thus lose simply this advantage.

5.2.2. The Ways Muslims Describe and Perceive their Relations to Christians

Muslims live together with Christians more than fifty years ago in this area. According to this Muslim informant, the presence of Christians as Muslims' neighbors does not cause any major problem as we can read through his following statement: "Our living together is characterized by love. Christians are proving their love to Muslims in many ways notably in times of sorrows like sickness or death, in times also of joy as Muslim feasts, naming ceremony and so on. We like them as they like us"⁸⁸ The interviewee emphasizes the word "love" that does not work unilaterally that is, only from one side to another, but bilaterally from both Christian and Muslim sides; making life easy, at least in social level. However, one must notice that the relationship is not exemplary in religious way like it is in social collaboration. This can be seen through these words of a Muslim informant put as follows:

We do not have any issue in our coexistence because we collaborate in many ways to promote our area and our population. One thing however is to point out when we come to religious matter: how can we accept living properly with those who promote exclusivist truth stating that only Christian path provides salvation to all people? Are other people that is, 'Muslims' without any hope?"⁸⁹

⁸⁷ A1, 28.07.2013.

⁸⁸ B1, 29.07.2013.

⁸⁹ B1, 29.07.2013.

In mentioning collaboration in social level, the interviewee specifies that Christians and Muslims put their efforts together when there is a project like building a bridge to connect a village to another, collecting money for buying cereals in period of lower price in order to resell them in period of high price so that the benefit could help to promote the group and the individuals. Also like this informant, many Muslims remark the same thing when we come to religious matter. The reaction of the informant is dry, seeming to state that only Christianity has exclusivist truth. However, when one searches for understanding the motive of religious missionary activity, one realises that religions are missionary because every religion claims to possess “the truth” and not “a truth”. The informant continues to explain that this attitude of Christian truth exclusiveness is striking principally through Christian songs and messages during outreaches for evangelization because at that time, they are before many other religious groups including Muslims. In addition, the informant reveals a historical fact on how Muslims have inherited negative image of Christianity from the beginning as he puts it: “I am not converted to Islam in my mature age but from my childhood. I remember how we were taught to conceive Christianity: Christianity is a hopeless religion because all its followers will be burned in the hell at the end of time”⁹⁰

However, if the previous interviewee presents at the same time two opposite views of Christians when talking of Muslim relation with Christians; this other Muslim interviewee for his part, sees in Christians a precious richness to take into account in relational matter when he states that “ I keep a particular image of Christians since we live together in this area: they are those who make peace with their neighbors”⁹¹ Three key-words appear in this testimony, namely the words “peace”, “make”, and “neighbors”. According to the interviewee, these three words are interconnected one to others. The neighborhood is the field of valuating peace because there are two or many persons with different views living together and where encroachment is well possible. To continue living properly, one needs peace. And that peace does not come simply; it needs someone who will make it. The informant concludes then that this quality of peace-maker is that of Christians in the area according to his experience of living together with them.

⁹⁰ B1, 29.07.2013.

⁹¹ D2, 28.07.2013.

5.3. Views Regarding Mixed Marriage

5.3.1. *Christian Views on Mixed Marriage*

It is a general agreement among Christian informants that mixed marriage in Pere plain is, in many ways, a negative experience for Christians. At the beginning of the project of marriage, Christian girls and parents are promised by Muslim fiancé that no conversion to Islam will happen during the life of the couple, and that the girls will continue going to church worship. But once they are in marriage, things begin the change automatically in a way that Christian girls are constrained to convert to Islam if they want to continue being wives in a Muslim's household. In connection with the matter, this Christian informant states clearly that

Of all the mixed marriages that I know in this area none of them has been lived as promised. At the beginning Christian girl is told to continue being Christian. But once she arrived in house and mostly during Ramadan period, the husband refuses to eat what his wife cooked for the reason that she is unclean. The result is whether they divorce and the girl has a bad image of marriage all her life long or she is obliged to convert to Islam in order to maintain her marriage. We wonder if there is yet freedom of religion in our area as seen elsewhere all over the world. Conversion is a fact in all religion but must not be done by constraining people in one way or another⁹²

This view shared by many other Christians remains a serious issue in the area. Here intervenes again the expression of uncleanness applied to whoever belongs to Christ. If in other cases, the Christian uncleanness is in connection with what they eat; in this precise case of mixed marriage the matter is clearly linked to the personality of Christian for belonging to Christ. The proof is that what the Christian wife cooks in this marriage is not from her unclean resources, rather from official stores acknowledged by Muslims and judged worthy to be eaten. Therefore, one understands that it is the personality of Christian that is put in doubt, and not necessarily what they eat. That is why conversion becomes an obligation in the marriage when Christian wife does not like divorce or experiencing many marriages in terms of instability of marriage. The informant after all evokes the issue of religious freedom that does not exist or is not applied according to this situation where the partner is constrained to convert in order to solve a specific problem, and not from one's own conviction.

However, the causes of mixed marriage remain very delicate and very sensitive that one cannot easily state whatever concerning the topic. Sometimes mixed marriage is conceived as completely problematic; some other times it is viewed as not ideal because it is just a better alternative than remaining single, thus a good thing anyway. In many cases,

⁹² A1, 28.07.2013.

mixed marriage takes place because not only the Muslim husband insists to marry Christian girls, but because both the parents and daughters are constrained to do so just for the reason that there is impossibility to get Christian husbands as could set clearly that former Christian woman:

What should we do when we do not have Christian husbands and then there are many in Muslims side who propose to marry us? We don't have any choice because if we continue to be single we are exposed to what Christianity condemns and if we go to Muslim husbands, we are maybe second or third wife of the home. The worst is that in a given time, we are not allowed to come to church service...And all our children if we have some are automatically Muslims⁹³

Many issues are included in these words agreed by most of Christian's women that got married to Muslims husbands. It is revealed that there are most push factors than pull factors that is, what make Christian women convert is mostly the fact that they lack other possibilities than accepting this kind of religious-based marriage without expecting anything better in Islam or without personal conviction. In doing so, they find that they are sheltered from sexual disorder because they have then official husband. Mixed marriage then is a way of tackling ethical issues that could come to Christian women according to this informant. Further, they have to undergo in this marriage the status of being second or third wife of the husband, what is not at all common in Christianity. Finally, she poses the thorny problem of children born from this union. Here, the conversion of children to Islam does not even depend on the conversion of their mother; they are automatically Muslims for having Muslim father. Through her expression is revealed the exclamation on how great this kind of marriage contributes to Islam spread to the expense of Christianity. In this situation where there is no option, one can no longer be surprised that even church leaders' families are affected by the matter in seeing that they are limited on how to handle the problem. As a result, their daughters too are also given in marriage to Muslims.

5.3.2. Muslim Views on Mixed Marriage

The matter of mixed marriage between a Muslim husband and a Christian woman is not strange practice generally for Muslims according to this Muslim informant. On the contrary, it is common for Muslims to marry people of other faiths provided that these people could convert to Islam. Further, he stresses that even if many reasons could justify differently the

⁹³ E4, 18.07.2013.

fact according Muslims in general, there is nevertheless a main leading line explaining this type of marriage in unique sense:

Having Christian girls as wife for a Muslim is not hidden practice because the Koran allows it to all Muslims. However, the contrary that is, a Muslim wife having a Christian husband is firmly prohibited by the Koran. All our young Muslims are aware of this reality since their childhood⁹⁴

It is clear that mixed marriage of a Christian woman to Muslim husband is not a covert practice, but recommended even by Koran text. A strong exception nevertheless needs to be signalized in Pérè plain: no Muslim woman can have legally as husband a Christian unless this man converts to Islam. It is from this Muslim perspective that one understands why any attempt to mixed marriage implies automatically the conversion either of the Christian woman or that of the Christian husband to Islam. Moreover, this perception reveals the superiority of Islam over Christianity for the simple reason that conversion is only required in unique sense, from Christianity to Islam. Mixed marriage is thus a common practice, but depends on everyone who makes it. The perception of mixed marriage has undergone various traits from the beginning until now as the informant puts it. Some of these traits are high lightened through the statement the interviewee:

From the beginning, mixed marriage was common between Muslims and other ordinary women (from African Traditional Religion) that were not Muslims in order to make them Muslims. Christian women were not considered as such to have marriage with Muslims because they were seen as unclean and no proper contact was possible with them. However, today it became common to encounter this kind of marriage in our area. If Christian woman could convert to Islam, I do not see any problem in that.⁹⁵

The interviewee puts here an observation in accordance with many Muslim's views in this topic. That is, at the beginning, mixed marriages were common in the area mainly between Muslim husbands with African Traditional Religion (ATR) women for the reason that even these husbands came from ATR, it means that the conversion of these women to Islam was normal; and is even a necessity to leave this ancestral religion to the best one (Islam). Christianity and Christian women were seen as totally unclean matter to avoid at any rate. However, in a recent period, the situation has changed suddenly when Christian women became the core subject and the most solicited for conversion because Christianity seems to be the opposite of Islam. Therefore, one can perceive in this change a way for Muslims to

⁹⁴ B2, 05.08.2013.

⁹⁵ D2, 28.07.2013.

conduct mission because marriage implies automatically in many cases the conversion of the Christian woman to Islam.

5.4. Christians' and Muslims' Ways of Doing Mission

The section concerning mission would like to show how Christians and Muslims do mission. The importance or the motivation of doing mission in these two world religions lays on their Holy Scriptures inviting at the same time Christians and Muslims to spread their beliefs in gaining other people, otherwise all the nations to their beliefs. Thus, doing mission is a duty for both Christianity and Islam. How they do this mission is the concern in this section.

5.4.1. The way Christians Do Mission among Muslims

Exploring the way Christians do mission among Muslims, this Christian informant reveals the matter as follows:

The way Christians witness their faith among Muslims is, living according the spoken message of preaching that is, joining acts to speech. Christians are always encouraged to do so even though the flesh is still weak. When doing evangelization among Muslims today the ancient image of Christianity seems to prevail in the mind of many hearers. Young people manifest will to come to Church but parents are still recommending strongly young people to not make a change in their religious life. Evangelization is done generally through outreaches organized by responsible of the church in using various Christians according to the spiritual gift of everyone. Other form of evangelizing is visiting Muslims friends regularly in sharing life experiences and religious matters when the occasion permits it. In sharing so, we do not expect from them any conversion to Christianity because that is not our doing but God's doing that is, beyond our understanding and mission.⁹⁶

The ways Christians do mission among Muslims are that underlined by this informant and are even the most used by the church. Before going out for preaching the gospel, Christians are taught to live an exemplary life that suits to those who belong to Christ. That must be seen through righteousness in speech and in deeds, peace-making with neighbors, assisting those in need, acting lovely toward every body and the like. Even if this is difficult (the flesh is weak, according the informant expression), it stands as a basic way of doing mission. Outreach way is the second type of doing mission, and this is organized generally in public ways with choirs groups and short evangelical messages touching the fail of humankind and the everlasting

⁹⁶ C2, 04.08.2013.

divine love for humanity. What is important at the end is that, the preacher does not expect any sudden and effective conversion of the hearers afterward, because conversion is not man's doing, rather God's management. Thus, it could happen as it could not take place. Having this in mind should be helpful for missionary task because missionaries sometimes failed in understanding mission not as God's mission, but as man's mission or the church mission. Therefore, when there is no conversion, one concludes that the mission failed. The third way, that of visiting friends or everybody is founded in the first one that is, living according the word. The informant concludes that what is striking in this missionary enterprise is as mentioned above, the bad image applied to Christianity from the very beginning, and that impeded possibly somehow mission task as a kind of stigmatization of Christianity and Christians in that area.

5.4.2. Understanding Muslim's Mission on the Plain

There is no common or official way Muslims do mission among Christians. On the contrary, they are used to reinforce Muslims within their communities to be dynamic believers. Knowing well the situation, this Christian informant tells:

Muslims do not do mission within Christians properly as Christians do. They are doing mission among themselves in Mosques through various rounds of different "Modibe" to teach and preach to Muslims in Mosques. What could be qualified as mission toward other people is the use of tapes and radios on high volume in market place or in different shops where people go in and go out to buy things so that they can be attracted by the message.⁹⁷

An essential aspect is high lightened through the testimony of this informant when we come to mission; that of empowering the existent religious members. According to the informant, this empowerment is to make them also able to do mission everyone at one's level. The second aspect of mission mentioned in this quotation is that of using sound equipments to transmit Islamic message. The efficiency of sound equipments relies to the fact that no one can stop them and no one can waste time in plugging ears to avoid hearing the message through these devices. Thus, willingly or unwillingly, one has to hear when being at the place. Therefore, a good mission implies at the same time caring those inside the room and those to bring into the room. Moreover, this statement could be confirmed by this Muslim informant from the inside:

⁹⁷ A2, 25.07.2013.

Our mission among Christians is simple friendship and conversation in religious topics in a way to understand each other. It is through conversation that one perceives reality and decides not only willingly but also freely of what to do. However, Christians frequently do mission among Muslims not in Muslim yards, but through many organized outreaches mostly in public places where people could access to the message. This is their way of doing mission and we do not forbid them to do so⁹⁸

This common view of Muslim's mission raises some key-words to explore. Firstly, the word "understand" other is very important in living together. Understanding other does not imply automatically embracing his view or his religion, rather it means that one understands the way of thinking, acting, and even worshipping of other to avoid what could be seen as matter for worrying the relationship. However, the possibility of being convinced by the ideology of other, leading thus to any conversion is not completely excluded in this conversation. To this informant, all begins with friendship. Friendship means being overt to other confidently. Once being friends, two people have then facility to share on any topic without being at all reluctant each other. What is important at the end is that, conversion here does not intervene by constraint, but willingly and freely. The statement underlines somehow an idea of religious freedom and conversion. However, when we come to the issue that Christian informant raises and mostly shared by almost the entire Christian community concerning the way Muslims do mission, it reveals a non-official way through which Christians convert to Islam, seen as a way Muslims do mission among Christians as we can read:

It is true that we cannot assert boldly that there is problem of relationship between Christians and Muslims here in our zone. But the strategy so far used by Muslims to discourage or to convert Christians and other religious groups to Islam is the strongest one: the silent strategy of neglecting and underestimating Christians that has been demonstrated more powerful than forcing people⁹⁹

The informant puts side by side two ways through which Muslims do mission in a way to high light his view on the matter. The first one is forcing people to convert to a religion. He refers this first way to the forcible manner through which Islam took place in Adamaoua Region in general, by using weapon or other threatening ways. The other is, according to his view is neglecting, and underestimating people so that they can feel without any consideration, and lead them to conversion through a peaceful way. According to the informant, the situation in the area demonstrates that this silent strategy (neglecting Christians and Christianity) is more efficient than the forcible strategy (using weapon) to convert people

⁹⁸ B2, 05.08.2013.

⁹⁹ A2, 25.07.2013.

to Islam because no one is compelled by someone to convert, but people convert for the simple reason that their religion is not at all considered in the area.

5.5. Some Perceptions of Conversion

5.5.1. *How Christians Perceive Christians' Conversion to Islam*

Christian conversion to Islam is simple and common in the area. But how Christians perceive this act? From my informants, I had two quite opposite views: one more positive and other more negative. One Christian informant addressing the matter states:

Christian conversion to Islam stands scandalous; it is a denial of God's will and God's path likely regrettable as in Islam. However, we do not intend to do anything threatening against the convert, on the contrary we pray for him to be lightened by God and maybe one day he/she could come back to his/her initial faith. We are limited to repair the fact materially (by human skills).¹⁰⁰

At least three main issues arise from this statement: the very perception of conversion, the attitude of other members toward the convert, and the way of handling the issue. First of all, conversion of a Christian to Islam is considered as something scandalous and regrettable. On the one hand, it is regarded as a deliberate refusal of divine salvation, and on the other hand, as a risk to embrace an unknown destiny. The act is perceived generally with much more sorrows for losing a member of the kingdom of heaven. Moreover, it is a loss of Christian member whom contribution in the community was important. Secondly, when we come to what is going on after the conversion of a Christian, we realize that the attitude of other members toward the convert is that of love. They love the convert; they pray for him/her, they hope a possible transformation of heart that God can operate. Finally, the matter of conversion is not human activity; that is why the left members share the view that they are limited in how to handle properly the fact, or to persuade the convert to come back to Christianity. Only God has skills to do whatever he can do in the situation. Other Christian states quite differently about Christian conversion to Islam in a more liberal way that deserves equally our attention:

I do not see any threat in Christian conversion to Islam: before being Christian, one comes from somewhere; this means that one can leave again Christianity to Islam. Likely the opposite is possible in the sense that, one can leave again Islam to join Christianity or the previous religion before coming to Christianity.¹⁰¹

¹⁰⁰ A1, 28.07.2013.

¹⁰¹ A2, 25.07.2013.

Like this informant, many other Christians share the view that Christian conversion to Islam is not to consider as scandalous at all. The point of departure of this quite liberal view is the cyclical perception of conversion in religion. According to this perception, conversion is not only one direction-based movement; rather it happens in all directions at any moment. This view has something common with religious freedom even though it is not set clearly in the text.

5.5.2. Some Reasons for Christians' Conversion to Islam

According to the few interviewees questioned on the reasons that lead Christians to convert to Islam, various reasons intervene in this matter depending on every case. The first Christian informant stresses that:

Among other reasons making Christians convert to Islam, one may signalize the lack of care from church leaders or members in certain critical situations that experience some Christians, the will of wealth as Islam from the beginning was shown as religion of power and wealth; Christianity is neglected in the area making Christians look like strangers.¹⁰²

These reasons evoked by the informant are generally shared among my informants. The relation between church-leaders and lay-Christians is the first mentioned by the interviewee. This is not a fact to neglect because Christians see more love of church leaders in critical situation than they see it in moment they are healthy. The informant adds that, it is at this moment that if any assistance comes from a certain denomination or from another religion than from the religion the needy belongs; conversion becomes then obvious at more than 60%. Many testimonies of former Christians have reported largely the fact. Wealth as a reason of Christian conversion to Islam is also a founded matter because many Christians converted to Islam; have been promised at the beginning wealth in terms of money, cows, and the like. Continuing in the same vein, the informant adjusted that those without solid foundation in Christianity left their faith to gain justly these materials. The last issue in this statement is conversion based on neglecting Christians as already mentioned elsewhere above. The word "stranger" refers to the difficult condition of social life of Christians; without any solid foundation, thereby without hope for a durable existence in the milieu because a stranger has short stay in stranger land. Another reason of Christian conversion to Islam is pointed out

¹⁰² C4, 11.07.2013.

by that former Christian lady whom job is restaurant. Through her words one understands that the commerce has its impact in the process of Christian conversion to Islam as she reveals:

My only source of revenue to take care of my family and myself is cooking food to sell. In addition, most of those who eat my food are Muslims. Day after day, they repeated me to convert to Islam or they cease to eat what I prepare. After that, I saw my clientele reduced suddenly. It was time for me to make a decision: either I continue to be Christian and I become ridicule and disturbing to my family because no one will eat in my restaurant or I convert to Islam and I preserve my job. The second alternative came to my head that is why you found me Muslim today.¹⁰³

The factor that intervenes primarily in this situation is the milieu having great influence in activities. As mentioned above, the notion of uncleanness comes back in the judgment. The lady tried many ways to in order to bypass the issue in giving animals to Muslims to slaughter; so that there will be any contempt about food she prepares. In spite of that effort, the issue remained unchanged; hence, the necessity for her to become Muslim in order to prosper in her activity. We note how a push factor intervenes in the process of conversion; because the lady was not attracted by anything in Islam that could make her converting. It was just due to the loss of clients, and the risk of becoming ridicule, even disturbing (being a load rather a helper) to her family that she became Muslim. The expression “ridicule” has great significance in the sense that, one becomes a subject of backbiting, and of mockery relatively to one’s past.

In addition to that, she stresses “Christianity in our area does not make any progress on the contrary it regresses: our number as native of the area is always the same or permanently in reduction. We are sometimes encouraged by the presence of some Christians coming from other areas but sometimes they are also caught by Islam.”¹⁰⁴ The fact is striking in the area where the lady lives: an experience of more than thirty years of Christian community, without any adjustment of local inhabitant to Christian members. Rather, Christian’s members join Islam community occasionally. The conclusion is clear: no adjustment, rather reduction in membership. Further, and different from previous reasons, the following former Christian informant denounces other fact originating Christian conversion to Islam as he puts it clearly:

My conversion to Islam is in connection with my marriage with this Muslim girl. Her parents and even Muslim community insisted on my conversion before they can accept giving their daughter in marriage. It is not strange and worrying for me because

¹⁰³ E1, 11.07.2013.

¹⁰⁴ E1, 11.07.2013.

previous cases of conversion of men for marrying Muslim girls are common in this area.”¹⁰⁵

When coming insight the words of that informant; two issues at least could retain the reader’s attention. To begin with, the insistence or better yet; the obligation to convert to Islam is a condition to any mixed marriage whether with Christian boy or Christian girl to a Muslim partner. However, an important remark needs to be high lightened here: if Christian girls have possibility to come to marriage being Christian before the constraint for conversion comes; the case of Christian boys is particularly stringent, no access to get marriage with Muslim girl without being converted to Islam. The second issue raised on the topic is the fact that Christian boys’ conversion to Islam for the sake of mixed marriage with Muslim girls became a common and frequent practice. What is seen through this is that, not only Christian boys’ conversion is a common fact in the area, but also it serves to justify and even encourage other conversions that follow, to say; it facilitates other conversion.

5.5.3. How Muslims’ Perceive Muslims’ Conversion to Christianity

The conversion of a Muslim to Christianity still seems to be strange and somewhat scandalous, at least in Pèrè plain. The fact could be set clearer through these words of a Muslim informant addressed with sorrow and commonly shared among many other Muslims:

The course of history has changed and continues to change. Some years ago, talking of Muslim conversion to Christianity was impossible fact. But nowadays, cases of Muslim conversion to Christianity are quite regular in some areas. However, to me so far, Muslims’ conversion to Christianity is an alienation of Allah’s path and will. The fact must be condemned...¹⁰⁶

According to this view, Muslim conversion to Islam is a new, even strange fact in Muslims milieus of the plain. What sounds in the words is that, this change intervened in Islam history is not yet the reality in the informant’s area, it is rather the prerogative of other areas far from the informant’s. This view wants to condemn the matter of Muslims’ conversion to Christianity; it is justly what sounds in the final remark: conversion is alienation. And what is qualified as alienation in God’s path has necessarily to be discarded. The important thing to underline here is that not only the act of conversion is to be excluded; but even the actor that is, the convert is to be also excluded. This removal is not simply understood as removal of a

¹⁰⁵ E2, 11.07.2013.

¹⁰⁶ B2, 05.08.2013.

member from his/her community letting him go anywhere he/she wants, rather; in order to limit the conversion in the time to come, the removal implies a more profound sense to signify eliminating the convert in killing him through a hidden way.

5.5.4. Some Reasons for Muslims' Conversion to Christianity

Concerning conversion from Islam to Christianity, it appears clear that one is not use to see such a thing in the area. What is common is rather the contrary as we can read with that Muslim interviewee:

Asking me question to know what are the major reasons that make Muslims convert to Christianity is invalid question because from my childhood till now, I have never seen a Muslim converted to Christianity in our area. We hear about Muslims conversion to Christianity in other area than ours. Moreover, each convert has one's own reason that we cannot generalize over others.¹⁰⁷

This view does not deny completely the possibility of Muslims' conversion to Islam at least in other areas, but does not also enumerate openly reasons that provoke Muslims' conversion to Christianity. It signalizes somehow, that various reasons could make Muslims' convert to Christianity. Other, responding to the same question says: "Even though many reasons for conversion are personal and difficult to point at from the outside, Muslim conversion to Christianity is generally caused by deception form Islam and will of experiencing a new compensative reality."¹⁰⁸ From this statement, one can find an important fact playing a great role in conversion in many religions already mentioned above: the deception from one's previous religion. This deception creates in the subject a desire to seek a new experience where life will be better than in the previous milieu. This deception is not always from the matter of care taking in critical times, but also from various other matters like religious teachings, ethical behaviors, and the like.

¹⁰⁷ D1, 11.07.2013.

¹⁰⁸ B2, 05.08.2013.

5.6. Suggestions for Good Cohabitation

To the question of what to suggest in order to promote peace between people of different religions living together in the area, this Muslim interviewee responds as follows:

The responsibility to this well-living way is shared between the different groups. If each group consider the real message of his religion allowing no bad deeds and consider the other as oneself because created by the same and one God, then we will reach a peaceful cohabitation of different religious groups. Out of these primary considerations, cohabitation will be nothing but damage and bitterness.¹⁰⁹

The response contains two basic theological elements whose account is necessary for a good cohabitation. The first element is the teaching of every revealed religion that does never attempt to advise bad things to its followers; rather message of peace and message related to the coming kingdom of God. Based on this aspect, no trouble could be seen between religions. The second matter addressed in this response is related to the origin, to say the Creator of all humankind. It means that if every religious people could recognize that all people have been created by the unique God, no relational problem could occur between religious people. These two elements are qualified by the informant as primary not to minimize them, but to signify their importance to be known and to be taken into account by every religious group. When these elements are not taken into account, the consequence is inevitably the life of perpetual conflict and fights expressed properly in the words of the informant as “damage and bitterness”, synonym of chaos. In light of this worrying remark, another informant from Christian side advises as all church leaders what follows in order to have peaceable cohabitation:

In order to keep a good relationship between Christians and Muslims, Christians even neglected in number and faith; they must continue to be Christians in a right way that is, as peacemakers and those who consider their own religion in living according to the precepts of Christianity. One of the fruit of that is already the confidence attribute given to Christians in this area.¹¹⁰

The suggestion tends to direct all the efforts; or else the main initiative process for good cohabitation to Christians. They must do it in spite of their condition of small in number and people whom faith is not at all considered. They must do it not for mere complacency, but because they must reflect the very motive and content of Christianity. Living according Christian precepts does not only provide way for good cohabitation, but also paves a way for exchange, witness and all good things that can follow. This is a call for making positive image

¹⁰⁹ D1, 11.07.2013.

¹¹⁰ A1, 28.02.2013.

of Christianity based on the very gospel message; a way above all to let people testify the goodness of Christianity without it being claimed by Christians themselves. In stating so, the informant expects from Christians a noiseless claim of truth of Christianity without harming neighbors.

5.7. What the Church Does and What Christians Think that the Church should Do in Order to Encounter the Challenges with Regard to Christian-Muslim Relation.

Face to this situation, the church does not remain silent.

- In national level, the church contributes at least through two ways Christian-centered to face the problem. First, a specific program regarding Islam studies has been introduced in different training Institutions principally in Lutheran Institute of Theology of Meiganga where pastors are trained. The policy being that, once they finish their studies in this institution, they are both aware of the necessity of teaching in Christian-Muslim relation matter to Christians and acquainted of skills to approach Muslims with the message of the gospel without distorting the existing relationship between Christians and Muslims. Secondly, through its Institution named S.R.I.C (Service des Relation Islamo-Chrétiennes) primarily destined to present the gospel to Fulani (including Muslims); the church is making its best to inform Christians in different congregations about their relation to maintain with Muslims in a way to keep a good relation with them. This service ensures both the teaching of Christians to deepen their own faith first and secondly to be aware of their task to share with Muslims in social and religious matter in a right way.

-In local level, Christians are taught in congregations and different monthly and annual meetings on the matter the religious pluralism and the challenges that it present to Christians living together with Muslims. Through this enterprise, Christians perceived that religious exclusivist message of the past does no longer fit the new context and that they must revise their perception of Muslims as their neighbors. An informant aware of the situation stresses in accordance with that previous enterprise of the church in the field:

In order to keep and improve the spiritual life of its members, the church has great task of empowering its members through various teachings concerning what does mean

being Christian, how to live in multi-religious context both in keeping one's own religious conviction and entering in dialogue with people of other faiths.¹¹¹

Two essential themes emerge from what this informant said: the necessity of instructing one's local community, and the need of accounting the imposing new context in which religions have to live and act. Concerning the empowerment of local believers, one understands that there exists a kind of lack of religious knowledge in Christians that makes them weak in matter of faith. Therefore, this void needs to be filled in order to make Christians strong and mature in faith, so that no other religious win can snatch them from their faith. The goal here is to get accomplished Christians that can stand steadfastly on their belief. When we move to the second theme, that of learning to live in a multi-religious context; it launches equally a challenge of instructing believers, but with a particular accent on how to live and relate to others whom presence can neither be denied, nor be extracted from their place of living. Because the removal of the neighbor is impossible that it imposes the alternative of dialogue. To be in dialogue implies first the recognition justly of the presence of other before dealing with the negotiation for dialogue; because it is this presence of other that fosters and imposes the connection through dialogue. To underline that this task is urgent for the church and needs to be done as early as possible before any conversion, the young man could state:

Going into Islam looks like a fish entering into a creel of fishing: easy to be in, but difficult and sometimes impossible to go out. This is my case now. In spite of the will to return back, two main barriers stand in front of me: on one hand, the matter of shame from Christians I left, on the other hand the fear of threats from Muslim law leading inevitably to death...If the church has to do something, then it is better before any attempt to go out from the church.¹¹²

The informant reveals first what conversion looks like from Christianity to Islam in the first case and from Islam to Christianity in the second case. What is to note in the first case is notably the facility for Christians to convert to Islam. He compares this simple movement to the fish entering into a creel helped by the flow of water. However, the return to the initial place is a difficult, or better an impossible attempt in many cases. Various reasons render this inverse movement among which those listed above: the shame of coming back to Christianity and among Christians in the one hand, the fear of being removed (killed) by actual religion members on the other hand. After he displayed the problem, the informant comes to conclude that the role the church in preventing Christians' conversion to Islam is accountable only when Christians are yet in church, but once out, the mechanism becomes more complicated.

¹¹¹ C4, 11.07.2013.

¹¹² E3, 11.07.2013.

What comes out of this statement is pointing to the church its great and urgent role of caring Christians through various supports and teaching that strengthen and render Christians mature in their faith.

Conclusion

The result of the fieldwork shows that there is a slight problem on how Christians and Muslims perceive each other in the Père plain even if commonly one can say that there is not problem in their cohabitation. There is good perception of other in general on the one hand and also a quite bad perception of other on the other hand. The perception of other that make problem is base whether on theological matter or on ethical matter. However, the church does not stay silent about the issue. The church as peace claimer is addressing positively the issue of relation between Christians and Muslim in the plain in principally in teaching Christians to consider the people of other faiths in all their dignity and in living a Christian life that is, the life of love, dialogue, share and openness toward Muslims in a way to promote a climate of peace and easy common life.

CHAPTER SIX: ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF THE RELATION BETWEEN CHRISTIANITY AND ISLAM IN THE PERE PLAIN

Introduction

This chapter aims to present an analysis of the findings that we gained from the fieldwork in a way to perceive in a most organized way the relation between Christianity and Islam at the Père plain. It will refer regularly to the previous chapter (ch.5) due to the strict link between them. This chapter is divided into three main parts. First, in part one (6.1) we will address what characterizes generally the Christian-Muslim relation at the plain, in positive or negative sense. In part two (6.2) we will deal with both analysis and discussion of the challenges and opportunities highlighted in the first part. The third part (6.3), building on the discussion in the second part will focus on the role of the church. It analyses what the church does to address the challenges and opportunities encountered in the Christian-Muslim relation. The chapter ends with short partial conclusion. This will be used as a background for the discussion in chapter 7. It is also important to signalize that French quotations in this section have been translated into English by me. Translated English versions are in the text and the original French versions are found in the footnotes.

6.1. The Relation Between the Christianity and Islam in Père Plain - Some Main Characteristics

6.1.1. Majority/Minority

One of the most striking characteristics with regard of Christian-Muslim relation in Père plain is the great imbalance of majority and minority. This aspect does not appear only through the official statistic given above in the introductive chapter 1 and the different statistics of Catholics and Protestants shown in chapter 4, but is also referred to by many of my informants, for example like this Muslim informant: “When talking about the number of Muslims compared to that of Christians in this area, we must consider the fact that Islam was

installed before Christianity and gained the larger part of the ground and people.”¹¹³ This statement highlights what might be one of the main reasons to the big difference in numbers. Muslims were the first to install in the area making more followers than the Christianity came later after the large spread of Islam. Therefore, it stands a sort of imbalance making some stronger and more enthusiastic, and others more feeble, timid and fearful. More than the statistics, the perception of Islam given by the Christian informant in 5.1.1 in terms of “religion of the mass” could explain better this situation of Majority/minority because this religion draws many people at the same time. To be clearer, people go there not by personal conviction but mainly because this religion according to him includes most people than others thus having a particular influence on the rest. To understand that, one may refer to some expressions revealed by some Muslims informants qualifying Christians by this term “strangers” as found in point 5.1.1. Being stranger is taken to mean that one does not have any right of living in the area, and as a result one should be extracted or be treated without any regard. Therefore, the majority has both numerical and power influence on the minority which feels without comfort. One can ask how this imbalance influences on the relation and how they perceive each other. We must notice that this perception of other as stranger together with the position of minority causes a major issue in relationship because if one group is seen as stranger, what follows is inevitably insecurity, bad relationship with owners of the land. In other areas, it leads even to overt religious war as it is the case in Syria.¹¹⁴ As strangers, Christians feel weak in their life because they are a small group among a great majority. The fact that they are a minority sometimes renders Christians voiceless before the large majority of Muslims when it is a matter of making decision on some situations. One might also think that this position could be a factor that does not facilitate a frank dialogue between the two groups because the stronger seems to not see or consider the presence of the weak, and the weak does not have any courage to confirm one’s presence and contribution. The majority could consider other as lesser, even without importance to engage religious dialogue; and the feeble feeling his smallness realizes that he has nothing valuable to address to the stronger: there is then a lack of real communication. It is at this level that the “social conflict perspective” mentioned above in 3.1.1 plays an important role because it illuminates some

¹¹³ B1, 29.07.2013.

¹¹⁴ GlobalPost, “Syria’s minority Christians under threat from extremist Muslim rebels”; available from <http://www.globalpost.com/dispatch/news/regions/middle-east/syria/131224/syria-minority-christians-under-threat-extremists>; Internet; Accessed 09 May 2014.

reasons making the stronger group influencing on the weak. How then to deal with such a situation in a way to prevent this negative perception of other?

Warning against this factor with all its consequences, the recommendation of Bangkok relating to Human Rights was stating: "Human rights and obligations have a universal dimension. Christians and Muslims should recognize that and work together for their enforcement. This means that stronger groups should not try to impose their understanding of right and justice on weaker groups."¹¹⁵ In my opinion, this statement is valuable for both Islam and Christianity. It means that where Christians are of majority, they ought not to impose their understanding of human rights over Muslims community that is of minority in an area. In this way, the smallest religious group even though negligible, has at least his right of living and worship properly and in all dignity in a given area. The importance of a religion does not lay on the number of faithful, but on the object and content of the religion, and in the particular case of Islam and Christianity living side by side as neighbor everywhere in the world; God is this object and content of the faith. In the same way that God does not make any preference, thus avoiding any imbalance in value and in number; Christians and Muslims are called to consider God's philosophy to establish a climate of equality in value at any level it could be.

6.1.2. Social Collaboration

A second characteristic of Christian-Muslim relation in Péré plain is the social collaboration. This aspect is mentioned proudly by both Christians and Muslims and constitutes the strength that unites the two religious groups. The testimony from Christian informant for example in 5.2.1, for example, mentions some important sectors of this collaboration namely the sector of developing the area and that of promoting individuals and various groups in social and economic way. Here, the beneficiaries are not selected according to any religion; both Christians and Muslims benefit of the fruits of this collaboration in a way or another. Taking for example the case of building a bridge uniting two villages included in the words of the Christian informant in 5.2.1, both the two religious groups are beneficiaries because in the two villages there is at the same time Christian and Muslim populations. When we turn to the Muslim testimony about Christian-Muslim relation in the plain, we get the same impression

¹¹⁵ From "Report and Recommendations," in *Islam in Asia: Perspectives for Christian-Muslim Encounter*, eds J. Paul Rajashekar and H. S. Wilson (Geneva 2: Lutheran World Federation, 1992), 184.

of satisfaction concerning social collaboration through the words as neighbor and love. The two words are very important and depend on each other. On the one hand, the evocation of neighborhood for its part is a kind of asserting that Christians and Muslims are neighbors willingly or unwillingly because this is a fact already imposed by religious plurality. On the other hand, the expression “love” is an inseparable word of neighborhood if one needs to see and experience the real sense and fullness of neighborhood. Love according to the informant is a symbol of a good cohabitation where people understand each other in a way to accomplish together any kind of project. All this development leads us to discover a profound meaning of leaving together.

It is in this way that the document of the consultation of Bangkok places for its part the Christian-Muslim collaboration as a way to fulfill God’s will as we can read through these words: “...Both firmly believe that God has given them the task to safeguard his creation. This means not only to take care that life on earth remains possible, but to develop conditions wherein life becomes pleasant”¹¹⁶ Through this statement, not only the sense of developing way of life is God’s will for Christians and Muslims, but also an exhortation to meet and make way together to develop the condition of human life because this is a shared responsibility given by God. Conceiving the matter of social collaboration might foster and enhance the living together of Christians and Muslims living in a way to improve the condition of life of their respective populations with any major reluctance of some toward others. Social collaboration becomes an imperative for Christians and Muslims, conditioned by God’s will and their wellbeing all together.

6.1.3. Silent Strategy of Challenging Christianity

As we have seen in chapter 5, many of the Christian informants are seeing in their relation with Muslims, a relation tinted of a kind of silent strategy to challenge Christianity. The first case is that signalized by this Christian interviewee as follows:

It is true that we cannot assert boldly that there is problem of relationship between Christians and Muslims here in our zone. But the strategy so far used by Muslims to discourage or to convert Christians and other religious groups to Islam is the strongest

¹¹⁶ Mwakabana, Hance A. O. « Summary Report From the Working Group on Islam, » in *Lutheran World Federation Document : Theological Perspectives on Other Faiths*, ed. Hance A. O. Mwakabana (Geneva 2 : Lutheran World Federation, 1997), 172.

one: the silent strategy of neglecting and underestimating Christians that has been demonstrated more powerful than forcing people.¹¹⁷

In spite of the presence of a quite frank collaboration in the domain of social life and development, Christian communities are afraid in their profound life about the way things are moving on when talking especially about religious consideration. The term “silent strategy” of neglecting and underestimating used by the interviewee is capital to understand the Christian-Muslim relation. The term neglecting refers to how some Muslims do not consider at all Christianity and Christians in the plain in all their religious dignity. The fact to neglect Christianity and Christians leads then to minimize or underestimate all that is related to Christianity like Christian worship celebration, Christian’s food and the like. The term has its positive understanding instead of its too strong accent on negative sense in that, this struggle does not use force to do mission among Christians and Christians cannot feel openly what is going on concerning their relation with their neighbors. What is to appreciate here is the lasting presence of peace between Christians and Muslims so far. However, this expression has also its negative sense in that; there is no frank collaboration in religious matters. The manifestations of this lack of frank consideration in religious matters are for instance, the Muslim refusal of eating Christians’ meals, obliging married Christian girls to become Muslims, and the like. From this Muslim perspective of relation, Christians feel that they are not at all considered in their dignity, so that there is lack of something to realize a right relation. To complete what is lacking, one must think and act according Muslim ideology. One may refer to how Nygandji puts the case: “Kirdi populations and Habe thus reified were doomed to disappear shortly. The strategy put in place to extinguish these tribes was especially assimilation. Think like a Fulani, dress like a Fulani, eat like a Fulani, pray like a Fulani, it was belonging to the true humanity.”¹¹⁸ This statement is important to reread here because in doing so, Christians were acquiring progressively the Fulani social and religious cultures that take place in their consciences and like system facilitating them their embracing of Islam. In point 5.2.1, a Christian interviewee calls this of doing as “a hidden call war”, where people convert not by been forced, but by troubled conscience of being not considered. Those who cannot embrace this life system could feel stranger in the milieu. It is not surprising to note that in a certain period and in a particular zone, some Christians began to

¹¹⁷ A2, 25.07.2013.

¹¹⁸ Nygandji, *Pourquoi les Kirdi du Nord-Cameroun ont-ils préféré le Christianisme à l’Islam?*, 62. « Les populations Kirdi et Habé ainsi chosifiées, étaient vouées à la disparition à brève échéance. La stratégie mise en place pour éteindre ces tribus était surtout l’assimilation. Penser comme un peul, s’habiller comme un peul, manger comme un peul, prier comme un peul, c’était appartenir à la vraie humanité. »

hide bible and songbooks when going to Church worship to dissuade Muslims of that area of his religious identity. One can then understand simply the following declaration of this other Christian informant: “We, Christians, are too neglected in this area; we do not deserve any respect. What can encourage us to continue in this way when we do not have any respect whereas others are well considered?”¹¹⁹

Considering all these anomalies, I would argue that the situation needs a change in order to get a true religious collaboration and cohabitation. That is why all these deficiencies need to be cancelled through a visible change in order to make balance between all communities living together in a common place. It is by this means that the silent strategy will leave place to true understanding of each other. Moreover, this change will not come miraculously from anywhere; it is a proper responsibility of local people as Gandhi puts it: “You must be the change you want to see in the world.”¹²⁰ The importance of these words of Gandhi lays on the fact that change is not launched by controversy, rather by being the example of what you like to see in the world. As such, both Christians and Muslims are concerned to bring this change together, everyone from one’s side because neighbors.

6.1.4. Stigmatization

According to many interviewees from both Christian and Muslim side in chapter 5, the relation between the two religious groups in this area is characterized by a form of stigmatization of Christianity, placing thus Christianity and Christians in a state of a quite negative religion. To begin with, let us perceive the matter as put first by this Christian interviewee:

All that Christians are undergoing so far in this area concerning their relation with the pre-established Islam come from the images they have been attributed from the beginning. Since missionaries arrived in the plain with the gospel, Christianity was qualified as religion of fire and all those who belong to Christianity are destined to hell at the end of age. This image stands upon Christians and influences enormously Christianity in the area.¹²¹

¹¹⁹ C3, 28.07.2013

¹²⁰ Quoted by Kerry, Senator John F. “Common Word, Dialogue, and the Future of the World,” in *A Common Word: Muslims and Christians on Loving God and Neighbor*, eds Miraslov Volf, Ghazi bin Muhammad, and Melissa Yarrington (Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2010), 199.

¹²¹ A1, 28.07.2013.

The informant situates the root of the problem from the very beginning of Christianity in this area. Why then this demeaning image? The problem would come from two possible ideas. Firstly, this image would come from Muslims and labeled to Christians because Christianity that came after Islam in that area is seen by Muslims as opposite to Islam. And according to the Koran 2: 174-175 for example, “Those who conceal God’s revelation in the Book, and purchase for them Amascrable profit, they swallow into themselves Naught but fire; God will not address them on the Day of Resurrection, Nor purify them: Grievous will be their Penalty. They are the ones who buy Error in place of Guidance and Torment in place of Forgiveness (They show) for the Fire!” Secondly, the image would come from the incomprehension of the Christian images used at that time to evangelize where there are people who accepted Jesus Christ and protected from the wrath of God by Jesus on the one hand; and those who do not accept the message of the gospel and are consumed by the wrath (fire) of God on the other hand. The incomprehension that I allude to is the one that Muslims taught that rather those who are consumed by fire in these images are Christians. Therefore, Christianity and Christians were seen by other people then mainly Muslims in an almost negative sense. The phenomenon has even double negative effects on Christians. On the one hand, Christians generally doomed by the bad image try sometimes to doubt of their spirituality in becoming fragile or embracing naturally the influent religion of the area; on the other hand, no one, at least from Muslims side can joint Christianity because of the bad label given to Christianity since the beginning. In one case or other, all turn into the advantage of Islam and the disadvantage of Christianity. Secondly when we turn to Muslim side, there exist many same testimonies that do not honor Christianity in general. From Muslim statements in points 5.1.2 and 5.2.2, it appears clearly that Christianity as religion of fire is a most expended image among Muslims. This image cannot be removed simply because it is transmitted from generation to generation rending it new that is; updated for new generations. It makes that even if one asks to Muslim children how they perceive Christianity; they do not have any hesitation to state that Christianity is a religion of fire.

6.1.5. Islam and Christianity without Easy Access with the Outside

Another fact that characterized Christianity and Islam in Pérè plain is that of ignorance of reality of other localities that is to say, the awareness of religious plurality that other peoples from outside already have and that calls to a new view of religion and other. What can explain this is the closed geographical situation of Pérè land as described in chapter 4 by Rachel Balé.

This position has not offered from the beginning free openness to communication in social and religious matters with the outside. Those in the land were cut off from other realities elsewhere. What could be seen as effect is the raw character of religious conception that influenced even the cultural richness of neighborhood that was approaching people; especially the case mentioned above in point 5.2.1 where Christians are qualified as unclean, and then eating together with Muslim is perceived automatically scandalous and prohibited act. Whereas in other areas, this ancient conception of other is out of date and Christians and Muslims can eat together without any major rejection of other. The remoteness of the plain thus made that those of outside had no facility to come in with new conception of religions colored by the spirit of religious pluralism that calls to a new conception of religious matters except some traders in market days who had to leave as soon as possible for other markets. Today, the progressive openness of the land to other geographical zones begins to bring change in this sense. Christians from other places influence positively the system of life of local Christians permitting an objective conception of life, religion and people of other religions. The same change can be observed on Muslims' side when one can notice that Christians can eat together with Muslims, even though this is practical only in some places.

Based on all these realities mentioned above, we hope that there is still need to go further in order to update religious cohabitation in the area according the new reality of globalization as written:

Globalization has brought nations and cultures into closer contact, and Christian mission faces pluralism in various forms. Migration is one of the main reasons for the co-existence of different religions and faith groups within one region. The challenge to all faith communities is to shift from tolerating a factual pluralism to a concept of religious pluralism which transcends earlier concepts like the fulfillment theory or the criteria of difference or continuity.¹²²

Even if initially this statement is focusing on Christian ancient religion conception that necessitates to be shifted in order to fit the new religious context brought by migration, the quotation is also valuable to other religions in general, and to Islam as Christianity potential neighbor in particular. As both Christianity and Islam define to be missionaries, even called to live together everywhere all over the world; they need everyone to move from one's ancient conception of religion that no longer fit to today context to direct one's comprehension of religion toward the presence and importance of other.

¹²²Daryl Balia and Kirsteen Kim, *Witnessing to Christ today: Edinburgh 2010, volume II* (Oxford: Regnum Books International, 2010), 42.

6.1.6. Comparing the Way Christians and Muslims Perceive Each Other

The concern in this point is principally to compare the way Christians and Muslims perceive each other in order to discern side by side some similar and different basis in this perception.

Addressing firstly the concern of common basis, one realizes from the findings in chapter 5 that a first element of similarity is the fact that both Christians and Muslims perceive each other from the basis of the bad image that each community has of other from the beginning. At this level, one can mention on the one hand Islam viewed by Christians as having used forced strategy to install, and on the other hand Christianity judged by Islam as religion of fire from its very beginning. A second common basis of the perception of other could be the actual experience one has toward other. Here what prevails is the fact that each religion realizes that the bad image attributed to other is demonstrated as fault because both Christians and Muslims testify in the same way how good the neighbor is. "No physical attack from Muslims...", "Christianity is not a bad religion, but Christians have to prove it through their behavior..." are the words that sustain this aspect of perception of other. A third basis from which every religion perceives other is the universalistic claim of truth. For Christians, this is manifested through the will of Islam to convert at any rate every Christian who attempts a marriage with a Muslim, man of woman. For Muslims, this view is criticized particularly by one of the Muslim informant in point 5.2.2 through the expression "exclusivist truth". A last basis of perception of other, at least to me, is the balance between positive and negative elements of every religion. This could be referred to what the Christian informant said about Muslims in stating that they are good neighbors, but in other to fulfill this neighborhood; Muslims are exhorted to consider also Christianity as true religion. From Muslim side, the view could be backed up by the Muslim view mentioned above in point 5.1.2.

Secondly, when we turn to the matter of differences concerning how Christians and Muslims perceive each other; we note at least two points of difference. From Muslim side, it is true that Christians are perceived from a religious background, that is to say from religious basis; but the focus according to my view is made mostly in ethical domain. This perception from ethical basis could be seen through the accent that Muslims make on certain ethical aspects signalized in the finding chapter both by Christian and Muslim testimonies. From Christian informant for example, one notes how an informant was stressing the fact that Christians are considered generally by Muslims as unclean people from the basis of their dish in point 5.1.2, and 5.2.1 where Christians are called to fulfil the truth of the Christianity by

moderating their consumption of alcohol and in living according to the message of the gospel. From the Christian side, the basis of perceiving Muslims in my view is quite religious because through the findings we do not see where Christians rebuked bold Muslim behaviour. Rather, the Christian informant in 5.1.1 encourages Muslims to consider Christianity in all its dignity. Other differences could be seen through the way each group leads his mission enterprise. Muslims do not practice outreach to mission among Christians, they enhance local members by teaching and utilise sound materials in shops or market place to accomplish their mission enterprise. Christians on the contrary are mostly used to do mission in public places through outreaches in singing and preaching.

6.2. Opportunities and Challenges

In this section, we would like to present some ways of good collaboration on the one hand, and some challenges on the other hand in a way to point to what the church is doing in the case of opportunities in order to enhance the existent good relation between Christians and Muslims, and what she is doing in the case of challenges in order to delete some issues and make the relation better.

6.2.1. Some Ways of Good Relation

6.2.1.1. Social Collaboration

When coming to the way of good relation between Christians and Muslims in Pèrè plain, one can mention firstly the social collaboration. Here, despite the quite lack of religious consideration of Muslims toward Christians and Christianity in plain; one can see a visible and effective collaboration of the two religious groups in different ways of social activities and acts of compassion as mentioned above in 5.2.1 by a Christian informant and in 5.2.2 by a Muslim informant. According to the findings in chapter 5, both Muslims and Christians confirm this way of good relation and wish at the same time its continuity for the sake of peaceable life between the two religions (see also 6.2.2). Beyond this first way of good collaboration, one may signalize another example of activity where collaboration takes place; the Association named “Moolnim”¹²³ not mentioned in Chapter 5 but where Christians and

¹²³ Moolnim in Pèrè language does mean “Gathering families”

Muslims are brothers and sisters in sharing ideas to construct Père present and future life. It is in fact a monthly gathering that moves from one compound to other with the goal to know all the habitations of the group members. Two main points direct every meeting: discussing how to promote Père's life culturally and in educative way on one hand; and gathering money that is used for many goals. Among other goals, the money of the association is destined to enhance the local activities of the association, to support young Père students who will to continue studying in universities, to assist families in case of illness or death, to create an activity in a way to promote the revenue of the association, to help a village in matter of digging wells, building bridge to connect two or many villages etc.

After all that has been said about this point, one can assert that there is positive competition for common development in the association because every religious group member wants to give best suggestions to promote the association. In my opinion, this way of living with people of other faiths is in today context; one of Christians means to accomplish God's will and activity and therefore must be reinforced to better life of people. To improve and strengthen this social collaboration, one must continue to put aside any attempt to religious debate in the meetings to let people understand that there, it is a matter of pure social promotion. It is equally important to take into account the view from each side that could promote the group without any prejudice related to religious affiliation so that every group will feel religiously and socially considered in the group.

6.2.1.2. Christian Transparency

Another important fact fostering a good collaboration between Christians and Muslims in this area is this element of Christian transparency expressed clearly by some persons of other faith when we point back to chapter 5.1.2. Expressions like "God-fearing", "confidence" and "transparency" are kindly applied commonly to Christians. In my view, this appreciation must be considered seriously and safeguarded in Christian communities. It can be utilized also as Christian asset for doing mission, because mission implies being subject of joy and confidence for neighbors. What to conclude concerning this point?

Many significant images and metaphors are used in the Bible to describe Christian's statute in the world in a way to make particular attention on the change that it could bring to the world. Jesus himself addressing to his disciples says: You are like salt for all mankind. But if salt loses its saltiness, there is no way to make it salty again. It has become worthless,

so it is thrown out and people trample on it. You are like light for the whole world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid. No one lights a lamp and puts it under a bowl; instead he puts it on the lampstand, where it gives light for everyone in the house. In the same way your light must shine before people, so that they will see the good things you do and praise your Father in heaven. Matt 5: 13-16. The passage does not highlight only Christian's virtues anchored in Christians by belonging to Christ, but launches a vivid call to Christians to externalize these virtues to the profit of the world that is, to render to the world a just, tasteful and enviable life. The world in this sense is seen as land of injustice, darkness, waiting for a deliverance and better condition of life. This deliverance can come only from those who know God's will and are aware to accomplish it. Further, Paul names Corinthians explicitly "Letter" of Christ: You yourselves are the letter we have, written on our hearts for everyone to know and read. It is clear that Christ himself wrote this letter and sent it by us. It is written, not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, and not on stone tablets but on human hearts. 2 Cor 3: 2-3. Therefore, Christians are exhorted to be a living letter of Christ and not a dead letter that does neither attract nor change readers. The task for Christians then is to be readable by those surrounding them in order to fulfill the meaning of a letter: to read it in order to understand the sense.

6.2.1.3. Christians as Peace-Makers

This important aspect of life seen in Christians' life and testified by a Muslim interviewee in 5.2.2 in my opinion needs to be enhanced among the different Christian communities, first in the concerned area of Pérè plain; and among other communities all over the world. This is important, even urgent for the reason that Christianity is no longer defined as religion of universal truth. This stance calls particularly Christians to share this world with other religions in general, and with Muslims in particular as co-missionaries. For Christians, making peace with other is not a new call; this is rather the firm evangelical invitation of the Lord Jesus-Christ to all Christians found for the first time in the sermon on the mount of Matthew 5: 9 stating as follows: Happy are those who work for peace; God will call them his children! (According to Good News Bible; Today's English Translation). What sounds through this call for peace, is the sense that peace needs to be worked, to be initiated in order to institute it among peoples. It is a Christian duty toward Christian brothers and toward people of other faiths. When going further in the analysis of these words, one understands that for Christians, being called Children of God depends intrinsically on working for peace to

render life livable, that is to say a life full of sense. It sounds that Christians who do not work for peace are not called children of God. In sum, the various Muslim's views on Christians and Christianity are full of important concepts to explore in order to improve Christian-Muslim relation.

Ultimately these good images attributed to Christians and testified by most of Muslims is to be pursued by Christians to be really what Muslims expect them to be; this is real yeast for improving the relation between Christians and Muslims. These words "confidence", "trust", "love", "transparency", and "peace-makers" are capital for constructing a peaceful life within and between two religious groups. Where these words are present and valued, there is much chance to come to real dialogue between two or many religious groups.

6.2.1.4. Muslims as Prompt Helpers in Time of Needs

This is a striking testimony of a Christian informant in 5.1.1 on Muslims in general in the Père plain. The statement is a proof that the two religious communities are living in harmony where one does not see the suffering of other; due to the lack of means to overcome a difficult situation. How to understand that this functions simply among Christians and Muslims?

It is important to put that not simply because Muslims in this area are mainly the well situated in term of wealth that they can come help easily Christians in need; but one must emphasize at the basis this collaboration, the facility Muslims have and experience in living together with Christians in the area. It suffices to recall some of the good adjectives already mentioned above (transparency, peace-makers...) applied to Christians by Muslims to qualify the type to their relation in order to understand the profound mystery of this kind of interaction.

6.2.2. *Sectors of Problems*

6.2.2.1. Traditional Power (Lamido)

In order to understand well the matter, one can only refer to this declaration of the Christian informant in point 5.2.1 where we can read "...However, the matter of conventional leadership is controlled exclusively seriously in all its details. That is why; neither a Christian nor a member of African Traditional Religion could take power over Muslims as 'Lamido' or

'Djaouro'...' This way of controlling power is summed up by this more expended Fulani slogan: "kaado laamata dow joulbe", meaning that a non-Muslim cannot rule over Muslims. As a result, nowhere in the plain one can see a traditional ruler (Lamido) who is Christian. It is this last ten years that an exception is found in the rank of the lesser traditional ruler (Djaouro) that is a Christian. Even though this exception, one must precise that this kind of ruler is found where there is not many Muslims or they are completely absent. All though this happy exception, his representativeness in rulers' assembly is not taken into account as are others and; a frequent call to convert to Islam is sounding around him related to his rule. Christians then see themselves as weak people and sometimes covered of social weakness.

Considering all these aspects of thing, we think in a modest way that the power or the art to rule is never linked to a particular religion if we agree that in the name of human right, "All human beings are... equal in dignity and rights..."¹²⁴ regardless of their religious affiliation. Based on these statements of Human Rights, one finds that every religion could be considered properly in its dignity, in a way that the matter of rule could not be a domain of a specific religion. The practical example to point in this issue is that of government ruler: even in a country in which Muslims are the majority, no Christian administrator or ruler is harmed to convert to Islam before being what he or she is over the a given community. Rather, thing goes without any religious claim even if Christian ruler is not sometimes respected properly in the community. What is applicable in government must be applicable in traditional rule to delete inequality and underestimation of other faiths. Therefore, Christians who are of the chieftdom court or council could not be asked to convert to Islam in order to continue being members of council. Practically, we perceive this call for equality as way of sharing naturally experiences, gifts of rule, and the "savoir-faire" of every religious group. As long as two or more religious and cultural groups do not share power, we cannot talk of equality, or at least, the proper consideration of others; still there is a dividing fact which in a near future will generate more than simple distance between religions.

¹²⁴ See "Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Adopted by United Nations General Assembly Resolutions 217A (III) of 10 December 1948," in *Bridge or Barrier: Religion, Violence and Visions for Peace*, eds Guerrie Ter Haar and James J. Busuttill (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 300, Article 1.

6.2.2.2. Truth Claim of Both Christianity and Islam

When we come to the problem of relation between Christianity and Islam and, precisely to the matter of truth claim, we touch at the very problem of this area. Islam exists in the area earlier proclaiming the message of truth over traditional religions. In a way or another, Islam was set as the religion of divine truth that annihilates previous religions. When Christianity comes later with another claim of truth, it was not accepted by the existing truth holder that is Islam. It suffices to turn back to those previous words of the Muslim informant on Christians in point 5.2.2 to see clearly the problem: “We do not have any issue in our coexistence because we collaborate in many ways to promote our area and our population. One thing however is to be pointed out when we come to religious matter: how can we accept living properly with those who promote exclusivist truth stating that only Christian path provides salvation to all people? Are other people that is, “Muslims” without any hope?”¹²⁵ This state of thing does not facilitate religious cohabitation generally, rather it fosters deeper and deeper the chasm that does not show any hope and precondition of collaboration and dialogue, whereas dialogue and collaboration necessitates a precondition of putting aside truth claim and considering other faith as well. Klauspeter Blaser addressing the matter of a useful condition for a good cohabitation of truth claimers states that “The condition of a purposeful dialogue is that we all descended from our religious or apologetic buildings in order to really meet”¹²⁶

However, moving from the truth claim could in a sense make problem because it is what makes a religion been true religion: the claim of truth coming from God through revelation and providing sense of life even salvation to all believers. Wilfred Cantwell Smith call this unchangeable stance “idol” when stating that “Each ‘religion’ is ‘an idol’ in the best sense of the word, if one were going to use these words at all. Exclusive claims for one’s own is idolatry in the pejorative sense.”¹²⁷ In addition, talking specifically of Christianity he stresses that “Christianity-for some, Christian theology-has been our idol. It has had both the spiritual efficacy of ‘idols’ in the good sense, and the serious limitations of idolatry in the bad sense.”¹²⁸ This is both an appreciation of Christianity if it stands on positive claim of truth

¹²⁵ B1, 29.07.2013.

¹²⁶ Quoted in Nyiwé, *La stratégie missionnaire de l’Eglise face aux Traditions Musulmanes dans l’Adamaoua*, 53. « La condition d’un dialogue judicieux est que nous descendions tous de nos édifices religieux ou apologétiques afin de pouvoir vraiment nous rencontrer »

¹²⁷ Smith, Wilfred Cantwell. “Idolatry in Comparative Perspective,” in *The Myth of Christian Uniqueness*, eds John Hick and Paul F. Knitter (New York: Maryknoll, Orbis Books, 1987), 60.

¹²⁸ Smith, Wilfred Cantwell. “Idolatry in Comparative Perspective,” in *The Myth of Christian Uniqueness*, eds John Hick and Paul F. Knitter (New York: Maryknoll, Orbis Books, 1987), 61.

without hindering other faiths, and a call to change Christian theology if other faiths were threatened by Christianity. However, losing the claim of truth empty religion of its sense as Paul F. Knitter puts it: "Like Dupuis, other Catholic theologians recognize that if a Christian no longer places Jesus Christ at the heart of what God is up to in all of history, she's no longer really a Christian. 'The Christian faith collapses if the definitive claim for Jesus Christ is denied.'"¹²⁹ May be same statement is valuable and trustworthy in Islam and other faiths: this is the reality of our religious conviction. The World Council of Churches (WCC) discussing this point and seeking to put a neat balance, states during its meeting at San Antonio in 1989 as follows: "We cannot point to any other way of salvation than Jesus Christ. At the same time we cannot set limits to God's saving power....We appreciate this tension, and do not attempt to resolve it"¹³⁰ In all its being, the matter of truth claim needs to be clarified more to not impede the way of dialogue. In fact, possessing *the* truth, that is what makes problem because it means that other religions have no truth, thus no consideration for others. But possessing *a* truth means that others have also a part of truth within the many existing truths. The exclusivist truth in fact is an essential component of all religions that claim to be missionary, because if a religion does not claim to be exclusivist in matter of truth and salvation, then no missionary task has sense. Only for Christians, this exclusivist claim is not only the core of biblical message, but also Christians at the beginning have put this claim in a way to let people of other faiths know that nothing else is valuable than Christian message when talking of salvation. Islam coming some centuries after Christianity runs also this risk of categorical truth claim.

6.2.2.3. Mixed Marriage

We are talking of mixed marriage in this point as interreligious marriage between Muslim men and Christian women on the one hand; and between Christian men and Muslim women on the other hand. Mixed marriage as described by Nyiwé Thomas in point 4.2 was from the beginning a means for Père people to gain the confidence of Foulbe and peace between with Foulbe then in full campaign of Islamization. Even providing a climate of peace between the two ethnic groups, mixed marriage did not prevent the cultural and religious underestimation of Foulbe over Père people because Foulbe generally other tribes that come to Islam still as

¹²⁹ Paul F. Knitter, *Introducing Theologies of Religions* (New York: Maryknoll, Orbis Books, 2002), 93.

¹³⁰ Balia and Kim, *Witnessing to Christ*, 48.

not pure Muslims. They think that a pure Muslim is from pure fulbe tribe. In addition, even the children born of the couple come sometimes to consider their parents, brothers and sisters who are not Muslims as inferior to Muslims. Therefore, Foulbe language becomes a language of esteem: one asks something in mother tongue to a Muslim, but the Muslim Père prefers to respond into Foulbe language as it were, being Muslim implies speaking Foulbe language. How then about today situation in the plain?

If by the past, mixed marriage in Père plain was due mainly to conclude a sort of covenant for peace, today the reason for mixed marriage is no longer for peace-keeping. Mixed marriage takes often place between Christian girls and Muslim men because both the girls and their parents are confronted to the difficulty of finding volunteer Christian men for marriage on the one hand; and because for some of Muslims, marrying Christian girls is a means of promoting Islam on the other hand. As far as the first case is concerned, it is important to recall this striking statement of a former Christian woman:

What should we do when we do not have Christian husbands and then there are many in Muslims side who propose to marry us? We don't have any choice because if we continue to be single we are exposed to what Christianity condemns and if we go to Muslim husbands, we are maybe second or third wife of the home. The worst is that in a given time, we are not allowed to come to church service...And all our children if we have ones are automatically Muslims¹³¹

Through these words, one understands that Mixed marriage is contracted mainly just because the type of marriage awaited by Christian girls and their parents is not sometimes possible. Turning to the second case that is, Mixed marriage as means of promoting Islam, one may refer principally to the decision taken by Muslim Youth Council that took place in Maroua stating among others that: "122 marriages by our various youth of South with brave girls of pastors and other indirectly. We believe that by the year 2010 if all of us, we put our machines running, we can easily legally married Christian girls or women of church leaders."¹³² This let understanding that something is already done in this way of mixed marriage for the goal of promoting Islam on the expense of Christianity and many things will continue to be done in this sense. Through the same council, one can continue to read: "We take a nod to our young of South who managed much of the plan against the Christians. We recommend that every young person present at the base of the south take the example in hand, as we heard in the

¹³¹ E4, 18.07.2013.

¹³² See Appendix 2.

report of the Deep South: the Islamization of Christians in 2713 adults and 1042 children from all Christian families.¹³³

6.2.2.4. Conversion

Conversion is a reality in all religious communities because one can see it everywhere. It happens mainly from the reasons that only the convert can give truly. That is why in point 5.5.2 addressing the reason that led her to convert to Islam, the Christian informant could state that her conversion to Islam is linked to her food selling because those who buy her food are mainly Muslims. In the same vein, other explained openly that his conversion to Islam is in connection with his marriage with his Muslim wife because her parents insisted that he must convert to Islam before having access to their daughter for marriage. The reasons that lead people to convert are multiple and cannot be generalized to all converts. Jan Opsal¹³⁴ addressing the matter of conversion in his lecture uses the expressions “push factors” and “pull factors” to designate these reasons leading generally to conversion. Push factors are the reasons for why a person leaves a religion, principally founded on this religion he/she belongs at this moment. It could be a deception from the leader or members of this religion. Pull factors are rather the reasons that lead a person to join a new religion. These reasons are mainly linked to some advantages that could be found in this new religion or to the will of experiencing a new reality.

What is important to state is that in one case or another, the reasons are linked to the personality of the convert. Therefore, I would argue that it is important to say that conversion should not be forced from the outside that is, from other people than the converts themselves. Conversion becomes a problem justly when it is forced from the outside and this is precisely the concern in this topic regarding Père plain. To have its full sense of conversion, conversion should come from the inner conviction of the convert himself/herself without any external pressure. Where conversion is based on any pressure from the outside, then the freedom of conversion is violated, accordingly to the Declaration of Human Rights article 18 stating that “Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right

¹³³ France-Echo Cameroun, « La jeunesse musulmane ‘gestaposante’ et son ‘plan de lutte contre les Chrétiens’ » ; available from <http://www.coranix.org/archicoray/2004/06jun/1026.htm>; Internet, accessed 10 Mai 2013.

¹³⁴ Lecture on Science of Religions and Encounters of Religions, 30-erc/reku-301-term 1-3, no 4, 2012.

includes freedom to change his religion or belief..." The term "everyone" underlines somehow; a personal decision making.

6.3. The Role of the Church

The point here is to give a short analysis of what the church leaders perceive as the role of the church; what the church does practically to address the challenges and opportunities she faces in matter of relation between Christians and Muslims in this area.

6.3.1. What the Church Leaders Perceive as the Role of the Church

The role of the church in Christian-Muslim relation issue in general according to the church leaders is to be reconciliatory. This is what tends to sound in the words of this Christian informant when stating that "In everything, the church has to hold the prophetic role to reconcile the world"¹³⁵ In talking of the prophetic role, he stresses that the prophet stands between God and people, he takes the commands of God to transmit it to the people in situation of crisis. In the case of Christian-Muslim-relation, the church is not called to worsen the relation through any way it could be, but to play her full role of peace-maker in taking into account the theology of both Christians and Muslims. To be clearer, he wanted that the church be not the one who takes the problem from a Chritocentric basis that is, supporting only Christian side and encouraging Christians to contradict Muslims; rather she must hold the problem from the Theocentric basis including all religions in God's love and God's care. In conceiving that we all are from God and under God's love, there is no reason to foster division. There is rather reason to seek a peaceful way to leave peacefully together as Sons of God.

6.3.2. The Way the Church Addresses These Challenges

The fact for the church to integrate Islamic teaching in her program of study through the Lutheran Institute of Theology of Meiganga is a policy to treat the problem from the basis or to say better, from the roots that are the church leaders. The church believes that the theological issues can be addressed suitably and efficiently by theologians that are trained in

¹³⁵ A1, 28.07.2013.

this Institution because they are those who will work in the field that is, in different communities where these challenges are present. The church hopes that they can do better than other Christians in communities because they acquired some knowledge in Islam and some skills to approach the problem in a better way without provoking any kind of encroachment with Islam. In other words, they can deal with the problem in respecting Islam and Muslims. The aim of the Service des Relations Islamo-Chrétiennes (S.R.I.C) in this policy of the church is to have easy and right access to Muslims in order to share in the sense of religious dialogue. Christians at the local level are then those who apply the teaching of church leaders in their lives with Muslims as their neighbors because they have most contact with Muslims than the church leaders have.

6.3.3. Concerning Opportunities

The church uses the occasions of the way of good collaboration to delete as much as possible the spirit of division. At the level of collaboration between these religious groups, Christians seek to prove that the duty of maintaining the creation of God and to render the environment good for human being is not of some particular groups, but that this is a way where all human beings are concerned regardless of their ethnic and religious affiliation. It means that in matter of promoting the creation of God through different development enterprises, one needs to put aside the question of religion in order to reaffirm our common belonging to God who sees us all as his children without religious distinction. When we turn to the fact of gathering and praying together as Muslims and Christians mentioned by the Christian informant in point 5.2.1, one sees and understands that in matter of interceding for the common wellbeing of humankind, no religious group is put aside. Rather everyone invokes God in his religious belongings being aware that God understands and accepts the prayer of all his children without exception. The church uses this occasion to demonstrate the opposite of the bad image people had on her from the beginning as religion of fire because people of religion of fire cannot be anymore collaborators with others. In other words, through these ways of good collaboration, Christians should continue to be what they are really in order to change the image of assumption that leads to divide people from the same Creator.

Conclusion

At the end of this analysis, one realizes that the characteristics of the Christian-Muslim relation are not somehow totally exemplary in a full sense. On the one hand, some sectors of life demonstrate that there is good collaboration between the two religious groups in this area of Père plain; on the other hand, some ways of a quite difficult relation are shown. Both challenges and opportunities are the deal of the church. She should exploit these opportunities to enhance a good cohabitation with people of other faiths in general, and with Muslims her closer neighbors in particular. At the same time, she should be aware of these challenges and seek the ways to address them in a good way without encroaching on her own belief, or on the belief of her neighbors. What the church does is in this sense is already very significant, but she should not stop going further in order to establish a climate of peace and understanding each other.

CHAPTER SEVEN: CHRISTIAN-MUSLIM RELATIONS: A THEOLOGICAL AND CONSTRUCTIVE DISCUSSION

Introduction

From the analysis that is done so far concerning the Christian-Muslim relation in the Péré plain, there is, in my opinion, a vibrant need for Christians and Muslims to engage in dialogue in order to address the assumptions that create distance between them rather than facilitating their cohabitation. The Christian interviewee in point 5.2.1 seems to state that the fact to not have relation, thus to not engage in dialogue might mean that one does not take into account the presence of other; that one does not recognize that other exists and this is the very important issue in matter of living together. Where it is not quite possible to share the same religious conviction, dialogue becomes an important means for maintaining peace between religions. That is why we focus particularly in this last chapter on dialogue. The chapter is divided into two main sections. In the first section 7.1, we are going to address the theological discussion on the dialogue in a way to show how important is it and how to practice it in a good way without harm. The section will address the issue of othering, types of dialogue, scope of dialogue, limits of dialogue, the link between mission and dialogue and a historical significant initiative for dialogue. In the second section 7.2, we address first the issue of how Christians and Muslims can understand each other before suggesting the responsibility of the Church, Islam and the Government on the matter of cohabitation and dialogue.

7.1. The Permanent Challenge of Dialogue

7.1.1. From "Othering" to Dialogue

An important condition to engage in dialogue is being aware of the otherness of the neighbors. Being aware of the presence of the neighbors means acknowledging that we are not the only persons living in a given place, but that there are many other people living near us and that, those other people are not like us. Elisabeth Porter discussing of the necessity of the otherness in international relation distinguishes two forms of it when stating that:

Some form of 'otherness' is necessary to affirm self-identity and to recognize that identity emerges in relation to others who are different from us. When difference is accepted unproblematically as part of life's rich tapestry, there need be no harm in this

'otherness'. Where difference is seen as inferior, strange, weird or is the justification for violence, the difference of 'othering' is harmful. Harmful 'othering' is based on hierarchically valued dichotomies which are not simple opposites, 'but rather mask the power of one side of the binary to control the other' (Bell 2002: 433), categorizing others as us/them, citizen/foreigner and good/evil. One of the most significant harms of dualism is the effect of 'othering' that undermines, demoralizes and potentially fuels tensions that escalate into violence.¹³⁶

The importance of Elisabeth's words lies not only on the significant difference she perceives in the expression "othering", but she calls indirectly the readers to operate a choice, and a good choice above all. In her development, one understands that the expression othering is like a neutral word that takes its sense according to people who use it. Thus, its meaning depends on the mind of its users. However, she points out the risk of mistaking the word that leads inevitably to tensions; giving no chance to collaboration and dialogue. The call here is to take the word in its good sense designating human difference in a positive sense that is, being part of system of human life because humans are created different. When it is perceived in this sense, othering calls to dialogue in a way to make unity in the difference. This call to take the othering in a good sense is not limited to secular societies, is it more important in religious communities (Christians and Islam) where the word of God is preached and where the love should be symbolized visibly through the absence of harms.

7.1.2. *Types of Dialogue*

The context of religious pluralism calls both Islam and Christianity to a new perception of life and religious assessments. That is why Christianity in particular made a significant move from its ancient theology to the new theology passing consecutively through many models like the replacement model (only one true religion), fulfillment model (the one fulfills the many), mutuality model (many true religions called to dialogue), and acceptance model (many true religions: So be it)¹³⁷. This theological shift intends to establish a good relation between different religious groups mainly understood in term of dialogue. There are many types of dialogue that could make sense to religious people. A first type of dialogue is the dialogue of life. It is the more free dialogue concerning the share of life realities in multicultural context where people of different cultural belonging are called to live together, to learn life and culture of each other in a way to understand other and live properly together.

¹³⁶ Elisabeth Porter, *Peacebuilding: Women in international perspective* (London and New-York: Routledge, 2007), 48.

¹³⁷ Knitter, *Introducing Theologies of Religions*, 18-191.

A second type of dialogue is the dialogue of beliefs, regarding theological thoughts and philosophical ideas. Unfortunately, this kind of dialogue seems to be restricted only to the academic domain and institutions. It is mainly technical, abstract and more complicated. That is why it is sometimes avoided not only by common religious people, but also by theologians. A third type of dialogue called euphemistically the dialogue of witnessing to one's faith. This kind of dialogue is the missionary one because it ends finally by an invitation to conversion. Other type of dialogue is that Mahmoud Ayoub¹³⁸ calls dialogue of faith. Although using ideas and methods of the third type of dialogue, it does not aim to convert the dialogue partner. Rather, its aim is to deepen the faith of Muslim and Christian women and men by sharing the personal faith of the other in a deeper and personal level, so that other can know me well and I can also know other well in his faith. One should say that all these types of dialogue are important because they suit both to missionary and good cohabitation vision. What is important to keep in mind is that none of these dialogues should aim to religious and good cohabitation distortion. In other words, they should be used carefully in a way not to put disorder in cohabitation, but to eliminate it from religious people if this is possible. The church thus is encouraged to value all of these types of dialogue in order to accomplish its goal of being an agent of peace, unity, human social development, and render the presence of God visible among people of different horizons.

7.1.3. Scope of Dialogue

The scope of dialogue lies both on the types of dialogue we listed above and on the missionary character of Islam and Christianity. The synthesis that comes out from this consideration directs dialogue toward two main goals: firstly, the dialogue as mission aiming to convert one's dialogue partner, and secondly the dialogue that I prefer to call "sterile" that is, a dialogue that does not relate to mission in its strict sense, rather to a pacific cohabitation of religious specifically in our case in this topic. Considering the inevitable fact of religious pluralism that prevails in the actual context on the one hand and the possible presence of truth in other faiths on the other hand, some theologians have opted simply for the dialogue as means of peaceable cohabitation of religious groups. It is this aspect of dialogue that seems to sound in these words: "Interfaith dialogue, as it was introduced from the early 1970s, was a

¹³⁸ Mahmoud, Ayoub. "Christian-Muslim Dialogue: Goals and Obstacles," in *A Muslim view of Christianity: Essays on Dialogues*, ed. Irfan A. Omar (New York: Maryknoll, Orbis Books, 2007), 68.

controversial subject matter, or it was treated so. Proponents such as Samartha insisted that any motive to convert the dialogue partner of another religion is unacceptable. The dialogue partner is to be treated with respect and should be received with openness.”¹³⁹ This statement shows how complicated was the matter of dialogue from the beginning because it was conceived in a controversial period when the meaning and goal of dialogue were being still debating. According to the view of Samartha, the goal of dialogue at that period was directed mainly toward the conversion of the dialogue partner. To stress more the fact that dialogue does not mean necessarily willing to convert the dialogue partner, one can read with the same authors that:

Dialogue is only possible if we proceed from the expectation of meeting God who has preceded us and has been relating to people within the context of their own culture and conviction. God is there before we come (Acts 17) and our task is not to bring God along, but to witness to the God who is already there. We therefore take off our shoes as we approach men and women of other living faiths. Dialogue is a way of taking seriously that all human are created in God’s image.¹⁴⁰

Therefore, we understand that dialogue is a means of gathering people of God because all human are created in God’s image thus deserving any kind of respect from others. To be clearer, the writer states that in dialogue, it is important to understand that before we go to connect other through (religious) dialogue, we need to keep in mind that God is there before us, or we do not bring God to dialogue partner; rather we share the presence of God in all religious groups. As a result, the dialogue partner is not to be taken as ignorant God, but as someone with whom we can share the blessings and goodness of God. Paul F. Knitter for his part places boldly that: “Sincere and authentic dialogue does not have for its objective the conversion of the other; for conversion depends solely on God’s internal call and the person’s free decision...”¹⁴¹ Paul F. Knitter’s development tries to turn our attention toward not only the fact that conversion is God’s doing; but also invites us to perceive dialogue as originated from God on the same range as mission of God. This perception wants people to disappear behind dialogue and let dialogue be a job of God so that one cannot expect any conversion form any dialogue enterprise. Therefore, the job attributed to church is not seeking to see practically a change when doing dialogue, but to accomplish just its commission given to her

¹³⁹ See “Christian Mission among Other Faiths: Edinburgh 2010 Study Group,” in *Witnessing to Christ in a Pluralistic Age: Christian Mission Among other Faiths*, eds Lalsankima Pachuau and Knud Jørgensen (Oxford:Regnum Books International, 2011), 11-12.

¹⁴⁰ “Christian Mission among Other Faiths: Edinburgh 2010 Study Group,” in *Witnessing to Christ in a Pluralistic Age: Christian Mission Among other Faiths*, eds Lalsankima Pachuau and Knud Jørgensen (Oxford:Regnum Books International, 2011), 23.

¹⁴¹ Knitter, *Introducing Theologies of Religions*, 96.

by God as stressed elsewhere: "We cannot draw the conclusion...that only those who respond will be saved. God's revelation is not limited to the explicit human preaching of the good news, but extends beyond it. We must be prepared to be surprised at those whom we will meet in the kingdom of God."¹⁴² Therefore, an urgent call to reformulate Christian perception of their relation with people of other faiths stand before Christian theologians to lead God's mission through a right way which honors God and people that Christians approach as we can read:

This 'living together' has not only practical implications, but it also needs to be based on a solid theological reflection that justifies such a mutual attitude in accordance with faith. Traditionally, such relations were shaped in the framework of mission. Without denying the cross associated with following Christ and proclaiming the gospel, it may be noted that this approach often led to mistrust and unnecessary confrontations. Thus it seems necessary to ask anew whether that understanding of mission which took the neighbor merely as a receiver of the Christian missionary call is appropriate.¹⁴³

Through these previous statements, we realize that dialogue does not necessary lead to invitation to conversion, but it fosters a good understanding of other so that people of different faith can live together without seeking a way to underestimate, to contradict or to eliminate the presence of other. This kind of dialogue is welcome in our actual context of religious pluralism in other to experience peaceful cohabitations of different religious groups. Peter Nissen understanding well the situation seems to stress this way writhing that

The purpose of mission is not simply to propagate the Christian faith all over the world or to expand the church. Its task is to discover God's initiative in the human world, beyond all religious, cultural, social, political and economic borders and in the farthest corners of society. And in discovering, disclosing and unveiling God's initiative, the church, through its missionary concern, renders a service to the human world. It can help to turn human existence into human coexistence. In a world in which people go their own way, mission brings them at crossroads, where, through the missionary vehicles of encounter and dialogue, they discover the grace of becoming co-travelers.¹⁴⁴

However, as Christianity and Islam have a missionary vocation to witness their faith with the hope to bring other people to one's faith, dialogue is then conceived by some as missionary,

¹⁴² Quoted in "Christian Mission among Other Faiths: Edinburgh 2010 Study Group," in *Witnessing to Christ in a Pluralistic Age: Christian Mission among Other Faiths*, eds Lalsankima Pachuau and Knud Jørgensen (Oxford: Regnum B. I, 2011), 29.

¹⁴³ See "Summary Report From the Working Group on Islam," in *Lutheran World Federation Documentation: Theological Perspectives on Other Faiths*, ed. Hance A. O. Mwakabana (Geneva 2: Lutheran World Federation, 1997), 168.

¹⁴⁴ Nissen, Peter. "'Mission is a must'. A missiological profile of Rogier Van Rossum," in *Mission is a Must: Intercultural Theology and the Mission of the church*, eds Frans Wijssen and Peter Nissen (New York: Editions Rodopi B. V. , 2002), 3.

intending to foster any conversion of the dialogue partner. This is the sense of dialogue that appears in the document *Dialogue and Proclamation (DP)*¹⁴⁵ document in which we can perceive that dialogue must always “remain oriented toward proclamation”, and when we talk of proclamation, we point to the conversion inevitably since the goal of proclamation is somehow to lead to conversion. However, this way of understanding dialogue involves skills and care of practitioners because it must take into account the matter of religious freedom. Therefore, Christians would not complain for theirs who in some cases have shifted from Christianity to Islam; and Muslims would not use any other means to convert at any rate Christians by reason of marriage, glory in society, economically well being and the like. This necessity of skills and care sounds as follows:

...as we have pointed out already, Islam and Christianity are the only two world religions that have missions at the heart of their faith. Christian missions to Muslims in this context should go beyond the making of converts. As the only two missionary religions, it is in the interest of adherents of both traditions to have an open discussion on mission itself. In such conversations, the point has to be made that there can be no mission unless there is freedom of religion and that there is an inherent contradiction between mission or da'wah and criminalization of change of religion. As Kenneth Cragg puts it: ‘A true understanding of freedom, as freedom of movement of mind, demands that the option should exist’ and ‘freedom of belief must include freedom of disbelief’¹⁴⁶

The point here is the acknowledgement of the duty of doing mission in Christianity and Islam on the one hand; and the call to consider the free movement of people from one religion to another due to the religious freedom on the other hand. It means that religious people who have the duty of mission have also the duty to take into account religious freedom that can make their own religious members convert to other religions they consider as opponent. When there is freedom of doing mission, there is also freedom of belief; the two things always go together. One cannot do mission in its full sense or mission through dialogue and at the same time forbid conversion. Still on a way to underline the violation of religious freedom established by human right, other writer could say freely: “Surely one of the most significant tests of human rights is the freedom of religious conversion. Islam, both in practice and in theology, does not find it easy to accept the idea of Muslims becoming Christians. ‘Conversion to Christianity (or to any other religion) is generally regarded as a betrayal of

¹⁴⁵ *Dialogue and Proclamation (DP)* is a document issued jointly by the Commission on Interreligious Dialogue and the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples.

¹⁴⁶ Azumah, John. “Mission among Muslims: Christian Mission and Islam,” in *Witnessing to Christ in a Pluralistic Age: Christian Mission among Other Faiths*, eds Lalsankima Pachuau and Knud Jørgensen (Oxford: Regnum Books International, 2011), 128-129.

family and community, and apostasy which deserves the severest punishment”¹⁴⁷ However, Lamin Sanneh recalling Islam mission in Africa reminds us that Christian mission toward Muslims still stands as a permanent necessity and must be fostered by Muslim Da’wa as he puts it in these words:

Christian experience of Islamic *da’wa* (or appeal) ‘has shown Christians how seriously the vocation to witness needs to be taken’...This special circumstance of the Muslim context invites Christians living among Muslims to bear witness to Jesus. Islam has done us a service. ‘The devotion and sense of self-sacrifice which Muslims have shown in obedience to the call to spread and establish the faith are a poignant reminder of what lies at the heart of Christian discipleship’¹⁴⁸

Through these words, Lamin takes the example of *da’wa* (invitation to joint Islam) to remind that Christians should take into account this manner of doing of Islam to be still missionary among Muslims. It means that in any circumstance, Christians through dialogue with Muslims should seek the way of inviting Muslims to joint Christianity. To conclude, it comes out from these two main positions (Dialogue intending not to convert other and dialogue intending to convert the dialogue partner) that the church has to deal with both of them because the church is at the same time missionary and social that is to say, on the one hand she needs to witness Christ through her dialogue with the people of other faiths, on the other hand she needs to establish a societal well living with people of other faith through dialogue of life.

7.1.4. *Limits of Dialogue*

If in the name of the new context of globalization and religious pluralism we are aware of a necessary change in how religious people should behave vis-à-vis other faiths in term of dialogue, nevertheless dialogue must have some limits when practicing it. These limits are never a simple matter of hypocrisy or fear before other faiths; but significantly a matter of the very essential components of every religion making sense to every religion. These components are named occasionally by “unchangeable truth”, “nonnegotiable”, “plinth”, and “pillar” that can never be modified without causing any damage to every religion. Both Islam and Christianity that living together have these nonnegotiable truths that are unshakable from their very essence, and that other beliefs must not attack or deny any way. It is certainly in

¹⁴⁷ Vinoth Ramachandra, *Faiths in conflict? Christian Integrity in a Multicultural World* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 31.

¹⁴⁸ Nickel, *Peaceable Witness Among Muslims*, 33.

this level that sterile dialogue aiming to deepen simply life realities makes sense. On this observation, Paul Knitter can put the fact in a detailed as follows:

Every religion has its own *nonnegotiables*. Here is another important lesson for all Christians as they move into deeper dialogue with others. There seem to be certain convictions or values or beliefs in the heart of hearts of all religious persons that they simply are not able to put on the table of dialogue for possible questioning. Even though they might want to, they can't. Even though with their head they might tell themselves that dialogue requires putting everything up for question, in their hearts they know that some things are in a specially protected place and can't be touched. We are talking about convictions or commitments that define the identity of the religious person. To question them is to question who the person is and wants to be. Most of us can't do that, if we are honest about ourselves.¹⁴⁹

This nonnegotiable is not a matter of mere religious people's invention, it is rooted in the holy Scripture and doctrine of every religion. Biblical texts like John 3: 16, 14: 6, Acts 4: 12 are well known for their character of Jesus' uniqueness in matter of salvation and that Christianity can't pass by: "The Christian faith cannot stand without claiming for Jesus Christ a constitutive uniqueness". "Constitutive uniqueness" means that Jesus, and only Jesus, "opens access to God for all human beings"¹⁵⁰ The Pope Paul VI in the postconciliar developments, in a way to avoid "hidden energy" of the good news on the one hand, and to underline Christian duty to evangelize other people on the other hand can stress seriously in *Evangelii Nuntiandi* that it is "incumbent by the command of the Lord Jesus, so that people can believe and be saved. This message is indeed necessary. It is unique. It cannot be replaced. It does not permit either indifference, syncretism or accommodation. It is a question of people's salvation....It is truth"¹⁵¹ After pointing at some elements of dialogue limitation in Christian side, let us move toward Islam side to show also some limitative elements. Islam limits stand like in the Bible, in the very Koran and the prophet Mohammed. In order to be more explicit, by Kor 3: 19; 3: 95; it is said that "Surely the (true) religion with God is Islam..." and "whoever seeks a religion other than Islam, it shall not be accepted from him, and in the hereafter he shall be among the losers"¹⁵² Further, these words supposed to have been said by the prophet stress directly the uniqueness of the prophet in matter of salvation for people today as we can read again with Irfan: "whoever died in the faith of Jesus, and died in Islam before he heard of me, his lot shall be good. But whoever hears of me today and yet does not

¹⁴⁹ Knitter, *Introducing Theologies of Religions*, 102.

¹⁵⁰ Dupuis quoted in Knitter, *Introducing Theologies of Religions*, 91.

¹⁵¹ Veli-Matti Karkkainen, *An Introduction to the Theology of Religions: Biblical, Historical and Contemporary Perspectives* (United States of America: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 119.

¹⁵² Mahmoud, Ayoub. "Roots of Muslim-Christian Conflict," in *A Muslim View of Christianity: Essays on Dialogue*, ed. Irfan A. Omar (New York: Maryknoll, Orbis Books, 2007), 44.

assent to me, he shall surely perish”¹⁵³ One might then conclude that out of Koran, out of Mohammed, and out of Islam there is no salvation. After looking closer to both Christianity and Islam affirmation on their respective unchangeable truths, it appears clear that dialogue even advisable in the context of religious pluralism, it has however its limits to be respected otherwise dialogue becomes a factor of serious issues in religious cohabitation rather to ensure a good cohabitation.

7.1.5. Mission (Proclamation) and Dialogue

We have underlined above the two main perspectives of dialogue namely the dialogue of good cohabitation and that intending any conversion of the dialogue partner as mission way. For John Paul II, mission and dialogue have a dialectical character in the sense that in Christian witnessing to the world or people of other faiths, mission and dialogue are in the same time valuable as he set it clearly in his Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris Missio*:

In the light of economy of salvation, the church sees no conflict between proclaiming Christ and engaging in interreligious dialogue. Instead, she feels the need to link the two in the context of her mission *ad gentes*. These two elements must maintain both their intimate connection and their distinctiveness; therefore they should not be confused, manipulated or regarded as identical, as though they were interchangeable. I recently wrote to the bishops of Asia: ‘Although the church gladly acknowledges whatever is true and holy in the religious traditions of Buddhism, Hinduism and Islam as a reflection of that truth which enlightens all men, this does not lessen her duty and resolve to proclaim without fail Jesus Christ who is: the way and the truth and the life.... The fact that the followers of other religions can receive God’s grace and be saved by Christ apart from the ordinary means which he has established does not thereby cancel the call to faith and baptism which God wills for all people’. Indeed Christ himself ‘while expressly insisting on the need of faith and baptism, at the same time confirmed *the need for the church*, into which people enter through Baptism as through a door.’ Dialogue should be conducted and implemented with the conviction that *the church is the ordinary means of salvation* and that *she alone* possesses the fullness of the means of salvation.¹⁵⁴

One can retain from these words of the Pope the insistence on the proclamation through dialogue as well as direct preaching because the evangelical message is not limited to the mere dialogue of life; rather it goes beyond to address a proclamation that fosters the conversion of the hearers. However, dialogue and mission cannot be confused or separated

¹⁵³ Mahmoud, “Roots of Muslim,” 44.

¹⁵⁴ See Camps, Arnulf. “The Evolution, Involution and Revolution of the Concept and Reality of mission and Evangelization,” in *‘Mission is a Must’: Intercultural Theology and The Mission of the Church*, eds Frans Wijzen and Peter Nissen (New York: Edition Rodopi B. V. , 2002), 1.17.

one from other. The understanding of the relation between mission and dialogue seems to be equally ambiguous and Samartha does not hesitate to put the two things together as we can read in his words: "Dialogue emerged out of the womb of mission and it has never been easy for mission to cut the umbilical cord and to recognize the independence of the growing child without denying the relationship."¹⁵⁵ According to these words, dialogue is a part of mission, or better in his words the "child" of mission. It means that the two things cannot go separately and moreover, dialogue should aim to accomplish mission or must be directed toward mission. David J. Bosch sees the same interdependence of dialogue and mission when recalling the statement of the San Antonio Commission for the World Mission and Evangelism (CWME) of the WCC in these terms: "We affirm that witness does not preclude dialogue but invites it, and that dialogue does not preclude witness but extends and deepens it"¹⁵⁶ Seeing the situation in the Pèrè plain, I think that dialogue is very necessary to give to Christians and Muslims in this area the sense of living together in respecting each other and in sharing God's mission together. God's mission that consists to keep a good social relation and a good beliefs relation. The good social collaboration and the religious peace that are experienced already in the plain are the first steps in dialogue and could be strengthened more if each religious group considers the necessity of dialogue.

7.1.6. Historic Significant Initiative for Dialogue: "A Common Word Between Us and You"

We cannot leave this session without mentioning a historic significant initiative for dialogue made by Muslims in order to show a common framework with Christians that could be a solid base of dialogue. Going from the fact that the Prophet Muhammad stood again on the two great commandments taught by Jesus Christ and strengthened it as well (Loving God and Loving neighbour), an initiative group of Muslims launched a bridge of dialogue that could facilitate our living together as Christians and Muslims. The significant letter entitled "A Common Word Between Us and You" addressed to Christian community on October 2007 is not only a recall that we have common basic attitudes, values and practices, but also and above all a vibrant invitation of Christian community for loving God, for loving neighbour, for engaging in dialogue because no reason can makes us walking separately. In order to have

¹⁵⁵ Quoted by Ataullah, Siddiqui. "Christian-Muslim Dialogue: Problems and Challenges," in *Muslim-Christian Dialogue: Promise and Problems*, eds M. Darrol Bryant and S. A. Ali (St Paul, Minnesota: Paragon house, 1998), 81.

¹⁵⁶ David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 487

more information about the letter, we find important to come back to its opening words placed as a summary:

Common Word Between Us and You” was launched on October 13th 2007 initially as an open letter signed by 138 leading Muslim scholars and intellectuals (including such figures as the Grand Muftis of Egypt, Syria, Jordan, Oman, Bosnia, Russia, and Istanbul) to the leaders of the Christian churches and denominations of the entire world, including His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI. In essence it proposed, based on verses from the Holy Qur’an and the Holy Bible, that Islam and Christianity share, at their core, the twin “golden” commandments of the paramount importance of loving God and loving one’s neighbor. Based on this joint common ground, it called for peace and harmony between Christians and Muslims worldwide.¹⁵⁷

After long debate and exchange of ideas on the writing in Yale University in New Haven (United States of America), Christian leaders in return agreed with the letter and they initiated also another letter as the Christian community’s response to the previous letter, known as Yale response. The Yale response issued in November 2007 and entitled: “Loving God and Neighbor Together: A Christian Response to ‘A common Word Between Us and You’” was an affirmative response of Christian leaders to Muslims’ letter, agreeing with Muslims’ theological development and going further with other theological reflections on love, God, and neighbor in a way to foster to dialogue and peace keeping. Unfortunately, the golden document remained simply theoretical statement; and many undesirable events are taking place all over the world between Christians and Muslims. One could ask if the document has not been diffused broadly all over the world! Nevertheless, it remains a very significant departure for the relation between the two great religions of the world and should be maintained and developed more and more to reach the desired goal of the very initiative. For, there is nothing amazing to see people of God fighting every time, every where, killing each other in the name of religion and in the name of God; God we define together as Love, peace giver and so on. After all, the important thing stands that:

All of us share this world for but a brief moment in time. The question is whether we spend that time focused on what pushes us apart, or whether we commit ourselves to an effort—a sustained effort—to find common ground, to focus on the future we seek for our children, and to respect the dignity of all human beings...¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁷ H. R. H. Prince Ghazi Bin Muhammad of Jordan. “On ‘A Common Word Between Us and You,’” in *A Common Word: Muslims and Christians on Loving God and Neighbor*, eds Miroslav Volf, Ghazi bin Muhammad and Melissa Yarrington (Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2010), 3.

¹⁵⁸ President Barack Obama, quoted by Tony Blair. “Foreword,” in *A Common Word: Muslims and Christians on Loving God and Neighbor*, ix.

These words stand important for the fact that they focus at the same time on the commonality of the world for all, the finitude of all, and the call for keeping a good relationship now for the sake of our future generation. The commonality of the world stresses our inseparability in this word because there is no other planet where people could leave separately one another. The brevity of time points on our finitude, calling thus, to an urgent arrangement of common life because in an undetermined moment, we will leave this world. The mention of the future underlines the concern that we must have for our coming generation. We must not make them inherit a world spoiled by our bad behaviors, our lasting lack of agreement and dialogue; rather we need to let them inherit a world where there is agreement, a world of peace and dialogue, a world of hope even for their future generation.

7.2. Some Suggestions for Strengthening and Improving Christian-Muslim Relations at the Père Plain.

The section aims to give some suggestions that could reinforce and improve the Christian-Muslim relation in the plain. It will be a matter of putting some general statements and events that will serve as basis and then to relate them to the reality in plain in a way to show how they could be helpful in improving Christian-Muslim relation in the plain.

7.2.1. Reconsidering Our Common Sad History to Understand Each Other

Today, what refrains in many cases a sincere and objective dialogue between Christians and Muslims is the ignorance of one's own past or in other cases, the carelessness of one's own past to accuse most of the time other as being the only guilty. Therefore, a retrospective view of the history of both Christianity and Islam is necessary to a possible fruitful dialogue that is, the bad way Christianity and Islam conducted their missionary task along the history. The following statement is in accordance with this idea as puts the report of a consultation:

What we constantly encounter in Christian-Muslim relations is the memory of certain past events which may have happened long ago, but are remembered as if they had taken place only recently. With this kind of memory structure, the genealogical approach to undo some of the suspicion, and the problems posed by Christian-Muslim relations become all the more important and urgent. Christians and Muslims alike forget how badly they have treated each other in history and both present the other as the historical culprit. This tendency creates psychological and historical barrier for developing genuine relations. In order to overcome these barriers, an honest historical

re-appraisal, preferably together, is essential. This can create the most needed atmosphere for genuine repentance and forgiveness.¹⁵⁹

The consultation does not merely turn back our view to the past to point to the origin of what makes difficult the relation between Christians and Muslims, but proposes also what is important to do in order to come to a neat conception of each-other: an honest historical re-appraisal, preferably, together means being face to face to talk together. The expression re-appraisal evokes something already done in that way but not in a right way. In order to render the relation appreciable, Christianity and Islam should be together face to face and place on the same table their common history of mission to evaluate what was good in it to be pursued on the one hand; and what was the failure to correct on the other hand. In Christian side, the sad memory stands on how the first missionaries in general have presented the message of gospel all over the world. Standing on the uniqueness of both Christ and Christianity, they “exaggerated” in rending the announcement of the gospel harmful for people. The first step in this skidding lies on the fact that they linked at the beginning mission to colonization, the one that the theology of mission named significantly the “Medieval Roman Catholic Paradigm”. It is one among the six paradigms the church knew in her history of mission namely: The apocalyptic paradigm of primitive Christianity, the Hellenistic paradigm of the patristic period, the Protestant (Reformation) paradigm, the modern Enlightenment paradigm, and the emerging ecumenical paradigm.¹⁶⁰ Surely there were other distortions of Christian mission like the individualization of salvation (Pelagianism), Mission between church and State, Ecclesiastization of salvation, but the main issues were that of mixing mission to colonization; and indirect and direct missionary wars/crusades. Alluding especially to the concern of the mission mixed with colonization that he situates the origin from the pope Alexander VI, David J. Bosch states clearly the fact as follows:

So, hard upon the discoveries of the sea routes to India and the Americas, Pope Alexander VI (in the Papal Bull *Inter Caetera Divinae*) divided the world outside of Europe between the kings of Portugal and Spain, granting them full authority over all the territories they had already discovered as well as over those still to be discovered. This Bull (like its predecessor, *Romanus Pontifex* of Nicolas V (1454), which had dealt with privileges granted to Portugal only) was based on the medieval assumption that the pope held supreme authority over the entire globe, including the pagan world. Here lies the origin of the right of patronage (*patronato real* in Spanish, *padroado* in Portuguese), according to which the rulers of the two countries had dominion over

¹⁵⁹ “Report and Recommendations,” in *Islam in Asia: Perspectives for Christian-Muslim Encounter*, eds J. Paul Rajashekar and H. S. Wilson (Geneva 2: Lutheran World Federation, 1992), 176.

¹⁶⁰ David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (New York: Maryknoll, Orbis Books, 1991), 181-182.

their colonies, not only politically, but also ecclesiastically. Colonialism and mission, as a matter of course, were interdependent; the right to have colonies carried with it the duty to Christianize the colonized.¹⁶¹

More blatant are the crusades initiated by church leaders. The first one launched in 1096 by pope Urban II did not distinguish between pagan and heretics. Anybody belonging to any of these categories could be killed with impunity and, in Manegold's judgment, the one who killed such a person would incur not guilt but rather deserved praise and honor. The killing of a heathen or apostate, it was now suggested, was exceptionally pleasing to God. It appears important here to put again the fact as described by Ayoub:

On November 27, 1095, Pope Urban II proclaimed a crusade in a fiery speech delivered before a large audience assembled for that purpose at the Council of Clermont. According to the famous chronicler of the First Crusade, Fulcher of Chartres, the pope exhorted his subjects in the name of Christ to 'hasten to exterminate this vile race from our lands and to aid the Christian inhabitants in time.' To add greater stress to this exhortation, the pope declared that 'Christ commands it.' It was natural for the fighters to cry out '*Deus le volt*' (God wills it) in their merciless assault on Muslim cities. The holy pontiff then granted absolution to all those who would join in this 'holy war.' No doubt papal absolution contributed to the ruthless savagery with which the crusading armies carried out their mission.¹⁶²

What is striking in this recall of the crusade is the fact of putting the will of God on the one hand, and the forgiveness promised to such killers on the other hand to accomplish what was not really good in the eyes of God. Both the so called "will of God" and the insurance to be forgiven by the holy pontiff fostered the courage of Christians to the blatant act of fighting Muslims. Having their mind colored by this sad past, Muslims in African land think generally that colonization could be the 'modern continuation of the crusades against Muslims. This is what sounds in Mahmoud Ayoub's words when stating that: "Motivated by the affirmation that salvation is by Christ alone, Christians sent both missionaries and armies to colonize and convert the Muslims".¹⁶³ The words of Mahmoud Ayoub put in light the bad image Muslims in Africa particularly have of Christianity such that if nothing is done to change the mind, Christianity will always remain as an everlasting enemy of Islam, and continue to influence negatively the way of dialogue between Christians and Muslims. Ovey N. Mohammed discussing the Christian crusade did not have pain to put in due form this extract structure of

¹⁶¹ Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 227.

¹⁶² Mahmoud, Ayoub. "Roots of Muslim-Christian Conflict," in *A Muslim view of Christianity: Essays on Dialogue*, ed. Irfan A. Omar (New York: Maryknoll, Orbis Books, 2007), 47.

¹⁶³ Mahmoud, Ayoub. "Islam and Christianity: Between Tolerance and Acceptance," in *A Muslim view of Christianity: Essays on Dialogue*, ed. Irfan A. Omar (New York: Maryknoll, Orbis Books, 2007), 38.

the Pope's message to Christians calling them openly to fight against Muslim Turks as follows:

Christian warriors, who seek without end for vain pretexts for war, rejoice, for you have today found true ones. You who have been so often the terror of your fellow citizens, go and fight against the barbarians, go and fight for the deliverance of the holy places; you who sell for vile pay the strength of your arms to the fury of others, armed with the sword of the Maccabees, go and merit an eternal reward. If you triumph over your enemies, the kingdoms of the East will be your heritage; if you are conquered, you will have the glory of dying in the very same place as Jesus Christ, and God will not forget that He shall have found you in His holy ranks. This is the moment ...in which you may expiate so many violences [sic] committed in the bosom of peace... If you must have blood, bathe your hands in the blood of the infidels. I speak you with harshness, because my ministry obliges me to do so: so soldiers of hell, become soldiers of the living God! When Christ summons you to his defence [sic]...see nothing but the shame and the evils of the Christians: listen to nothing but the groans of Jerusalem.¹⁶⁴

After all, the fact is clear and true and no doubt, we can join Ovey to say that even Western Christianity had its jihad (holy war) in the history that need to be re appraised to give a solid basis to Christian-Muslim relation and dialogue.

Regarding Muslim side, we must cite first the closer case of Islamization of Adamaoua. Through history, we know that Adamaoua was Islamized in two ways: Peaceable Islamization and Islamization by force. The Islamization by force or jihad is the great armed conquest undertaken by Modibo Adama after receiving the authority from Outhman Dan Fodio of Sokoto by have been given "the white flag of jihad" to be "Lamido Foubina"¹⁶⁵ that is, Adamaoua. The first step is to propose to the local chief and his population to be under the leadership of Foulbe. If they agree with, then there is no longer problem. However, if they refuse to submit to Foulbe leadership, the use of force to convert them becomes inevitable. The typical case of Belaka Koiya is striking:

Belaka Koiya and Mboum people in the region of Ngaoundéré were forced to become Muslims by Djobdi. 'When Koiya refused to submit to Muslim authority the Fulani population gathered their auxiliaries and decided to force Koiya to submission...Djobdi ceased to rely on his own resource alone, and sought for urgent help from Buba Njidda of Rai, and Sambo of Tibati...After three months of siege,

¹⁶⁴ Ovey N. Mohammed, *Muslim-Christian Relations: Past . Present . Future* (New-york: Maryknoll, Orbis Books, 1999), 35

¹⁶⁵ Thomas Sundnes Drønen, and Jean Koulagna, *La voie de l'Islam et la voie de Christ: La croix et le croissant en Afrique de l'Ouest*, SIL, 2002, 62.

Koiya acknowledged defeat. In the peace settlement, Koiya accepted Islam as the religion for himself and his people.¹⁶⁶

The situation all over the world is no gayer for Christians. Raymond Ibrahim in his book: *Crucified Again: Exposing Islam's New War on Christians*¹⁶⁷ argues with some examples how Christians are persecuted in Egypt and other sides of the world as we can read: "As you read this, Christians around the world are being murdered, raped, plundered, abducted, forcibly converted to Islam, or otherwise oppressed by Muslims. Christians in Muslim-majority areas are some of the most vulnerable and horribly oppressed people on Earth..."¹⁶⁸ It is precisely in Egypt that Islamists blaming Christians for the ouster of Mohammed Morsi, launched an anti-Christian violence that reached epidemic levels, with an estimated 82 churches across Egypt attacked and heavily damaged by Morsi.¹⁶⁹ In citing the renowned Muslim scholar Ibn Khaldun (1332-1406), Ibrahim lets us knowing the very motive of this kind of acts Christians are undergoing:

[Jihad] is a religious duty, because of the universalism of the Muslim mission and the obligation to convert everybody to Islam either by persuasion or by force... The other religious groups did not have a universal mission, and the holy war was not a religious duty for them... But Islam is under obligation to gain power over the nations.¹⁷⁰

In reading carefully the words of Ibn Khaldun, one perceives clearly the idea that other religious groups, Christianity included have no global vision or duty to spread their beliefs to gain converts all over the world and that only Islam has this duty for universal mission. This is an example of denying the presence of other in a pluralistic world worsening thus the relation between different religious groups. Many other sad realities could be mentioned in addition: "In Iran, an Iranian Pastor named Nadarkhani Youssof continues to suffer in prison because of his faith in Christ. Most recently, he was offered an offer to release only if he publicly acknowledges the prophet Muhammed of Islam as a messenger of God."¹⁷¹ Pakistan

¹⁶⁶ Simbé, *The Malloum in Northern Cameroon*, 16.

¹⁶⁷ News Agemeiner, "The Muslim War Against Christians"; available from <http://www.algemeiner.com/2013/08/21/the-muslim-war-against-christians/>; Internet; accessed 15 February 2014.

¹⁶⁸ News Agemeiner, "The Muslim War Against Christians" <http://www.algemeiner.com/2013/08/21/the-muslim-war-against-christians/>; Internet; accessed 15 February 2014.

¹⁶⁹ Mohammed Morsi is a man of State in Egypt, president of Freedom and Justice Party, formed by Muslim brotherhood.

¹⁷⁰ News Agemeiner, "The Muslim War Against Christians" <http://www.algemeiner.com/2013/08/21/the-muslim-war-against-christians/>; Internet; accessed 15 February 2014.

¹⁷¹ Focus de Prière de Ramadan 2012, du 20 juillet au 18 Août, Démonstrons l'Amour de Christ à nos voisins musulmans par la prière, 23. « En Iran, un pasteur iranien nommé Youssof Nadarkhni continu de souffrir en

is not the exception when we know that in this country “Per year, there are at least 700 cases of girls kidnapped and forced to marry Muslims.”¹⁷² To sum up what concerns the persecution that Muslims apply to Christians through jihad, a statistic states that about 105.000 Christians are killed per year all over the world because of their faith.¹⁷³ To conclude, the Christian-Muslim view and conception of other is characterized mostly by the ancient history of religious wars either physically, morally or theologically. In the Pérè plain where these bad images influence the relation, there is need to move to a good side of relation. The image given to Christianity by Muslims as religion of fire mentioned in Chapter 5 needs to be deleted in order to foster a more credible and true relation. The same thing needs to be done in Muslim side where Islam is generally considered by Christians as religion of harm or fore according to the way Islam took place in many areas of Adamaoua as mentioned above concerning Belaka. Therefore, in order to come back to our good mind, expressions as “winner” for one’s self, “loser” for other, “battle”, “victor” for one’s self, “victim” for the other and the like are to be removed from our daily vocabulary because they are in connection with this sad past of religious people . They worsen nothing but the relationship of religions in our world. They should not sound today among religious people when the understanding of religious pluralism calls all religions to dialogue, peaceable cohabitation, acceptance of other and to a common front to fight against humankind alienation and poverty in a way to improve human life that is a precious gift of God. Remembering our common sad history aims not to come back to these things and to begin to practice them again in the past bad way; rather it calls all to remember the bad past so that we should not let such things happen again.

7.2.2. Message of the Parable of the Good Samaritan to Religious People

This history is a theological resource for the Christians with regard to strengthening and developing the concept of love and neighbor which I have previously shown to be concepts utilized in the description of the relation between Christians and Muslims.

After all the failure of both sides, it stands important to turn to the message of Jesus contained in the parable of the Good Samaritan. All begins with the question of an

prison à cause de sa foi en Christ. Très récemment on lui a proposé une offre de libération si seulement il reconnaissait publiquement le prophète Mohammed de l’ Islam comme un messenger de Dieu. »

¹⁷² Focus de Prière de Ramadan 2012, 23. « Par an, il y a au moins 700 cas de filles kidnappées et forcées à épouser les musulmans. »

¹⁷³ Focus de Prière de Ramadan 2012, 23.

expert in the Mosaic Law to Jesus to know which the most important commandment is. The conversation between Jesus and the expert of the Mosaic Law goes ahead without any problem in the question-answer system. To the first important question addressed to Jesus to know what to do to receive eternal life, Jesus sent back the teacher of the Law in the Scriptures where he found himself the answer in these terms: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind”; and ‘Love your neighbour as you love yourself.’” Luke 10: 25-27. Everything is clear according to the answer given by the teacher of the Law himself and Jesus happily sent him to do so. However, one thing captivates the mind of the Mosaic Law expert and will soon appear in his second important question: “Who is my neighbour?” Instead to say shortly to the teacher of the Law, your neighbour is the unknown to you, the neglected and careless people, people you see as your enemies; Jesus took all his time and wisdom to answer to the question in a most wide way putting:

There was once a man who was going down Jerusalem to Jericho when robbers attacked him, stripped him, and beat him up, leaving him half dead. It so happened that a priest was going down that road; but then he saw the man, he walked on by, on the other side. In the same way a Levite also came along, went over and looked at the man, and then walked on by, on the other side. But a Samaritan who was traveling that way came upon the man, and when he saw him, his heart was filled of pity. He went over to him, poured oil and wine on his wounds and bandaged them; then he put the man on his own animal and took him to an inn, where he took care of him. The next day he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper. ‘Take care of him,’ he told the innkeeper, ‘and when I come back this way, I will pay you whatever else you spend on him.’ And Jesus concluded, “In your opinion, which one of these three acted like a neighbour towards the man attacked by the robbers?” The teacher of the Law answered, “The one who was kind to him.” Once again, Jesus sends the Law teacher telling him: “You go, then, and do the same.”¹⁷⁴

The great concern in the debate between Jesus and the Law teacher is undoubtedly the personality and meaning of a “neighbour”. Through the long and wide explanation given by Jesus, it becomes clear that our neighbour is an ordinary person like us. It is a known or unknown, man, woman, old, young, child, without any distinction of religion, locality, race, tribe and sex...that we meet or with whom we live together. The fact that neither the priest nor the Levite took care of the man, but only a non considered in society, a rejected pagan, a “Samaritan”; is an urgent call to change mind and act like religious people that is, people having in them the Spirit of God. From Samaritan example, we encounter a surprising fact that, how those we do not consider at all can do marvelous things better than us, and the fact

¹⁷⁴ Luke 10: 30- 37.

here is to notice, how shameful for us this act is as religious people. Rather, religious people are the ones to show good examples to those we consider as not knowing God's will and commandment. Nothing can make us affirming whether the man who took care of the bitten one is religious or non religious, but the term well known in the area at that time "Samaritan" says more about him. However, one thing is essential: he did what either a priest or a Levite could not do. Christians and Muslims in the Pérè plain need to perceive the real sense of this parable. Time is not for them to ask: who is my neighbor? This question must be out of age for them. Rather, the time is for them to ask: How can I do for a good neighborhood, because they knew already each other. What the neighbor can do to other is justly to help in time of need as done by Muslims in the plain (see point 5.1.1). In the same way, Christians and Muslims who are regarding each other as "enemies" are reminded to live like "neighbors", people of the same and unique God, who are caring each other in critical situation; who are making the earth livable and lovable for all. We do need to move from our situation of bad Christians and bad Muslims to Good Christians and Good Muslims like the bad Samaritan of the past time became in Jesus' time from now on a Good Samaritan, putting in positive confusion the world. The world is in difficult situation like that man in the Good Samaritan's history because it is beaten by the blow of diseases, corruption, tensions, lack of dialogue, famine, war and needs a help. That help cannot come from elsewhere than from religious people who know God's will and can take care of the world in general, and of the neighbors in particular to restore life and conviviality.

7.2.3. The Church Responsibility in Local Level

The suggestions in this section come from some documents and from me. They aim to point to some ways through which the church can play fully and properly her role in order to lead Christians to live a life of peace and dialogue with Muslims in the very Pérè plain.

-Need of a general mindset change. The church has the heavy duty to inform Christians about the pluralistic new context of religions existence calling at the same time to a new conception on how to do mission and how to live together with people of other faiths.

-Living one's faith honestly as a witness. To begin with, Christians are invited to live in faith integrity, charity, compassion, humility, and to overcome all form of arrogance, of condescendence and of depreciation toward other faiths. In this stance, Christians are invited to imitate Jesus. In all the aspects of the life, and particularly in their witness, Christians are

called to follow the example and the teachings of Jesus Christ, sharing in his love, glorifying and honoring God the Father in the power of the Holy Ghost (Jn 20: 21-23). The time has come not to discuss who is right and who is wrong; this kind of debate leads but only in everlasting incomprehension, the time is to ask one's self: what should I do to live in peace with others because all have full dignity to exist and to promote their religious convictions.¹⁷⁵

-Christians are encouraged to witness their faith ethically. The Human Rights that comprises the right to profess publicly, to practice, to diffuse and to change religion, derives from the very dignity of the human being, that founds on the fact that all human beings are created in the image and likeness of God (Gn 1: 26). Therefore, all human beings are equal in rights and responsibilities. When a religion, regardless it to be, is manipulated for political purposes, or when a religion is subject to persecutions, Christians are called to render a prophetic witness in denouncing such actions.¹⁷⁶

-Christians are encouraged to respect all individuals culturally. Christians acknowledge that the gospel challenges and enriches cultures at the same time. Even if the gospel questions certain aspects of cultures, Christians are called to respect all individual. Christians are equally called to discern elements of their own cultures challenged by the gospel in a way to live a pure and dynamic gospel life.¹⁷⁷

-Being careful in keeping good image of others. We encourage the church and all Christians in general to a more positive and true knowledge of Islam in a way to remove apathy or antipathy and to build a relationship based on friendship; to pay attention to the needs of Muslims and not to ignore their problems, to realize that aggression is often a reaction to neglect and depravation.¹⁷⁸

-They must "be attentive to the mass media's projection of Islam; to try to challenge and/or correct any prejudiced attitude towards Islam"¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁵ Suggestion taken from the document *Le témoignage Chrétien dans un monde multireligieux*.

¹⁷⁶ From *Le témoignage Chrétien dans un monde multireligieux*

¹⁷⁷ From *Le témoignage Chrétien dans un monde multireligieux*

¹⁷⁸ "Report and Recommendations," in *Islam in Asia: Perspectives for Christian-Muslim Encounter*, eds J. Paul Rajashekar and H. S. Wilson (Geneva 2: Lutheran World Federation, 1992), 189.

¹⁷⁹ "Report and Recommendations," in *Islam in Asia: Perspectives for Christian-Muslim Encounter*, eds J. Paul Rajashekar and H. S. Wilson (Geneva 2: Lutheran World Federation, 1992), 190.

7.2.4. Islam Responsibility in Local Level

The section aims to point to Muslim leaders' responsibility. Through it I give some practical advices on how they can deal with the matter of relation and dialogue with Christians imposed by the multireligious context, in relation with Human Rights.

-Muslim leaders and Muslims are called to recognize that in the new context of religious and cultural pluralism; of the dignity of all human beings, the land belongs to nobody in singular way, but to all. Therefore, this fact calls to living and witnessing in world of many valuable religions and cultures that implies respect and consideration of them.

-In order to make more impact on this important concern, a specific program regarding multireligious context and its corollaries, the implementation of Human Right in the every day practice of Islamic faith appears necessary for a new comprehension of the world. In that way, the teaching could reach even the lowest Muslim communities so that relation with people of other faiths could be improved everywhere.

-Need to separate mixed marriage and conversion. Muslim leader in the name of Human Rights are called to recognize that marriage with people of other faiths in general, and with Christians in particular does not implies automatic or compulsory conversion of the Christian partner; conversion derives from free will and conviction.

-Need to separate power and religion. Even though traditionally Muslims have linked religion to political or traditional power (a ruler must be no other people than a Muslim), the fact of living in the world of many religions and cultures on one hand, and the equality in dignity of all human beings on the other hand, should influence this traditional conception and give today equal responsibility to every religion, we mean Christians and other faiths can also properly be traditional rulers over Muslims communities.

7.2.5. Co-Responsibility of Church and Islam in National Level

The suggestion for a united effort is inspired particularly by the document of the Joint Statement Opposing Religious Extremism. Its importance lies in the fact that both Christian and Muslim sides are aware of the risk of religious extremism and take together a decision of keeping religious peace with other. We find that this can be relevant in Cameroon because it will unite Christians and Muslims to take a common engagement to respect other and keep religious peace in the country like it is already the case in Norway. It can be equally relevant

at the plain given that the decision taken in the national level will influence until the local level and make Christian and Muslim communities aware of the call to religious peace.

Referring to the revelation of one of our interviewees¹⁸⁰, it appears clear that the responsibility for a good cohabitation of Christianity and Islam is shared between the two religions. It is not possible to reach the peace we need if the two religious groups are not involved at the same time in the concern; above all if only the minority religious group is the one who initiate the process for peace keeping. In addition, all the religious tensions we have today are due to religious extremism. Christians and Muslims in Norway are aware of this inescapable matter in making a co-signed document, a *Joint Statement Opposing Religious Extremism*¹⁸¹ in Oslo, November 22nd 2011 to prevent any attempt of one group to attack another. We do not put all the content here; but we refer only to some extract we consider with universal value anywhere these two religions live together. From the description of extremism to the joint appeal for keep religious peace, the Joint Statement is set as follows:

Characteristics

Religious extremism has many characteristics. We mention especially these:

- Extremists believe that they are alone in interpreting their own religion correctly, so that they cannot cooperate with others who think differently, even though these belong to the same religious tradition.
- Extremists are convinced that there are groups of people that it is impossible to co-exist with, and which they must therefore oppose and remove, either from society as a whole or certain places or areas.
- Extremists reduce human dignity for groups that they oppose, and reject the idea that human rights apply to these groups.
- Extremists accuse those who think differently of having certain political, ethical or religious opinions, without allowing them to define for themselves who they are or what they believe.
- Extremists use gender-based hierarchies and power structures in which women are denied human rights and human dignity on the same level as men.
- Extremists use a language of hate, inciting to conflict with certain groups of people and with those who disagree with their convictions.
- Extremists are willing to use terror, violence or other forms of compulsion in order to enforce the consequences of their religious views on others.....

¹⁸⁰ D1, 11.07.2013.

¹⁸¹ See appendix 3.

Joint appeal

- We urge religious leaders to continue to raise these questions in their preaching and teaching, in order to reject and prevent extremism in their own ranks.
- We urge religious leaders and faith communities to join together and speak out publicly against religious extremism.
- We urge religious leaders and faith communities to develop contingency plans to prevent and oppose extremism.
- We urge congregations and assemblies to raise these issues in study groups, plenary sessions and dialogues.
- We urge religious leaders, congregations and assemblies to protect one another's members, holy places and other institutions which could be threatened by religious extremists.
- We urge religious leaders, congregations and assemblies to expose and oppose the use of holy writings and religious rhetoric in a way that can create conditions for the development of religious extremism.
- We urge religious leaders, congregations and assemblies to speak out against hateful and threatening descriptions of others, not least in the media and on the internet.
- We urge religious leaders, congregations and assemblies to oppose hateful descriptions and harassment of women.
- We urge the media and other public bodies to present a nuanced picture of religious belief when violence and force are committed in the name of religion.
- We urge the various faith communities to use their international contacts and networks to strengthen the struggle against religious extremism nationally and internationally.

7.2.6. Government Responsibility

Basing on what we have so far as sources for our thesis, one realizes without risk to fail that the history of relations between religions in general, and Christianity and Islam in particular in Cameroon are colored by the impact of the government (see chapter 4); favoring one religion at the expense of the other, from the colonial administration to the first independent country leader. As a result, the gap between religions is broadened more and more worsening in a large sense religions relation. That is why we believe firmly that the government in one sense or the other has his responsibility in the matter if we like to build a peaceful and coherent community in a multi religious and multicultural world. As such:

- We hope firmly that it is the government's duty and responsibility to make sure that the Human Rights are known every where and respected scrupulously by any religious group so

that no one can be excused for transgressing them for one reason or another; calling into question the very religious freedom and the dignity of all religious groups. The government anywhere it may be should be neutral religiously in order to bring neutral even objective intervention in religious matter when problems occur between two or many religious groups living in a common area. Where government support only one side that is, corrupted; there exist no other potential referee to intervene in a way to stop problems and promote peaceful cohabitation between religious groups.

-The global respect of Human Rights implies also the freedom of missionary activities; so that any government could not impede the missionary work of some religious institutions and individuals where there is majority/minority concern.

-The government's responsibility lies also in the level of designation or appointment of government members that should take into account some parameters of cultural, religious, and regional belonging even if the commitment to excellence requires and respects the qualities of people needed for one post or another. In this way, balance would be made in administrative member recruitment culturally, religiously, and regionally. We hope from this perspective that; peace and harmony could exist in our cities within and between our various communities. This is also accountable for traditional rulers' appointment even if the first step in this process has to be done by local population.

-The community is made in the manner that religious people have spiritual power to intercede for a good and successful government activity; this is very important and capital, and the government has political power to establish order within the community. We believe also that primary problems opposing religious people should be treated first by religious people themselves in a peaceable way. However, if a problem opposing religious people could not be released by themselves, a timely reaction and decision for peace making from the government should be welcomed to find rapidly a solution for peace when the life of people are not yet threatened by atrocious acts from both sides. The government is the last authority to intervene at that time to bring peace anyway between religious groups.

Conclusion of the Seventh Chapter

At the end of the discussion on the dialogue, we are aware of the constant necessity of dialogue between religious people in general, and between Christian and Muslim in particular.

However, this dialogue needs to respect some rules in a way to avoid any harm in religious matter. In order to reach this level of consideration or understanding of dialogue and cohabitation, Christians, Muslims and the Government have all together a role to pay as their responsibility in that matter. The way of finding a peaceable cohabitation cannot come only from a group, rather it involves all those who live in the area as in this particular case of the Père plain.

CONCLUSION

Christians and Muslims had a difficult history of cohabitation a bit after Islam was born. This misunderstanding of each other has created an almost everlasting tension between the two religions and today it became a sort of legacy of the ancient time. Our analysis of the problem extensively has shown us that this matter is due mainly to the ignorance of each other, ignorance that other is legally recognized and having full right to exist and promote his or her faith, ignorance that both of us have made same errors of leading our mission from the beginning, ignorance that the new context imposes not a way to claim one's uniqueness but collaboration because of the religious and cultural pluralism context brought by globalization movement. Therefore, a new wind of love, forgiveness and hope needs to blow in our world to refresh this ancient mind colored by hatred, by negative image of other in a way to have positive conception and consideration of the presence of other not as an enemy to fight, to eradicate in order to gain full rule over the world; but rather as a brother from the same God, a neighbor with whom to collaborate to make sense of life to people from God's perspective, calling all nations to salvation and to fight against all the vices and alienations of human being due to injustice, poverty, illness etc. This is only possible if all of us make a common front or effort to these vices as some have put it: "Christians and Muslims are living together, and this fact implies that they share many problems which have to be overcome through common effort and action. This can be achieved only when both refrain from bearing false witness against each other, from spreading false rumors about the other, and from attempting to harm each other".¹⁸² In addition, this stands true because all the world population is religious everyone in his own manner of doing. It is from this background that Hans Küng could declare boldly that "No peace in the world without peace between the religions. No peace between the religions without dialogue between the religions"¹⁸³ Therefore, standing on this cardinal truth is a way for us to accomplish God's will for humankind in particular, and for the whole world in general. The call for dialogue then becomes as a refrain of every time before every religious group. The future of our world depends inevitably.

¹⁸² "Summary Report from the Working Group on Islam," in *Lutheran World Federation Documentation: Theological Perspectives on other Faiths*, ed. Hance A. O. Mwakabana (Geneva 2: Lutheran World Federation, 1997), 168.

¹⁸³ From the lecture of Jan Opsal on Science of Religion and Encounters of Religions, 30-enc/reku-301, 2012.

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APPENDIXES

Appendix 1: List of Informants

Group 1: Church leaders

- A1, 65 years old, interviewed on 28.07.2013
- A2, 62 years old, interviewed on 25.07.2013

Group 2: Mosque leaders

- B1, 58 years old, interviewed on 29.07.2013
- B2, 44 years old, interviewed on 05.08.2013

Group 3: Ordinary Christians

- C1, 43 years old, interviewed on 05.08.2013
- C2, 42 years old, interviewed on 04.08.2013
- C3, 48 years old, interviewed on 28.07.2013
- C4, 33 years old, interviewed on 11.07.2013

Group 4: Ordinary Muslims

- D1, 33 years old, interviewed on 11.07.2013
- D2, 30 years old, interviewed on 28.07.2013

Group 5: Former Christians

- E1, 50 years old, interviewed on 11.07.2013
- E2, 46 years old, interviewed on 11.07.2013
- E3, 30 years old, interviewed on 11.07.2013
- E4, 36 years old, interviewed on 18.07.2013

Additional Informants

- Assana Bello, 29.07.2013.
- The Mayor of Mayo-Baléo, 29.07.2013.

Appendix 2

Muslim Youth Text Northern Cameroon

International Islamization

Tuesday, June 8, 2004

Cameroon : Muslim youth " gestaposante " and " plan against Christians "

Under the signatures of Mohammadou Rabiou , Oustass Younoussa and Cheick Modibo Haroun responsible for IYC (Islamic Youth of Cameroon) , the reports of the third national congress of the IYC which took place from 5 to 7 September, just achieve us and reveal unspeakable intentions.

From the welcome transcribed in the report, Christians are obviously the target of Islam in Cameroon. "We take a nod to our young of South who managed much of the plan against the Christians. We recommend that every young person present at the base of the south take the example in hand, as we heard in the report of the Deep South: the Islamization of Christians in 2713 adults and 1042 children from all Christian families. "

How many Christians have been Islamized it quickly? The answer lies a few lines later in that report: "122 marriages by our various youth of South with brave girls of pastors and other indirectly. We believe that by the year 2010 if all of us, we put our machines running, we can easily legally married Christian girls or women of church leaders. "

The closing of this meeting continues the directive line and reinforces an unnamed hatred towards Christians. "We have all the necessary resources at our disposal to extinguish Christianity in this city." These meetings allow managers to recruit young people to the Islamic cause and do not hesitate to use big words: "Islam needs this gestaposante youth !" Although inexistent in the dictionary of the French language, this word is a two combined very significant words Gestapo (secret police of the Nazi party) and imposing. Is this the desire of Islam and Allah the merciful?

Beyond words and speeches, many decisions were made during the conference. These resolutions were also published by the Evangelical Monthly Magazine of Cameroon "Echoes of The Pyramid of Salvation."

01. Now aids from outside will be increased.

02. The action plan will follow Islam by putting more resources to day and it is exempt. It will involve a lot more girls in our fight against Christian boys in schools.

03. Help vulnerable and visit Christian families.

04. Accentuate the depth Bible study.

05. Prepare a good team of public debate.

06. Do not let our houses to Christians. For those who are already in our homes, make sure the drive by increasing prices each month.

07. Do not sell the land to non-Muslims.

08. Do not vote for a non-Muslim as mayor, Member of Parliament, Lawanat, Lamidat.

09. Multiply the radio and television.

10. Conduct a fierce fight against sects of Islam (AL- Mahdiyah) .

11. Educate parents, friends, brothers and colleagues or friends and send massively our children to school, because the future of Islam depends.

12. Encourage the creation of primary and secondary schools.

13. Encourage the establishment of CIG (Common Initiative Group) for women, men and young people.

14. Encourage the establishment of Islamic health centers.
15. Encourage free digging wells.
16. Trade and transport must be controlled by us and therefore subject and others.

N.B. This text is originally written in French. It has been translated by me into English for need of English readers.

Appendix 3

Joint Statement Opposing Religious Extremism

by the Islamic Council of Norway and the Church of Norway Council on Ecumenical and International Relations

Religious extremism

Religious extremism has various and alarming results. The world community has witnessed tragedies such as the demolition of the Babri Mosque in Ayodhya, India in December 1992 and the violence that followed, the massacre of Bosnian Muslims in Srebrenica in July 1995, the aircraft that were flown into the World Trade Centre and Pentagon on 11th September 2001 and the terror in Oslo and on Utøya 22 nd July 2011. Religious extremism is part of the global reality. But religious extremism also threatens the life, welfare and rights of human beings in many local situations and in many ways, without being given the same attention as these vast tragedies, for example by religiously legitimized violence in close relationships, the desecration of holy places and threats to those who take part in public debates. Whatever the extent, we cannot accept that individuals or groups in various ways are made the victims of religious extremism.

Extremism involves the use of violence, force or threats to promote the extremists' ideal society or to attack individuals or groups. This often happens without religion being involved. But some use religion or religious rhetoric to explain or justify extremism, for example by interpreting religious writings so that they seem to support extremist attitudes and actions. This is what we mean by religious extremism, which we as religious leaders have a special responsibility to oppose.

Characteristics

Religious extremism has many characteristics. We mention especially these:

- Extremists believe that they are alone in interpreting their own religion correctly, so that they cannot cooperate with others who think differently, even though these belong to the same religious tradition.
- Extremists are convinced that there are groups of people that it is impossible to co- exist with, and which they must therefore oppose or remove, either from society as a whole or from certain places or areas.
- Extremists reduce human dignity for groups that they oppose, and reject the idea that human rights apply to these groups.
- Extremists accuse those who think differently of having certain political, ethical or religious opinions, without allowing them to define for themselves who they are or what they believe.
- Extremists use gender-based hierarchies and power structures in which women are denied human rights and human dignity on the same level as men.
- Extremists use a language of hate, inciting to conflict with certain groups of people and with those who disagree with their convictions.
- Extremists are willing to use terror, violence or other forms of compulsion in order to enforce the consequences of their religious views on others.

This is not intended to be a complete list, but includes what we think are important characteristics of religious extremism. The more of these characteristics that are present in a specific case, the more serious it is. Each of these characteristics can be present with different degrees of seriousness. We therefore believe that it is important to identify and oppose tendencies to religious extremism as early as possible.

With this in mind, it is also clear that there is no reason to use the term “religious extremism” for everyone who is strongly committed to his or her faith and who lives out this commitment in different ways. To have a sincere and intense commitment to one’s faith has in itself nothing to do with religious extremism, as long as it is combined with respect for the dignity and human rights of others and is not combined with attempts to force the consequences of one’s religious or ideological convictions on others.

Joint appeal

The Islamic Council of Norway and the Church of Norway Council on Ecumenical and International Relations reject all forms of religious extremism. Religious extremists put themselves in the place of God and believe that they are fighting on behalf of God against the enemies of God. Religious extremism is therefore contrary to the teachings of our religions, especially with respect to the basic dignity and rights of all human beings. The idea of forcing one’s opinions on others is fundamentally opposed to the responsibility and right which we believe that God has given to all human beings, to make their own decisions. To live in peace and reconciliation with one another across the boundaries of culture and religion is in fundamental harmony with the basic values of our religions.

The Islamic Council of Norway and the Church of Norway Council on Ecumenical and International Relations are especially concerned that possible tendencies to religious extremism in our own ranks should come to light. We therefore urge Muslims and Christians to prevent and oppose all forms of religious extremism both in their respective communities and in their fellowship with one another.

- We urge religious leaders to continue to raise these questions in their preaching and teaching, in order to reject and prevent extremism in their own ranks. - We urge religious leaders and faith communities to join together and speak out publicly against religious extremism.
- We urge religious leaders and faith communities to develop contingency plans to prevent and oppose extremism.
- We urge congregations and assemblies to raise these issues in study groups, plenary sessions and dialogues.
- We urge religious leaders, congregations and assemblies to protect one another’s members, holy places and other institutions which could be threatened by religious extremists.
- We urge religious leaders, congregations and assemblies to expose and oppose the use of holy writings and religious rhetoric in a way that can create conditions for the development of religious extremism.
- We urge religious leaders, congregations and assemblies to speak out against hateful and threatening descriptions of others, not least in the media and on the internet.
- We urge religious leaders, congregations and assemblies to oppose hateful descriptions and harassment of women.

- We urge the media and other public bodies to present a nuanced picture of religious belief when violence and force are committed in the name of religion.
- We urge the various faith communities to use their international contacts and networks to strengthen the struggle against religious extremism nationally and internationally.

Oslo, 22 nd November 2011

Mehtab Afsar

General Secretary

Islamic Council of Norway

Berit Hagen Agøy

General Secretary

Church of Norway Council on Ecumenical and
International Relations

Appendix 4

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Title of project: CHRISTIAN-MUSLIM RELATIONS ON THE PERE PLAIN : CHALLENGES FOR THE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN CAMEROON (E .L.C.C)

Student : Bakari Boukar

Advisor: Kari Storstein Haug

Group A: Church Leaders (3)

- 1.Can you introduce yourself briefly?
- 2.How many Christians and how many Muslims live in the area where you work as a church leader?
- 3.What do you think about the presence of Muslims as your neighbours?
- 4.How will you characterize the relation between Christians and Muslims in this area?
- 5.What works well and what are the challenges.
- 6.Is there any problem in your relationship with Muslims in your city?
- 7.If there are problems, which ones do you remark?
- 8.Is there anything that you think constitutes a barrier to dialogue and good cohabitation with Muslims n your city ?
- 9.Is there anything you think promote dialogue and good cohabitation with Muslims in your city?
- 10.What do you do or suggest to do in order to establish/keep a good relationship between Christians and Muslims?
11. How do you live out your Christian life in the sense to present the message of the Gospel to Muslims ?
12. Do Christians do mission among Muslims, in what ways? What do you think of that?
- 13.Do the Muslims do mission among Christians, in what ways ? What do you think of that?
14. Do you accept or encourage mixed marriage between Christians and Muslims? Could you justify your position?
15. Are there examples of conversions to Christianity or Islam in your neighbourhood/your city? What do you think of the conversions?
- 16.What could be the reasons of the conversions of Christians to Islam, or of Muslims to Christianity?

Group B: Mosque Leaders (2)

- 1.Can you introduce yourself briefly?
- 2.How many Christians and how many Muslims live in the area where you are a leader?
- 3.What do you think about the presence of Christians as your neighbours?
- 4.How long have you lived together with Christians?
- 5.How will you characterize the relation between Christians and Muslims in this area?
- 6.What works well and what are the challenges?
- 7.Is there any problem in your relationship with Christians in your city?
- 8.If there are problems, which ones do you remark?
- 9.Is there anything that you think constitutes a barrier to dialogue and good cohabitation with Christians in your city?
- 10.Is there anything that you think promotes dialogue and good cohabitation with Christians in your city?
- 11.Which way do you think is the best way to improve the relationship between Muslims and Christians?
- 12.Have you something to suggest in the sense of promoting peace between people of different religions living together in this area?
- 13.Do Muslims do mission among Christians, in what ways? What do you think of this?
- 14.Do the Christians do mission among Muslims, in what ways? What do you think of this?
- 15.What do you think about mixed marriage between Muslims and Christians?

Group C: Ordinary Christians (4)

- 1.Can you introduce yourself briefly?
- 2.Do you have any relations with Muslims?
- 3.What do you think of your relationship with Muslims?
- 4.According to you, what are the major reasons that make Christians convert to Islam?
- 5.What do you think the Church could do to keep its members?
- 6.What do you think the Church could do to improve the spiritual life of its members?
- 7.What do you think about mixed marriage between Muslims and Christians?

Group D: Ordinary Muslims (2)

- 1.Can you introduce yourself briefly?
- 2.Do you have any relations with Christians?
- 3.What do you think of your relationship with Christians?
- 4.According to you, what are the major reasons that make Muslims convert to Christianity?
- 5.What do you think about mixed marriage between Muslims and Christians?
- 6.Have you something to suggest in the sense of promoting peace between people of different religions living together in this area?

Group E: Former Christians (4)

- 1.Can you introduce yourself briefly?
- 2.What made you converted to Islam?
3. How do you consider Christians now that you are Muslim?
4. Are there something you think the Church could do to bring you back to Christianity?



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Vår dato: 04.06.2013

Vår ref: 34615 / 3 / SSA

Deres dato:

Deres ref:

TILBAKEMELDING PÅ MELDING OM BEHANDLING AV PERSONOPPLYSNINGER

Vi viser til melding om behandling av personopplysninger, mottatt 24.05.2013. Meldingen gjelder prosjektet:

34615

*Christian - Muslim Relations on the Peres' Plain : Challenges for the
Evangelical Lutheran Church in Cameroon (E.L.C.C)*

Behandlingsansvarlig
Daglig ansvarlig
Student

Misjonshøgskolen, ved institusjonens øverste leder
Kari Storstein Haug
Bakari Boukar

Personvernombudet har vurdert prosjektet, og finner at behandlingen av personopplysninger vil være regulert av § 7-27 i personopplysningsforskriften. Personvernombudet tilrår at prosjektet gjennomføres.

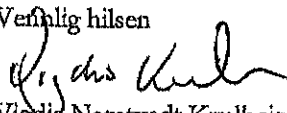
Personvernombudets tilråding forutsetter at prosjektet gjennomføres i tråd med opplysningene gitt i meldeskjemaet, korrespondanse med ombudet, ombudets kommentarer samt personopplysningsloven og helseregisterloven med forskrifter. Behandlingen av personopplysninger kan settes i gang.

Det gjøres oppmerksom på at det skal gis ny melding dersom behandlingen endres i forhold til de opplysninger som ligger til grunn for personvernombudets vurdering. Endringsmeldinger gis via et eget skjema, <http://www.nsd.uib.no/personvern/meldeplikt/skjema.html>. Det skal også gis melding etter tre år dersom prosjektet fortsatt pågår. Meldinger skal skje skriftlig til ombudet.

Personvernombudet har lagt ut opplysninger om prosjektet i en offentlig database, <http://pvo.nsd.no/prosjekt>.

Personvernombudet vil ved prosjektets avslutning, 14.08.2014, rette en henvendelse angående status for behandlingen av personopplysninger.

Vennlig hilsen


Vigdis Namtvedt Kvalheim


Sondre S. Arnesen

Kontaktperson: Sondre S. Arnesen tlf: 55 58 25 83

Vedlegg: Prosjektvurdering

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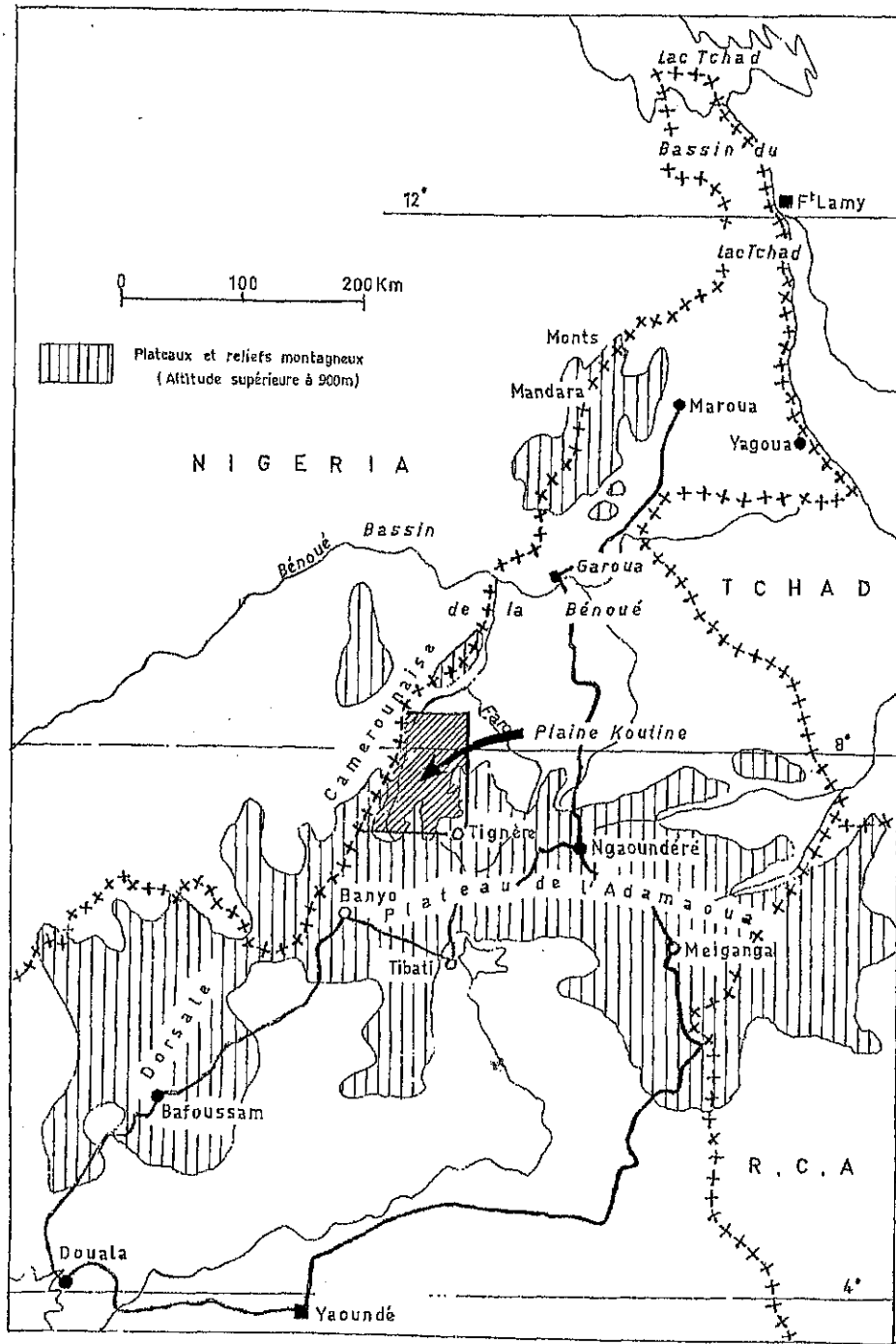


Fig. 1. — Croquis de localisation.

Source: J. Boutrais P. 106

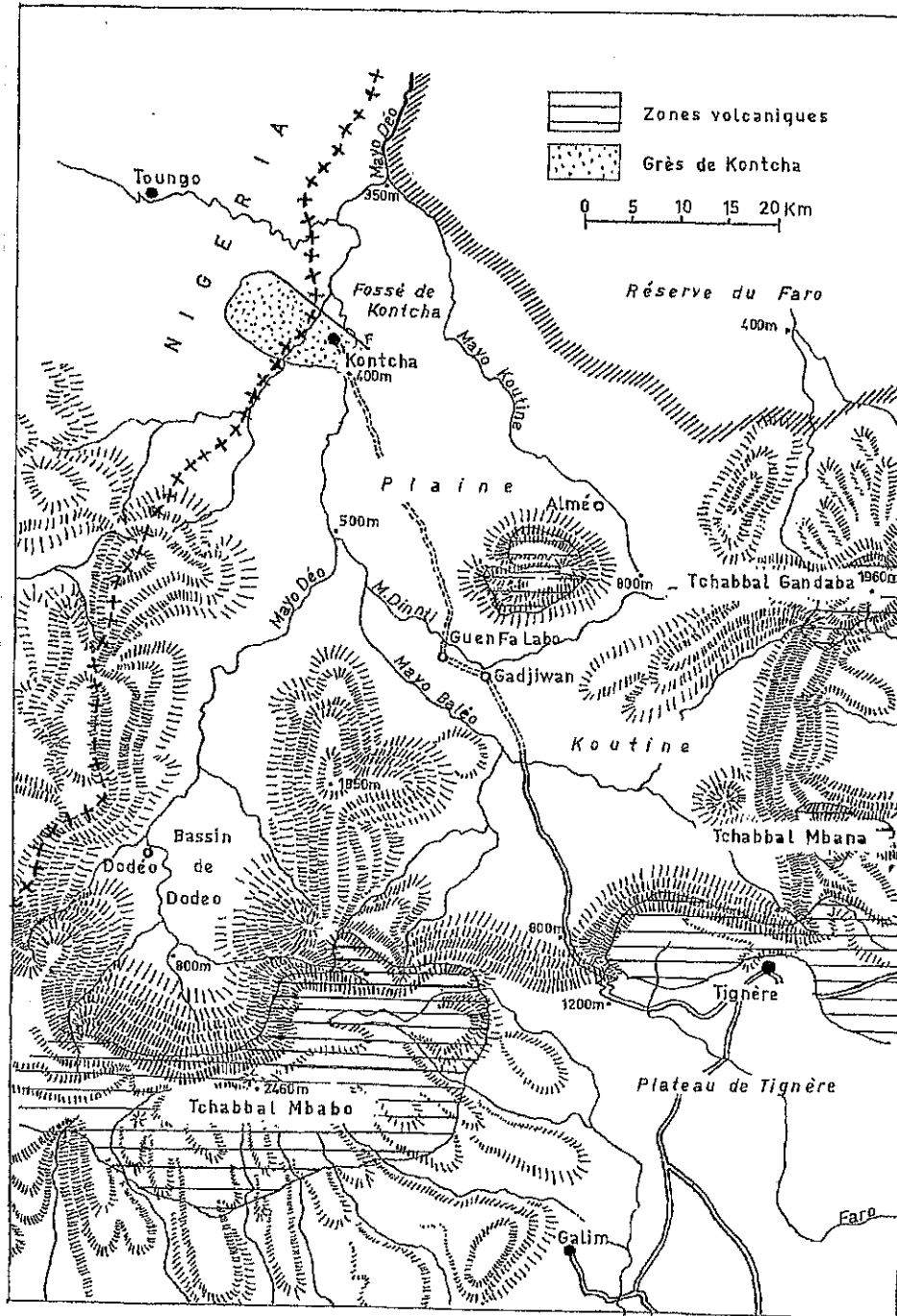


Fig. 2. — La plaine Koutine.

Source: J. Boutrais P. 104