Addis Ababa University

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A NEW FRONTIER IN THE INTER-ETHNIC RELATIONSHIP IN MULTI-ETHNIC

ETHIOPIA: A STUDY ON THE ROLE OF RELIGION IN PROMOTING SOCIAL

INTEGRATION IN BENI-SHANGUL

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Abstract

One of the greatest challenges of Ethiopia is to promote wider societal development because the notions of ethnicity are fall prey to atomized competitions, hostility or conflicts. These fraudulent competitions are directed in the struggle for political power, public offices, and socio-economic opportunities by mobilizing their constituencies to think except 'their own members' are in power, they are unable to secure the national benefits. Nevertheless, ethnicity does neither inherently revolutionary nor impermeable, as many multiethnic nations do not have major troubles with their diversities but a potential factor for cultivation. The problem lies on political elites who emphasis those things that separate Ethiopians to organize ethnicity as a determining variables, if not inevitably a problem, in a democratic government where supreme loyalty is fully submitted to the collectively agreed constitution while every citizen feel loyal to a specific ethnicity without making divisive demands. At this time, regional states are the center for archaic competitions against the arithmetic of 'historic territory vis-à-vis numeral calculus that does not sustain political peace and tolerance, as is not the cardinal virtue on which the pluralistic Ethiopian society bases its collective interests. Therefore, for a viable society, we must begin with the practical recognition that all citizens are where they are and what they are in position by good worth of how they actually live and how they potentially rich to reshape their existence. Otherwise, if we are obsessed in politicizing our conflictual historical relations, we should put them in their own contexts to avoid sociological-historical distortions. Secondly, we, Ethiopians, have been undeniably multiethnic society, at least for the grass root population, with apolitically constructed social spaces that promote the complementarities of different ethnic or agro-ecological communities for millennia. These are enormously rooted in our cultures of inter-marriage, population settlements, religious solidarities and ceremonies, conflict transformations, economic exchanges and patriotic-coalitions against frequent colonial aggressions. Therefore, the findings showed that, if renovated, these institutions could be a paramount importance

for social workers in cross-cultural policy analyses, policymaking and practicing. Eventually, they could have an instrumental role in sustaining a non-violent political formula for mainstreaming development by the continual need to live with others of different identities while maintaining own identity without trespassing upon the wellbeing of 'others'.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The Context of the problem

The Horn of Africa according to (Atilo, 2005) has been a conflict prone area as it is (Gebreab, 2003) located enroute to Europe, Asia and Australia. Ethiopia, as part of the Horn, is endowed with geopolitically strategic importance. It has also experienced many conflicts for centuries that are the major factors negatively affecting sustainable development through diverting resources. External influences on the internal political economy of Ethiopia that had continued throughout the millennia, nonetheless, escalated in the 19th century. Accordingly, the European presence in the Horn of Africa had exacerbated the geopolitical vulnerability of Ethiopia, as it was (Abraham, 1991:77) "encircled by the Italians in the north and south, the British in the west and east and the French in the east". Eventually, this conflict, among others, influenced the country and brought about the King of Kings [later Emperor] Menelik II with his aggressive policy nation building by incorporating independent peoples and states of the southern, southwestern and southeastern parts of the country. He made an unequivocal message to the European-colonial powers in 1891(Taddese, 1972:24) that reads, "If powers at a distance come forward to partition Africa between them, I do not intend to be an indifferent spectator". Because of colonialism and the forceful conquest, the territorial boundaries in the Horn of Africa, including Ethiopia, (Atilo, 2005) are the reflection of imperial rivalries rather than a genuine patterning of population along geographical or ethnic lines equally discriminatory administration policies.

Therefore, the processes of nation-building (Markakis, 2003) culminated with unitary Ethiopia in the late 19th century that came about by employing two alternative methodologies that are, peaceful submission and armed struggle. The artificiality of nation building or adopted administration did not necessarily mean the complete destruction of the indigenous socio-political and legal institutions. Generally, Ethiopians had entered the 20th century under a single political community with 'defined' boundaries and achieved the first magnificent African victory over colonialism at Adwa while the ethnic question continued to the Haile Sellassie and military regimes. Following devastating civil war in every corner of the country, the incumbent government transferred authority to ethnic-based political organizations in 1991 that (Andreas 2003:142) phrased as "a bold experiment" to face the fact of ethnic diversity. Perhaps, because of artificially delineated ethnic boundaries, there are numerous structural, attitudinal and practical impediments to change as the political executives do not represent the interests of all constituencies, are not immune from ethnic or clan loyalties and potentially disenfranchise minority ethnic communities.

To be contextual in the study unit, (Young, 1996) successive governments, development agencies and political analysts have ignored the Beni-Shangul-Gumuz regional state. Certainly, the state embraces multiple 'minority' ethnic communities who have enjoyed peaceful interaction and mutual social integration for centuries. Physically, the state stretches along the Sudanese border between 09.17^0 south and 12.06^0 north while the western and eastern limits are the 34.1^0west and 37.04^0 east longitudes respectively covering about 50,380km square areas that administratively is divided into three zones, eighteen woredas, and two special woredas. More specifically, it is one of the most fertile and resourceful but most underdeveloped parts of

Ethiopia with about 460,459 populations [density of 9.1 persons/ km2] where 92.2%, are living in rural areas, remote and inaccessible, while the remaining 7.8% are living in small towns (Central Statistic Authority, 1997). Moreover, economically, among the rural population, the Bertha predominantly lives by shifting cultivation while the Settlers live by oxen plow agriculture. On the open bamboo lowlands, the Bertha homesteads are scattered but they have extended hamlets in plateau like mini-mountains and also live in clan-based villages. The Settlers live in continuing chains of villages, along the Addis-Sudan highway and are comparatively accessible for social services. The Beni-Shangul is divided in to six wereda (district): namely, Assossa, Bambasi, Mengei, Kirmuk, Komasha, Sherkole and Mao-Komo special wereda. The Settlers predominantly occupy the first two weredas, while the indigenous Bertha and the Mao-Komo ethnic communities inhabit the remaining weredas. The Bertha, who constitutes the most numerous ethnic communities in the state, mostly inhabits inaccessible and arid areas. Before the arrival of the Settlers, the Bertha population, were displaced and pushed to the peripheries and stripped of their resources that served as their livelihood for centuries.

Therefore, for the purpose of contextual details on inter-ethnic integration between the two communities, the study uses three constructed sub-taxonomies of ethnic communities. The first include the indigenous Bertha who claims to be the original inhabitants of the area. The second group includes the Oromo, the Gumuz, the Mao and the Komo, who have lived in neighboring communities with proportional socio-cultural integration and peaceful coexistence for centuries. The last group is the state sponsored Settlers. This group is further differentiated by the time, area of origin and conditions of resettlement. Since dealing with all the social categories is beyond the scope of the study, the focus of the study, as a pilot, was the first and the

third categories, nevertheless, the second category may be considered where the data indicate a necessity.

Statement of the Problem

Ethiopia is one of the most multi (ethnic, cultural and religious) countries in Africa as the product of immigration of Afro-Asiatic super-language families. Unlike the rest of Africa, our heterogeneity (Andreas, 2003) is not an accidental outcome of alien imposition. Equally, the study unit has been the abode for ethnic communities affiliated from all of the super- language families and incorporated into the modern polity of Ethiopia in the late 19th century. The political instability of the Horn is (USAID, 1997:24)   "simultaneously characterized by crosscutting thematic issues including: failed states and states in transition, variable approaches to democratization, efforts to both manipulate and address ethnic and religious divisions and increased pressures on resources". Hence, successive rulers have failed to sustain pluralistic ideology to accommodate the existing cultural, language, religion and ethnic diversity. This forced Ethiopians to pass through persistent social conflicts. Mesfin (1999: 140; 148) notes through out the long history Ethiopians have always been "forced to engage in murderous conflicts, however, the recent conflicts are only the continuation on the traditional and he lebels the recent conflict as negative, destructive and retrogressive". Thus, many of the developmental failures in Ethiopia could not be traced merely to the technical and financial rather they are due to the cultural and ethnic complexities of the country. The complexities of diversity make the process of nation building an unfinished project for social workers to participate in the mobilizing and location for collectively sustained institutions. Local academics and practitioners have also largely provided the public with bouquet of different discourses on the conflictual relationships, Ethiopians nonetheless have had collectively shared institutions maintained for

mutual tolerance, coexistence, mutual integration and assimilation in their social environment. These institutions have paramount implications for peace and socio-economic development in the context of 'democratic' Ethiopia. The academic failures of putting the sociological-historical interdependent communications or otherwise into its context have further exacerbated confusions and concerns among diverse ethnic communities in contemporary Ethiopia. The study starts with the history of harmonious relationship among the ethnic communities (Levine, 1974; 2000) he notes that Ethiopians did not live as discrete isolated social units but (Pankhrust and Piguet,2003) maintained mutual relations both in the periods of conflict and coexistence involving some complementarity and joint institutions for conflict transformation. Here, the historical interethnic relationship could be put in a line of continuum to draw social balance in the transition from conflictual to partnerships transcending those primordial differences as a national community. Therefore, examinations of shared institutions in the line of continuum have practical implications for social work practitioners. It is important to identify the existing collective social institutions that have their pedigrees in the history of social interaction.

However, the study has a narrow focus on the religiously endorsed communication networks in promoting inter-ethnic integration between the case communities in Beni-Shangul. Therefore, the study is a modest inquiry to explore the contribution of religion on the ongoing discourses for the effective response to complex questions of ethnicity and their possible indigenous solution(s) through grass-root community perspectives and ideas that might stimulate reciprocated interactions. The study dealt with a brief historical venture into the nation-building period that has its intellectual significance with a precise consideration on the religion concentrating in its capacity of integrative-solidarity that cuts across primordial ethnic identities. The study does not address the metaphysical doctrines or beliefs and derivation from sacred

scriptures since those are not the aim of the study. Additionally, it is not the aim, here, to provide religious ethnographic description of either ethnic community.

The Research questions

The study is intended to offer a set of (Padgett, 2004:302) 'contextualizing' patterns of interethnic relationships through conducting the exploration 'by portraying the lived experiences' of the Bertha and the Settler communities in the context of social work theory, education, and practices, with general objective of contributing to the understanding, the dilemmas and discourses associated with ethnic diversity. Additionally, a goal is intended to have positive impact on the socio-political and economic development in contemporary Ethiopia. Specifically, therefore, the study addresses the problem by answering the general research question, *'Do the collectively institutionalized religious networks and/or practices promote social integration between the Bertha and the Settler communities?*

 The study focuses on the following specific questions:

- How did and/or do ethnic communities remain idiosyncratic? Under what circumstances does ethnicity become significant in interethnic social relationships?

- What are those factors that thwart mutual integration between the case communities?

Epistemological and methodological considerations

The study employed certain epistemological positions as (Dudley, 2005:132) "a research design is a plan that describes how the research will be conducted" and to do so it is necessary to ask, "Does the study be exploratory or explanatory". Accordingly, the study used the exploratory model for (Monette, Sullivan & Dejong, 1998) the construction of conceptual categories from the obtained data. It employed Dudley's model (2005) that states 'in situations of lack of data on the topic, qualitative approach, for its flexibility for holistic exploration in a wider social

context'. It also employed (Long, Tice, & Morrison, 2006:230) "to initiate the primary grasp of the [social] phenomena, a beginning characterization of what is occurring is needed". The qualitative-exploratory approach partly fits with my personal interest that prefers channeling conversation, sensing, and probing to preconceived quantitative data. Generally, this approach is compatible for contextual inquiry on the history of ethnic interaction as well as its correlation to the current inter-ethnic relations in the context of the existing integration through the insider/community perspectives.

The methods of data collection

The research gave high consideration on secondary information to substantiate the primary data and collected from religious scriptures, books, journals, magazines, various workshops proceedings and reports on the issues of ethnicity and religion. It was collected for critical analyses on the history of ethnic interaction related to concepts and practices relevant to the research problem. The principal method of data collection was series of intensive while informal interviews with a number of individuals and observation in each community context. The study did not approach the issues with a preconceived theoretical perspective and, concerned with the predetermined number of samples. The researcher remained open to obtain and construct the existing reality and meaning from the actions and reactions of society's constituent, as individuals. The questions of inductive-exploratory inquiry need little prior instrumentation that is suitable for studies where little is already known. The researcher enters the field armed only with a general theme and some ideas to find information. The researcher did not prefer a precise set of questions to be asked in a given sequence of pre-established categories of answers over semi-structure with a maximum openness in which the interviewees could respond in their own words. The interview questions were developed from literatures on ethnicity, conflict,

religion, resettlement that finally refined by local information obtained from preliminary informal discussions with members from both ethnic communities. In the development of interview questions, more emphasis was given on the answers of interviewees to be substantiated through reflection, paraphrasing and summarizing during the interview process. Additional information was sought within the study community that was a partial immersion in the day-to-day life experiences. The researcher conducted systematic and purposeful observation and discussion on diverse socio-cultural and economic practices of the communities living the study villages. These practices are marriage, burial, praying, and market place interaction. This method was valuable due to lack of road networks in the state and the difficulty of traveling 10-15 kms of walking distance/ day observing and discussing with a number of individuals on various issues. In inductive study (Monette et al, 1998:81-82) note the need to walk a mile in their shoes, talk to people at length, and immerse in the lives of participants to experience the highs and lows, the joys and sorrows, the triumphs and tragedies with the perspectives of people themselves.

Procedures, experiences and tools for data collection

The villages for critical inquiry had been purposively selected based on settlement patterns, time and place of origin of the Settlers, causes and conditions of the resettlement, level of integration or disagreement and accessibility to the Assossa and Bambassi town. Besides, the local bi-weekly Assoassa and Bambassi public market centers were selected as units for exploration especially to contact people coming from inaccessible Bertha villages. As the fieldwork period was politically volatile election period, both communities were supporting parties related to their ethnicity and was suspicious to each other. They were also suspicious to outsiders like the researcher. When I was in their village for preliminary observation and

informal discussion to refine the semi-structured questions for in-depth interview, people were asking me who are you after all? Because of political dissatisfaction, they were refusing to provide me with necessary information. As part of these two-kebele(lowest level political administration) administrators were interrogating me what I am working and what would be the purpose of the research with no consideration for the formal support letter from the graduate school of social work. They advised me to bring a supportive formal letter from higher government officials. Then, the researcher approached some regional, zonal and district administrators including police offices for obtaining formal permission before the actual data collection, and, finally, gained their fully cooperation using formal letters. They also agreed to be interviewed. After obtaining formal letters to Kebele administrators and community leaders from higher officials the fieldwork became more appropriate to collect the necessary information. Even after having this done, some of my informants were suspicious in relation to spying for either of the competing political parties. While reading the formal supportive letters and verbal explanation about my research, the researcher obtained the rapport of community members. In remote village from towns, the rapport with some community members enabled me to access food and sleeping in their homes. All these provided the researcher to achieve the good opportunity to use the purposive sampling strategy to select knowledgeable interviewees, among the most resourceful members of both communities, for in-depth-interview. To obtain an informed consent from the purposively selected interviewees the researcher explained about the purpose of the research, their information, risks related to the information they provide, relevant outcomes of the study. I have explained the amount of time and their absolute rights not to respond for questions they do not like or ask any explanations about the asked questions. Even the researcher informed about their ultimate right not to participate in the interviewee. For the

interviewees who do not speak Amharic, translator was arranged to explain in their language. Most of my interviewees agreed to participate in the study if they would be guaranteed with confidentiality and without providing their detailed personal profiles except those placed in chapter three. The actual series of in-depth interviews were conducted with, rural and urban, key-informants from the Bertha community (n=12) and the Settlers community (n=13). The informants included elders, religious leaders, zonal and woreda administrators, various civil society members, and police officials. The interview took place in the homes of the Settlers or Khalewas (guest rooms) among the Bertha community. The researcher, assisted by third Year University and technical college students conducted the interviews. The interviews were followed with additional questions to the interviewee in the form of clarification, paraphrasing, and probing in response to their verbal and nonverbal communication. The processes of interviewing followed (York, 1998:40-41) considerations which includes be aware of predisposition, engage the interview in the validation of the notes, seek disconfirming evidence of the initial impression and engage in note-taking methods that place minimum burden upon memory. At the end of the interviewing, as a device to reduce the errors in the interview development and the processes of interviewing, interviewees were candidly invited for their perspective with the expectation that would yield various viewpoints and attitudes, trigger thoughts and uncover diversity of opinion on the issues in question that might not be revealed through the intensive interviews. Throughout the data collection processes, the tools for field data inquiry were field note taking and tape cassette recording. I found one interviewee uncomfortable with audio recorder, so the interview was conducted with intensive note taking alone.

Procedures of Data analysis

The information collected on each method was triangulated to offer some perspectives and, eventually, derive some meaning. It starts with the transcriptions of the audio interview data in the original (Ruthaia, Bertha language) language to provide unique perspectives on the cultural content specificity while a college student carried out simultaneous transcription and translation of Amharic into English of the six interviewees during the fieldwork[1]. These translations/transcriptions were carefully reviewed for consistency, as were the intensive notes and analytic memos. The researcher also listened to the audio tape several times comparing them with the transcription as well as the intensive field notes and analytic memos. Corrections were made and the transcriptions were broken into units, and read numerous times. They were divided into sections based on major topics and subtopics were identified for accurate analysis. Then, the analysis employed organizing according to the initial semi-structured questions. Eventually, the analysis selectively concentrated on the differences or similarities in perspectives on the assigned titles and subtitles styled to identify potential biases, differences and agreements.

Rationale for the selection of the study unit

In most parts of Ethiopia, religious diversity is not coterminous with primordial ethnic differences. The case of Beni-Shangul regional state is peculiar in contemporary Ethiopia because the state is the home of communities from many language families. Moreover, the Settlers are not only multireligious but also multiethnic, with predominant mutual assimilation that might have theoretical and practical significance in the course of interethnic peaceful coexistence and, eventual, social integration. Generally, the relation between the Settlers and the host communities (Pankhrust, 2004) had least attention in resettlement planning and

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[1] Only six interviewees from the Bertha ethnic community could not speak Amharic while the rest six were fluent and the interview was conducted in Amharic and all of the Settlers are native Amharic speakers.

implementation. Because of these failures, the same cohort of Settlers in the Gilgel Belese and Metekel, within the same regional state, lived with social conflict and social distrust that perhaps seems to attract a number of local researchers. The social conflicts are eloquently discussed in (Gebre, 2004) and (Wolde-sellasie, 2004) that frequent Gumuz (indigenous ethnic community in the area) resistance and deadly conflict that exposed the Settlers to massacres and killing on the road, in the forest, in the market place, in the field and in their homes. In contrast, in the study unit, the Bertha and the same cohort of Settlers have maintained comparative record of peaceful coexistence with the exception of sporadic as well as individual level violence. This amazing social relationship seems to be ignored by researchers as well as practitioners. The Beni-Shangul, therefore, is the ideal unit to explore the role of religion in nurturing collective systems of social networks as well as social governance in the maintenance of social harmony and, mutual integration in multiethnic communities.

Ethical Responsibility

Social work is an essentially (Ife, 2001) ethical activity that is necessary to have some capacity to engage with difficult moral dilemmas to make moral decisions. Therefore, ensuring this professional values the study treats the research questions as a truly practice based professional exploration grounded in the lived experiences of day-to-day social interaction between the case communities. To achieve these goal(s), researchers engage in (Padgett 2004:302) "socially responsible research [that] extends the context beyond the local to larger societal milieus for improving their existing scenes." That is why, the study tried adequately examined interethnic interaction in their historical context as (Ife, 2001) ahistorical practice could be itself as a continuation of discriminations. In practice-based professions, the researcher

(Padgett, 2004) seeks for balancing theoretical thinking with methodological rigor, social responsibility, and practice relevance.

CHAPTER TWO

CONCEPTUAL AND LITERATURE REVIEW ON ETHNICITY, HISTORY AND RELIGION

Globally, there is a predominant academic confusion around ethnic phenomena. The term ethnicity comes from the ancient Greek ethos (Jerkins, 1997 citing Ostergard, 1992) referring a range of situations of human is collectively living and acting together that presently represents 'people' or 'nations'. It, according to Hutchinson and Smith (1996) first appeared in the 1950s in the English language and was recorded in the Oxford English dictionary of the 1953. In short, ethnic identities and ethnic differences are increasingly experiencing on an everyday level; they become sentimental metaphors in the daily struggle for group advantages. In recent times, ethnicities or ethnic communities are often associated with conflict, and genocide. Ethnicity (Ake, 1993:5) 'is a most significant element of the African reality and further that we do violence to the African reality by failing to explore the possibilities of ethnicity, by failing to follow its contours and its rhythm, for that would be part of starting with the way we are instead of discarding it for what we might be'. These unstable dynamism of ethnicity have come not by chance that politicization of identities constitute a form of symbolic 'emancipation' rather had its roots in the experiences of social injustices and, therefore, a strategy which aims at transforming the dominant model of national representation.

Ethnicity in Perspective and the Beni-Shangul Reality

Ethiopia has been and continues to be a plurality with ethnicities with differential contact among each group though living under their relatively autonomous regional confederacy until nation-building periods of the late 19th century. For centuries, different ethnic communities had historical records of social solidarity, tolerance, mutual integration varied considerably across times, in the content of this salience importance in Ethiopian society. Recently, the notions of ethnicity[2] in Ethiopia is parallel to the global trends (Hutchinson and Smith 1996:3) that is "often associated with conflict and more particularly political struggles", and the most powerful in contemporary socio-political discourses. Academics as well as practitioners from different professions, however, constituting different cultural, ethnic and ideological backgrounds enthusiastically molded ethnicity into divergent perspectives. These discourses have been used rhetorically to prove or disprove a large number of different, occasionally conflicting ideas. More specifically, one use has been against or for ethnically constructed nationalism, elitist rhetoric of the indivisibility of Ethiopia. It is true that, historically, this rhetoric had its impact on the institutional developments of the nation state that, again deconstructed with the same, but qualitatively different, image of ethnic identity lines. In both cases, there exists both distributive and relational injustice that triggered differences in the struggle against perceived lost resources or power in their social environment.

These ethnically constructed Political disputes have created confusion among the populace, and should not be considered as the mere creation of the incumbent government with its postmodern ethnic federalism. That is to mean it endorses the notion of relativism

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[2] Ethnicity in Ethiopia becomes daily discourses, and metaphor for party politics. Hence, the study does not attempt to define rather provides contemplation, not ethnicity per se, but what we mean where it comes when we talk about ethnic discourse, in other words, what counts ethnicity and what does not. Here, many of the claims on ethnicity are some contestable, some frivolous and some applicable only to certain communities.

[subjectivity] on the quest for ethnic identity in Ethiopia. Consequently, it depends on individual interest to interpret the salient elements associated ethnic community, weight the presence or absence of the elements differently, and disagrees on what counts as an ethnic community in Ethiopia. However, it is not free from problems rather it involves competing discourses that eventually lead to organized divisive ideologies. Given these complexities, therefore, the simple way to begin in the understanding of the notion of ethnicity and its related issues in the context of Ethiopia, principally in the study unit, is to imagine about what ethnicity was/is not. Moreover, much of the academic debate about ethnicity remains at the theoretical level; less has been said about the practice of ethnicity. For convenience, therefore, the predominant conceptualization might be categorized into (Hutchinson and Smith, 1996) two broad perspectives and a number of alternative approaches notably the premordialism and constructionism.

The Premordialist Paradigm

The dominant perspective in premordialism, which might be labeled, alternatively as naturalism views ethnicity, bound to objective attachments among members of a given cultural community. They sees (Geertz,1996) ethnicity having innate and biological characteristics, an external world with distinct categories existing independent of interpretation, with an absurd identity based on blood, language, religion, territory and common understanding about the criteria of membership. The premordialists presumed that ethnic community shares empirically verifiable similarities among themselves and differences with 'others'. This perspective has its own biases particularly it adopts an ethnocentric view of history of each community, for instance the Bertha, as community without collective interaction with other neighboring ethnic communities. Primordialism (Hutchinson and Smith, 1996 citing Eller and Coughlan, 1993) is

criticized for presenting a static and naturalistic view, lacking explanatory power. It leads our thinking towards stagnant categories existing independently from any social processes; however, the social interactions among the members of the case communities strongly cut across primordial ties in socio-religious rituals, economic exchange, marriage, to some extent lifestyle and so forth. That is to mean, the communities have both similarities and differences, as they are living in an intermixed equally interdependent social environment, positively or negatively, where interests of communities need to be debated, discussed, and ultimately socially resolved. Similarly, (Jenkins, 1997) argues that collective interests do not simply reflect or follow from similarities and differences between people; however, the pursuits of collective interest encourage ethnic identification. The maintenance of primordial ties among members of the ethnic communities as communal and personal identity seems to be a direct consequence of structural injustices that perceives the Bertha as belonging together even though they came from different backgrounds. The criteria for the explanation of ethnicity using the primordial perspective could not be certainly sufficient for the constitution of a nation (Weber, 1967 cited in Jerkins, 1997) taking the case of Ireland and England, however, and common sentiment grounded on collective historical memory.

Weber argued as quoted in (Jenkins, 1997:10):

> Ethnic membership does not constitute a group; it only facilitates group formation of any kind, particularly in the political sphere. On the other hand, it is primary the political community, no matter how artificially organized, that inspires the belief in common ethnicity.

Equally, an elderly Bertha informant in Salga relentlessly stressed on ethnic ideology through the narration of historical memories of descent, linguistic and religious unity that have implications to the social interaction with the Settlers. He adds that for centuries, we have had mutual equally peaceful coexistence with the neighboring Mao, Komo, Oromo, Gumuz and others based on the

values of complementarity that is not sufficiently explained with the premises of premordialism. Normally, the primordialist view has been the object of sustained critique in the social science literatures (Barth, 1969); (Berman, 1998:314) and (Jerkins, 1997) equally the focus of the study is not on the static but on the socially maintained institutions shared by the case communities that transcends primordial characters; contingent to time, places, across lifestyles, cultures, political contexts.   Respecting the intellectual content in primordialism, the next part explicates the constructionist model of ethnicity current in sociology and other social science disciplines.

The Constructionist Paradigm

From the premordialist perspectives, we see that ethnicity exists independent of our perception of it; it is assumed to significantly distinguish ethnic members from one another while the constructionists argue that we have created it as a meaningful category of difference between people. The constructionist paradigm has criticized the potential suppression of the primordial variables of ethnicity through illuminating the ideological implication for the processes of relationship in political decision-making rooted in historical vicissitudes. Accordingly, (Barth, 1969) argued that boundary maintenance is a crucial factor in ethnicity that is otherwise dependent on the structural differences of competing communities. The structural relationships are more decisive in defining ethnicity than primordial factors and, indeed, primordial factors might be instrumental in mobilizing ethnic communities to assert a distinctive identity and pursue collective but primordial interests. The creation and recreation of Barth's ethnic boundary maintenance what (Poluha, 1998:34) states as "the ethnification processes" assumes that past ethnic boundaries might be modified or replaced through new histories and experiences to meet the pace of social processes in their environment. Ethnicity is not a self-directed entity rather a process involving creation or recreation and including the primordial identities. Hobsbawn,

(1990) note the time-dimension in the maintenance of ethnicity that is not linear but is experienced in the legitimating of every day social interaction. In similar vein, (Hettne, 1996:17) notes "it is a variable, contextual, situational and relational" phenomena. Though ethnicity remains imprecise, fluid and constantly in processes of ethnicization, de-ethnicization and re-ethnicization as the members move from one social situation to another, based of realities in the study unit, it has potential power to explain the inter-ethnic realities in the study unit.

We could fairly concludes that the constructionists interpret ethnicity as a boundary phenomenon constructed within specific and competing discursive sites equally with conflicting discourses and practices. Constructionism has arguably significant explanatory capacity to explicate the dynamics of historical processes for plausible theorizing on ethnicity in the context of pluralistic communities, equally in the study area. In similar vein, (Berman, 1998:314) noted that ethnicity is not a fixed condition but historical processes, only be studied in context-specificity that unequivocally explains the construction of ethnicity in the study unit amidst multiple, sometime conflicting, versions of culture and divergent life styles. Maybury-Lewis, (1997:137) notes "the context of ethnic nationalism and circumstances of the arena in which it acts". For instance, the Settlers with different mode of economic subsistence eventually overwhelmed the shifting cultivator Bertha community with politically sponsored economic, cultural and even, demographic spheres that, in turn, caused the creation of ethnic cleavages and categories. These wide-ranging possibilities in the maintenance of ethnic identity (ethno genesis) according to (Hettne (1996:17) combinations of different primordial criteria plus their interrelationships with a changing historical context makes the phenomena more difficult equally indispensable. The case communities have maintained shared socio-economic exchange, systems

of communication, and modes of social reproduction that does not considered as ascribed or primordial to the uniqueness of any ethnic lines.

The constructionist perspective is also biased towards social interactions that eventually might lead us to social determinism, leaving no room for individual choices. Are ethnic nationalisms essentially only ideological inventions? Are ethnic communities imagined or are they mere social constructions? Fortunately, the aim of the study, here, is a brief attempt to draw attention to the conceptual problems in the field of social sciences rather than presenting clear analytic account of these complex phenomena. Therefore, cognizant of this fact, other alternative approaches are somewhat detached from pure premordialism or constructionism affirming the existence of both objective and subjective qualities. Hence, as stressed in their literatures (Stavenhagen, 1996) and (Smith, 1991) noted that both objective and subjective factors are essential elements for the existence of ethnicity. However, not always the case, Smith classifies language, territory, social organization, culture, common origin, and religion to objective characteristic while the rest of the aspects are subjective and are subject to manipulation for political and economic advantages. Based on his experience on European ethnicity, (Smith, 1986:28) identifies key elements on the complex meanings of ethnic ties and sentiments:

Ethnie do not cease to be ethnie when they are dispersed and have lost their homeland;

for ethnicity is a matter of myths, memories, values and symbols and not of material

possessions or political power, but of which require a habitant for their actualization.

He seems to be suggesting the importance of the myths of origins, descent and the association to a specified territory in the construction of ethnic membership; however, it is not a sufficient condition, taking into account the Beni-Shangul experience. That is, the history of the Bertha (Ateib, 1973) mentions the consecutive migration of various families or clans or linguistic

communities from different directions including the Fungi kingdom of Sudan while all retained the ethnic name derived from their previous mountain settlements. The case is also true for the Settlers. The existence of sub-ethnic communities or 'sub-clans' within the two communities retaining the same group name and seeing themselves as belonging but with different ancestral origins across times. This might have given evidence that ethnic identities are more territorially based political communities.

Therefore, the debate over the premordialist visa-a-vise the constructionist perspective in light of the study unit, is predictable explanation on social relationship, instead of competition, to describe the different levels of collective social identities lines across ethnic, clan, religious and so forth. That is, it explains a bit more exactly on the mutual social interrelationships that transcend the categorical ethnic arrangement between the Bertha and the Settler communities, yet, these interrelationships happen to be contingent on the political, economic, ecological and other socially constructed institutions. This has also been true (Lemon, 1996:93) in the extent of "unity among oppressed blacks and mixed race people along with Indians in the struggle against Apartied, across ethnic and racial boundaries in the 1980s, but proven fragile just after the common enemy is removed" in the post-independent south Africa. Ethnic identity, therefore, changes in intensity over time as it could be explicitly uncovered through intensive observation on the social interaction and solidarity with/within the two case communities on their political preference for the 2005 election. Consequently, rather than dichotomization of primordial vis-à-vis constructed models of ethnicity, the complementarity paradigm might be founded on the social principle of, however, situational, mutual recognition and accommodation of differences. Similarly, ethnic identities cut across ethnic divisions that have implications for the concept 'network' rather than coming from established social units. Therefore, the case study focuses on

what (Turton, 1994:17) calls the "organization of collective action" rather than a tradition of common origin, which makes them a community in the first place. These collectively institutionalized institutions, between the case communities, are the result of the dialectical interactions between their similarities vis-à-vis differentiations.

Overview of Interethnic integration in Ethiopia

The origins, direction of movement and modes of integration among ethnic or linguistic communities in the unfolding historical processes in the traditional Ethiopian polities had been a multifaceted voyage that could understand a bit more exactly in its context-specificity. This part is, indeed, an effort to locate our intriguing ethno-religious past in context so that one can envisage the essence of his/her identity of Ethiopianness from the stimulating, occasionally, terrible history of our diversity that traps our thoughts by penchant prejudices of the 'elitist' political affairs. Obviously, the contemporary Ethiopia is a land made up of varied ethnic and linguistic threads comprising (Pankhrust, 1990: ix) the Semetic, largely in the north with pockets in the south; the Omotic in the south west; Cushitic largely in the south with pockets in the north and the Nilo-Saharan in the far west, near the Sudan border. Rather it resulted from the immigration, differentiation, and integration of super-language families in the first glimpses of Ethiopian history.

Intermarriage between members of different ethnic or religious communities is common in Ethiopia, principally in areas where plurality exists. Perhaps, ethnic hybridity of diversity through familial relationship has theoretical and practical significance for the manifestation of mutual tolerance that transcends the existing primordial ethnic/ linguistic differentiation. Accordingly, (Hetzron, cited in Sheriff, 1985:3) indicates that the Semetic people had intermingled with indigenous Cushitic people to form the ancient Ethio-semitic language

speakers. As an effect of intermarriage Trimingham, (1952) noted that the fusion of diverse communities into a culturally homogeneous community, and, eventually, developed indigenous civilization with little alien influence other than the sabean civilization. This amazing intermarriage of different people in Ethiopia has further supported with in (Pankhrust, 1990) the history of population movements in various forms from across every direction. Hence, historical movements of people have made possible the social phenomena of bilingualism, and, indeed, multilingualism that sufficiently reveals the patterns early of interethnic interaction perhaps based on mutual assimilation and integration.

At the macro-level, Prophet Mohammed also witnessed the cerebrated pluralism in Ethiopia. It had been documented in Trimingham, (1952) and Hussein (2001) saying, "If you go to Abyssinia [al-habasha], you will find a king under whom none are persecuted. It is lands of righteousness where God will give you relief from you are suffering". This historical fact, among others, entails the diversity and multifaceted peaceful social interactions among various communities that stretches millennia across the socio-economic, political, commercial and religio-cultural spheres of Ethiopian history. Besides, the cerebrated grassroots mutual tolerance had also attested with side-by-side existence of Muslim sultanates and the Christian kingdom along ethnic dimensions. For instance, the sultanate of Ifat or Shawa, the strong center, among the central and eastern Ethiopia Trimingham, (1952) and the Makhzumi Muslim Dynasty founded in 896 AD, situating in the eastern edge of Showa next to the capital of the Christian kingdom and the kingdom of Damot lying in its south-west. Furthermore, the above experiences had not been limited to the secular spheres of social life but had in the spiritual dimensions. It is evident in religious syncretism that, for instance, (Hussein, 2001) discusses about the assimilation of traditional religious elements with Islam or Christianity or Islam with

Christianity. However, historically maintained mutual tolerance might have been pushed aside during 'the restoration of the Solomonic dynasty' in 1270 which had herald the unity of state and church for mutually endorsed policy of aggressive expansionism over different autonomous linguistic, ethnic and religious communities.

Consequently, the Christian kingdom, the Muslim sultanates and indigenous communities, having predominant ethnic dimensions, became major rivals and waged continuous wars for political dominance in their territories, often as survival strategy. The first half of the 16th century witnessed high population movement from various directions and, eventually, complicated and changed the population distribution and, enriched the diversity of Ethiopian society. In contrast, the historical image of Ethiopia as a nation had been Ullendorff, (1960:33) "biased or selective to the Semitic speakers or traditional empire builders of 'modern' Ethiopia". Hence, the ruling elites had achieved Muzuri's (1975) "ethnocratic state" where ethnicity was the political quintessence of the country. Historically, elitist constructions of social biases and selectivities have resulted in the hierarchical stratification of ethnic and religious relations in the Ethiopian society where the societal inclusion or exclusion based on ethnic calculus.

The Elitist Aspects of 'Nation Building' in Ethiopia

Though historical evidences had showed that Ullendorff, (1960) Punt and Damat were the first states in the Horn of Africa in the third millennium BC having extensive commercial relations with Egypt, but with no exact political boundaries, some academics argue within present day Ethiopia, Eritrea, and Somalia. The primary focus of most historical literatures seems to have been the assertion of history of the (Taddese, 1972:5) 'Semitic state' as the ultimate origins of the Ethiopian state. It was the settlement of the Arabian immigrants in the hinterland of Adulis and Axum. Hence, some historical sources trace the origin of the Ethiopian state

during the Aksumite era to a trading state, emerged at the first century trading with the Byzantine Empire, Egypt, and the Arabs. However, they did say nothing about how the indigenous communities, before the immigration or the Axumite state, had been governing their interests within / across communities.

It seems that the definition of state, in the history of Ethiopia, constitutes political dominance, social conflict, trade, and political affairs. Some scanty historical sources, nonetheless, have indicated the existences of small autonomous political units sharing the same social and cultural heritage that (Taddese, 1972:11) 'date back in the fifth millennia B.C., having won sufficient economic and military prestige'. They had been ruled by local system of traditional chiefdoms Trimingham, (1952) and give rise to the eventual consolidation of more than eighty ethnic communities into a single nation state. Briefly, the development of a 'modern state' in Ethiopia has been an evolutionary process that undergone successive phases of contraction and expansion to delineate its territorial boundary. Historically, these processes of nation making have been evidenced Levine (1974) who notes four centers of early territorial expansion constituting the Axumites, the Beja, the Agaw and the Somali.

As part of the traditional forms of political organization (Levine, 1974) noted leaders of politically dominant states called themselves 'King of Kings' and enjoyed holding sway over diverse peoples receiving tribute from them, and bringing them into a single cultural trajectory. Perhaps, that is why the Amharic word 'Ager', meant for country does not have a collective meaning for either the past or contemporary Ethiopia as a political unit inclusive to all current ethnic communities as a 'citizen' while it equally applies to the neighborhood, the district, and regions. Levine has further declared that in the year 1300, Ethiopia constituted fifty politically independent societies, each with its own language, religion and customs and, most never

developed ambitions beyond the struggle to survive in a circumscribed and protected by mountains and waterways defining their territories of local inhabitants. Hence, from the political perspective, most of these small societies (Taddese, 1972) had maintained strong military capacity to protect themselves against attacks but not were aggressive to engage in sustained territorial expansion until the restoration of the 'Solomonic dynasty'.

The Solomonic elites furthered (Taddese, 1972) the title of 'King of Kings' and adopted the Aksumite political and religious institutions, although aggressive and exploitative, in the expansion of the empire of the Christian kingdom to the eastern, southern and western dimensions since the 13th century. Consequently, there were frequent wars among the expansionist Christian kingdom with the conquered people in different corners of Ethiopia. Notwithstanding thousands of years of huge territorial expansion or contraction, the spectacular (Markakis, 2003:11) expansion was launched from Showa, the southern most principality of the kingdom by its provincial ruler Menilk II, who become king of Ethiopia in 1889 Gregorian calendar and completed the processes before his death in 1913. Accordingly, (Abebe and Dawit, 1996:139) commented that, unlike most other African countries, the formation of present-day Ethiopia was due largely to the interaction of competing 'indigenous' social and political forces spanning many centuries. This competitive expansion to the greater proportion of its current territory eventually culminated in the late 19th century. In addition, the period also witnessed the epidemic of the great Ethiopian famine [Kifu Qan] in the northern parts of Ethiopia that perhaps as survival strategy; most northerner joined the expansionist army of Emperor Menilik. Subsequently, they settled in the relatively less stricken south, and western parts of the current Ethiopia. During this period, the Bella-Shangul region had been ruled under three local governors 'possessing complete autonomy from outside interference. The letter to the British

government in Sudan attested to this quoted in Ateib (1973:36) and reads, "When the Abyssinian troops came to my country; they called upon me to pay taxes and submit to them or be prepared to fight". However, the methods and extents of exploitations (Markakis, 2003) varied considerably depending mainly on the reaction to the conquest. That is, it involves taking into slavery and the removal or elimination of those local kings or Emirs of who resist and expropriation of land to distribute to the military garrisons as well as collaborators from the host ethnic communities. Those communities who did not resist their incorporation were treated moderately through the assimilation of local leaders in to a system of indirect rule. These rulers were rewarded grants of land and shares of taxes collected from their own people and royal [political] marriage relations or proven loyalty. Often, the elites provide political loyalty with the conversion to the state religion and the espousal of Amhara cultural traditions, including the adoption of the Amharic language. It was in the late 19th century that (Sanderson quoted in Ateib, 1973) Menelik eventually incorporated the region of Beni-Shangul into the Ethiopian state with its military superiority and manipulating internal rivals. Furthermore, attesting the cruelty and oppressive administration of the newly incorporated regions of the study unit by the notorious garrisons quoting the memo of British tourists (Ateib, 1973:37) reads as "our visit was ill-timed…the country had been raided by the Abyssinians that crops destroyed by fire, and the live stocks were killed or driven off. Most of the inhabitants who had escaped death or capture had fled to the remote parts of the country". Here, one could fairly surmise that the processes of nation building not only resulted in incorporation of physical land but also the alienations of life style of the indigenous cultural communities. In both cases, the newly incorporated people of Ethiopia had faced cruel feudal exploitation through paying heavy tributes, and oppression related to ethnic, religious, traditional institutions and language until the 1974 revolution. As a

peculiar feature, therefore, the people of Ethiopia had entered the 20th century as a single political community with well-defined national boundary and achieving the first magnificent African victory over colonialism at Adwa. This political stability lasted only for a short period. The ethnic question continued to the Haile Sellassie and the military regimes. The Emperor was (Bahru, 2000:137) "entitled to absolute power to control the central government" by Fasil, (1997:17) states that "consolidate his power by codifying a new constitution in 1931" to make himself Authoritarian vis-à-vis political resistance from the disenfranchised communities with educational, occupational and language policies. These policies were implemented by building a strong army (Markakis, 1974) with the membership prerequisites of language, religion, values and blood relations with the legendary imperial family. Here, it is true that most of the symbols of the Ethiopian state had taken the identities of 'Amhara culture' and the names of the persons who have occupied power and privilege had Amhara names. Nevertheless, this does not mean that the majority of the 'Amhara' people have been 'dominators' or 'beneficiaries' of the political, economic, or social system that bore their name.

After the deposition of the imperial government in the 1974, the rise to power of the military regime had given (Young, 1996) 'enduring vigor for ethnic based liberation movements, some stressed secession while others appealed for national self-determination for disenfranchised ethnic minorities'. The constitution of the 1987 by the regime (Markakis, 2003) denounced the chauvinism of its predecessors and tried to answer the quest of ethnicity with recognition and respect for the right of self-determination of all nationalities in accordance with the spirit of socialism. Beyond, the regime denounced the imperial constitution that reserved the right to education to people who fulfill the criteria of 'Semetic' traditions and granted the right to free education for all nationalities. It also (Markakis, 2003:12) "gave usufruct rights, mostly for

people in the conquered areas and freed themselves from the exactions and services to alien landlords". Moreover, the regime had carried the national literacy campaign (Clapham, 1998) benefiting mostly women and won praise internationally and (Markakis, 2003) carried out the first ever population census [that] includes questions on language and religion in Ethiopia. From the political perspective, through adopting the soviet model of ethnic federalism the regime 'changed the imperial *Teklay Gizat* (provinces) to *kifle Hager* (regions)' with the prerequisite on socio-economic development. Given the complexities of the quest on ethnicity coupled with the ideological definition of ethnicity (Markakis, 1994), 'its ambiguous determination on the integrity and unity of Ethiopia' did not achieve stable political community. Thought efforts of the regime seem decisive societal transformation, however, amid growing ethnic nationalism, had not ultimately responded to quests of various insurgents' that, eventually, destroyed the Marxist-socialist experiment. Therefore, the Ethiopian people's revolutionary democratic front [coalition of four ethnically based insurgent organizations in 1990 realized that the current federalism as the only way out and built upon a historically inappropriate management of ethnic diversities that large ethnic communities were given their own regions, which included some minorities. This ended up process with the creation of 12 regions with two more multi-ethnic cities of Harar and Addis Ababa. Equally, along with the existing ethnic based decentralization of political power, the government has established "new democratic rights" for legally organized ethnic based political parties that further the ethnicization of ethnicity.

Summary on the Politicization of Ethnicity in Ethiopia

The processes of ethnicity (ethno-genesis) contributed to evolutionary and transformational changes in ethno-demographic composition through mutual integration or assimilation for centuries. Amidst histories of mutual tolerance, Ethiopians had a history of

conflicts and wars. These conflicts have been and continue to be (Mar kakis, 2003) part of local history that color peoples' political attitudes and behaviors in contemporary Ethiopia. Based on their ethnocratic processes of Ethiopianization, (Joireman, 1997) successive rulers broken down those organized ethnic oppositions as remarkably ineffective. The major issues faced by Ethiopia today have appeared on the agenda of groups that were opposing their rule. Those oppressive state policies provided the (Markakis, 1974; 2003) 'social conditions for politicization of the ethnicity' that have been 'toughened in the 1950s and 60s'. This period was the contemporary of (Joireman (1997) the radicalized political quests of the Ethiopian students demanding self-determination of nations, nationalities and land rights. This revolutionary quest (Markakis, 2003:23) had led to the collapse of the imperial regime and revealed the fault lines in the Ethiopian state. It was the time for the struggle for independence in Africa and unique in the proliferation of internal conflicts and civil wars among peoples within many countries leading to the politicization of ethnicity. In such wider perspective, (Ake, 1991) ethnic relations in most of the multiethnic nations of Africa after independence have in 'every way been turbulent, chaotic, and violent and characterized by perpetual hostilities'.

Furthermore, the complex ideological definition of ethnicity by the military regime led to the proliferation of armed opposition movements that chose ethnicity as a marker of political metaphors. Consequently, (Joireman, 1997) notes many of those now functioning as parties had their beginning with in ethnically based insurgent groups during the military era. (Horowitz, 1991:140) noted, 'In divided societies, the majority of studies actually show that ethnocentrism *increases* [emphasis in the original] with education'. Hence, the expansion of education also produced (Markakis, 2003) 'politicized intellectuals seeking potential contradiction and violence in the quest for ethnicity. Equally, the mass literacy campaign decorated the role of language in

the definition of ethnic identity (Markakis, 2003:11) "awaken and reinforce ethnic passions for self-administration" in Ethiopia. Finally, these led to deadly conflicts that ended with the current 'political-ethnic federalism giving particular ethnic group(s) control over the governing of their historic homelands. However, the current federalism seems to ignore the historical intermingling of ethnic communities at the grass root level. Consequently, the socio-economic and political problems in current Ethiopia (Joireman, 1997:406) "cut across ethnic boundaries and present a political conundrum… exclusive ethnic political organization cannot [certainly] claim to represent the interests of all". Succinctly, the existing competitive political processes, while ignoring the protection of rights and interests of regional minorities has exacerbated the politicization of ethnicity, in turn, furthering inter-ethnic resentments. Unfortunately, neither the government nor the opposition did opt for credible multiethnic alternative to end the cycle of social conflict.

The International Dimensions of Conflicts in Ethiopia

Alongside policies of state disenfranchisement, the internal interethnic relationships of Ethiopia somewhat through long-handed material interests of external forces. Providing its strategic significance, the social conditions for the inter-ethnic interactions, peaceful or otherwise have not only internal but also external dimensions that greatly felt in the 19th century. These external forces created the conditions favoring the politicization of diversities against each 'other' and particularly the state. This part, therefore, is an effort to review some of the significant external historical influences, in part, creates favorable conditions for inter-ethnic conflicts. To start with, the Axumite state (Taddese, 1972:21) with its ports of Adulis had developed international commercial relations however, with (Trimingham, 1965) profound alien influences of the Greco-Egyptians, Western Europe and the Byzantine Empire. Similarly, (Abebe

et.al, 1996:139) noted that Ethiopia has presented an enigma for foreign scholars for many centuries, for instance, the search for the presten John of Indies. In the medieval period, European powers had found Ethiopia as a potentially valuable partner in their struggle against the Turkish rule, as they were concerned primarily with strengthening their hegemony over the Red sea, and Indian Ocean trade routes. These competitive situations, among others, therefore, had eventually led to the nation wide ethno-religious conflicts of the 16th century, partly having its root in the blockade of the European long-trade route by the ottoman Turks. In the heyday of competition in the Horn of Africa, the Portuguese established trading stations along the eastern coast of Africa while the Turks had already an established power in the region. In 1520, they sent (Taddese, 1972) an official delegation to Ethiopia to advance its competing material interests through the pretext of friendly-religious- diplomatic solidarity while the Turks had with various Muslim sultanates. The competitions had resulted in the ferocious wars that both powers fought on the side of their 'friends' in the pretext of religious solidarity. Recently, the ideological alliances or re-alliances made Ethiopia vulnerable, as it (Mesfin, 1999:83) was a close friend of the United States in the period 1950 to 1974 while the Sudan and Egypt were strongly anti-America and pro-soviet, later Ethiopia shift to the soviet and the Sudan and Egypt, too, the America. Given its valuable geopolitical position with pivotal military strategic value to both the United States and the Soviet Union, Ethiopia has been attractive (Mesfin, 1999) as a competitive superpower. The Soviet Union (Atilo, 2005:33) established military relations with Somalia and the Sudan to divert western attention and resources from Europe where it felt more vulnerable militarily.

However, after the 1977, the relation between Ethiopia and America ended by Ethiopia shifting its alignment to the soviets and the Americans to Somalia giving (Mesfin, 1999) 'a green

light to the Ethio-Somali war that continues in the current Ethiopia. The ideological alliances had made Ethiopia vulnerable for ethnic based civil wars with the long-handed supported of (Mesfin, 1999) the Sudan and Egypt supporting the secessionism of Eritrea that was born, nurtured and brought to full maturity in Egypt. More specifically, one cause for resettlement, among others, in the study unit according to Pankhurst (2004:114) an 'add-on rationale' tied to external influences. The intensification of foreign sponsored insurgent movements along the border areas had forced the regime to remove the perceived supporters or resettled other people that provide buffers against insurgent groups in the southwestern Ethiopia. Secondly, the drought or famine of the 1984/5 forced the government to feel (Pankhurst, 2004:115) "powerlessness" due to the ideological alliances against the western powers principally the United States that 'placed Ethiopia at the mercy of donors giving them some leverage over internal policies and practices which are irksome and dishonorable'. Hence, the distant and the immediate neighbors of Ethiopia had infiltrated deep into Ethiopian political economy as well as religio-social fabrics through their competing material interests, and, eventually, create their client factions/warlords through the sponsorship in the military, financial and political demands for millennia. The early kingdoms or chiefdoms had been dependent on their foreign sponsors that led them perhaps to see their internal interests through the eyes of these alien powers. Consequently, the alien power had been able successfully exploit the existing ethnic and religious diversities and justified their interventions because they had common religious or ethnic ties with their rival national clients.

Religio-politics in Ethiopia

Political ideologies in the contexts of Ethiopia seem to have been drawn from the experiences of the western nations. Besides, to make matters more complicated, the rhetorical nationalism knotted with religion and ethnic identities that influence the political culture and

worldview of respective adherents. Different chiefdoms, kingdoms, and sheikdoms had been deriving their ideologies [often divisive] to mobilize their constituencies to the manipulatively organized collective causes through religious traditions and solidarity. Likewise, the sociological-political interpretation of religion in the history of Ethiopia revealed its instrumentality in the legitimatization of imperial authority through the ethnic construction of the Solomonic descent. Certainly, the orthodox Christianity had been the state religion since the 4th century to the 1974 revolution which had a more fundamental role in the medieval ideological formation nationalism (Pankhrust, 1990:29) possessing a 'considerable ecclesiastical population prominence in national affairs'. The church and the state had reciprocal interference in the affairs of the Ethiopian society that was analogous to (Aymro & Motov, 1970; 113-14) 'the two faces of the same coin', or the cooperation of 'the right eye and the left eye'. Ethiopia had a 'single religious nationalism' just as it has been defined in terms of single religion rather than amalgamation of many religions and ethnicities, eventually, needs inclusive Ethiopianism as a 'national ideology'.

In the long history of political culture in Ethiopia, religion was mobilized in support of stereotyping and prejudices as the basis of negative discrimination to the extreme and morally reprehensible limits to attain power over the 'other'. For instance, until the 1931 constitution, the church was very much engaged in the administration of 'Justice' in Ethiopia through (Aymro & Motov, 1970) 'Fetha Negest' where the judge must be the member of the Orthodox Church for case interpretation while the Emperors considered themselves as the Christ representatives on earth. The historical religious discrimination culminated by the military regime through guaranteed the equality of religion and freedom of conscience based on the Marxist anti-religious discourses. The regime preferred to minimize the influence of all religious traditions on the daily

affairs of the Ethiopian community, overtly contradictive with genuine principle of secularism. The regime has proved hostile to all religions and mobilized schools for anti-religious indoctrination of and propaganda of ideology deploying the vulgar of socialism. The overt influences of religion in Ethiopian politics since the revolution latently ignored as the domination of the alien ideological paradigms that depicted religious virtues as epiphenomena. However, Ethiopians are witnessing in the daily life level that the historical political traditions did not disappear with 'modernization' and the socialist models of national integration. Rather the opposite is true in Ethiopia where political elites have manipulated the primordial uniqueness of ethnicity knotted with religion to reactivate and reinsert into politics to challenge the authority and legitimacy of government(s). Indeed, we have witnessed that religion has featured one of the most important socio-political factors in the 2005 national election mobilized as catalyst to influence the political judgments of the populace. However, there are enormous qualitative differences in the contemporary religious manipulation from the past of Ethiopia as (Haynes, 1993:155) notes 'political ideologies may wax and wane but religion maintains its position of personal salience' for its adherents.

The Integrative Aspects of Religious Institutions

The integrative importance of religion summed up in (Radcliffe-Brown, 1952) as orderly social life amongst human beings depends upon the presence in the minds of the members of a society of certain sentiments to control the behavior of the individual in his relation to others. Hence, using these perspective, religious institutions are more or less inclusive and equally exclusive that affects the level of genuine communication. That is to mean, members identify themselves primarily with religious institutions or rituals aimed at variety of goals or purposes, either transcendental or worldly, depending on their religiosity. Durkheim in Pickering (2002)

asserted that religion is a reality or real force-a force because it exerted an influence over people that should be given a prime place above all other institutions. Religious practices (Davis, 1948) reinforce the social identification of fellow adherents to observe community norms and to rise above purely private interests, however, sharpen their separateness from 'others' with socially regulatory conviction up on supernatural punishment for frivolous or bad actions and reward for good deeds. The integrative aspects of religion have further illustrated in (Geertz, 1966) as cultural system historically transmitted patterns of meanings embodied in symbols, ethos, and world-view. For Geertz social ethos is mutually supportive with worldview that enabled adherents' collective framework of meaning and experience in their social environments. This great power of religion has also summarized in (Smith, 1970) that religion integrates 'traditional' society by providing it with a common framework of meaning and experience through the ordinary processes of socialization associated with symbols of sacred. Participation in the same rituals, celebrating collective festivals and so forth makes members of the society integrated at the profound level. It clearly indicates that religion could exert paramount influence in the integration of adherents, and certainly a force for social enhancement with supports with the socio-economic and political structure of society. In Ethiopian society, religious, either indigenous or the monotheistic religions, ideals and values substantially constituted the entire worldview and cultural systems, with predominant syncretism. That is to mean, there are shared beliefs, rites or practices across religious traditions, perhaps reflecting the cultural plurality of social relations in Ethiopian society, transcending religious boundaries. Besides, adherents of the same religious traditions across different ethnic communities have been sharing more or less similar identity and practices.

CHAPTER THREE

PRESENTATION AND ANALYSES OF DATA ON ETHNIC IDENTIFICATION,

CONFLICT, AND INTEGRATION

The site-specific exploratory interviews were conducted in villages purposively selected upon the criteria listed in the methodology part of this study. The main research site is the Assossa District with selected nine villages and Bambasi district was chosen as supplementary with four villages. The Assossa and Bamabssi towns serve as favorable settings for investigating especially for informants coming from non-visited villages. As I already noted, the towns were the setting for systematic and purposeful observation and discussion about the socio-economic practices and exchanges relevant to the study. Though the study employed informal discussions with a number of individuals from the two communities, the following tables show only the demographic characteristics of selected interviewees for in-depth exploration.

Table1: Demographic characteristics, district/villages and interview schedule for Bertha

Code	Age	District/village	Sex	community	Date of interview
001	75	Assossa/Amba 13	M	Bertha	19/07/2005
002	45	Assossa/Town	M	Bertha	22/07/2005
003	60	Assossa/Anfezism	M	Bertha	26/07/2005
004	21	Assossa/Megele 35	M	Bertha	29/07/2005
005	26	Assossa/Salga 24	M	Bertha	2/08/ 2005
006	30	Assossa/town	F	Bertha	3/08/2005
007	57	AssossaAmba18	M	Bertha	9/08/2005
008	77	Assossa/Town	M	Bertha	11/08/2005
009	72	Assossa/Amba 9	M	Bertha	14/08/2005
010	48	Bambassi/Dabus	M	Bertha	5/10/2005
011	68	Bambassi/Keshmado	M	Bertha	6/10/ 2005
012	28	Bambassi/Town	F	Bertha	8/10/2005

Table 2: Demographic characteristics, district/villages and interview schedule for Settler interviewees

013	29	Bambassi/Dabus	M	Bertha	8/10/2005
014	69	Assossa/Salga24	M	Settler	18/07/2005
015	75	Assossa/Megel 35	M	Settler	21/07/2005
016	83	Assossa/Megele 34	M	Settler	24/07/2005
017	25	Assossa/Amba 13	M	Settler	27/07/2005
018	48	Assossa/Amba4	F	Settler	28/07/2005
019	39	Assossa/Amba 15	M	Settler	6/08/2005
020	61	Assossa/Amba18	M	Settler	15/08/2005
021	52	Assossa/Town	M	Settler	17/08/2005
022	63	Assossa/Amba 9	M	Settler	9/08/2005
023	73	Bambassi/town	M	Settler	11/10/2005
024	24	Bambassi/Keshmado	F	Settler	15/10/2005
025	20	Bambassi/Dabus	M	Settler	17/10/2005

Ethnic identification of the Bertha and the Settler community members

Here the study follows the analyses of ethnic identity as an individual level of identification or the sense of the individual to belong their respective community. Individual members of the Bertha and the Settlers make a strong identity dichotomization of the 'We'-'they' to refer themselves as a distinct identity group. A Bertha interviewee stressed:

Identification in our environment is based on familial, clan, territorial, religion, physical emblems, and lifestyle. These are also reflected in the cumulative social interaction and reaction with the other ethnic group. It is not the one direction assumption of members to themselves rather the attitudes and behaviors of other groups and vise versa.

Some interviewees expanded the social marking for identification into differences means of livelihood, marriage systems, patterns of leadership and skin color. These identity markers are not only found to be means for membership in a group but also (Chazan, 1992) a means for mobilization of members for common political, economic and social purposes; is in essence a culturally based social organization. The identity sketches of ethnic identification of the case communities could better in the summary given by SchermerHorn as quoted in (Hutchinson et al, 1996:6) as a:

> social entity within a larger society having real or putative common ancestry, memories of a shared historical past, and a cultural focus on one or more symbolic elements defined as the epitome of their peoplehood. Examples of such symbolic elements are kinship patterns, physical contiguity, religious affiliation, language or any combination of these. A necessary accompaniment is some consciousness of kind among members of the group.

This definition is parallel to what we have discussed above referring the lists of (Smith, 1986) including shared memories of origin, collective culture, territoriality, and so forth. However, individual identity is personal that varies with situations while collective identity are bunches of identities used as boundaries in relation to 'others'. For the same reason, (Smith, 1994:14) differentiates in terms of individual visa-a-vise collective identity. Relatedly, these identifies could be an impetus for the construction of certain beliefs that can later on become enduring and effective. Though not empirically verified, for instance, the oppressive state legitimacy that stayed for millennia had been constructed with the prerequisites of language, religion, and legendary blood relations with the Israelites.

More over, (Barth, 1969:14) defines ethnic identity in terms of cultural standards that a group possesses, that are, the overt signals and the basic value orientation. For him, ethnic identity is the ascribed social units, where the social boundaries ensure the maintenance of the community, that is, not the cultural content shielded by the boundary but the boundary itself or

the symbolic border. In contrast, (Horowitz, 1985:46) discusses about the differential estimations of group worth, and on their collective stereotypes that considered by (Hutchinson et al, 1997:10) "a welcome antidote to reductionist approaches…supplemented by a historical perspective". The differential estimations can be categorized into the visible and the permanent signal and the invisible and consistent sign of identity including collective memories, preexisting group hostility and so forth. Though the Settlers are assimilation of ethnicities, the Bertha refers to them as "Amhara", "Wolloye" (the symbolic attachment ancestral homeland) the same is true for the Bertha refer to them as Sudanese (to refer to their black skin, Arabic language, Religion, historical attachment) that expresses the essence of community. However, the features of identification are not exhaustive as well as exclusive where religious solidarity [very strong among the Bertha], history, language, historical memories of ancestral homeland [very strong for the Settlers communities].

Finally, all the above features have an impact on the ethnic solidarity against those "other" parallel to (Zastrow & Kirst-Ashan 1997:202) conviction to its members "form a special group" and a sense of communal identity. The above-discussed ethno-historical memories of institutional ethnocentrism together with the current ethnic based decentralization have their shares in the psychosocial distance between the two communities. More of those primordial features, including many others, of ethnic identification against the other, however, have their own implications for the two communities to be internally subdivided in their differential psychosocial allegiances. For example, the Wolloye did not leave the traditional beliefs of marriage that prohibits the inter-marriage of artisans with non-artisans who are considered being bio-socially pure.

The Bertha ethnic identification: Historical and political perspective

The Bertha is the largest ethnic group in the regional state inhabiting Assossa or Beni-Shangul Zone. While the Bertha still think of them as belonging to a single nation with a single identity. (Cerulli, 1947:157 cited in Ateib, 1973) classified the Bertha linguistically in to 'the westerner (live in the Sudan) and the easterner' (live in Ethiopia)-the case of the study. Meaning, linguistically the Bertha belongs to the group of sudanic branch in the Nilo-Saharan language family, however, (Triulizi, quoted in Ateib, 1973) note the various clan designations used to describe the different Bertha groups/clans in the land of Beni-Shangul. Though some historians and tourists had mentioned some aspects of the community, there is no comprehensive historical literature about its cultural and chronological identity. Legendary sources noted in (Ateib, 1973), all informants affirmed that they descend from one father, Berthu, and a mother Endili. However, in an interview with an elderly informant in Bambassi town it was found that the mother of the Bertha community was Endu. Other tradition acknowledges that the Tumat area was their first settlement while the scattered Mao and Koma ethnic communities appear to have been the original inhabitants of the region as (Triuilzi, quoted in Ateib,1973) says, 'the very name of the region seems to have been a Mao word'.

Politically, for a long period of its history, that area has been under the rule of sheikdoms while their homeland was the site for slave hunting, traditional trade routes (particularly of gold) with the other parts of Ethiopian territories (including the Axumite kingdom), the Sudan, Egypt and Turks. The history of the Bertha mainly dominated with the evolution of different political institutions of various sheikdoms. To the end of the 18th century (Ateib, Undated) three, the Akoldi, Komosha and Belashangul, powerful sheikdoms were in the Bertha land established through powerful Sudanese Arab caravan traders who integrated themselves with the local

Bertha community through marriage. Based on informants, further marriage integration also took place with the refugees of Beni Ummayya tribe that the Jabalawin claim descended from the Sudan in the 16th century and other Cushitic and Nilotic language families perhaps experienced identity formation within the context of pluralism. In addition to the historical process of slave raids, the resettlement during the military regimes forced the Bertha further to the semi-arid lowland areas in the far western periphery of Ethiopia, searching for protection. These experiences as part of local history, the elderly Bertha informants painfully narrated the ostentatious memory of the horrible experiences of slave raiding until Ethiopia abolished slavery in the first half of the 20th century.

The views of the Bertha on Ethnic Pluralism

We have seen that the intrinsic ethnic identifications somehow problematic as well as commitment to individual to his/her own community against the 'others'. It seems a response to historical circumstances as members of many minority communities in Ethiopia 'engaged in the straggle to achieve equality'. According to many informants, they were interacting and forming alliances against domination. What strikes me during the fieldwork about them though contingent in the existing political situations in relation to resources/opportunities is the collectively time-honored, normatively and cognitive pluralism within members of the case communities amidst politically constructed state level inequalities over the centuries. More specifically, the composition of the Bertha community had historical heterogeneity that adopted the conditions of homogeneity in reaction to political discrimination by the successive regimes of Ethiopia as they referred to them as a group governed by one culture, religion, and language.

Besides, as discussed above, the Bertha had self-contained, self-perpetuating and relatively socially egalitarian system of relations across clans or linguistic constituencies, the

patterns of collective social relations among members are individual and equally institutional. Quite interestingly, members of the Bertha or at least the great majority affiliated to the standards, norms, beliefs, ideals, and expectations of their community governed by religious leaders, clan or community elders who justify their actions through the traditions of their religion that influence their worldview. More importantly, there is a predominant mutual assimilation and/or integration (Ateib, 1973) that taken place between the Bertha and their immediate neighbors, the Nilotic-Burn and the Mao ethnic communities. Here, the concept of integration does not necessarily mean egalitarian-proportionate social relations rather ethical, social and psychological exchange in the pursuit of social fairness between the case communities. The Bertha had deeply rooted experience of mutual tolerance equal willingness to peacefully coexist with neighboring communities even though different in primordial ethnic features, for instance, the Bertha, the Mao, the Komo and the majority of the Oromo with the same religious tradition coexist with the Gumuz with indigenous religion, and the Christian Shinasha.

Consequently, these historical interactions might have implications to have pluralistic traditions or institutions that, in turn, influence the level mutual tolerance including integration with the Settler community. Elderly Bertha informants stressed that their religious traditions, like others, had an influence on their worldview and considers "it as guidance for tolerance as well as peaceful coexistence with the neighboring communities". They repeatedly referred to the first Islamic constitution in Madinah that established "the first and single" political community acknowledging societal pluralism in the political, social, economic and the defense matrix of the community. The clan is a powerful symbol of identity within the Bertha that informs social relationships. Though it is composed of neighborhood residents with blood relationships, elder informants reported that it is the determinant factor for the coexistence of different groups in the

Bertha land. Accordingly, to promote just social relationships, they have relatively an egalitarian social system in which every member has equal social rights and entitlements within or across clans.

General Overview of the Settlers

The military regime carried through (Pankhrust, 2004:114) "with an emergency approach those dictatorial officials decide on a campaign mentality to manipulate in times of crises". Referring to the conclusion made by Gebre (Pankhrust and Piguet, 2004) using famine as central concern the regime may have planned to ensure its control of peripheral regions, counter insurgents, establishment of collective farms [ideological], and regional development. One Settler informant who was member of the Militia during arrival described the situation as:

> The government was not seemed settling people. It did not give the respect we deserve. We were provided with deceptions and unfulfilled promises. We (the Settlers) have relative or family members coming here (Assossa) when the loved members persuaded or forced to leave their homestead. At our arrival, we discovered that it was a strategic move of militarization to increase the government control against insurgents' movement. That is, the areas were the battleground between the Ethiopian army, the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) and the Bertha People's Liberation Movement (BPLM). Then after, the government established two local militia namely 'Mentir' (Literary mean destroy) and 'Tikur Anbessa' (Black lion).

It became apparent that the military agenda lies hidden not far below the surface in the descriptions of their experiences in the resettlement villages, which clearly indicates the social engineering, used to contain insurgent movements. Hence, two types of militia were recruited from the Settlers, those who work inside the resettlement villages and those who were sent out into the indigenous communities. During the 1984/85 famine, the second phase, some literatures indicated some practical improvements have been undertaken in terms of careful selection and preparation of sites and voluntary recruitment but Colok (quoted in Dessalegn,1988) the largest Assossa project] was started with out feasibility or Agro-climatic studies. Unfortunately, in

contrast to the overzealous preconception by the military regime, the area is infested with Gendi (diseases that killed Horn animals) and less favorable for farming that makes it underexploited.

From purely economic and political perspectives, in which the schemes were originally intended, the resultant effects of the resettlement have been obviously negative, particularly in the first phase while the social consequences are equally negative. The initial hardships, malnutrition, diseases and sufferings of the Settlers were similar with what Gebre clearly portrayed while referring the cohort Settlers in Metekel, the same regional state, cited in (Pankhrust and Piguet, 2004:72) as 'nothing but a failed project and a reminder of despair'. The failure had been exacerbated by similar factors (Wolde-sellassie, 2004:77) noted in Belese valley that Settlers were told that tractors would cultivate the land, fully furnished already built iron roofed houses awaited them and plenty of food, clothing and other technologies would be rendered. Informants gravely stressed that the promises were misinformation that created social cynicism, and instability amidst the devastating plague of malaria and other epidemics. Their produces of all other crops were stored in warehouses guarded by militia and later trucked away, as per the discourses of socialist economy. These painful expectations, human right violations, cadre control on production and exchange, movement, and lack of religious freedom have brought about a nostalgic affinity to their original homestead along with desperation.

The Bertha informants also reported that they had suffered significantly. They had been excluded, dispossessed of their lands and natural resources with the excuse of being assumed as Sudanese rather than truly Ethiopians. This is still revealed in the way the Settlers referred to them as Arabs derived from their Arabic language or Sudanese and their black-skin. More alarmingly, currently, the negative ecological consequences of the poorly-though-out resettlement as (Wolde-sellasie, 2004) witnessed in Beles valley has been accelerating rate of

deforestation, and desertification, eventually, loss of niches of livelihood, and inter-ethnic resentments equally potentially conflicts. These, eventually, has disintegrated equally impoverished the livelihood sources of the case communities, potentially disruptive.

Ethnic Identification among the Settlers

The Settlers were mostly farmers who used to live in the north central highlands of Ethiopia, Wollo province, basing their cultural civilization on a mixture of the early Semetic culture and the prior Cushitic culture. The original homestead of the Settlers is the area for the bet-Amhara where the Semitic people descended (Ullendroff, 1973) the sabean (the Habashats and the Aguezat) migrants of south Arabia to the Ethiopian Highlands between 1000-400 B.C. From the socio-historical perspective, prior to the introduction of Christianity and Islam in the province, the Cushitic Agawe and the Jewish communities had populated the province (Tesfaye, 1990) the Jewish communities left their historical legacies on village names like Betania Gelila, Korab, and Kibran. The Settlers' homestead had been the melting pot of   population movements and long distance trades that affect the composition of the Settlers. They came from different ecological zones or different means of livelihoods, ideas, and views. Consequently, these experiences had their share in the formation of more or less multicultural communities with their intermingled traditional values and practices, including religious beliefs and practices. The Settlers were referred by the Bertha, as "Amhara". They seemed to accept that and agreed with the predominant Semetic cultural values. The Settlers including the Muslims integrated those indigenously developed Christian beliefs and traditions. The community group name Amhara, despite its internal linguistic or ethnic differentiation commonly derived from Amharic, the language of the Settlers, developed from the original Sabaean language, changing through the influence of the non-Semitic languages as (Bender, 1976) notes the intermarriage of the Cushitic

and Semitic in the Amharic language. The Bertha did not know about Muslims in the Amhara 'ethnic' communities as the word Amhara historically meant Christian, even in the original provinces Islam had been used to represent 'ethnic identity'. However, some Bertha informants noted that as time goes they have been aware of the ethnic or linguistic diversities and that their religious rituals or practices reflect the Cushitic culture.

The Settlers were brought from all districts of the province, however, different in interethnic or inter-religious integration. For instances, most of the 1970s Settlers are predominantly moved from the highland-sedentary Christians that have had relatively lesser social interaction with the Bertha community. However, the second groups of Settlers are predominantly from the highly hybridized lowland-semi- sedentary-pastoral and pastoral Muslim communities that have maintained amazing social relationships with the Bertha. Quite interestingly, the sociological-historical integration of these communities noted in (Teferi, 1993 referring Isenberg and Krapf, missionaries in the 1840s) hat led to complete assimilation.

Nostalgia and Identity Dilemma among the Settlers

Ethiopia is the first country to plant Christianity in the African continent south of Egypt (Taddess, 1996) equally (Erlichi, 2002) the first country to host the first Muslim refuges [in the world]. Ethiopia (Trimingham, 1952) is also the only African country where Islam had established the presentation of a new religious conception of life, rapidly, appearing in daily life with their lifestyles. The two religions often representing different ethnic communities with different lifestyles but had maintained astonishing mutual tolerance and peaceful coexistence. Elites in power had demonstrated a reactive xenophobic attitude and behavior towards Muslim and other religious communities by prohibition of religious practices and derogatory stereotypes and social prejudices. Hence, (Medhane, 2003) characterized the relations by conflicts, wars and

integration, however, (Hussein, 2001) religion was often the content of the historical conflict not its basic factor rather political, class and ethnicity. This hierarchical stratification seems to have been constructed in the context of elitist equally powerful class promoting their interests in dynamic social, economic and political situations.

Hence, because of the differential conjunction of various historical forces, the Settlers had been victims of historical discrimination, including coercive conversion particularly during the reign of Tewodrose II (1855-1871) and Yohannes II (1872-1889) in an attempt to realize the dream of religious uniformity in then Ethiopia. To secure socio-political visibility (Hussein, 1989) a number of Muslim dynasties flourished as obstacles to the policy of centralization and unification of the Ethiopian empire. Eventually, the Emperors perceived Islam as an obstacle to the implementation of such a policy that led to Islamic solidarity to mobilize their energies against the hatful conversion/atrocities. As a response, might be others, Emperor Yohannes called the Boru Meda council (Bahiru, 2002) in May/June 1878 to declare religious conversion of non-orthodox Christians. The Wollo Muslims (Hussein, 1989) responded with major revolts, however, and resulted in atrocious massacres of peasants and semi-pastoral communities. Spending most of their lives as Christian (Asnake, 1983:27) those who were forcefully converted and stressed by elder informants ultimately declare on their death that they were Muslim at heart, ensuring no longer dangerous. Quite interestingly, despite these hostile experiences imposed by the ruling elites, their homestead has always been the typical place with strong social relationships between the Muslims and Christians in their village, including inter-marriage. Accordingly, (Mesfin, 19991:18) notes such amazing inter-religious marriage much more common in Wollo than any other part of Ethiopia. Nor do the Muslim Settlers quickly assimilate or integrate themselves with the receiving Bertha due to the above historical memories of

deprivation. They have predominant nostalgic affiliation to their original residence equally claims those oppressive rulers as "patriots" of Ethiopia, partly due to "the current political alienation in their resettlement site". More specifically, the new generations, who do not know where Wollo is situated, tend to identify themselves with Amahra region rather than with a particular Wollo territory or community. A young Settler informant illustrated his situation as:

> I was born here in Assossa. I lived here for the last 25 years and I do not know what Wollo is looks like. I have never been there but politicians are saying me you are not member of the owners of the territory (beni-Shangul). I have completed from private teachers training, Dandi-Boru teachers college. Nevertheless, I could not get any contract for teaching in the region. They told me that I cannot speak the local language to teach and I would better go to Amhara region. I am always worried about my affiliation whether I from Beni-Shangul or from Wollo. To be free of the existing political malpractices, I am nostalgic to the unknown Wollo (to him) but I am not sure all about. I know friends who went and employed there. In addition, it will be an excitement to live and work there but I am afraid going there because I do not know any relative in Wollo in case of emergency. Imagine we are being barred from participation in the affairs of governance, offices and accesses to other public employments with in the territory of our own country. Where lays the difference of justice and equality from historical exclusionary state policies? There is nothing different.

The existing dilemma seems an ideological construct against the label from the Bertha elites and vies-versa mobilize community solidarity to influence the political outcomes in their environs. The factors for the maintenance of this nostalgic identity and solidarity, as of informants, over extended periods are a combination of preference amidst exclusionary nature of the political administrative structure. That is, the current political administration gave the "autonomous political right" to the Bertha ethnic community or other indigenous minorities to control over the governing of their historic homelands, the Settlers seem unable to articulated their interests and have less access to decision making circles. Unfortunately, some Settlers are unwilling to become proficient in the Bertha language and lifestyles, considering them as obsolescent, negative reactions to their political situations. Perhaps, they feel alienated from the 'mainstream Ethiopian history' simultaneously feeling guilty of deserting their homestead. That is to mean,

they thought that they are neither belonging to the current territory nor the homestead which is the source of social alienation. They are also uncomfortable with congested construction of their hamlets that exposed their privacy, as opposed to scattered settlements in their original villages. The traditional symbol attached to the Amharic word 'Yene Ager' [my country] equally representing neighborhood, the district, or region also contribute its own share to their feeling of hopelessness and ailing about the strong attachment and passion about their place of origin. Many of the still aspire to die in their prior settlement in Wollo. Hence, some Settlers maintained social communication with kinfolks in their original residence of wollo in the form of visits, in some cases, to bring younger relatives as a form of maintaining nostalgic attachments and rediscover their ancestral roots. While a number of them also returned as permanent repatriates. Among these, some have gone back due to lack of access to land and other livelihood sources in their former homestead or death of immediate family members for welcoming.

A Bird's Eye View of Barriers for Social Integration

In spite of the dominant mutual integration and peaceful coexistence, there are also elements of social disagreements/conflicts emerging within and/or between the Bertha and the Settlers communities. Certainly, the definition of conflict together with its theoretical explanations influences the appropriate strategies for its transformation into peaceful co-existence and mutual tolerance. Accordingly, from the conceptual and theoretical perspectives of social conflict, the traditional discourses explain inter-ethnic conflicts in terms of cultural and psychological as the propensity of members of some ethnic communities to be "aggressive" while others are peaceful. The psychologists as Freud gave primary importance for social conflicts in relation to the behavior of individuals while symbolic sociological theorists like (Simmel, 1955) and (Coser, 1967) interpret social conflict as the products of social interaction

among individuals or groups and the structural theorists explain social conflict as the product of the foundation and organization of society. Notwithstanding the psychological and symbolic theorists, the study certainly pinpoints the structural factors in the explanation of social conflict in the study unit. Many social scientists put the causes of social conflict in to the structural fabrics of societies (Brown, 1997:83) points "two prerequisite for social conflict among ethnic communities to exist; these are the existence of more than one ethnic community in a given territory and the negligence/weakness of either national or regional administration to manage such pluralistic communities". Both ethnic communities of have relatively different cultural and lifestyle but interact in a collective environment while sharing or competing for resources found to be symbiotical or conflictual. Another discourse best explains the local reality in the study unit as (Samatra, 1993 cited in Ahmed, 2000) calls it "general plight of a decomposing reciprocal mode of historical livelihood" as a possible factor for social conflict among communities. Certainly, (Markakis, 1993) agrees by indicating that conflict among pastoral and semi-pastoral ethnic communities could be due to the shrinking resource base where survival possibilities are threatened. As the consequence of the aforementioned factors informant villagers in Bambassi and Megale attests to periodic tensions between the communities and confirm that the occasional inter-ethnic tensions, though not overt conflicts can be transformed by peaceful mediation of the elders of the communities. Hence, in the context of the study, the experiences showed that difference in ethnic identity or religious affiliation is not a cause for social conflict. Rather the prevailing inter-ethnic social tensions are essentially on the question of economic, political, and ecological demands between the case communities that summarized below:

The Preponderance of Poverty

This study identifies the prevalence of poverty that hinders interethnic communications amidst tremendous natural resources in the study site. The notions of poverty correlated with specific societal conditions that need to be studied in its own wider context. Here is not an attempt of comprehensive causal factors and magnitude. According to Informants, historical discrimination remains a serious impediment to development with its inherent political instability, and failure to use resources effectively. The socio-economic and political deprivation profoundly influence on the mutual integration and coexistence between the case communities. A Bertha interviewee in Assossa town stressed:

> The Bertha closer to the Settler farmers developed to be an agriculturalist. This makes them for open cultivation and competitor for land around their settlements. They adapted to farm on domestic animals. All these adaptation strategy leads to open conflicts especially during the dry season in search of grazing lands. In the process of defending and expanding, social conflicts become a reality the locality.

This report also supported interviewees in other villages that the competition over scarcely available resources/ opportunities. The competition could be illustrated with cases of conflicts between the case communities. An interview with and Bertha informant reads like this:

> As part of the competition for grazing land in Menge led to conflict in January 2001 Gregorian calendar. The competition was taken to the political administrators but decided it was historically the property of the Bertha and the Settlers continued to grazing on the perception 'it is our forefather who have ruled over you for centuries'. Then the Bertha raided some of the cattle when the Settlers demanded their cattle conflict was happened and a Bertha was killed. The Bertha in a group went in villages and killed five Settlers. In revenge, the Settlers killed seven Bertha and destroyed many villages and eventually the security forces intervened and stabilize the situation.

These competitions are not only limited to land but also to the public employment and other social services. Therefore, it is clear that poverty aggravates the social opposition over scarce livelihood resources and opportunities. It has a significant potential, if not actual influences to, continue to be the main cause of social conflict between the case communities.

Environmental Deprivation

The Bertha entirely dependent for livelihood on shifting cultivation together with gathering, hunting, fishing, honey collection, and traditional Gold mining having extensive ecological knowledge passed through generations.

> We have our subsistence from the fruits of our natural environment including hoe plowing, hunting and collecting of fruits, honey collection and traditional gold mining. Our natural environment constitutes sacred things. Because, the entire environment with its abundant resources is a generous gift and creation of God. It is the source and destination of life itself. Therefore, it is our obligation to protect and maintain natural resources for sustainable use and administration to pass to the future generation as the past generation did to us.

The entire perception of the Bertha on natural resources is similar to (Berks, 1999 cited in Wolde-sellasie, 2005) conceptualized as the knowledge-practice-belief complex and (Seeland, 1997) as the interconnectedness of nature and culture, capable of making harmonious connection with nature. The Settlers have been criticized by the Bertha for unskillful natural resource management while the Settler claimed their behavior as adaptation strategies in the new context full of uncertainties and desperations. The Settlers' experiences are similar with the Settlers in Belese valley that immediately their arrival to their (Wolde-sellassie, 2004:77) "promised land, they had been forced to clear-forested land, plowing and cultivating in the collective fields and constructing houses constitute the Settlers' daily activities". One informant stressed the threatening situation at their arrival:

> We were also forced to subsist on monthly food rations consisted solely of 15 kg of grain, usually maize, for each adult. To the worst children receive half rations. Obviously, the amount was hardly an adequate diet and was completely controlled by camp cadres. Can you imagine how survival was impossible with out other sources of living? We did what was right for our survival.

To cope up the desperation of life in the resettlement site, Settler informants stressed that they were forced to supplement their diets with food obtained illegally from the indigenous people

living in the areas as well as making secret trades of firewood or charcoal in towns escalating deforestation.

Political Manipulation of Ethnic Differences

The political role of ethnicity, as discussed elsewhere, is 'contingent on certain conditions' that (Harries, 1989 cited in Maybur-Lewis, 1997) 'fluctuating expression of identity aimed at the achievement of specific political ends' where the 'central state' itself was the hegemonic political expression of ethno-nationalism with out the consent of other communities. The state (Rupeshige, 1989) is neither a mediating nor a neutral institution but assumes the focal point of competition for various authoritative survival strategies. It was found that this inability leads to the political marginalization of the Settlers. One Settler interviewee reported:

> The Bertha claims political claims contrary to our basic rights and freedom given current regionalization. The government gave full autonomy to govern us as individuals or group because they are owners of the area. We have lived more than 20 years but we do not have the right to be elected or be entitled as candidates for political positions. They (the Bertha) think that we are Amhara and we have our own regional states but we do not have any access to any of its services. They said you better go in your original villages and compete there.

This is because ethnically organized-coalition party to the EPRDF that did not represent the Settlers politically administers the study unit. Because the current party organization assumes the Settlers to be represented by All Amhara Democratic organization that does no operate in the regional state. By implication the Settlers do not have the right to be elected (except as an opposition) rather expected to elect party that do not represent their interests. Hence, the lack of political integration at the national level finally leads to political alienation of the Settlers. This study has identified that elite 'activists' by their divisive ethnic discourses have a great impact on social interaction between the case communities through manipulating primordial ethnic attributes 'one against the other'. The competing ethnic 'elite' politicians selectively valorizing the pre-existing social divisions and loyalties, which explicitly contradict the implication of

empowerment of discriminated ethnic communities. Informants stressed, especially the Settlers, that the state, to be viable for its citizen, has to operate with in the legally-constitutionally defined framework to maximize the collective interests of the pluralistic Ethiopian society. I quote from a Settler as saying:

> Every members of any community or party should have the right to vote for or against by abiding by the laws of the land and the collective interests of all as we are members of the national community. Every of us must recognize and fully respect the history, culture, language and religion in a way one group not to dominate the other. For this end, I believe that the practices of Shemglena should be integrated in to the state administration. Because the powers of religious leaders and elders to plea for the tenets of religious morality and to inform respective adherents or ethnic communities against divisive ideologies. Therefore, if mobilized, elders have a significant contribution to teaching our fellow believers to respect and to be tolerant of the beliefs and traditions of others to build mutual understanding and peaceful co-existence in our communities.

Elders and religious elders have more institutional credibility, which is firmly rooted in the community. This is important for rural society, in which community participation and control of the collective decision-making influences daily lives.

Differences in Sources of Living

The Bertha have a relatively diversified means of livelihood including pottery, hunting, fishing, honey collection, and shifting cultivation. Shifting cultivation is the predominant sources of livelihood and traditional ecological management of the Bertha community. As one informant in Salga claims that:

> The Wolloye clear and uproot the trees in the field plots and let their cattle for unmanaged grazing, which are the main causes of soil erosion, and Bamboo forest depletion that serves as the source of livelihood for our fore fathers, current and future generation.

The Bertha residing in close proximity to the Settler communities have been worried about oxen plow agriculture because of the low fallowing periods of the land for shifting cultivation due to over grazing and deforestation. The Bertha informants in Bambassi, Megale and Salga asserted that the pressure from the Wolloyes severely reduced the accessibility to wild products they require for living. The Settlers have their influence in the livelihood sources of the Bertha

community because of different livelihood and land tenure systems. The Settlers in their traditional life style need clear plots of land apposite for oxen plow agriculture. The Settlers also increased population density causing a reduction in the land holding right. This has a consequence in reducing the fallowing period for shifting cultivation. The Settlers also reported that the Bertha themselves are responsible for ecological depletation as they sell charcoal or bamboo. In both case, the depletion of forests has a severe impact on the diversification of foodstuff obtained through hunting and gathering and seriously affected the Berthas' cultural medicine production, and access to ritual plants. An informant stressed that such incompatible pressures are the exclusive factor for inter-ethnic conflicts among the Bertha and the Settler Wolloye communities. The Settler informants stressed that that they are facing problems related to severe decline in soil fertility. That caused them to abandon the affected areas that put strong pressure on the communally owned Bertha forests for new plots of land and eventually lead to ecological change. It is clearly observable that areas occupied by the Settlers were being depleted and susceptible for low productivity. Quite interestingly, the case communities are capable of mobilizing their traditional conflict transformation has also maintained in modes of socially acceptable equally workable options for interethnic relationships.

The Religious Aspects of Conflict Management

The scope, however, does not permit the in-depth analyses of cross-cultural conflict management; rather it is indispensable to highlight the role of religiously endorsed conflict management systems in building peaceful coexistence between the case communities. Hence, to start with the lexicon meaning of the concept conflict is a struggle between two opposing forces, ideas, and interests, which occurs at different levels of societal echelon as the individual, family, peer groups, neighbors, communities and, eventually societies. More interestingly, the traditional

conflict transformation mechanisms that African societies (Rabar and Karimi, 2004) depend on equally draw from the socio-political and economic realities as well as lifestyles of respective communities/societies that are in one way or another unique to each community. Mesfin (1999:145) states that "the Ethiopian society had alternative methods of non-military resolutions within military leadership, negotiation and reconciliation is the institutionalized roles of 'shimaghilles' (elders)" was very important, for community integration. Hence, the various communities in multiethnic Ethiopia have found their own traditional institutions for averting and/or resolving intra and/or inter-social conflicts in their collective social environment that deeply rooted in their history of existence. The traditions of the pluralistic society of Beni-Shangul, which is composed of the Bertha, Amhara, Gumuz, Shinasha, Mao, Komo and other ethnic communities attests the above with principal respectful coexistence through their time-honored conflict management strategies under the leadership of elders consultation-consensus model of conflict transformation. An informant described the model of conflict management as:

> All ethnic communities here (Beni-shangul) have their own conflict management systems. These methods include negotiation, mediation and arbitration. They might be practiced at the community level to settle interpersonal, inter-ethnic, and inter-religious disputes. They are greatly influenced by religious traditions. Those are connected with the socio-cultural practices, beliefs, and norms. They also yield to cooperatively acceptable decisions.

Informants stressed the effective and constructive implementation of conflict transformation or resolution through their community leaders (elders and religious clerics) is a framework for comprehending their history of social values, religious traditions, and norms to balance mutual commitments against competitive relationships between members the case communities. In both communities, elders and religious leaders have an authoritative power in mediation, arbitration and reconciliation. Informants reported that this has significant implication for interethnic peaceful coexistence in their vicinity that might have theoretical significance setting the stage for and building the bridge for social integration.

The Patterns of Elders' Authority in Inter-Communal Life

The elders in the life of rural communities in Ethiopia have an indispensable influence on the day-to-day lives, which might have an implication in the promotion of community integration and co-existence. A Settler interviewee described the power of elders as:

> The elders have always smoothened disagreements between and/ or among neighbors, spouses, and friends. They have regulative power to govern the forms of inter-communal social interaction and render members with comprehensible social order through their customary law inherited from ancestors. They have significant role in guiding our relationship with other ethnic communities.

These customary laws are not defined and formalized inextricably intertwined in the religious, political, societal and economic practices and relations in which members adhere, live and realize in their day-to-day interactions. The elders through the social institution of Shemgelna (Al-Sheba in Bertha) acquiesce informed decision through methodical processes of rational and commonsensical consultation on the conflicting interests or parties for compromise or reconciliation. Accordingly, the sympathy, hospitality and justice mindedness of elders in Ethiopia demonstrated the (Ahmed, 2000:119) understanding of the ecological conditions by the elders, during the famine of 1984/5 in northern Ethiopia. During this time, the Afar ethnic community had moved to the Oromo and Argoba territories. The young Oromo members were opposed to, the traditional chiefs and religious elders who had been more open hearted and welcoming the Afar as "Ibnal Sabil Allah", meaning the children of God in search of their livelihood. A Bertha interviewee described elders as:

> The pillars of social existence responsible for the caring for the weak, correcting anti-social behaviors, marriage, conflict management and so forth. With out their guidance and supervision life itself would be worthless. We respect elders for their good judgments and knowledge of Islamic traditions and are respected for their justice, fairness, and superior ethical qualities in the daily life of the entire community members.

Hence, the Bertha informants in Bambassi district stressed that the role of the elders with religious knowledge as very decisive in all aspects of social life. According to Sheikh, Medewihammed Abdurrahman (willing to be named):

> Elders have social and religious wisdom to govern the behaviors of their communities or clans. They based their judgments on accepted cultural and religious principles, values, norms, ethics and customary laws. They are exercising unlimited power in the provision of 'informal' community administrative services.

The case is also true within the Settlers as they are responsible for the over all affairs of the family, neighborhood, intra-commune as well as inter-commune relationships. In both cases, the elders' decisions in social issues are binding within the community for the great majority of community members. The whole apparatus of justice administration in community affairs is also dependent on the people themselves. Informants reported that the elders are expected to be supervised by the community Qadi (sheiks) or priests in their respective neighborhood depending on the matter for decision to prevent them from arbitrary judgment or by mere prejudice and ignorance, but controlled through the divinely decreed traditions adhered as part of their worldview. Thus, the communities consider elderly members as the pillars of their existence.

Social Institutions for Inter-Ethnic Integration

Inter-community relations imply a set of institutions with in which their social interactions can occur or memberships can be identified. There are varieties of relatively mismatched traditions among the case communities; there are still social relationships based on shared values and shared ways of life that do promote tolerance and peaceful coexistence. An interviewee illustrated the existing social relationships in Bamabassi as:

> We here (Bambassi) are living with a number of ethnic or religious groups. Ethnic communities, however, are not separate entities but live in often-complementary relationships. I myself have neighbors from other ethnic groups. I have also sustained

socio-economic exchange but varying in intensity depending on religious similarity, behavioral patterns, collective interests and religiosity.

The existed relationships between the case communities overwhelmingly negates what (Mesfin, 1999:30) posits, "If the racial (ethnic) differences are physically sharp, then may be the most serious barriers to smooth contacts and interactions between individuals and communities". To assess all of the functional social establishments, the study tried to portray the bonded relationships between the case communities maintained for mutual tolerance and support, inter alia, the religiously endorsed instructions as a key factor of social solidarity.

Inter-Ethnic Marriage and Kinship

The family is the most basic social institution in society where the nuclear and extended family institutions exist in the case communities; nuclear family is dominant among the Settlers because of the phenomena of familial separation in the departure for resettlement. The role of inter-marriage and, indeed, the family institution had and continues to have paramount significance in promoting inter-ethnic tolerance and compromise as it was historically practiced among the ruling elites of various loosely confederated chiefdoms, sheikdoms and kingdoms in the then Ethiopia as (Mesfin, 1999:145) phrased it 'political marriage'. Obviously, the other way of explaining the integrative aspects of religion in a multiethnic society is looking on the extended kinship networks. The main task here, hence, is to examine the implication of inter-marriage for interdependence of individuals and communities through mutual assimilation and/or integration, in effect, broader interethnic social solidarity in their neighborhoods. The systematic scrutiny of their family institution within the case communities provide viable insights to social interaction, thus, the study starts with widest discussion of inter-marriage, family structure, and kinship networks as its central core and implication for mutual assimilation and integration. Hence, the tradition of intermarriage among the Bertha goes back in the 16th century when with

the Beni Ummayya refuges from Sudan (Ateib, 1972) they formed two strong families descended from the Sheba in Qebesh and the Muguale in Komosha. Equally, among the Settlers (Weissleder, 1974) noted that marriage in their original homestead is an exceptionally flexible institution in which, inter-ethnic marriage or inter-religious marriage is practiced with both spouses live together retaining their respective religion, however, it is a closed institution to artisans and other caste groups.

In both communities, however, the elders usually arrange marriage after mutual consent between two youngsters. These marriages are based in the prevailed kinship system among the Berthas structured on the principle of preferential patrilateral cross-cousin marriage. Some informants explain the preference in terms of Islamic teaching while others insist that it does not prohibit exchanges in marriage outside the patrilinage nor does it enjoin preferential marriage within it. Similarly, the varieties of cross-cousin marriage have been noted (Levis-Strauss, 1969:493) with rules of descent and residence that determine the disharmonization or harmonization of society. In contrast, the Settlers practiced the marriage contract between people who do not have any kinship relation until the seventh generation and they prefer marriage with in geographical proximity. That is marriage with whom one has acquaintance but not existing familial affiliation, in their place of origin.

In the context of the research site, therefore, individuals who do not belong to the same consanguine kinship unit or even belong to different ethnic communities are married and living together. Traditions of marriage, however, in both communities have followed caste considerations, and concern for dowries, trace-connections (particularly the Settlers), attention for socio-economic positions and religious qualities (essentially the Bertha). Inter marriages constituted a minority in both communities in Beni-Shangul, and sometimes could lead to the

social isolation of the married couples particularly in the Settler community often related to psychosocial attitudes and other socio-cultural demands like residence, bride price, and so forth. Some informants report that there is a relative preference for 'love marriage' favorable for crossing ethnic boundaries, including the 'caste groups' within the Settler communities, by the youths above traditionally arranged marriages. Alternatively, the children of such mixed marriages may choose to identify themselves as a new specifically mixed-origin group, although they are probably more allied to one parental group. Such familial relationship seems powerful to generate social representation in the context of shared social hybridity. Informants stressed that these individuals are capable of constructing their social reality in accordance with the collective interests and aspirations of the case communities and act as stabilizers within multi-ethnic and religious communities. A Bertha interviewee who married a Settler illustrated the practical significance of intermarriage for interethnic integration as:

> I am a Bertha and got married a wolloye. We have two children. We are living happily except language problem to communicate with our relatives during visiting. We are acting as good channel for socio-economic communication between my relatives and the relative of my wife. Therefore, I found that inter-marriage is an instrument for maintaining mutual socio-economic security and cooperation. These co-operations have a wider implication for the development more tolerant and peaceful relationships between our relatives based on the religious values of faithfulness, honesty, justice and trustworthiness, among one another.

Intermarriage perhaps encourages the formation of dual identity that has a useful future for researchers and practitioners with in contexts of specific circumstances. The impact of inter-ethnic marriage, at least for the local community, claims as a means to reveal that prejudice and discrimination based on certain primordial demographic profiles, like ethnicity, is irreligious phenomena and contrary to social life.

The practice of inter-marriage among the Muslims of the Settlers had some explanation based on the power of principles of religious tolerance, justice, and peaceful coexistence towards

members of the ethnic community and admits the multiplicity of humanity. The study also revealed that the Berthas most inclined to inter-marriage illustrated with the positive experience of time-tested interactions with the Mao, the Komo, and the Oromo communities. An elder Bertha commented on the historical marriage relationship with other ethnic communities as:

> Inter-ethnic marriage was practiced with other ethnic communities especially the Mao, the Komo and the Oromo. However, these marriage relationships considered religious similarities. It has wider social, economic, political and cultural justifications beyond religious affiliations. We (the Bertha) and other neighboring communities (the Mao, Komo, and Oromo) were discriminated against by the state that created common social interests with the implications of social alliance in our territories. We have timed tested mutual tolerances that facilitate the level of social integration among ethnic communities. This does not mean we are equal in all of our social interaction. I am telling you in relative terms. Moreover, intermarriage was also supported by relative similarities of traditions and lifestyles. We have more or less similar cultural practices related to pattern of marital choice, place of residence after marriage, amount of dowry, and condition of divorce.

Social anthropologists have identified three typologies as Virilocal [couples live with the husbands kin], Uxorilocal [couples live with the bride's kin], and Neolocal [couples establish new residence]. Hence, Virilocal and uxorilocal are common arrangements within the case communities where virilocal residence is predominant within the Settlers. As it is varies from village to village, there is friendlier relationship in villages where there is a higher level of inter-marriage and enhances the established socio-economic arrangements across ethnic boundaries. Interethnic marriage is not free from critique from political 'elites' on the assumption that smaller ethnic minorities, like the Bertha, could be assimilated and/or disappear through processes of inter-marriage.

The Traditional Practice of Inter-Community Consultation

The experiences, principally in Bambasi district, seem to negate the Hobseian views of universal propensity for conflict. Both communities have shared institutions for mutual tolerance by transforming the sources social conflict in their social environment through the moral authority of the elders and the religious leaders' supervisions on the behaviors of individual

members as social controls. The inevitability of the Hobesian social conflict based itself on the assumption that competition is a fact of nature, and that groups exist independently of the inter-relationships that evidently linked to the value of absolute individualism. The existed social interdependence and communication best expressed in (Mazuri, 1978) 'indigenous social networks in African societies are inconceivable to the western academic traditions'. The social communication networks between the case communities along familial, clan and neighborhood systems as an expression of social fellowship transcend primordial ethnic boundaries.

The Durkheimian traditions of society might better explain the collective social relationships between the case communities with interdependent social and economic interests. Equally, (Barth, 1969:9-10) pointed out that ethnic boundaries do not depend on absence of social interaction and acceptance but are often the very foundation on which embracing social systems are based. To achieve these interdependent social relationships, the significance of community consultation (Al-shura) is paramount. An informant described the practice of inter-communities shura as "a procedure of making decisions by consultation and deliberation on common concerns of both communities in their social neighborhood". The system of mutual consultation [shura for the Bertha] with its mixture of customary legal strength and religious sanctions had remarkable impact on social life. Some Bertha elderly informants insisted that the system is intrinsically Islamic and trace the traditions to the following Quranic verses (42:38) that designate the believers as "those whose affairs are decided by mutual consultation" and addresses Prophet Muhammed (pbuh) to follow the consultation-consensus model to (3:159) "take consultation with them in matters of social concern". In fact some literature confirmed that the tradition of community consultation was practiced even before Islam, for instances, (Irafan, 1995:70) concludes "as it is a pre-Islamic consultation-consensus procedure that the Qur'an

incorporated in the normative teachings of Islam". Moreover, non-Arab societies also practiced it

that we have Quranic revelation, Queen Sheba of Ethiopia had a practice of never making a

decision without consulting her community leaders in here rule. Equally, (Abera, 1990) notes the

foundation of the principles of the traditional laws [that might be applicable for mutual

consultation] within the earliest times of Christianity that had developed out of Judaism as laws

to govern their social and spiritual living. A Bertha informant in Bambassi district illustrated:

> The Muslims but also the Christians within the Settlers practice community consultation. It acts as a democratic grass root means for participation. The community leaders, religious people, and other community members from both communities took collective decisions after thorough discussion on the matters of social concern among themselves.

 The tradition seems and is claimed by some informants, as parallel with the concept of

democracy, since it has also to do with decisions taken after deliberation while there still are

some differences. From the practical point of view, the concept of democracy, as an approach

for conflict transformation, seems to be limited by political parties, while the tradition of

mutual consultation (shura) easily extends itself to aspects of community life at the grass root

stratum. Informants reported that it also achieves collective obedient-conformity that in similar

traditions, the Wolloyes consider as 'Yabatader hig'(roughly the laws of our forefather) in

which the decision(s) are and/or is binding for members involved with an adequate

participation in a flexible and socially defined and accepted institutions. The processes of the

decision-making within the community summarized by (Ife, 2001:123) as:

> It is in the integrity of the processes and the opportunity for people to have genuine input into deliberative processes that effective democracy can be realized. People are often prepared to accept a decision that goes against their particular preferences, as long as they can be satisfied that they have had the opportunity to have effective input and that the decision-making processes has been open and fair.

In the context of the case communities, it is, therefore, the uniqueness that they are involved in

dialogue or mutual consultation as a procedure of decision-making. An elder informant from the

Bertha described the procedure as:

Our elders have viable socio-economic value. They have also play a significant role in socially abiding decisions on social conflicts. The village members elected them based on their wisdom, economic status, socio-religious knowledge and skills. They positioned themselves during dealings under a tree or open space or at churches/mosques with the consent of the petitioners (individuals or communities). They would be provided with full access to all relevant information, time to study alternatives and debate the issue to reach final and abiding decisions.

The local experience seems a social procedure of decision-making, based on the principles and values that organized the society itself, and by which it should abide. The tradition acts as stabilizer against pitfalls of the 'democratic administration' to borrow Ife's (2001) phrase 'mythological hydra' that hides the reality of communities' powerlessness. However, the tradition of consultation provides the power on the collective concerns of community members, supervised through their leaders, social networks, collective partnerships and collaboration to correct social injustices within the broader context of social solidarity. It also stabilize the top-down political decision that tends to be elitist and partial, allowing the interests and perspectives of the powerful while disregarding the insights and interests of the minority. The other peculiar feature in tradition of mutual consultation, it the religious principles and norms contextualized in their daily lives, as expressed in their respected Holy Books and defined in their social practices, that is the supreme constitution within in which concerned members have the right to discus and makes decision in their social environment.

Cross-communal socio-economic exchange

Historically, different ethnic communities have maintained resourceful complementarity in their neighborhoods that the study communities still maintained those transcending ethnic boundaries. A Settler informant reported:

Now we have reestablished our social support systems in wollo like Iddir, Iquib, and Mahber. These establishments act as a gateway for livelihood improvements and supporting strategies for the poor members. We have also a system of social exchange with the Bertha community members in the form of cash and grain loans, exchanging grain and live animals, exchanging grain for labor and vies versa and exchanging cattle for land or vise versa. These

including many other social arrangements are sources of integration and coexistence at the community.

Some informants stressed that these social support networks have religiously endorsed among members belonging to the same religious group along inter-ethnic and intra-ethnic intimate social associations. For instance, Muslims in the Bambassi district from the Bertha, the Amhara, the Oromo, and other ethnic communities have established a Jemah (association) and reorganized in a network of co-association of thirty-five Ambas (village) associations. The associations or Jemah intended to and played significant contributions in transforming conflicts through mediating or arbitrating any form of religious misunderstandings or ethnic conflicts across intra-ethnic and inter-ethnic echelons. Correspondingly, the prevailing interethnic communications, patterns of socio-economic exchange involves social connections among individuals and, eventually, communities because many of the people in the environs live with subsistence economy. The social connections are explicit in the case public market places to understand how they mutually serve the indigenous and the Settler communities with regard to the specific issues of social integration. In the market, not only exchange commodities but also with commitments for religious solidarity, ideas, bonded-friendships, and mate selection of inter-marriage. Besides, the other sources of socio-economic exchange is Labor that one of the basic resources of rural communities in Ethiopia with various typologies. Through the existing mutual friendship, the case communities have sustained mutual arrangement of sharecropping and labor exchange that further improved the diversifications of their sources livelihoods. Despite the potential impacts on the indigenous ecological knowledge system, sharecropping arrangements enabled both communities to build social confidence at multiple contexts development.

Religious Observance and Rituals

For centuries, the church/ mosque have been comparatively inclusive institution that transcends ethnic boundaries not only as a place for the performance of religious rituals but also as places of for building collective social networks with social representation from different ethnic communities. A priest among the Settler community illustrates the impacts on social interaction as:

> Religious beliefs and values are a central feature of the daily lives of Ethiopian people, families and communities. They have a powerful impact upon our views of life and social interaction with others. Nevertheless, we have failed to speak and act against injustice, and degradation of human dignity that causes social violence. Consequently, we have not fulfilled our common aspiration of peaceful co-existence.

The reaction of the study informants is parallel to what Durkehim Quoted in (Henslin, 1995) identifies religion acting as a form of social buttress that unites adherents by regularly bringing them together to enact various rituals and providing shared values and norms to bind one another in to a community. In the study context, religious rites /practices give the members of the case communities, principally the Muslims in some villages, a sense of community, couched with the same religious standards. An interviewee in Assossa stressed the viability of religion in social interaction as:

> All religions have social norms and standards for social order. These norms can maintain and sustain not only socially acceptable within a single community but also transcends to govern inter-community affairs. They also have instructions for their adherents to prevent themselves from undesirable social representations like ethnic prejudices, stereotypes indispensable for ethico-morally acceptable social interactions.

Accordingly, the study fairly argued that religious rituals have actual significance in inter-community trust building and sustaining social solidarity, indeed, integration. Historically, the Ethiopian Orthodox Church integrated in the social, cultural and political fabric mainly in the highland Ethiopia (Mesfin, 1999:145) including in conflict resolution or social reconciliation. Notwithstanding the parallel significance of churches, the field observation, here, remains on the

religious activities in mosques due to certain religious/social limits to attend. Hence, the study

identifies the significance of the mosque as a focal point of opposition to the notion of social

disenfranchisement by ethnic identities. While the Berthas exclusively Muslim community that

the Islamic traditions influence their worldview, meaning, community practicing Islam as a

culture, the Settler community is both Christians and Muslims with comparatively

undifferentiated religious traditions in relation to diversity and cultural tolerances. The religious

similarity seems stronger for inter-ethnic solidarity that community membership based on

religion (Islam) which are parallel with (Marger, 1985:9) notes that the socialization process that

influences individuals to learn their group membership early and effectively and to understand

the difference with the 'others'. As the sign of group identity, the Bertha has religiously

maintained traditional practices: the Shangur, the Heshal that entail dancing, and feasting for

divination. A Settler informant in Amba 13 stressed the integrative aspects of rituals as;

> Religious celebration and rituals have a paramount significance for the cross interaction of
> ethnic groups in their neighborhoods. Religious event/rites are means by which members of
> ethnic groups, especially the youth, maintained and sustained their spiritual brotherhood
> within a society that places a great deal of social and political values on ethnicity.

At the practical level, according to informant villagers, the various public religious ceremonies,

Islamic or Christian, have become essentially vital mechanisms for social contact in both ethnic

communities, not as a matter of survival rather as a matter of social rights and entitlements,

which are prerequisite for mutual tolerance.

Medressa Education

Notwithstanding the developed alphabetical [Amharic] language, Ethiopians a century

ago had no formal system of education. Hence, the church and/or the mosque were the place

where rituals were fostered and the center of collective learning. Besides, traditional religious

schools, through the elementary Quranic or Bible schools were part of the integral history of

education in Ethiopia. These traditional schools had been the competing institutions in the ecclesiastical and cultural socialization processes of the new generation. Accordingly, the informal religious educations in Beni-Shangul have a significant contribution in building bridges between the case communities.   Quite interestingly, the Settler informants in Amba 13 and 18 of assossa district, predominant intercommunity integration is noticeable, medressa education enable them to enlarge ethnic boundaries, which take them away from purely ethnic identification towards the broader affiliation of the religiously envisaged society. A Settler informant in Amba 13 reported:

> In our neighborhood, Medresa schools are centers to form new values, motivations, beliefs, attitudes, emotions, and behavioral patterns among children. They are suitable centers for the mutual coexistence and social interaction of the Bertha and the Settler communities especially the young generation.

From intensive observation in Amba (village) eighteen, there also observed that strong intercommunity cooperation that children reflect, in their daily interaction, the above listed repertoires that might recognize, respect and humanize their differentiations. Eventually, one could expect that mederesa education to lead to not only cognitive development but also attainment of peaceful behaviors and actions towards members of the other side. Informants in both communities stressed that informally organized religious schools are viable means of social engineering in plural societies that practically enable children to gain knowledge of 'others' while retaining their own . However, a Bertha interviewee recommended:

> I believe that Mederesa education could teach our fellow believers to respect, and to be tolerant, of the beliefs and traditions of others for peaceful co-existence. However, their content should be designed to make them agent to defuse deeply held mindsets and biases. The teachers or preachers should also reinforce religious identities that cross ethnic boundaries with their open, flexible and intercultural style. Therefore, to contextualize the teaching style to the local conditions and take account of community identities with full participation parents, community members, religious clerics to reflect collective values and principles of peaceful coexistence.

Some informants, nonetheless, also stressed that medressa education was more prevalent some years ago while explaining the politicization of identities by political elites in the case communities. In this situation, medressa education, according to informants, can act as a supportive catalyst that accelerates the processes but cannot by itself play a major role in the social integration of the case communities.

Inter-Ethnic- Bond-Friendships

Members of the case communities have established institutional arrangements of social relationships with others within neighborhood or beyond through intimate friendships based on either interpersonal or inter-communal interaction. A settler interviewee in Amba 18 reported:

> Religious ceremonies and rituals necessitate persistent interaction among believers. Because of these continuous and persistent religious interactions between individuals from the two communities often develop in to what he calls in Amharic 'Wedajenet' (bonded-friendship). This relationship gains for the Settler for grazing and farming land on the Bertha fields, privileges to use forests, and the Bertha also benefited from the harvest, farming experience and animal husbandry."

Accordingly, as it also substantiated from other informant villagers, most of the bond friendships across ethnic communities are strictly religious. These micro and macro-echelons of intimate acquaintances have advanced in a kind of mutual network of social relationships between neighboring case communities, which enhance the level of social exchange through crossing ethnic boundaries, and building a bridge as an opportunity for cultural knowledge and sensitivity that promotes mutual understanding and peaceful coexistence. The Bertha and the Muslims Settler individuals have a home-to-home visiting arrangement during religious holidays and other social events. A number of informants in village eighteen and thirteen stressed the significance of mutual friendship-bonds through religious benevolence 'as a bridge in conducting responsiveness and evading prejudice and stereotypes between the indigenous and the woloyes (Settler community)'.

CHAPTER FOUR

CONCLUSION: PROSPECTS FOR SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE

This brief-inductive research on interethnic relationships in Beni-Shangul could certainly not to draw easy generalization to the problems related to ethnicity. As the study was an exploratory, it would be premature to draw a well-versed conclusion from the analysis to provide general guidance for an overall relevance. Instead, it revealed a broad overview over their social communications and peacemaking strategies by addressing the notions of ethnicity and religion within historical perspective. These ventures might contain valuable lessons for social work education, research and practice in the context of Ethiopia. Apart from the obvious limitations, there is a more interesting findings, and briefly consider a few concluding remarks with potential lessons for those who could carry out similar researches, cross-cultural policy analysts, policymakers and professional practitioners.

The contextual analyses on conceptual paradigms on ethnicity indicated that the notions of ethnicity are not only simply 'objects' to be calculated but also the result of ongoing processes of social interactions that social workers play their roles in its context specificity. That is to mean, an important characteristic of any paradigm is that it is contested or constantly being constructed, and reconstructed. Hence, social workers seek to perceive themselves as active participants in these discursive processes, and social work practice itself can be seen as part of the ongoing processes. That is to say, the notions of ethnicity are contingent upon time, place, societal context and the form it takes varies for that reason. The study nonetheless critically examine what ethnicity meant by brief historical venture as it is helpful to think beyond the limits of static or ahistorical interethnic relationships in the Ethiopian as well as related with the context of the study unit. It found that historical events with the current political manipulations

either as instrument for domination or as a metaphor for struggle against the demands of authority, control and domination. All these forces facilitated the sociological construction of ethnicity that finally influences the modes of inter-ethnic relationships. Besides, the politicization of ethnic identities did not activate or reactivate by the entire members of either ethnic community, but by the elites. Thus, the notions of ethnicitiy have hegemonic class dimension that elites deliberately conspire in their respective communities to struggle against perceived marginalization, achieve proxy benefits and parochial ends, by their lies, mythologies and sets of social prejudices. More interestingly, the strategies and techniques of deploying political-ethnic-solidarity against the 'others' are constantly changing that clearly indicating the artificiality of ethnic representations. Hence, the study dares to argue that either social integration or conflicts between the case communities have not been linked to the existence of a simple couture of ethnic identities.

The study also indicated that historical conflicts in Ethiopia have flooding effects of many factors and actors originating in those externally manipulated political interests. Accordingly, it indicated that the neighboring or distant powers have always played significant position in our internal problems by maintaining patron-client relationship by territorializing or politicizing ethnicity. The mutual integration of the case communities has also been affected by factors including poverty, political manipulation, ecological knowledge, lifestyles and competitions over resources or opportunities that social workers might play significant role in locating and bringing the possible intervention modalities. Thus, it is clear that the question of ethnic integration or disintegration have been a political fact that has to be taken in to account in all considerations of societal development.

The study also indicated that religious traditions grounded in an affirmation of transcendental experiences manifesting fairy-tale social meanings extend beyond the boundaries of the ordinary that provides individuals with socially acceptable meanings of life experiences. For the same reason, religious institutions have been intricately intertwined with the cultural practices of respective community. Religious norms and mores have an influential constituent in the socio-political traditions as it has been addressed as the most profound existential quests of societal relationships for centuries. These institutions inherently enjoy the great variety of schemes and approaches for inter-ethnic compromise and peaceful co-existence. What is more significant is that sustainable solutions to interethnic conflicts would not be a top-down-approach but a bottom-up as they have potential importance for good governance, social justice, and forgiveness to maintain social equilibrium.

The study also found that religious practices are intermingled with ethnic identities and with cultural traditions including the patterns of conflict management, religious ideals, mythological worldviews, interpersonal relationships, subsistence, and lifestyles. For instance, patterns of inter-community decision-making and conflict transformation have less individualistic orientations that give collective interest. The decision-making processes do not imply a winner-loser situation but rather emphasize on social justice, forgiveness, tolerance and mutual coexistence. The overall rationale within these indigenous practices is to correct conflictual social relations that story-telling elders or religious leaders play roles for friendly-ceremonial communication at suitable locations. Having religious dimension, the community elders offer verbal blessing and sacrificing of a bull, goat, or sheep to their divinities as a commitment to social compromise and reconciliation. Apart from conflict transformation, these

practices played significant implications in setting the social conditions for mutual enhancement for integration between the case communities.

The study also indicated the practical importance of inter-marriage between neighboring case communities. Intermarriage found to be an integrative-solidarity arrangement binding not only the couples, but also their relatives and their respective communities. It is not always easy and sometimes subject to social disapproval, to get married someone outside respective community. These difficulties are associated with differences in rules of residence, amount of bride prize and conditions of divorce between the two ethnic communities. As it is varies from village to village, there is friendlier relationship in villages where there is a higher level of inter-marriage and intermarriage enhances the established socio-economic arrangements across ethnic boundaries. However, these arrangements seek the support of political compromises and professional interventions in environmental protection or development, further trust building, and problems solving capacities.

Here is the recommendation with specific implication for social work intervention. Ethiopian society is multiethnic with crosscutting solidarities that unrefined elitist manipulations do not succeed to plummet. These crosscutting solidarities have accumulated potential avenues for constructive socio-economic transformations by promoting the overall societal interests. Religious practices are crucial to sanction conflict transformation or peacemaking implanted in social traditions with morally authoritative control to govern relationships. Thus, these religious traditions should be retrieved with an underlying intension of upholding the norms of respective communities as they have exclusively transmitted and decided by elder story talers. Therefore, the future of social work practices should try to integrate these traditions into democratic discourses to sustain culturally acceptable political formula for sustainable solutions to

interethnic strives. Out of the findings it was clear that conflicts are not properly understood and managed that the first and the foremost implications for social workers is to improve the understanding of ethnic conflicts in light of proper analysis for effective management and resolution. In doing so, social workers must start with the thinking about the core problems, and their effects, prepare instruments for the exploration of conflicts, practical understanding on the complexities of the situations, parties involved, prepares professional guidelines, and work with concerned agencies. These practices of valid identification of causal factors, choosing socially effective and accessible means and goals, identifying and mobilizing resources, implementation, follow-up and evaluations finally enhances knowledge-driven and socially acceptable models of peacemaking, conflict management and resolutions in multiethnic Ethiopia. Therefore, the outcome of this study could be expanded with a range of practice for social workers at macro system or community interventions. For this purpose, social workers might play their professional roles as facilitator, mediator, negotiator, expert-consultant, and advocator, community planner, community organizer and administrator in the context of at least in the following practice areas:

Empowerment

As long as people live in societies or groups, there are conflicts arising from differences of interests, social prejudices, needs and ambitions. Social workers should locate and mobilize nonviolent and socially acceptable resolution and reconciliation mechanisms depending on the social, economic and political environments. It starts from professional acknowledgement of indigenous institutions for social integration and conflict resolutions to preserve unity in the face of diversity. It is found that the state confined conflict management and resolution responsibilities from elders and community leaders and placed it in the hands of the local

administrations. Therefore, social workers should search for amore responsive, preemptive and preventive strategies than the 'fire-brigade' approach of the state. As part of this wider strategy, social workers seek to rehabilitate and adopt local structures of governance into the state structures as complimentary or as advisory board in situation of conflict. Social workers should look for ways for promoting partnership and collaboration between local government officials with these elders and religious leaders. The practice might target civil society institutions to lobby governmental authorities to integrate traditional mechanisms for good governance, social justice and equitable distribution of resources and opportunities. The social worker might also organize and mobilize these institutions for peace occasions within the community setting to develop social trust and confidence to transform conflict into cultural assimilation and ethnic integration.

Facilitation of capacity building

The existing shared social space is found to be good, therefore, it calls for professional supports to enlarge and provide an opportunity for new sets of social experiences transcending ethnic horizons. The nature and causes of ethnic conflict are also changing from time to time that makes a need for social workers to enhance the capacity of traditional peacemakers through training and experience sharing forums. These professional services might targets training to integrate new approaches of conflict handling into traditional modalities, and encouraging the community to adapt the models, materials, and concepts including communication, negotiation, facilitation, problem solving, and mediation skills. They also focus on enhance the capacity of religious schools to socialize children in socially acceptable values that recognize and respect unity in diversity. These school should be well designed for integration oriented curriculum that emphasis interdependence and a strengthened sense of solidarity as a national community. The

social worker might build the capacity of problems solving role of the elders by organizing meetings to exchanging information and discussing on the overall peace situation in their localities. However, any effort of capacity building should be supported with other research findings on how traditional institutions structures with their possibilities, limitations, and strengths to integrate them into the modern state structures.

Supporting developmental activities

The study shows that the causes of ethnic conflict are largely socio-economic relationships that poverty plays a significant role in conflicts between the Bertha and the Settler communities. The area is endowed with perennial rivers, fertile lands, minerals, and other natural resources that have enormous potentials for economic development. Therefore, social workers must participate in carefully designed and long-term developmental programs that meet local realities and demands to support the confidence building activities by reducing social opposition over scarce resources and opportunities. They also encourage and strengthen the traditional rules of access and resource utilization and management to effectively the difference in sources of livelihood and environmental deprivation. Social workers also actively involved in the provision of family planning services to balance the uncontrolled population increase that cause the depletation of land and natural resources. Their provision should recognize and respect the cultural needs and interests of the communities. Social workers also work for careful analyses on resettlement planning and implementations taking into account a wide range of socio-economic, cultural, institutional, environmental and political consequences. They also work on environmental protection and rehabilitation programmes carried by various agencies. It is also found that resettlement caused the collapse of social support systems and disintegration of community ies, social workers need to revitalize these local institutions to adopt in the new environment.

Advocacy

To promote distributive and relational justice, social workers might engage in advocacy against oppressive state policies that provide the social conditions for politicization of the ethnicity. Social workers work to balance the existing political competition for the protection of rights and interests of minorities within regional states. Social workers also advocate for proportional representation of various ethnic groups with a plurality of criteria rather than the land vis-à-vis number calculus to promote both relational and distributive justice. Though not an easy job, social workers might include provision of information for public awareness through addressing the local communities on elitist political conspiracy, social lies, mythologies and sets of social prejudices. Social workers might advocate for the establishment of conflict management fund to cover the costs of the activities of traditional peacemakers in their localities. They also advocate for a clear land tenure policy based on socially accepted land tenure system to avoid competitions in neighboring areas. Advocate for the provision of education in issues of diversity, conflict and conflict resolutions in formal and informal education systems. Here emphasis should be given the peaceful coexistence and crosscutting social networks among various ethnic communities for centuries.

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Annex one: Guiding Questions for the exploratory interview and observation. It was prepared in Amharic with some difference from the English translation.

Would you tell me about your ethnic background?

Age? Educational status? Occupation? Place of origin, and current relation (for Settlers)?

Socio-economic conditions? Level of adaptation (for Settlers)? Information prior resettlement?

Living situation in the original homestead? Conditions of recruitment for resettlement? The first encounter during arrival? Expectations prior to resettlement?

Availability, accessibility and affordability of social services at arrival? Survival strategies?

Interaction with the local communities at arrival? The reaction from the commoner indigenous community members, the insurgent groups, and the government cadres?

How about your religious affiliation? Knowledge? Spirituality? Religiosity?

What is conflict for you?

What are the stages of conflict?

What are the root causes of conflict in the area?

What are the escalating or deescalating factors to violence?

Who are the actors in violence?

How the conflicting bodies perceive the other's goals, values, interests or behaviors in relation to its own?

What are the traditional institutions and systems to handle conflicts peacefully and to prevent violence?

What are the specific causal factors that lead to aggression or violence?

What is the level of polarization or the feeling of self and other; negative interaction?

What are the religious values and principles, in your views, through relining positively?

What is the strength of religion in healing the prevalent historical grievances?

What are the prevailing social-Distance and polarizing attitudes which may be translated in to behaviors like prejudice, discrimination…?

What is the role of religious institutions in changing a culture of violence to a culture of peace?

How religious beliefs and principles have a role in maintaining solidarity, responsiveness and trust among ethnic groups?

DECLARATION

This research report is mine and only my original work. It has not been presented in any form for any purpose in any institutions or universities. Besides, all consulted materials have been genuinely acknowledged.

Uthman Hassen

Addis Ababa, June 2006