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THE DYNAMICS OF RELIGIOUS PLURALISM AND TOLERANCE IN FEDERAL ETHIOPIA: THE SOUTH WOLLO EXPERIENCE

BY

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Declaration

I, undersigned, declare that this thesis is my original work and has not been presented for a degree in any other university and that sources of material used for the thesis are duly acknowledged.

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Abstract

This study deals with the dynamics of religious pluralism and tolerance in Ethiopia's secularism considering South Wollo as a case.

The major objective of the study is to examine the changing character of religious pluralism and tolerance in federal Ethiopia. The study argued that the adoption of ethnic federalism accompanied by a religio-pluralistic secular venture has brought a new dynamics of religious pluralism and tolerance in Ethiopia in general and in South Wollo in Particular.

Based on a qualitative approach, the study uncovers the issue of religious pluralism and tolerance in the current secular venture; the emerging dynamics of religious contestation at the federal level manifested in terms of state-religion relations, inter and intra-religious relations; local models of religious pluralism and tolerance and the advent of reform movements and the changing contours of religious tolerance.

The study emphasized the need for a holistic approach that helps understand the changes and continues on the nature of religious pluralism and tolerance in the study area. Accordingly, from a historical perspective, it discusses the trajectories of religious tolerance in pre-federal Ethiopia since its modern inception in 1855.

Although the focus of the study is on the changes, it dwells on the local models of religious pluralism and tolerance still existing in the area in order to show the changes that occurred under the religio-pluralistic secular policy of the state. Hence, the study identified Communal Institutions (Idir and Equb), interfaith marriage and affinity (Amachicha) relationship, neighborly relations, the Abbagar institution, cooperation in building worship places and pilgrimage to shrines still existing arenas of religious pluralism and tolerance in South Wollo.

In contrast, the study identified major areas of change over religious pluralism and tolerance as the decline of interfaith- communal associations, neighborly relation is now becoming more religious-based, and cooperation in building worship places is declining.

It is the contention of this study that the current venture has shown a mixed result as far as religious tolerance is concerned. On the one hand, with all its pitfalls the Ethiopian secular experience has positive ramifications for ensuring religious liberty by creating equal opportunity for all religious groups in practicing their religion thereby set a stage for religious pluralism and religious tolerance. On the other hand, the new religio-pluralistic policy has invited a new dynamics of both inter and intrareligious intolerance.

Acronyms

BPLM	Benshangul People Liberation Movement
CUD	Coalition for Unity and Democracy
DKA	Dawa and Knowledge Association
ECC	Ethiopian Catholic Church
ECFE	Evangelical Churches Fellowship of Ethiopia
EECMY	Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus
EEUC	Ethiopian Evangelical Unity Church
EIASC	Ethiopian Islamic Affairs Supreme Council
EOC	Ethiopian Orthodox Church
EPRDF	Ethiopian People Revolutionary Democratic Front
EPRP	Ethiopian People Revolutionary Party
FDRE	Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia
HoF	House of Federation
HPR	House of People Representative
IAC	Islamic Africa Center
IIRO	Islamic International Relief Organization
IRCE	Inter-Religious Council of Ethiopia
MoFAPD	Minister of Federal Affairs and Pastoral Development
NDR	National Democratic Revolution

ONLF	Ogaden National Liberation Front
PDRE	People Democratic Republic of Ethiopia
SDAC	Seventh Day Adventist Church
SNNPR	Southern Nation Nationality Peoples Region
TPLF	Tigrian People Liberation Movement
VOA	Voice of America
WML	World Muslim League
WSLF	Western Somali Liberation Front

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CHAPTER ONE

1.1 Background

Ethiopia is a country of assorted diversity. It is home to around eighty ethnic groups speaking different languages and confessing various religions Islam and Christianity being the dominant ones. Contestations over ethnic and religious identity have dominated the political history of Ethiopia.

Ethiopia hosts the three major Abrahamic religions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam and various indigenous traditional religions practiced even before the adoption of the monolithic ones.[1] Judaism was the first to enter and was predominant in ancient empire of Aksum before Orthodox Christianity, which initially confined to the ruling class but later overtook it and became a state religion in 4th century during the reign of King Ezana (320-350 AD) [2] and continued its dominance up until the fall of Haile Selassie regime in 1974.

Two Syrian monks Adesius and Frumentius who survived a shipwreck to the coast of Axum and became slaves of Emperor Ella Meda introduced Christianity. Frumentius later won the heart of the emperor and even became a royal secretary. He was instrumental in the construction of many churches and the spread of the gospel. More importantly, he went to Alexandria to urge the appointment of the bishop and returned himself appointed so.[3]

In the 5th century, the arrival of Nine Saints from Syria further accelerated the rapid expansion of Christianity through the establishment of monasteries in the Axumite Empire. Moreover, they had contributed a lot to evangelization and produced the first translation of the Bible into Geez. They had probably left the Byzantine Empire to escape the persecution against their new doctrine. [4]

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[1] T. P, Ofcansky and L. Berry Eds. 1991. *Ethiopia, A Country Study*. LLC: Kessinger Publishing. PP.116

[2] Tadesse, Tamirat. 1972. *Church and State*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. PP. 43

[3] Marcus, Harold G. 1994. *A History of Ethiopia*. Berkeley: University of California Press. PP. 7

[4] Tadesse, Church and State. PP. 45-46

The king had encouraged Christian practice in his Empire. Hence, from the start, Christianity had the favor of the state that later helped to shape the ideals of the state and its identity as a Christian state. This intimacy was based on the state interest to legitimize its rule in the name of Christianity and the church's desire to use the power and influence of the monarchy to spread Christianity.

Moreover, the Coptic church of Alexandria was instrumental in the expansion of Christianity in the Empire through the appointment of Bishops and its missionary movement became the source of inspiration for the evangelization of the rural areas outside of the capital Axum. Nonetheless, Ethiopian Christianity developed mainly from internal sources, encouraged by the Aksum court, local monks and missionaries.

The Christian kingdom of Aksum reached its apogee of power in the middle of the 4th century and during the reign of King Kaleb, its political influence extends to Southern Arabia. However, beginning from the middle of the tenth century, Aksum began to decline because of a process started long ago with the Muslim expansion from the seventh century onwards.[5]

With the eventual decline and fall of Axum, the Agaw established the kingdom of zagewe in 1150. The zagewe period represents the heyday of Christianity in Ethiopian history. During these periods, successive kings restlessly worked in the expansion of Christianity exemplified among others with the construction of the eleven rock-hewn churches of King Lalibela.

Islam has a long history in Ethiopia. It is as old as Islam itself.[6] Ethiopia had wide opened its hand unto the nascent Muslim refugees of Arabia persecuted under the pagan Quraysh; which gave Ethiopia a unique place among Muslims across the globe as 'the land of the first Hijra'.[7]The prophet ordered his early followers to seek refuge in Aksum 'a land of righteousness' where no one is wronged.[8] It was in association with this Hijra that the prophet said: "*utrukual-*

[5] Tadesse, Church and State. PP. 13-21

[6] Tekeste Negash, 2008. "Distressed, yet Confident, Ethiopia Enters the Third Millennium," *International Journal of Ethiopian Studies.* PP. 1

[7] Desplat, P. 2005. "The Articulation of Religious Identities and Their Boundaries in Ethiopia: Labelling Differences and Processes of Contextualisation in Islam." *Journal of Religion in Africa.* Vol, 35 No, 4. PP. 482-505.

[8] Trimingham, Spencer. 1952. *Islam in Ethiopia.* London, Frank Class. PP. 44

habasha ma tarakukum" ("leave the Abyssinians as long as they leave you [in peace]"), and exempt Ethiopia from the jihad.[9] The episode made Ethiopia not only the first meeting place of Islam and Christianity on African soil but it represents the nascent peaceful and cordial relations between the two communities.

This Hijra ushered in 'the African Matrix of interfaith relations' and the foundation of the tradition of tolerance and coexistence that characterized the relations between Ethiopian Muslims and Christians and was the earliest example of inter-religious and inter-state contact and cooperation in the history of Islam in Africa, and indeed in the world.

Like Christianity, Islam entered Ethiopia peaceably.[10] It expands from the periphery to the center. Hussein Ahmed[11] believes traders from the coast and the nomads from the interior who were the first mediators between Islam and the Ethiopian hinterland. He also emphasized the indigenous character of Islam mainly due to the role of rural Islamic education centers and indigenous Sufi clerics were critical in the expansion of Islam. For him

> […] it was the zawiyya or rural Islamic centers of education, and later, with the expansion of Sufi orders, the various centers of local pilgrimage, rather than the trading stations and markets, which recruited converts to Islam, and laid the basis for the emergence of viable and prosperous Muslim communities in the countryside and town of the Ethiopian interior.[12]

In the same vein, Abbink[13] argued that the spread of Islam was largely peaceful and itinerant teachers mainly from Yemeni and Argoba were instrumental for its expansion. According to him, the Christian Monarchs' tolerant attitude towards Muslim traders was because the trade and

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[9] Hussein Ahmed, 1996. "Aksum in Muslim Historical Traditions," in *Journal of Ethiopian Studies*. No. 2 Issue 29: 47

[10] Abbink, Jon. 1998. "An Historical-Anthropological Approach to Islam in Ethiopia: Issues of Identity and Politics" *Journal of African Cultural Studies*, Vol. 11, No. 2: 109-124. PP. 112

[11] Hussein, Ahmed. 2001. *Islam in Nineteenth-Century Wollo, Ethiopia: Revival, Reform and Reaction*. Leiden: Brill. PP. 73-83

[12] Ibid

[13] Abbink, 'An Historical-Anthropological Approach.' PP. 116

craftwork of the Muslims was not the favorite occupation among the Christians. This had helped Muslim traders to not only trade goods but also preach their religion.

Such pragmatic alliance between the Christian Monarchs and Muslims was made possible under the duress of Christian monarch that dominates Ethiopian political landscape since the 4th century -aside from brief periods in the ninth and 16th-century C.E- until 1974 when Ethiopia's last Christian Emperor, Haile Selassie I was deposed in a military coup.

Since its modern inception in the second half of the nineteenth century, successive regimes came up with various management strategies to deal with societal diversity. Hence, Tewodros II (1855-63) had imagined and attempted to create a Christian United Ethiopia. However, ironically, his policy towards the Christian Orthodox Church and furious modernizing zeal invited the British expedition, which finally sealed the abrupt end of his reign.

After a brief rule of Tekele Giorgis, Yohannes IV controlled the center and became king of kings of Ethiopia. He is better remembered not only for his heroic struggle to defend Ethiopia against foreign intruders in *Gundet* and *Gura* but also for his unwavering stance in homogenizing the Ethiopian state by his Policy of Christianization. His successor Menelik II, champion of State formation followed a slightly different path in managing religious diversity called 'guarded tolerance' with which newly incorporated Muslim dynasties were allowed to keep their religious identity as long as they pay tax to the central government[14]. The kingdom of Jimma under Abba Jifar was a case in point that remained autonomous until the promulgation of the 1931 constitution.

As far as the history of accommodation of religious diversity in Ethiopia is concerned, the brief period of Iyasu V (1913 – 1916) provides a unique experience. In a bid to integrate the Muslims of Ethiopia, the young emperor went many steps ahead of his grandfather to the extent of sponsoring the construction of mosques in Muslim populated areas and established marriage ties with notable Muslim lords of Afar and Jimma among others.[15]

[14] Hussein Ahmed. 2006. Coexistence and/or Confrontation? : Towards a Reappraisal of Christian-Muslim Encounter in *Contemporary Ethiopia Journal of Religion in Africa*. Vol. 36, Fasc. 1:4-22. PP. 4.

[15] Abbink, 'An Historical-Anthropological Approach.' PP. 116.

This had created a window of opportunity for his power contenders to accuse him of conversion to Islam and set a stage for his final deposition from power. However, with the coming to power of Emperor Haile Selassie I (1931-1974) and a subsequent centralization of power, once again Orthodox Christianity was promoted as the official religion of Ethiopia. This is evident in the first written constitution of the country that signifies the Christian character of Ethiopia. Thus, the Church and state were unalterably connected until the downfall of Emperor Haile Selassie in 1974. Such a marriage has always played a central role in Christian-Muslim relations.[16]

With the coming to power of the Derg regime in 1974, state and religion were divorced for the first time in the history of the Ethiopian State. This had brought a window of hope for equality of religious groups and religious freedom for the hitherto disfranchised religious groups. Nonetheless, the regime's inclination towards Marxism has led to the suppression of all religious groups and religion as 'opium of the masses' in favor of communist irreligiousness.

With the downfall of the Derg in 1991, after a brief period of transition, Ethiopia officially became a federal state in 1994. The federalization of Ethiopia represents a huge rupture in the country's political history in that in its modern history Ethiopia adopts a federal constitution that establishes a federation of nine regional states largely based on ethno-linguistic criteria. Following the footstep of its predecessor, the new regime opted secularism as a tool of managing religious diversity based on a religio-pluralist policy that guarantees religious equality and freedom. Within this historical context and the current state of secularism, this study examines the dynamics of religious pluralism and tolerance in South Wollo.

1.2 Statement of the problem

Religion has been an integral part of human personality. States of the world whether they are unitary or federal exhibit some form of religious diversity. Alongside the social phenomenon of ethnicity, religious diversity has been the characteristic feature of many states of the world including both long-established classic federations and emerging ones.

In Switzerland, religious cleavage between the protestant and Catholic divide has been the source of tension and served as a political playing card at the federal and cantonal levels. Similarly, the

[16] F. Peter Ford, Jr. nd. Christian-Muslim Relations in Ethiopia: A Checkered Past, a Challenging Future.

Indian federation is marred by religious conflicts and religious-based politics. In the Nigerian federation, the oldest federal state of Africa, the major source of instability has been the challenge of ethno-religious conflicts. Coming home, in the Ethiopian federation, though not as politicized as it was the case in other federations; religious diversity has remained a fault line and a matter that demands policy reckoning.

Even the most cursory reading of Ethiopian history underscores that the Abrahamic religions of Islam and Christianity and other traditional religions have experienced power and resources differently, and relations with each other have therefore been characterized by conflict. Nonetheless, inter-group relations i.e. religious, linguistic and cultural; have also been characterized by points of recognition and accommodation.

With the change in regime and the subsequent political liberalization accompanied by secularism, religious relations have shown signs of strains marked by occasional violent conflicts. In recent decades, Ethiopia has seen a change in religious dynamics. Religious identities, particularly in the Muslim community are being shaken, reconfigured and reaffirmed. This has also been the case with the protestant churches, which challenge the traditional bipolar religious scene. However, to a lesser extent, the wind of religious change has also affected the long-established and still dominant religious actor, i.e., the Ethiopian Orthodox Church.

Moreover, the issue of religion has become a cause of disagreement and a primary basis of identification among many Ethiopians in general and the hitherto 'tolerant' people of Wollo in particular. This is evident in the incidence of religious-based tensions and turmoil in various areas of the country claiming life and property of citizens. More recently, the current tension since the middle of 2011 between the EPRDF-led regime and segment of the Muslim community over the autonomy of the Supreme Council of Sharia and the imposition of the Lebanon-based Sufi-inclined Ahbash teaching brought religion at the center of public discourse. In this connection, the documentaries broadcasted on the National Television over religious fundamentalism were telling.

In the Christian camp too, after the death of Patriarch Abune Paulos in 2012, the selection of his successor was not without contestations. It was more so with the election of the former who

succeeded his predecessor Abune Mathias who still claim the rightful leader of the church. Some observers condemned the alleged intervention of the government in the process. [17]

This has contrasted the view of many observers internally and internationally that take Ethiopia as a beacon of tolerance that shines the ray of coexistence and mutual accommodation that exists between the followers of various religions across times. According to this view Ethiopia despite some disruption, in its long history had managed to contain major confrontation that underpinned religious identity.

Medhane[18] opined that 'religious institutions and inter-religious relations will, in the coming decades, gradually and perhaps inescapably become a thorny issue of national political life and a fundamental source of conflict. The prominent professor of Ethiopian history Bahru Zewde in his part commented, "[i]n the religious sphere, the great challenge is fostering a culture of mutual tolerance. This is a matter of national survival, for the alternative is a clash of fundamentalisms that make the class struggle [of the 1970s] and ethnic clashes [of the 1990s] of the past child's play."

Jon Abbink wrote, "the effects of polemic exchanges are a redrawing of boundaries, discursive overconfidence, if not recklessness, decline of dialogue and toleration, and deep rivalry, extending into the social and even demographic sphere […] the social effects of polemical escalation amount to blighting the relations between Christians and Muslims in Ethiopia."

With the adoption of ethnic federalism, not only ethnic rights were emphasized but also religious demands have been raised. This was evident in the secular constitution, which distanced itself from any religious ascriptions and declared the neutrality of the state as far as religion is concerned. On top of that, it empowers the various religious groups as equal and grants free expression of religious practices as long as they are outside of the political arena of the state. This increased contestation and tension is against the enabling conditions federalism believed to

[17] https://ethiopiaobservatory.com/2013/02/28/abune-mathias-becomes-6th-eotc-patriarchtplf-accused-of-pushing-ethnicity-down-churchs-throat/. Recently, the divide between the two rival synods is ended with the coming to home of Abune Merkorios the leader of the synod in exile.

[18] Medhane Tadesse. 2003. "Ethiopia: Religion a New breeding ground for Conflict." http://www.irinnews.org /Report.aspx?ReportId=43642

create in accommodating diversity including religion and a federal constitutional legal regime friendly to group concerns and aspirations and its promise towards peaceful co-existence.

Although it was Derg's People Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (PDRE) constitution that sealed the divorce between state and religion in Ethiopia, the new federal constitution has provided wider legal protection for religious groups. More importantly, the emphasis placed on ethnicity as an organizing principle of federal restructuring has also indirectly affected the religious balance of the state. In this connection, one could see the creation of regional states predominantly populated by a single religious group.

The Federal restructuring of the state has resulted in the establishment of ethnic regions of which one dominant religious group predominantly populates some. However, not by default, the federalization of Ethiopia empowered Muslims politically in a manner unprecedented in their previous history.

Hence the regional states of Afar, Somali and Harari are ‘owned’ by Muslims; the largest part of Oromia - the most populous region of the federation – is inhabited by Muslims; Muslims (Berta) are also the majority in the Benishangul-Gumuz regional state, though this has not yet translated into a dominant political status there. In the Amhara regional state, Oromia Administrative Zone (Kemisse) and Argoba special Woreda are predominantly populated by Muslims while Muslims constitute the majority in the South Wollo zone. In the Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples Regional State (SNNPR) the Silte Zone and the Alaba zone are almost all Muslim while the Gurage Zone is predominantly Muslim.

Religious identities are becoming more dominant as people’s public identity and more ideological. This would affect the federal character of the state mainly built on ethnic identity. This politicization of religion would create a new dynamics of identity politics thereby make religion a readymade basis of political mobilization. In recent years a new and potentially problematic dynamic has emerged which may challenge mainstream believers their intergroup social relations and Ethiopia state policy. The changing relations between the religious communities are evident in the competition over public spaces, self-presentation in the media, public celebrations and religious noise production.

The revitalization of religious virtues, the articulation of religious identities, the reproduction of religious symbols and the demarcation of religious boundaries have brought an increased intra-religious plurality and inter-religious tensions. Medhane[19] claimed that Ethiopia's 'contemporary religious equilibrium is collapsing very quickly', and that 'contemporary religious militancy should be seen as a wholly new phenomenon and a threat to peace, stability and independence', a sense of fear is clearly discernible among the Christian population.

The government policy towards Muslims could be explained in various areas of contestations that include religious demography, the establishment of autonomous and legitimate organizations, freedom to practice religious duties at the public space and more importantly claim to greater participation in politics.

The 2006 religious violence between Christians and Muslims in Jimma, Illubabaor, Begi (Wollega) and Kemisse, as well as the 2008/9 clashes in Gondar, Addis Ababa, Arsi and Dessie (Wollo), are indicative of the explosive nature of the underlying interfaith tension in the country. It is therefore imperative to question what explains the current secular venture as manifested in the religio-pluralistic policy and its role in accommodating religious diversity of the state. That is how far the new religious opening goes in accommodating religious diversity thereby rectifies past injustice committed on non-Orthodox religious communities. Beyond the mere adoption of secularism what are the legal and institutional manifestations of religious accommodations in Federal Ethiopia if any? What implication does religious diversity have in the working of our federation and what are the challenges of religious diversity on the federal establishment? What explains the growing tension between the various religious groups in this age of secularism that unambiguously put religious freedom and equality as its major constitutional principle? What are the major destabilizing factors that threaten the religious balance of the state?

In the discourse of religious tolerance within the Ethiopian context, Wollo stands as a quintessential and paradigmatic case. It is located in the Northeastern part of Ethiopia under the administrative region of Amhara regional state. Its population character exhibits a mix of ethnic and religious identities. Amhara, Oromo, Argoba, Tigre and Afar have lived side by side for centuries. It hosts long-established religious centers of both Christians and Muslims. As Hayq

[19] Ibid

Estifanos, a monastery in South Wollo, is a source of pride and reverence for the Ethiopian Orthodox Christians, the many Sufi centers across Wollo are places for Ziyara and devotion among Muslims.

Despite the popular Ethiopian image of Wollo as a tolerant and peaceful people, 'there has been a constant, though muted, undercurrent of tension and rivalry between religious communities in Wollo since the sixteenth century'.[20] This is attributed to the various oppressions committed by both secular and religious leaders for both political and religious ends. The war of Ahmed Gragn; the Jihads of some Muslim Clerics and the pro-Christian and anti-Muslim policies of successive post-Zemene Mesafint Emperors had all played a part in shaping the nature of the relationship between Muslims and Christens of Wollo. More recently, 'the strict religious teachings, the politicization of religion, the confusion between ethnic and religious identities and the interference of government' seem to destabilize the culture of tolerance and peaceful coexistence.

Often cited as a beacon of tolerance, the Wollo region exhibit ''socio-cultural hybridity, pragmatic tolerance, and the accommodation of diversity''.[21] The question, however, is what explains the accommodation of religious diversity and/or tolerance in Wollo i.e., had it been a genuine culturally embedded social phenomenon or an imposed rhetoric made possible by state machination. Another related question worth asking in this regard is whether it is durable or whether it has always been a temporary and vulnerable outcome of contingent historical processes, with tensions under the surface. How do peoples of Wollo negotiate among competing and conflicting sets of religious norms and ideals? More importantly, what explains the changing dynamics of religious pluralism and tolerance manifested in the rising tensions between religious groups?

Hence, it is the purpose of this study to uncover the dynamics of religious pluralism and tolerance in federal Ethiopia taking South Wollo as a case study. In doing so, it evaluates the character of religious pluralism and tolerance both at the national and local levels. It explores

[20] Abbink, Jan. 2007. Transformation of Islam and Communal Relations in Wollo, Ethiopia. in B.F. Soares et al. (eds.) *Islam and Muslim Politics in Africa.* New York: Palgrave Macmillan. PP. 67

[21] Ibid: 66

both the local models of tolerance situated in everyday life of ordinary Christians and Muslims of South Wollo and shows how these have helped to maintain cordial relations between the adherents of these two faiths for centuries and the emerging dynamics of religious pluralism and tolerance after the advent of Islamic reform movements.

1.3 Research Objectives

The study has both general and specific objectives

1.3.1 General Objective

The study intentions at understanding the dynamics of religious pluralism and tolerance in South Wollo since the institution of the federal political order in Ethiopia.

1.3.2 Specific Objectives

The study intends to meet the following specific objectives:

- To explore the historical trajectories of religious pluralism and tolerance in South Wollo in pre-Federal Ethiopia
- To explain the character of the existing secular model vis-à-vis religious pluralism and tolerance
- To identify the major challenges of religious pluralism and tolerance in Federal Ethiopia particularly in South Wollo
- To explore local models of religious pluralism and tolerance in South Wollo
- To examine the changing dynamics of religious pluralism and tolerance in South Wollo after the advent of Islamic reform movements

1.4 Review of Related Literature

The relationship between state and religion on the one hand and interreligious relations on the other have been under scrutiny by foreign and Ethiopian scholars alike. Before taking a step towards the state of literature a few lines are in order to comment on Islam and its followers in Ethiopia and its stumbled character. Until recently, Islam and Muslims in Ethiopia have not been

a subject of interest for both foreign and Ethiopian writers. This is in part due to the long-held view and international characterization of Ethiopia as a 'Christian state', which symbolizes Christianity as the foundation of Ethiopia's statehood and set aside the existence and role of other faith traditions in the making of Ethiopia.

J. Spencer Trimingham was the first writer to conduct a comprehensive study on Islam as a social phenomenon in the Ethiopian context. Published in 1952, his 'Islam in Ethiopia' illustrates the history of Islam in Ethiopia and the relations between the Christian kingdom and the Muslim sultanates. Trimingham emphasized more on the confrontation side of the relation and paint Muslims as an external minority. This is evident in the chapter on 'The Conflict of Christianity and Islam in Ethiopia' (pp. 32-146).

The book is organized into four sections: The Region and its Folk, The Conflict of Christianity and Islam in Ethiopia; Tribal Distribution of Islam; Special Characteristics of Islam in the Region. Probably the most pioneering part of his study is the chapter on the 'Special characteristics of Islam in the Region' within which he depicts religious syncretism between Islam and Christianity. It is also this part, which is relevant for the current study in that it represents one of the major perspectives on the religious history of Ethiopia in general, and Muslim- Christian relations in particular. Despite its originality and analytical depth, Trimingham's study is limited in emphasizing the confrontational aspect of the relation and overemphasis made over the indignity of Christianity and the presentation of Islam as an alien force.

As far as the study of Islam in Ethiopia is concerned, the works of the late professor Hussein Ahmed are indispensable. It is more so, his masterpiece 'Islam in 19th c Wollo, Ethiopia: Revival, Reform, and Reaction' is a study without which researching the history of Islam in Wollo would be arduous, if not impossible.

Various articles on Islam and Christian-Muslim relations in Ethiopia by Dereje Feyissa provide us with an understanding of the current situation of religious pluralism and tolerance. Especially his article entitled 'Mechachal or Mechal? The politics of representing Ethiopia's religious past' is of particular importance to this study in that it serves as a basis of explaining the nature of the historical contestation and how it is manifested in the study area.

Another important contribution to the issue of religion in Ethiopia has been by the Norwegian scholar Terje Ostebo who focuses on religious change and Islam. Despite its focus on the Bale region his book on 'Localizing Salafism: Religious Change among Oromo Muslims in Bale, Ethiopia' is still useful in researching Islamic reform in Ethiopia and provides an opportunity to compare with other areas, for instance, Wollo.

Jon Abbink's article on the 'Transformation of Islam and Communal relation in Wollo' is crucial for the current study in that it focuses mainly on the federal years of Ethiopia and see the possible repercussions of the new religio-liberal policy on communal relations in Wollo. He argued

> a closer study of the Wollo region is both interesting (because of the mixed and tolerant nature of Christian–Muslim relations) and relevant (because recent developments may upset the balance and could have political repercussions).[22]

This study emphasized the changes or transformation that Islam has exhibited in recent decades as a destabilizing factor in the relation between Muslims and Christians of Wollo. In addition to recent changes, the very nature of religious tolerance and the bases under which such tolerance is based also explain the emerging dynamics of religious pluralism and tolerance. Hence, this study looks into both the historical trajectories and recent dynamics of religious pluralism and tolerance.

Another work by the same author on Wollo, 'Muslim Monasteries? Some Aspects of Religious Culture in Northern Ethiopia' compared two Muslim shrines of Wollo with Christian monasteries and put such Sufi centers as a representative of 'the more general religious culture of Ethiopia, marked by communal adherence to a theistic worldview and a profound commitment to religious values concerning the fate and destiny of humans.' This article purports the role of Sufi shrines as a social arena of religious pluralism and tolerance in South Wollo.

Kalklachew Ali's MA thesis on 'Religion, Rituals and Mutual Tolerance in Wollo: the Case of Kabe, Southwest Wollo' has received attention as one of the pioneer studies done on religious tolerance in Wollo. His study is interesting in that it uncovers the working of mutual tolerance

[22] Abbink Jon. 2017. "Transformation of Islam and Communal relation in Wollo". PP-65

and co-existence as it occurs in the everyday life of Christians and Muslims of Kabe with tangible lived experiences. Although his emphasis on the rise of the 'Salafiya/Wahabiya' as a prime cause of the emerging intolerance in the area is not without truth other historically rooted factors are also important in explaining the dynamics of religious pluralism and tolerance in the area. In this study, the situation in South Wollo is examined focusing on the advent of Islamic reform movements and its impact on religious relations as observed by both Muslim groups and Christians. Besides, the broader area focus of this study on South Wollo could help to understand the issue in a wider context.

A recently published book entitled 'Faith at A Crossroad: Religious Syncretism and Dispute Settlement in Northern Ethiopia. A Study of Sufi Shrine in North-Eastern Ethiopia' by Dr. Meron Zeleke, an emerging scholar on issues of Religion, is of critical importance for this study. Her study focused on the role of Sufi shrines as an institution of dispute settlement across the ethnic and religious boundary and serve as an integrative force in a diverse local context that is representative of the situation in many of the Sufi shrines in Wollo.

Haggai Erlich has written many books and articles on Christian-Muslim relations in Ethiopia. One such piece of literature is 'Saudi Arabia and Ethiopia: Islam, Christianity, and Politics Entwined' Under this study, Haggai once again showed his conception of Ethiopia as a Christian state and tried to present Islam as an alien force. As Hussein Ahmed rightly argues, such understanding denied the contribution of Islam and Muslims in the formation of Ethiopia's identity and its heterogeneous culture. Nonetheless, the book provides us with the history of Wahabiya throughout the successive regimes of Ethiopia since Haile Selassie. The last chapter on 'Wahabism and Ethiopian Identity' is specifically important because it provides the background to the regime change 1991 and the subsequent resurgence of Islam manifested through the emergence of Islamic reform movements among others Wahabiya/Salafiya. This is helpful to understand the changing dynamics of Christian-Muslim relations since the advent of Islamic reform movements in post-derg Ethiopia.

A Ph.D. thesis by Mohammed Dejen is essential in understanding the relationship between secularism and freedom of religion in the post-derg secular venture. The study specifically focuses on the relation, since 2011, between the Ethiopian government and the Muslim community and show how secularism appeared at the center of the contestation. As the study

focuses on the national level, it will serve as a reference frame to observe the regional dimension. Hence, this study builds on Mohammed's work and zooms in how this contestation is manifested in the intra-Muslim debate in South Wollo.

As opposed to the dominant understanding of Ethiopia as a Christian state, recently there emerges a growing literature that challenges such assertions. One such attempt in this regard is an edited book by Ostebo and Desplat entitled 'Muslim Ethiopia'. This book challenges the notion of Christian Ethiopia and tried to provide a balanced perspective on Christian-Muslim relations by looking into contemporary socio-political dynamics that contributed to shaping religions' into new patterns of religious expressions and representations in the public sphere, and Islamic practices and Muslims in Ethiopia.

In the literature, as far as religious tolerance and religious relations in Ethiopia are concerned three major perspectives stand out. In this connection, Dereje[23] has distinguished three major positions concerning the issue of religious tolerance in Ethiopia namely religious accommodation, religious tolerance and forbearance. This perspective advocates the existence of religious accommodation or Mechachal in Ethiopia. Many Ethiopians' writers and foreigners alike, consider Ethiopia as a land of religious tolerance in which despite its Christian dominance, religious others have been accommodated. Other than the Ethiopian Orthodox Church which fiercely defends this position, scholars who subscribe to this thesis include among others Sergew 1967; Tadesse, 1972; Ephrem, 2008, and foreign scholars such as Trimingham 1952; Budge 1965; Donald Levine 2007, Haggai Erlich to mention some.

The central element in the EOC's position is found in its self –understanding of being endogenous and others as exogenous. Hence, in the case of Muslims, the Christian state gave them refuge and despite its dominant position as a state religion until the downfall of the Emperor the church had exceptionally tolerated the existence of a large Muslim minority.[24] For Protestants, the EOC had not only opened up its door but also allowed them to evangelize the

[23] Dereje Feyissa. 2014. 'Mechal or mechachal? The Politics of representing Ethiopia's Religious Past. *Ethiopian Journal of Religious Studies.*

[24] Ephraim Isaac. 2008. 'Tolerance: Christianity and Islam in Ethiopia. From a historical Perspective' in Inter Africa Group. PP, 156

periphery beyond its reach. The Catholics were also made a political partner in its conflict with Ahmed Gragn.[25]

For the EOC Ethiopia's religious past is characterized as religious accommodation where the 'native' EOC was tolerant towards other 'latecomers.' This is based on a sacred narrative embodied in an ancient text Feteha Nagest that gave Ethiopia the status of a chosen nation. Written in the 14th century, this document narrates the travel made by Queen of Shaba to King Solomon of Israel; the subsequent birth of Menelik I of Ethiopia and more importantly the transfer of the divine Arc of Covenant from Israel to Aksum as a sign of divine favor.

For Orthodox Christians, Ethiopia is a promised land. It is mentioned by name thirty-eight times in the Old Testament as for instance 'ኢትዮጵያ እጆቿን ወደ እግዚአብሄር ትዘረጋለች' Ethiopia opens her Hand unto God. Central to Orthodox Christian's understanding of Ethiopia is the early introduction of Christianity and its adoption by the ruling class as a state religion. Since then, Ethiopia claimed to be a Christian state. Winning such royal patronage, Christianity became both the dominant religion and the dominant culture of the people and put an unforgettable mark on the history of the country and the psyche of its adherents. Gebru Tareke[26] captures such influence thus:

> "By extolling the virtue of social hierarchy, the Orthodox Church helped to stabilize the Abyssinian social formation; it was the continuing edge of relations of exploitation...Central to the Church's code of morality was the belief in divine omnipotence, the sanctity of royal authority, the justness of overlordship. Supported by a tradition of awesome antiquity, enjoying direct access to land and the product of the peasants, and exercising a virtual monopoly in education, the Church affected every facet of rural life."

Part of this Christian perception is the sense of indigenousness and its attendant view of taking other religious groups as exogenous or in its Amharic rendering "mete." Many Christians are of the opinion that Muslims are not as nationalist as Christian Ethiopians. To this effect, orthodox

[25] Ibid: 4-8

[26] Gebru Tareke. 1991. *Ethiopia: Power and Protest; Peasant Revolts in the Twentieth Century*. New York, Cambridge University Press.PP

Christians have sayings such as "የእስላም አገሩ ሃይማኖቱ ነው" for a Muslim his religion is his country' "የእስላም አገሩ መካ የአሞራ ቤቱ ዋርካ" the country of Muslims is *Mecca as the home of the eagle is Warrka Tree'*

Markakis[27], thus, observes, "according to tradition, Ethiopian nationality is theologically defined, its primary criterion being faith. A non-Christian could not be an Ethiopian, nor could an Ethiopian adhere to any other creed." Thus, Ethiopianness was inextricably linked with the orthodox faith. Besides, the Kebra Negest demanded, "No one except the male seed of David, the son of Solomon the king, shall ever reign over Ethiopia." In this connection, Ephraim Issaq[28] describes the unique case of Ethiopia saying, 'one cannot think of any other country besides Ethiopia with a state religion of Christianity - as was the case until 1974 - where a large Muslim minority had lived along with Christians". Similarly, Haggai Erlich put Ethiopia a symbol of Christian-Muslim dialogue despite centuries-old Christian hegemony.

Despite periodic interlude of Judaism of Yodit Gudit in 9th c and Islam of Ahmed Gragn in 16th c, since king Ezana's acceptance of Christianity in 4th AD up until the downfall of Emperor Haile Selassie in 1974, Christianity had remained part of state identity. Emphasizing this, the church capitalizes on the idea of religious accommodation that maintains; regardless of its hegemonic presence, the EOC had allowed the existence of other religious groups.

Another historical incident available for the church to convince its nativity is the Muslim migration to Aksum and the resultant exemption from jihad awarded for Ethiopia by the prophet who in recognition of the Axumite court accepting his relatives who were fleeing religious persecution accorded them special dispensation and exemption from Jihad. The arrival of Islam on the African continent was on Ethiopian soil. In the context of national celebration, this dual claim of origination and sense of being unique takes on renewed significance.

A related view of the church that shapes its position towards other religious groups has to do with the issue of national interest. EOC put itself as a guardian of national interest than others who ultimately serve the interest of external forces. Due to this, the church had suffered many

[27] Markakis, John. 1974. *Ethiopia: Anatomy of a Traditional Polity.* Oxford: Clarendon Press. PP. 66.

[28] Ephraim Issaq, as above note 24

challenges under the latter that 'bite their mother's breast' and want to prosper at its expense. Thus, despite all these odds, the church had accommodated other exogenous religious groups.

Moreover, most Christians believe that the church had been the vanguard of Ethiopian nationhood in many respects. Hence, it had contributed in creating an indigenous script system, the national calendar and helped to protect state independence fighting foreign aggressors. Thus, Ethiopia owes many things to the church.

Part of the controversy of religion and national identity revolves around the national calendar. For the Christians, this has been part of Ethiopian national pride as a unique state with its own calendar. However, for the Muslims, this is but another sign of Christian legacy of the state built upon the ideals of the EOC. Hence, they argued for the recognition of Islamic Hijri Calendar as part of the national calendar system, which has been based on a Christian enterprise of the Crucifixion of Jesus Christ to save mankind-ዓመተ-ምህረት. To avoid this some Muslim writers use either European calendar or a more common religious ground of the birth of Jesus Christ-ዓመተ-ልደት.[29] According to Ahmedin Jebel

> ዓመተ- ምህረት (ዓ.ም) ብሎ መጥራት የክርስትና እምነትን ማጽደቅ ነው። ‹‹ኢየሱስ ለኛ ሲል ተሰቅሎ ምህረት አገኘን›› ማለት ነው። ይህ ደግሞ የክርስትና አስተምህሮ ነው። ኢስላም አይቀበለውም። በቁርዐን ተወግዛል። ስለሆነም እኛ ሙስሊሞች ይህን አጠራር አንጠቀምም። ….ስለሆነም ‹‹ዓመተ- ምህረት›› የሚለውን መጠቀም ፊጽሞ ክልክል ስለሆነ በምትኩ ዓመተ-ልደት (ዓ.ል) የሚል ተጠቅሳል።
>
> To use the 'Year of Salvation' is to confirm Christian belief. It means 'we are saved with the crucifixion of Jesus'. This is Christian teaching. Islam does not accept this. Hence, we Muslims do not use this. …. Hence, since it is strictly forbidden to use the 'Year of Salvation' on its behalf 'Birth Year' is used.

A related matter is the divergent of opinion over the celebration of መስከረም ፩ across religious groups and especially within Muslims. For those who see no evil in celebrating it, መስከረም ፩ is

[29] For more see *Yeethiopia Muslim Yet new*? 2004. (Amharic) In all 18-feature articles of the book, no contributor used Ethiopian calendar.

nothing but part of their Ethiopian identity and has nothing to do with downplaying the Islamic New Year Ashura. They argue that as long as we are living in Ethiopia we need to adhere to such national events without necessarily succumbing to the Christian undercurrent in it. Others criticize this as unnecessary similitude with Christian practices, which is forbidden and punishable in Islam.[30]

A Muslim informant from Kombolcha commented

> ድሮ ደሮ መስከረም አንድ ሲመጣ ችቦ በመብራት ፊጦ በእንጀራ በመብላት ዶሮ በማረድ እናከብር ነበር።አሁን ግን ይህ ሁሉ ከእስልምና ጋር የሚጋጭና የክርስቲያን ባዕል መሆኑን ስንገነዘብ ማክበራችንን ተተናል።አመቱ መቀየሩን ከማሰብ ባለፈ ቤታችን ውስጥ እንደድሮው የሚዘጋጅ ምንም ዝግጅት የለም።ይህ ማለት ግን አክራሪ መሆን ማለት አይደለም ወይም ክርስቲያን ወገኖቻችንን ለማስከፋት ሳይሆን የእምነት ጉዳይ ስለሆነ ነው።እነሱም ይህን እንዲረዱን ያስፈልጋል፡
>
> We used to celebrate September 1 with all its traditional values. Now as we know it is a Christian culture and against Islam, we abandon such practice. We prepared nothing in our houses other than acknowledging the change in a year. However, this does not mean being an extremist or antagonizing our fellow Christians rather it is a matter of belief. Thus, they need to understand.

However, others appreciate the positive element in celebrating this day. For them, as long as we are living in Ethiopia celebrating September 1 as a national celebration is not problematic. Hence, the emphasis on its religious undercurrent needs reconsideration.

A similar but slightly different perspective on inter-religious relations in Ethiopia is the Religious tolerance narrative. Advocated primarily by EPRDF, this narrative assumes that though at the formal level successive regimes in the past were not accommodative and tolerant towards non-orthodox Christians, there has been religious tolerance at the grass-root level. In doing, so the government put itself as a defender of religious equality.[31]

[30] Interview with Shaikh Mohammad Rashad, Addis Ababa, 2017

[31] Ibid: 9-11

Mostly represented by some Muslim intellectuals, the third perspective i.e. 'Muslim forbearance' argued that Christian-Muslim relations in the past were that of forbearance where Muslims who tolerated the intolerance of the church and the state. Tolerance was made possible due to the religious policy of the state, which marginalized Muslims in different fashions. Hassen Taju's succinct view on religious relations in Ethiopia seems to represent the take of many Muslims hence merit quotation. According to him

> The term Mechachal is inappropriate in the Ethiopian context. Tolerance or co-existence is understood as assimilation. Muslims are regarded as good Muslims in places such as Wollo where they attend Christian holidays. The quintessential Christian story of religious tolerance is recounting Muslims celebrating Timiqet (Baptism); drinking tej (mead) in a mahiber (religious association) or contributing to the construction of Churches. However, these are neither accommodation nor co-existence. According to Islamic tenets, all these practices fall into the category of shirk (idolatry practices). Co-existence means accepting ways of life other than one's own for what they are. Terms such as accommodation, co-existence and tolerance are mistranslated in Ethiopia.[32]

Implicit in his argument is the idea that many of the examples usually taken as a manifestation of religious tolerance are practices Muslims did by succumbing to the dominant Christian culture. Hence, relations between Christians and Muslims were asymmetric and not rooted in the principle of religious equality.

In the words of Ahmedin Jebel

> One who carefully studied our history understands how Muslims had suffered. I argue against the idea that we have lived tolerating each other for long. We have not seen anyone who writes about tolerance based on evidence beyond the mere talk of tolerance in general. … Rather than tolerating each other, we Muslims lived tolerating others.[33]

[32] Hassen Taju, interview, Najashi online radio, March 2011 quoted in Dereje

[33] Ahmedin Jabal. 2010. *Ethiopian Muslims since 615-1700: A History of Oppression and Struggle*. PP. 30

Although, the idea that Muslims tolerated others appears persuasive totally denying the existence of evidence that depicts inter-religious tolerance seems inaccurate. As there were instances of formal, state intolerance towards non- Orthodox Christian religious groups, there were also shreds of evidence of Christian and Muslim tolerance informally.

As Hussein[34] rightly argued, Christian-Muslim relations have both consensual and conflictual nature. He criticized the long-held view of religious tolerance and peaceful coexistence and argued that underneath the disguise of smooth relations between Christian-Muslim; there were also occasional tensions, conflicts and clashes that 'need to be historicized, contextualized and assessed'. However, this should not obscure the still existing social threads of religious tolerance and peaceful coexistence. This dictates the use of a balanced approach in understanding the character of religious pluralism and tolerance in Ethiopia in general and Wollo in particular.

The Muslim perception of Christian-Muslim relation is mainly manifested in two historical incidents concerned already noted Ethiopia hosted the first Muslim refugees in Axum during the reign of King Najashi. This episode made Ethiopia the first place where Islam meets Christianity outside of Mecca and many parts of Arabia. Despite the attempt made by the Meccans to return them back, through the goodwill of the king, Muslims were allowed to stay in peace. The latter captured the Ethiopian hospitality and tolerance shown to them as

> ሐበሻ ገባን። መልካም ጎረቤቶችንም አገኘን። በሃይማኖታችን ምክነያት የሚደረግብን ተጽዕኖ አልነበረም። አላህንም በሰላም መገዛት ጀመርን። አንድም ችግርና መከራ አላጋጠመንም። የምንጠላው ነገር አልሰማንም።
>
> We entered Habesha and found good neighbors. We were not discriminated against based on our religion. We began worshiping Allah in peace. No problem and suffer encountered us. We hear but well. [35]

With this historic incident appeared what Dereje called the Najashi Controversy between Muslim and Orthodox Christians. This controversy arose out of the alleged conversion of the King to

[34] Hussein, "Coexistence or/and Confrontation" PP. 1

[35] For more on the First Hijira see Ibid : 37

Islam. While accepting the migration of the followers of the prophet to Axum, Orthodox Christians staunchly reject the conversion claim of Muslims. Some Christian writers even denied the existence of a king by such name altogether. Professor Sergew[36] argued it is difficult to believe that a Christian king became Muslim. In ridiculing one of the Muslim sources that claimed for Najashi's conversion, he said 'This statement by Tabari is an obvious expression of pure sentiments which can be regarded as wishful thinking.' Trimingham on his part take it as a 'Muslim legend'. Criticizing this as 'intellectual hypocrisy', Ahmedin Jabel argued these two authors accept the conversion of one of the Sahaba to Christianity based on the sources of the same writer Tabari but shunned the conversion of the king.

Muslims, on the other hand, base their claim on Arabic sources, which claimed the conversion of King Najashi into Islam upon the call made by Prophet Mohammed through his successive letters to the Axumite King. According to the narration of Tabrani the prophet of Islam send the following letter to Najashi and called him to Islam.

በአላህ ስም እጅግ በጣም አዛኝ በጣም ሩህሩህ በሆነው።

> ይደረስ ከሙሃመድ- የአላህ መልክተኛ- ወደ ነጃሺ አሰሐማ የሐበሻ ንጉስ። ከዚህ በመቀጠል በቅድሚያ አላህን አመሰግናለሁ። አላህ ከርሱ በቀር ሌላ አምላክ የሌለ ጌታ ነው።ንጉስ ነው። ፍጹም ነው።ሰላምና የሚታመንበት አሸናፊ ነው። ዒሳ የማሪያም ልጅ ራሰ የጠበቀችና ጻድቅ በሆነች ው ድንግል ማሪያም ላይ የተጣለ የአላህ መንፈስና ቃል መሆኑን እመሰክራለሁ። እርሰም በአላህ መንፈስና እስትንፋስ ዒሳን አረገዘች። አላህ አደምን በእጁና በእስትንፋሱ እንደፈጠረ ሁሉ።እኔ ወደ አላህ እጠረሃለሁ። አንድ ነው። አጋር የለውም። በእርሱ ትዕዛዝ ሥር እንድትውል አሳስብሃለሁ። እኔንም እነድትከተለኝ፣እንድታምንብኝና ወደኔም የወረደውን (ቁርአን) እነድታምንበት እጠይቅሃለሁ። እኔም የአላህ መልዕክተኛ ነኝ፤ አንተንም ሆነ ሰራዊትህን ወደ አላህ እጠራችኃለሁ። መልዕክቴን አድርሻለሁ። ተቀበሉኝ። ሰላም ቀናውን መንገድ በተከተሉት ላይ ይሁን። [37]

[36] Sergew Hable Selassie. 1972. *Ancient and medieval Ethiopian history to 1270*. Addis Abeba: United Printers PP. 190

[37] Ahmedin Jabel, as above note 29

The 16th-century war between the Sultanate of Adal and the Christian highland kingdom is still a subject of controversy both among scholars and among the public at large. The nature and consequence of this expedition have received various characterizations. For the majority of Orthodox Christians, this was fundamentally a religious war waged against Christian Ethiopian state by an Islamic invader 'Ahmed Gragn'. Epitomized as 'the Ahmed Gragn Syndrome' this view emphasized the religious element and the external nature of it. According to Genenew[38]

> Among conservative Christian elites and clergy, Gragn is still remembered as a devil-incarnate with Goliath-like physical build and fiendish mind bent on erasing Christianity off the face of Ethiopia. This image has been preserved in Northern folktales, religious sermons and, especially in 20th century popular Amharic literature.

While for Muslims, the war of Ahmed Ibn Ibrahim Al-Ghazi was an act of resistance against repeated subjugation of Islamic sultanates under successive rulers of the Christian highland kingdom. This hitherto muted respect for Imam Ahmed as a hero of Ethiopian Muslims went public as part of post-1991 political changes that ushered the reorganization of the Ethiopian state into nine regional states including Harar. With this, the legacy of Ahmed Gragn both as part of Harar's glorious past and Islamic history of Ethiopia resurfaced. Still others emphasize the political nature of it, in that the prime cause of the war was not religious rather politico-economic interests were important drivers. Hussein[39] aptly summarized the view of most of Ethiopian Muslims against the perception that put Islam and Muslims as an outsider

> Contrary to the widely-held view that Islam can only be defined as an external threat to the Ethiopian polity, and had been an internal subversive element, it must be understood that throughout the centuries, the Muslim religion has constituted the basis of the cultural identity of a sizeable part of the Ethiopian population, thereby functioning as an additional basis for the integration of diverse

[38] To an enlightening discussion of The 'Gragn Episode' see Genenew Assefa. 2007. Recasting Gragn The Aborted Islamic Government of Ethiopia (1529-43)

[39] Hussein Ahmed. Islam in Wollo. PP. 188

communities into the overall Ethiopian society, which has always had ethnic heterogeneity as its principal characteristic.

Based on the diverse views and characterization of Christian-Muslim relations in Ethiopia in the literature, the study chooses South Wollo, as a place where the various perspectives' can be reflected on the ground.

1.5 Methodology

This study used a qualitative approach. This so because it takes the natural setting to collect the data which enables the researcher to be more involved in gathering all the details provided by the informants. It is more humanistic and interactive; it is emergent rather than tightly prefigured and it is fundamentally interpretive in that the researcher ultimately provides the final interpretation of the data.

The researcher gathered data from both primary and secondary sources. This includes, among other official publications, newspapers, magazines and government reports. In gathering data, the researcher-conducted fieldwork in purposively selected cites of the South Wollo zone notably Dessie and Kombolcha. Nonetheless, the researcher had the opportunity to meet individuals from other areas of the zone that further augment the data. The reason behind the selection of these sites has to do with the demographic balance between Christians and Muslims is almost equal which enables to see the centuries-old interaction of Christians and Muslims.

Moreover, Dessie being the capital of the South Wollo zone and the oldest urban center in the area is ideal for examining the working of religious pluralism and tolerance both in the past and present. Kombolcha city is an urban administration known for its industries both at the regional and national levels. It is also one of the centers of Islamic education and surrounded by notable Sufi shrines of Geta and Majit. Hence, it is an ideal site to observe the changing dynamics of intra-Muslim relations. Given the rapid rate of social dynamism in urban areas than the rural ones, the emphasis was made on urban centers to grasp issues of religious pluralism and tolerance.

The researcher had conducted fieldwork first time in April and May 2015 and finally in May and June of 2016. The good thing about this study is the fact that I am originally from South Wollo I

know many individuals who can provide me information when the need arises. In order to collect sufficiently comprehensive and rich data to allow for the informed answering of the research questions, the researcher has employed data collection methods such as document analysis, in-depth interview and focus group discussions.

The Interview method is one of the most commonly used methods of data collection in qualitative studies pertaining to its relative ease and cost-efficiency with which they can be conducted.[40] Qualitative interviews provide opportunities for mutual discovery, understanding, reflection and explanation via a path that is organic, adaptive and oftentimes energizing. Interviews elucidate subjectively lived experiences and viewpoints from the respondents' perspective.[41]

Taking into account such advantages of this method, for this study, the researcher conducted an interview with forty-five selected individuals (see appendix) with an interview period that ranges from ten minutes to more than three hours. In selecting interviewees and focus group discussants, the purposive sampling technique is used. This strategy enables the researcher to selects individuals for study because they can purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem and the central phenomenon in the study.[42]

Focus group data reflects the collective notions shared and negotiated by the group. Focus groups are therefore appropriate for measuring meanings, which are otherwise difficult to get at. Focus groups are also well suited for studying attitudes, preferences and priorities, and beliefs. Moreover, more than any other method, they enable us to study participants' rationalizations and justifications. Many methods can be used to measure people's opinions. However, focus group research challenges study subjects to explore and even to defend these opinions.[43]

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[40] Given, Lisa M. 2008. The Sage Encyclopaedia of Qualitative Research Methods. Vol. 1 & 2. PP. 422

[41] Tracy, Sarah J .2013. Qualitative Research Methods: collecting evidence, crafting analysis, communicating impact. Pp. 132

[42] Creswell, John. 2007. Qualitative Inquiry & Research Design Choosing Among Five Approaches. California: Sage Publications, Inc. PP. 141

[43] Lune, Howard and Berg, Bruce L. 2017. Qualitative Research Methods for the Social Sciences. Pearson Education Limited. England. At 98

Two focus group discussions were also arranged within which five individuals have participated in each. Due to the sensitive nature of the issues, great care was taken to choose participants. Group discussants are selected based on religious affiliation hence five Orthodox Christians and Muslims were included in each group. To represent the divergent views among Muslims two individuals having Salafi orientation were included while the remaining others being Sufi affiliated.

In analyzing, the data gathered through the aforementioned methods of data collection the researcher employed a qualitative analysis method. Qualitative data analysis is a search for general statements about relationships among categories of data.[44] Hence, the generated data is coded, categorized thematically, analyzed and interpreted qualitatively.

In qualitative research, data collection and data analysis must be a simultaneous process where data analysis begins in the field, at the time of data collection as the researcher identifies problems and concepts that appear likely to help in understanding the issue under investigation. [45] Given the use of in-depth interview and focus group discussions, a direct insertion that enables recording quotations from respondents, appear here and there with their English rendering.

Research is done within the purview of certain ethical considerations.[46] Accordingly, this study is conducted considering ethical issues. Hence, the data was gathered after respondents were duly informed about the relevance of the research and they voluntarily consented to participate. (See appendix). Necessary care is also made in maintaining the confidentiality of the respondents in not sharing the information to a third party and for those who want to remain anonymous; the researcher either replaces their name with pseudo- names or indicates anonymity thereof.

1.6 Scope of the Study

The study focuses on the issue of religious pluralism and tolerance in South Wollo. The subjects of the research were Christians of Ethiopian Orthodox denomination and Muslims of Sufi and

[44] Marshall, C. and Rossman, G.B. 1989. *Designing Qualitative Research.* Newbury Park, CA: Sage

[45] Ibid: 111

[46] Creswell, John W. 2014. Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches. 4th Edition.

Salafism orientations. While drawing on the past the study has concentrated on the religio-pluralist secular model in the federal years of Ethiopia.

Whilst the title 'The Dynamics Religious Pluralism and Tolerance in Federal Ethiopia: the South Wollo Experience' might seem self-evident, the question needs to be asked: what do we mean by religious pluralism and tolerance and how are the specific aspects of it are treated here. By religious pluralism and tolerance implies the fact of religious diversity and the societal ways in which the people have developed in managing it. It also indicates frameworks of regulation and recognition states employ in responding to their religious diversity.

As there are many religious groups in the area this study focused on the two major religious groups (Orthodox Christians and Muslims) and their relations in the area. Hence, in this study, the term Christian implies Orthodox Christians. When we say Christian-Muslim relations, it should be known that Christians and Muslims are not as monolithic groups that interact as blocs. In order to understand better the Christian-Muslim relations, it seems important to look into the internal contestation within the religious groups. Significant in this regard is the Sufi-Salafi debate within Muslims as it appearing more contested with the emergence of reform movements.

The aspirations in Christian Muslim-relations of the Orthodox Church in Ethiopia will differ substantially from the Protestant Church of Ethiopia and that of the Catholic Church in Ethiopia on interfaith relationships. Likewise, a Sufi oriented Muslim of the Qadariyya or Shaziliyya and any other fraternity will have a different outlook on interfaith relations than a member of one of the newer Islamic reformist movements such as Salafi or Tabligh. Thus, the study selected one Christian and two Muslim groups. This is because of two reasons. On the one hand, to better capture, the changing dynamics of interfaith relations between Muslims and Orthodox Christians understanding Muslim schism seems indispensable. This provides us to grasp the various positions espoused among Muslim groups vis-à-vis the Orthodox Church and Orthodox Christians. Secondly, Orthodox Christianity is selected due to its dominant position and early contact with Muslims in the area,

Given, Ethiopia's wide territorial size and the internal diversity both within Islam and Christianity, it is virtually impossible in one single contribution to discuss Christian-Muslim relations in Ethiopia in their broadest sense covering all regions and religions. Therefore, this

study mainly focused on religious pluralism and tolerance as manifested in Christian-Muslim relations. Regionally, the emphasis is on the developments in the South Wollo zone and specifically in Dessie and Kombolcha, where both Islam and Christianity have a long history and where at times the tension between the two communities has risen high.

1.7 Significance of the Study

The study has both academic and policy significance. Granted the recent turn towards religiosity and religious assertiveness at the global and local level, understanding the dynamics of religious pluralism and tolerance under the post-derg secular system is a timely issue that demands an academic investigation. This study uncovers the changes brought by the current secular venture on religious pluralism and tolerance taking Wollo as a case.

Ethiopia is a religious society. Religion played a vital role in the lives of many Ethiopians. It commands decision making in major aspects of life among others marriage, death rituals, birth ceremonies, and more importantly animal slaughtering. Besides, religious festivals are celebrated hotly and devotedly. In recent decades, religious assertiveness has been seen among many Ethiopians across religions. A typical instance of this social phenomenon is apparent among Muslim groups and evangelical Christian churches. This is mainly related to the changes in the internal political dynamics of the state and the spread and sophistication of communication technology, which enables swift information sharing and interdependence among societies throughout the world. Thus, the study will contribute to indicating the emerging dynamics of religious relations and possible solutions that could help accommodate religious diversity within a federal and secular context.

The Wollo region is a wonderful “laboratory” to test and generate hypotheses about the dynamics of religious pluralism and tolerance both at the national and regional scales. The area is distinguished for its location at the interface of ethnic and religious groups. This led to the appearance of a syncretistic but original culture epitomized as “Wolloye.” Hence investigating the character of religious pluralism and tolerance in this area will help to identify important moral lessons (if any) to other parts of the country.

1.8 The Plan of the Study

This study consists of eight chapters. The first chapter provided background information and introduced the problem and the analytical framework. Accordingly, it starts with a historical background for the emerging dynamics of religious pluralism and tolerance. It also problematizes the issue under study and identifies the aim and questions of the study.

Chapter two discusses the concepts and theories central to the study, how they are understood and employed here. Hence as a conceptual and theoretical foundation for succeeding discussion, this chapter explicates on the meaning of religious pluralism and tolerance from various perspectives available in the literature. From a comparative perspective, this chapter also deals with religious pluralism in secular federations of India and the Republic of South Africa vis-à-vis the Ethiopian experience.

Chapter three dwells on, as a historical backdrop to the current secular venture, the nature of religious pluralism as manifested in the state-religion relations, during Haile Selassie and Derg regimes focusing on the constitutional approaches followed towards religious diversity.

Chapter Four focuses on the issue of religious pluralism and tolerance in the current secular venture. Accordingly, the character of secularism as it appears under the FDRE constitution is covered. The role of the Ministry of Federal Affairs (now Ministry of Peace) in managing the issue of religion and the work of the Inter-Religious Council of Ethiopia in promoting religious pluralism and tolerance is also discussed. Besides, it focuses on the dynamics of Christian-Muslims relations in Federal Ethiopia as seen in both inter and intra-religion relations and the issue of government interference in religious affairs.

Chapter five, as the study has taken South Wollo as a case, describes the study area. Besides, it traces the introduction of Islam and Christianity in the area in line with the historical analysis of relations between state and religion in South Wollo focusing mainly on the policy of 'Neo-Solomonid' emperors of Tewodros, Yohannes and Menelik. It also discusses the reign of Lij Iyasu as it represents a unique attempt at religious accommodation and tolerance.

Taking religious pluralism as everyday interactions in settings of religious diversity, the six-chapter presents certain local models of religious tolerance still at work in South Wollo. In doing

so, it focuses on major areas of Muslim-Christian interaction as Communal associations of Edir and Iqub, affinity (Amachicha) relationship, neighborly relations, the Abbagar Institution and Pilgrimage to Shrines.

Chapter seven explains the advent of the Islamic reform movement to the area and its impact on interfaith relations. Hence, the introduction of Islamic reform groups since the dawn of the post-derg secular venture accompanied by its religio-pluralistic policy and the resultant dynamics of inter and intra religious contestations are covered. Finally, by way of a critical appraisal, the study ends with the conclusion.

Chapter Two

Conceptual and Theoretical Framework

This chapter deals with the conceptual and theoretical issues raised in this study. It seeks to clarify the meanings of concepts used in order to avoid ambiguity and to regulate the sense in which key terms are employed here. This is crucial in understanding the main crux of the study.

2.1 Religious Pluralism and Tolerance: a Conceptual Sketch

While one talks of religious pluralism, it seems imperative to deal with religious tolerance and vice versa. This is so because these two concepts are very much related and discussing one will end up touching the other concept too. Although the principles of tolerance and pluralism receive much praise in the current intellectual arena, their essence and their side effects are often not seen deeply in a non-western context like Ethiopia. Hence, it is worth asking on what do these concepts fundamentally mean and what explains their relevance in understanding the dynamics of Christian –Muslim relations? In order to answer this question let us see the burgeoning scholarship over these concepts and related issues.

2.1.1 Religious Pluralism

This section is based on the presumption that in order to understand the dynamics of religious pluralism and tolerance it seems imperative to uncover the various perspectives in the literature. However, before delving into the meaning of religious pluralism let us first see the origin of the concept of religious pluralism.

Many scholars of religious pluralism associate its origin with the enlightenment period of the late seventeenth century and early eighteenth century in Europe when church and state were separated and principled argument for tolerance was developed.[47]

During that period, there was a general contempt of religion and the deification of science and technology. This was embedded in the enlightenment thought that presents religion as a pre-

[47] John Bowden. 2005. 'Religious Pluralism and the Heritage of the Enlightenment 'in Roger Boase eds. *Islam and Global Dialogue: Religious Pluralism and the Pursuit of Peace*. Ashgate Publishing Limited, England. PP 14-18

scientific form of thought that nurtures irrationality and superstition as well as a morally flawed perspective incompatible with individual liberty and free inquiry that leads to intolerance and violence. [48]

Those who subscribe to this view emphasize the existence of relativity in all things including religion. Hence, the very fact that more than one religion lays claim to absoluteness demonstrates the relativity of the claims to absoluteness. In this sense, religious pluralism simply describes the fact that there are many different religions. Moreover, how one understands the existence of these religions depends on the standpoint one adopts.[49]

However, writers such as Kaplan[50] and Walsham[51] opposed this Euro-centric understanding of religious pluralism. For them, there were pragmatically grounded local ways of religious tolerance developed even before the advent of the enlightenment thought. According to Kaplan, the Millet system of the Ottoman Empire was a case in point where though Islam was the official religion of the empire, Jewish and Christian religious groups were accorded state recognition. This was in the interest of the Ottomans in that non-Muslims were subject to a separate tax, which in turn expanded the tax base and this had even encouraged some to convert to Islam. Nonetheless, by European standards, it was still more progressive.

Some scholars even associate the emergence of the theory of pluralism with the liberalism stream of Protestantism in the 20th century. Legenhausen, for instance, argued religious pluralism emerged as a theological position defended among Christian thinkers only in the twentieth century. For him, though, in the past, there were thinkers of various religious persuasions who advocated religious pluralism in some way, in its modern sense, religious pluralism arose

[48] Ibid

[49] John Bowden 2005. Religious Pluralism. as above note 43

[50] Kaplan, B.J. 2007. *Divided By Faith: Religious Conflict and the Practice of Toleration in Early Modern Europe* Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.

[51] Walsham, Alexandra. 2006. *Charitable Hatred: Tolerance and Intolerance in England, 1500-1700*. Manchester: Manchester University Press

specifically in reaction to widespread Christian views about salvation that maintain Christians not of one's sect are damned.[52]

The major reaction came in the form of an ecumenical movement that grew out of Protestant missionary activity. The seed of Protestant ecumenism was sowed in 1910 in the Edinburgh conference that ultimately led to the establishment of the World Council of Churches in 1948. Protestants' position concerning the need for respect for non-Christian faiths was made clear under the Commission of Appraisal appointed by the Laymen's Foreign Missionary Inquiry in 1932.[53]

In the catholic camp, with the Second Vatican Council convened between 1962 and 1965, the church took strong steps towards ecumenism manifested in the attempt at reconciliation with protestant churches. Besides, the Catholic Church also encouraged a more tolerant attitude toward the adherents of non-Christian faiths. [54] More recently, in 1999, a historic act of ecumenism achieved between Protestants and the Catholic Church when representatives of the Lutheran World Federation and the Vatican signed a statement lifting the mutual condemnations of the sixteenth century. [55]

In the literature, the term religious pluralism has been used to denote many different things. Some writers[56] use it as a philosophical or theological view that no single religion can claim a monopoly of the truth. That is salvation is equally accessible for the adherents of different religions. Some others took religious pluralism as a social and political response to diversity.[57] In this sense, religious pluralism refers to the coexistence and the peaceful relations of multiple religions in a given state. Hence, it implies religious tolerance, which is a condition of harmonious co-existence between adherents of different religions or religious denominations.

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[52] Muhammad Legenhausen. 2005. 'A Muslim's Non-Reductive Religious Pluralism' in Roger Boase as above note 43

[53] Ibid: 56

[54] Ibid: 57

[55] Ibid

[56] These include among others such as John Hick, 1998; Roger Boase,2005

[57] Diana Eck, 2005; Beckford, 2014

Thomas Banchoff argued that religious pluralism is not limited to a theological position and implies more than a social reality of religious diversity. For him, it indicates patterns of peaceful interaction among diverse religious actors from various religious traditions at both individual and group levels with one another and with the society and the state around tangible cultural, social, economic and political concerns.[58]

As a political ideal religious pluralism 'refers to a political ideal of peaceful interaction of individuals and groups of different religious traditions and confessions, as well as non-believers.'[59]

According to Diana Eck[60] Pluralism is 'not the sheer fact of plurality alone, but is active engagement with a plurality'. Similarly, Peter Byrne[61] explains religious pluralism as, not to the fact that there is a plurality of religions in the world, but an intellectual response to that fact.

According to Beckford,[62] the term 'religious pluralism' can signify four different things namely empirical religious diversity, normative views of pluralism, frameworks to sustain and regulate religious diversity, and everyday interactions around religious diversity. As his classification comprises the major perspectives about religious pluralism in the literature this study conforms to Beckford's classification, hence the subsequent chapters discussed the situation of religious pluralism and tolerance in its four dimensions in Ethiopia taking South Wollo as a case. In doing so, a detailed conceptual examination of the four dimensions of pluralism is warranted here.

[58] Tomas F. Banchoff. 2008. *Religious Pluralism, Globalization, and World Politics.* Oxford: Oxford University Press. PP. 5.

[59] Élise Roumeas. 2015. 'What Is Religious Pluralism? In *Religious Pluralism: A Resource Book*. Aurelia Bardon et al eds. European University Institute, Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies, ReligioWest.

[60] Diana Eck. 2017. 'Interfaith dialogue in the new religious America' Review and Expositor. Volume 114(1) 25–33

[61] Peter Byrne. 1995. *Prolegomena to Religious Pluralism*. New York: Macmillan.

[62] Beckford, James. 2014. "Re-Thinking Religious Pluralism." *Religious Pluralism: Framing Religious Diversity in the Contemporary World*. Giordan, Giuseppe and Enzo Pace Eds. Switzerland: Springer International Publishing PP. 16

Religious Pluralism- as Empirical Fact of Religious Diversity

It signifies the simple fact of the existence of various distinct faith traditions in a given society or state. It refers to the existence of distinct groups from more than one religious tradition, be they Christians, Muslims, Hindus, religious Jews and many others. It is about inter-religious diversity. In this sense, all states of the world exhibit religious pluralism albeit to various degrees. The other dimension of religious diversity has to do with the internal diversity within distinct faith traditions that manifested itself in the existence of schools, currents and factions within each tradition. The plethora of protestant churches, the Sufi- Salafi divide in Islam and Tewahido-Tahadiso schism in EOTC represent the intra-religious diversity in the Ethiopian context. Still more, there exists diversity in terms of differences over the extent to which individuals their beliefs, practices and emotions reflect different faith traditions and the extent to which they accord salience to religion at different stages of their life and in different situations.[63]

Religious Pluralism as a Normative Value

More often than not, the concept of religious pluralism is conceived as the existence of diverse religious traditions in a given society. In this sense, the phenomenon of religious pluralism has always been with us. However, strictly speaking, the term actually refers to the idea about religious plurality, which goes beyond mere recognition of the fact that there are different religions and faiths in a society or in a country, but an appreciation that the fact of the religious plurality has a positive value.

As a normative value, religious pluralism has the distinctive feature of placing few or no limits on the extent of the religious diversity to be encouraged in a given state and involves active engagement with plurality.[64] However, in practical terms in states that accept religious pluralism as a positive thing invariably exclude large numbers of religious or spiritual groups.[65]

[63] Beckford, "Re-Thinking Religious Pluralism" PP. 22

[64] Ibid

[65] Ibid

This is, for instance, the case in Ethiopia where discussions of religious pluralism as a positive element are largely confined to monotheistic religious groups notably Christians and Muslims and ignores traditional ones.

Religious Pluralism as Frameworks of Regulation and Recognition

Here religious pluralism is associated with the way religious diversity is managed within a given state. It is concerned with the social, political, legal and cultural contexts within which religious diversity is recognized, represented, accommodated, encouraged, restricted, and regulated. It is not directly concerned with religion 'as such' but is focused on the political, cultural and social forces that push and pull the public expression of religions in various directions.[66] This brings the issue of secularism to the fore as a state response to religious diversity. In line with this understanding of religious pluralism, this study looks into the historical trajectories of state-religion relations in Ethiopia in general and South Wollo in particular.

Religious Pluralism as everyday interactions in settings of religious diversity

Religious pluralism in this sense is about the social interaction of religious groups in everyday life. It covers the representations, attitudes, negotiations and social interactions that occur in mundane or everyday settings where religious diversity is recognized or denied, challenged or extended.[67] It covers what Diana Eck[68] called dialogue of life a process that involves living in everyday relation to others. She defines it as inclusive categories that encompass most of the unstructured interaction between people of different traditions.[69] It represents the most elementary, important form of interfaith relations. It consists of respecting people as believers on a neighborly basis and establishes constructive and positive relations.[70]

[66] Ibid: 23

[67] Ibid: 24

[68] Eck, Diana. As above note 56

[69] Ibid

[70] Haney (2009) cited in Suraya Sintang et al. 2012. "Dialogue of Life and Its Significance in Inter-Religious Relation in Malaysia" in *International Journal of Islamic Thought*. Vol. 2 (Dec.)

These dialogues happen both spontaneously and in semi-organized form, concentrate on practical issues of communality hence implies concern, respect and hospitality towards one another. It leaves room for the other person's identity, modes of expression and values. Hence, these spontaneous dialogues need recognition and celebration for their value. This begs the study of social interactions that helps to understand religious diversity as a dimension of lived experience and a fact of social life.

Accordingly, this study assesses the phenomenon of dialogue of life as it happened between Orthodox Christians and Muslims of South Wollo which is mainly seen in communal institutions of *Edir* and *Iqub*, affinity (*Amachicha*) relationship, the practice of interfaith marriage, neighborly relations, the Abbagar Institution, pilgrimage to shrines and mutual cooperation in building worship places. This provides us with a clear picture of religious pluralism and tolerance in a local context. Moreover, it also serves as a foreground to understand the changing relations between Orthodox Christian and Muslims of South Wollo in this era of globalization.

The contemporary era of globalization is marked by greater religious pluralism.[71] Globalization in general and the new communications technologies in particular foster an internal diversification of religious traditions. It is promoting a high level of internal diversity and the reformulation of religious identities. Accordingly, new and reformed religious communities are thriving—including Evangelical groups that build on an individualized ethos and Muslim organizations that provide an anchor for identity within a churning world.[72]

The rapid expansion of communication technologies enabled not only the mobilization of religious communities across the geographic space but also deepens their interaction with one another, which is largely becoming competitive. This quest for religious recognition and competition (over beliefs and practices) is perhaps the most visible impact of globalization on religious pluralism both globally and in national contexts where transnational linkages of

[71] Pratap B, Mehta. 2008. 'On the Possibility of Religious Pluralism' in Tomas F. Banchoff Religious Pluralism, Globalization, and World Politics

[72] Tomas F. Banchoff. 2008. Religious Pluralism, Globalization, and World Politics. Oxford: Oxford University Press. PP. 10

religious groups are affecting local competition and challenging the existing on local patterns of religious pluralism and tolerance.[73]

As far as the issue of religious plurality is concerned there are two broad responses widely used in the literature namely non-religionist and religionists. Granted the view of non-religionist scholars being straightforward i.e. they associate plurality of religious world views with the absence of any truth claim for all religions, our focus here is on the varied and multifaceted response given by the religionist camp notably Christianity and Islam. Understanding the various vantage points of Christianity and Islam in reference to religious pluralism is critical in order to grasp the relationship between them in real-life situations.

The major Christian attitudes towards religious others could be categorized as namely exclusivism, inclusivism, and pluralism.[74] Exclusivism maintains that Jesus (and by implication Christianity) is the only true way of salvation and Gospel is the only source of authentic knowledge of God. This view is evident in the biblical injections of Acts 4:12 and John 14:6. This exclusivist view was historically manifested in the 19th century Catholic Church doctrine of 'no salvation outside of the church'[75]

Thus, all other religions are either imperfect, false or "works of the devil" and therefore have no salvific value at all. People of other religious traditions are eternally lost unless and until they convert to Christianity. Well-known proponents of this view include Emil Bruner, Karl Barth and Hendrik Kraemer. Exclusivism is criticized for its tendency to foster religious intolerance, fundamentalist tendencies and prevents a reciprocal and symmetrical relationship with the other.[76]

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[73] Ibid: 11

[74] Race, Alan. 1983, Christians and Religious Pluralism. London: SCM. Diana L. Eck. 2005. 'Is Our God Listening? Exclusivism, Inclusivism and Pluralism.' In *Islam and Global Dialogue: Religious Pluralism and the Pursuit of Peace*. Roger Boase Eds.

[75] Ibid: 2-3

[76] Jorge N. Ferrer. 2009. 'A Participatory Vision of Religion' in *International Journal of Transpersonal Studies*. 139-151

Inclusivism against Exclusivism views Jesus and Christianity as representing the whole truth but goes on to admit that in a mysterious way this truth can be found in other religions although without the knowledge of the adherents. This means there is a possibility of non - Christian good people to attain salvation. Hence, Christianity is the best but not the only religion.

In this connection, Justin Martyr quoted in Marcus Braybrooke[77] succinctly describes the inclusivist view on Christianity as follows:

> It is our belief that those who strive to do good, which is enjoined onus have a share in God; according to our traditional belief, they will by God's grace share his dwelling. And it is our conviction that this holds good in principle for all men […] Christ is the divine Word in whom human race share and those who live according to the light of their knowledge are Christians, even if they are considered as being godless.

Similarly, Pinnock[78], while emphasizing the superiority of Christianity, argued for the possible 'later day' salvation for non- Christians' saying Christ, then, is the Savior of all people, but they do not all come to him at once historically… People have to be given time to find their way home. Not all of those who will eventually come have yet found Jesus or entered into the communion of Christ's church… Christians do not have a monopoly on the Spirit.[79] In substantiating his claim of inclusivism, Pinnock provides five biblical pieces of evidence that prove the possibility of salvation without revelation for God-seekers (Hebrews 11:6.), Gentile believers of Old Testament, pre-messianic Jews, good workers (Matthew 25:40), and infants.[80]

The third major Christian view of other religions is Pluralism. The basic idea of Pluralism is a revelation is a common property for all religions so that no religion can claim a monopoly over it. Well-known advocates of Religious Pluralism include William Hocking, Ernest Troeltsch, and

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[77] Braybrooke, Marcus. 2005 *A Heart for the World*. O Books.

[78] Pinnock, Clark H. 1992. Wideness in Gods Mercy: The Finality of Christ in a World of Religions. PP, 102-113

[79] For more see Dennis L. Okholm and Timothy R. Phillips. Eds. 1995. 'Four Views on Salivation In a Pluralistic World. PP. 105, Daniel Strange.' 2002 *The Possibility of Salvation Among the Unevangelised: An Analysis of Inclusivism in Recent Evangelical Theology* at 22.

[80] Pinnock, 1992: 157-168

John Hick among others. John Hick, a major figure in the field of philosophy of religion and Christian theology, was the first to develop a theory of, "religious pluralism" that takes all religions as variant conception and perception of, and response to, the 'Divine Reality'.[81] It is a concept that attempts to provide a basis in Christian theology for tolerance of non-Christian religions.

Accordingly, all religions are equally valid as ways to God. Hick claims that each religion in its own way represents an authentic revelation of the Divine world and a fully authentic means of salvation. For him, all religions are culturally conditioned responses to the same ultimate reality; and, therefore, are equally valid, and salvation is possible through any of them.[82]

He claims that each major religious tradition is a more or less equally valid, though particular, response to the Real. According to him, religions are like members of the same family, similar in many ways but not the same in all ways. Thus, 'the great religious traditions are different but equally valid human responses to the ultimate reality that is the ground and source of everything and the condition of our highest good'. [83]

Hick's pluralistic view has not been without criticism. According to Sayyid Muhammad,[84] the most serious flaw in Hicks hypothesis is to ''reconciling the conflicting truth claims of various religions: for example, monotheism of Islam as opposed to polytheism of Hinduism; death and resurrection of Islam and Christianity as opposed to reincarnations and reaching the state of nirvana of Buddhism; salvation through Trinity as opposed to Tawhid (Monotheism), etc.''. Another major criticism leveled against pluralist theology has to do with the assumption that all religions have a common denominator. Criticizing this DiNoia [85] accuses pluralist in downplaying the particulars of religions, and questions the legitimacy of reducing all religious ends to one religious end.

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[81] Hick, John. 1980. *God has Many Names: Britain's New Religious Pluralism.* UK: Palgrave Macmillan

[82] Ibid

[83] More on this see John Hick. 1993. *God and The Universe of Faiths: Essays in the philosophy of Religion*. PP. 134-139

[84] Sayyid Muhammad 2006. "Islam and Religious Pluralism, available at http:/ /www.al-islam.org

[85] DiNoia, Joseph. 1992. *Pluralistic Theology of Religions.* Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press

In averting such criticisms, Hick comes up with three-way differentiation of religious traditions in terms of historical facts, trans-historical facts and conception of the real and propose solutions to each. Concerning the difference in terms of historical facts, he suggests that such differences are minor and could be resolved using the historical method. Disagreements over trans-historical facts, Hick suggests, are not necessary and thus religions need to dialogue to modify their belief. As to the various conceptions of the real, Hick believes that each religion's Deity is an authentic representation of the real.

In summary, in the Christian tradition, concerning Religious truth and salvation, there are three basic categories namely religious exclusivism, religious non-exclusivism and Religious pluralism. A religious exclusivist is someone who believes the religious perspective of only one basic theistic system or only one of the variants within a basic theistic system to be the truth or at least closer to the truth than any other religious perspective. Someone is a religious non-exclusivist when he/she denies that the religious perspective of any basic theistic system or variant thereof is superior to all other religious perspectives.

When one looks into the Islamic perspective on religious pluralism, we see a different picture. As far as the Quran and Hadith, the two most important sources of jurisprudence in Islam concerned the Islamic understanding of religious pluralism is far from clear. This ambiguity is far more complicated even among Muslim scholars with their different interpretations of these texts. Thus, it is hardly possible to find a standard or a unanimous view on the subject.

One can find the issue of religious pluralism raised in many verses of the Quran. A good starting point in this regard is the Quranic understanding of Islam that originally humanity started its existence on earth as one religious community.[86] Moreover, Muslims are also ordered to proclaim ''We believe in the revelation which has come down to us and in that which has come down to you; our God and your God is one and the same, and it is to Him we [all] submit'' (29:46).

[86] See Chapter 2 verse 213 of Quran

In Islam, diversity is a natural phenomenon that bound to exist. “O mankind, We have created you from a male and a female and made you tribes and families that you may have knowledge of one another. Surely the noblest of you with Allah is the most dutiful of you.” - 49:13.

Similarly, Islam proclaims religious diversity. Accordingly, the Quran guaranteed the existence of religion other than Islam when it says ‘‘those who believe [in the Qur’an], those who follow the Jewish faith, and the Sabaeans, Christians, Magians, and Polytheists – Allah will judge between them on the Day of Judgment’’.

Nonetheless, on the one hand, Islam appears exclusivist when it declares no religion is accepted but Islam-the correct religion ordained by God to all humankind through the last of His chosen prophets, Muhammad. On the other hand, if one takes Islam in its general sense of complete submission to the commands of Allah all of the divinely revealed religions are included under Islam. [87]

Another important verse in grasping the Islamic view of religious freedom and pluralism is the 109th Quranic chapter. This verse was revealed while the Prophet was still in Mecca. Once, some of the Quraysh Idolaters came up with a proposal that they would be prepared to worship Allah for a year if he would also reciprocate by worshiping their deities. This was responded by the stated verse ordering the Prophet to tell the disbelievers: “I do not worship those that you worship, nor do you worship Him Whom I worship […]. To you is your religion, and to me, my religion.” This is a clear acceptance of religious pluralism in Islam and implies the possibility that different religions could co-exist.

In achieving religious coexistence, Islam ordered its followers to tolerate and respect other religions. The concept of Tawfiq (grace) is important here. Since it is due to the goodwill of God not through once own will or power that one becomes Muslim or not, Muslims are required to thank God for his mercy in giving them Islam and pray for the same mercy to be given to non-Muslims.

[87] Legenhausen, Muhammad. 2005 ‘A Muslim’s Non-Reductive Religious Pluralism’ in *Islam and Global Dialogue Religious Pluralism and the Pursuit of Peace*, Roger Boase Ed. PP. 51-72

The prophetic way of responding to the fact of religious pluralism is epitomized in erstwhile 'Charter of Medina', which reads:

> "This is a message from Muhammad Ibn Abdullah as a covenant to those who adopt Christianity near and far we are with them. Verily, I the servant the helpers and my followers defend them because Christians are my citizens and by Allah, I hold out against anything that displeases them. No compulsion in religions is to be on them. Neither are their judges to be removed from their jobs, nor their monks from their monasteries. No one is to destroy a house of their religion, to damage it, or to carry anything from it to the Muslims houses. Should anyone take any of these, he will spoil God's Covenant and disobey his Prophet. Verily, these are my allies and have my secure charter against all that they hate. No one is to force them to travel or to oblige him or her to fight. Muslims are to fight for them. No one of the Muslim nations is to disobey this covenant till the last day."

Hence, this charter not only gives Christians equal citizenship with Muslims but also the right to practice their religion free from religious compulsion. More importantly, albeit in a Muslim majority context, the charter made tolerance a religious duty incumbent upon all Muslims until the end time.

Other than this seemingly 'constitutional' response to religious pluralism, an important manifestation of the prophet's attitude towards the religious others could be seen in his concern towards neighbors be it a Muslim or a non-Muslim. There are several sayings of the Holy Prophet Muhammad emphasizing duty towards one's neighbor. In one instance, the Prophet said, 'By Allah, he does not believe! By Allah, he does not believe! By Allah, he does not believe!' It was said: 'Who is that, O Messenger of Allah?' He said: That person whose neighbor is not safe from his evil." Thus, he made it a criterion of belief or not and asks Muslims to act accordingly to become a real believer.

In the same vein, Islam also obliged Muslims living in non-Muslim countries, where their basic religious rights are respected i.e. freedom to pray, go to mosques and call themselves Muslims, are in a covenant with the legal authorities to obey the law of the land. The basis provided by the moral teachings of Islam for Muslims to co-exist peaceably with non-Muslims is evident from the following verse, which lists the basic duties of a Muslim:

In general, the position of Islam towards religious pluralism is depended much on the way one interprets the various provisions in the Quran and Hadith in a given context.

2.1.2 Religious Tolerance

Although it is difficult to establish a clear foundation for this conceptual intimacy, when we think of tolerance most of the time, what comes to our mind is but religious tolerance. This is so because it 'provides the model for most of our thinking about toleration of other kinds.'[88] This is, however, no wonder given the many religious and religious-related conflicts our world had witnessed and witnessing. Now a day the international media has been replete with reports of such conflicts almost on a daily basis.

In the literature, it is uncommon to see the use of concepts of Toleration and Tolerance interchangeably. This seems justified in that the meanings of these two notions are similar and quite difficult to differentiate between them. Nonetheless, the distinction made by Michael Walzer[89] seems worth mentioning. For him, tolerance implies an attitude and toleration denotes a practice. These terms have been widely used in debates of social, cultural and religious contexts in many varieties of ways. However, here our focus is limited to religious tolerance and toleration.

Historically, the idea of religious tolerance embedded in the legacy of the 17th-century wars of religion that overwhelmed Europe. In the words of Katznelson,[90] 'It was Christian civil war that transformed toleration from a concern with peripheral people by religious authorities and political rulers to a set of questions located at the very center of European public and private life.' During this period, tolerance was called for its being a pragmatic solution without which endemic violence and bloodshed could not be averted. Thus, tolerance was advocated to restrain the state from coercing religious beliefs thereby infringe upon the individual conscience.

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[88] Scanlon, Thomas. 2003. *Difficulty of Tolerance: Essays in Political Philosophy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. PP. 188

[89] Michael Walzer. 1997. *On Toleration* .New Haven, CT: Yale University. PP. xi.

[90] Ira Katznelson. 2014. "A Form of Liberty and Indulgence: Toleration as a Layered Institution. In Alfred Stephan and Charles Taylor eds. *Boundaries of Toleration*. New York: Columbia University Press. 37-58

Over centuries, toleration evolved from its initial understanding of being an unwanted idea and in the 19th century achieved a positive conception expanded to allow the free expression of opinions, beliefs, and behavior associated with the exercise of the individual conscience. Nowadays the value of tolerance has become 'the object of unhesitating praise' in both scholastic and popular rhetoric. In order to understand this prominence, the following lines provide some of the major points that recurred in the recent discussions of tolerance in literature.

For Andrew Cohen[91]:-

> An act of toleration is an agent's intentional and principled refraining from interfering with an opposed other (or their behavior, etc.) in situations of diversity, where the agent believes she has the power to interfere.

Hence, he emphasized non-interference as a central tenet of tolerance. However, this noninterference should not rest on a lack of the necessary means to intervene rather on a conscious move against indulging in others' affairs. Tolerance is thus the cultured character to subdue our natural inclination to distance, reject or persecute others whose beliefs and practices differ from our own.[92] The tolerant person, rather, is disposed to recognize the other as an object of inestimable worth. The tolerant person says, in effect, "Our fundamental disagreement does not diminish my estimation of your worth as a human being and, therefore, though I disagree with your beliefs or practices, still I will endure them." Intolerance, on the other hand, acceding to the natural inclination to devalue the other, encourages the rejection of the person.[93]

Tolerance has a limit in that tolerance does not require unlimited endurance of all beliefs and practices. The tolerant person will endure some beliefs, practices, and not others. Philosophically 'tolerance' is viewed as a principle which asserts it is better on a societal or even a moral level in not acting rather than acting on one's moral disapproval regarding the actions, beliefs, and practices of the Other, so long as the Other does not directly obstruct the well -being of oneself or Others.

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[91] Andrew, Cohen. 2004. 'What Toleration Is.' in *Ethics,* 115:68–95. PP. 69

[92] Kelly James Clark. 1997. 'Perils of Pluralism.' *Faith and Philosophy* Vol 14, No 3, 303-320. PP. 6

[93] Ibid.

As a social virtue and the political principle, tolerance allows for the peaceful coexistence of individuals and groups who hold different views and practice different ways of life within the same society.[94]

For Thomas Scanlon[95] tolerance involves accepting people and permits their practices even when we are totally against them. Thus, he contends that tolerance needs an attitude that is intermediate between 'wholehearted acceptance and unrestrained opposition'.

Tolerance-as-Restraint

The dominant discourse of religious tolerance is based on a historical legacy of the European 30 years of Wars of Religion between the Protestants and the Catholic. Tolerance was taken as a means of ensuring state neutrality towards religious groups. Religious tolerance had been associated with the restraint the majority sustain in allowing the religious other to practice its religion which is otherwise impossible.

This mode of tolerance actually has historically been employed in achieving coexistence between monotheistic religious groups and remains prominent today. Such tolerance involves, even in a situation when 'one may very well have little or no respect for the beliefs and practices of the Other, in fact, one may find much that is wrong with them but still refrain from actively inhibiting the Other's pursuit of what is entailed by his/her own conception of human flourishing.' Here, the need for tolerance in this regard is born out of pragmatism. It is practically expedient for the dominant group to tolerate than to confront and destabilize the social system.[96]

John Horton's[97] definition of tolerance provides us with a full grasp of tolerance as a restraint. For him "the paradigm example of toleration is the deliberate decision to refrain from prohibiting, hindering or otherwise coercively interfering with the conduct of which one

[94] See Galeotti, Anna. 2002. *Tolerance as Recognition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press PP. 85-114

[95] Scanlon, Thomas. 1996. "The Difficulty of Tolerance" In *Toleration: An Elusive Virtue*, ed. David Heyd. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press. PP. 226–240

[96] Supera note 18 at 8

[97] John Horton (1998) as cited in Thomas Nys and Bart Engelen. 2008. "Tolerance: A Virtue? Towards a Broad and Descriptive Definition of Tolerance." *Philosophy in the Contemporary World* 15:1, 44-54. PP. 45

disapproves, although one has the power to do so." It signifies a refraining from prohibition and persecution. However, it suggests latent disapproval, and it usually refers to a condition in which the freedom, which it permits, is both limited and conditional. Thus, Toleration is not religious liberty, and it does not imply religious equality. Hence, it presupposes the existence of an authority with the power to determine the extent of toleration extended. It implies voluntary inaction, political indifference.

History has shown that Monotheistic religions than the polytheistic ones had been accustomed to tolerance-as-restraint.[98] More so in a situation where one dominant monotheistic religion tolerating other, minor monotheistic groups, and there was little chance that these minor religious groups exercise significant influence in the public sphere.

Nonetheless, the rise of democracies and the privatization of religion in modernity, the principle of tolerance has been taking a new connotation of respect.

Tolerance-as-Respect

As its name purports, this type of tolerance needs more than mere restraint. With the growing democratization of the world states, accompanied by the secular phenomenon that demands the separation of state and religion, tolerance has increasingly become a matter of respecting the beliefs and practices of the religious other without necessarily accepting it. Hence, this form of tolerance involves the politics of recognition that the religious-other are recognized as fellow citizens and whose beliefs and practices must be equally treated.[99]

UNESCO in its 'declaration of the principle of tolerance seems to subscribe to such understanding in defining tolerance as

> 1.1 Tolerance is respect, acceptance and appreciation of the rich diversity of our world's cultures, our forms of expression and ways of being human. It is fostered by knowledge, openness, communication and freedom of thought, conscience, and belief. Tolerance is harmony in difference. It is not only a moral duty; it is also a political and legal requirement. Tolerance, the virtue that makes peace

[98] Ibid

[99] Robert Erlewine. 2010. *Monotheism and Tolerance: Recovering a Religion of Reason*. Indiana: Indiana University Press. PP. 8

> possible, contributes to the replacement of the culture of war by a culture of peace.
>
> 1.2. Tolerance is not concession, condescension or indulgence. Tolerance is, above all, an active attitude prompted by recognition of the universal human rights and fundamental freedoms of others. … Tolerance is to be exercised by individuals, groups and States. [100]

Such a comprehensive definition represents the modern understanding of the concept as a virtue and manifests the positive value attached to it as a workable solution in a context of diversity. In addition, this definition provides the idea that for tolerance to exist equality is a precondition. Hence, tolerance could not be mistaken for forbearance and contempt.

Tolerance is not absolute. To be sure, there are problematic forms of intolerance, but that need not mean that all forms of intolerance are problematic as such. For instance, social evils as murder could not be tolerated. In the religious sphere to imposing once, religious conviction on others begs intolerance. In the Ethiopian context, to be a gay or lesbian is against a public reason hence a criminal act.

Tolerance does not necessarily entail acceptance of pluralism that rejects the privileging of any one value or worldview over all others and places inherent value in the diversity of perspectives. In this sense, pluralism is more than tolerance and rejects the hierarchal privileging of one's own position over the others as morally and politically problematic.[101]

Nonetheless, Tolerance and pluralism are both stands on strong regard for the different other. Hence, both involve restraining 'either the ramifications of one's beliefs (tolerance) or acknowledging the limits of one's entire worldview (pluralism), as an implication of the recognition of the other.'[102]

Achieving tolerance and pluralism is not an easy task. This is more so in an increasingly globalized world where individuals involved in disparate, incompatible and often mutually

[100] UNESCO. 1996. Records of the General Conference Twenty-eighth Session Paris, 25 October to 16 November. Vol. 1. PP. 70

[101] Erlewine, Robert, "Monotheism and Tolerance…" PP. 8

[102] Ibid: 9

antagonistic worldviews are contacting each other. Such contacts might inevitably lead to tensions including religious ones.[103]

Although religious intolerance- the practice of keeping religious others from acting in accordance with their religious beliefs- is not new to this era, there is concern globally over the increasing amount, and increasingly violent nature, of such actions.

As a result, there is reasonably a renewed interest in fostering pluralism and religiously tolerant environments in which individuals with different religious standpoints can practice their faiths unfettered.[104]This is even critical in this 'post-secular' age that witnesses the resurgence of religion as a potent force of social identity and the most explicit manifestation of it being the existing trends of religious fundamentalism.

2.1.3 Religious Fundamentalism

Another important concept that deserves an explanation in this thesis is 'Fundamentalism.' Religious intolerance has been demonstrated in many guises. The prime case in this regard is the phenomenon of religious fundamentalism. Hence, it seems pertinent to uncover the concept of fundamentalism and its repercussion on religious pluralism and religious tolerance and/or intolerance. The term fundamentalism begs various meanings. This is clearly seen in the debates that surround its usage in the literature. The meaning of the term fundamentalism is far from clear. This is evident in a myriad of connotations the word received among writers. Nonetheless, scholars employ, in understanding what fundamentalism is all about, some similar characteristic elements. Of such specific characteristics that connote fundamentalism has to do with its religious essence. Accordingly, most scholars have taken holy books as a crucial element in Fundamentalism. Lawrence[105] captured this succinctly 'Remove Scripture you no longer have fundamentalism but some other non-religious social movement'. He argued fundamentalism 'is textually based before it is contextually elaborated and enacted.' Fundamentalism, first and for most, is characterized by a strong commitment to the basic truth of certain religion, belief,

[103] Ibid

[104] Basinger, David. "Religious Diversity(Pluralism)" *The Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2014 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.) https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/entries/religious-pluralism

[105] Lawrence, B.B. 1990. *Defenders of God: Fundamentalists Revolt against the Modern Age.* London L.B Tauris

ideology or conviction. For some, fundamentalism is just a response to secularism. It is a snub to the secularist rhetoric of 'let religion die'.

According to Marty and Appleby[106] fundamentalism is 'a tendency, a habit of mind found within religious communities and paradigmatically embodied in certain representative individuals and movements, which manifests itself as a strategy, or set of strategies, by which beleaguered believers attempt to preserve their distinctive identity as people or group. Feeling this identity to be at risk in the contemporary era, they fortify it by a selective retrieval of doctrines, beliefs, and practices from a sacred past. These retrieved 'fundamentals' are refined, modified, and sanctioned in a spirit of shrewd pragmatism: they are to serve as a bulwark against the encroachment of outsiders who threaten draw the believers into a syncretistic, a religious or irreligious cultural milieu.'

According to Lawrence[107] in understanding fundamentalist, five extremely relevant traits could be discerned. First, fundamentalists assume themselves as 'a minority vanguard possessing the truth.' Fundamentalists categorically believe that the only holders and defenders of truth are but them. They strongly believe that they attain the correct understanding of the creed and others are in utter error. This is clearly seen among some so-called Islamic fundamentalist notably the Jammat Takfir who categorically assume other Muslims as kafir-non-believers as simply because they do not ascribe to their understanding of Islam. Secondly, fundamentalists are confrontational towards their opponents. In their errant position of nonconformity, fundamentalists look others as fundamentally mistaken and work to eradicate their opponent in any means possible. Thirdly, for fundamentalists, authority is derived from scripture and remains in the hands of secondary-level male elites. Fourthly, in reinforcing the 'we' ness as against to 'they' ness, fundamentalists employ 'a specific technical vocabulary'. Fifthly, fundamentalism has historical antecedents. More often than not fundamentalists are known for their rereading of history. They often time are in love with the glorious past wherein the ideals of religion were fully implemented and lived.

[106] Marty and Appleby. 1997. *Religion, Ethnicity, and Self-Identity: Nations in Turmoil*. Salzburg. PP. 19-34

[107] Lawrence, B. As above note 101

Fundamentalism is a Janus-faced phenomenon. Riesebrodt[108] has distinguished between two main types of fundamentalism: legalistic-literalist and charismatic. 'Legalistic-literalist' fundamentalism is centered on the regulation of everyday-life by religious-ethical principles or ritual obligations. The religious scholar and the moralistic preacher represent it. To this, 'charismatic' fundamentalism additionally emphasizes the extraordinary experience of divine gifts and miracles. It represents a more emotional and enthusiastic religiosity embodied by the living saint and miracle worker. 'Legalistic-literalist' and 'charismatic' fundamentalism are sometimes integrated into one movement, sometimes they are separated. 'Legalistic-literalist' fundamentalism is connected usually with the ideal way of life of urban middle-classes, and 'charismatic' fundamentalism with the ecstatic and magical needs of urban lower classes and rural population.

While some authors want to limit fundamentalism as protestant phenomena others try to situate it within the Abrahamic religions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Still others assume it applies to all religions of the world. Religious fundamentalism is not a monopoly of any specific religion.

Historically, fundamentalism evolved in the USA as a Christian movement mainly within American Protestantism in the late 19th and early 20th centuries amidst conservative evangelical Christians who, in a reaction to modernism, actively affirmed a "fundamental" set of Christian beliefs that opposed biblical criticism and advocates biblical literalism. Nonetheless, often time's fundamentalism has been associated with Islam. As Peter Pavlovich[109] succinctly put it, 'Fundamentalism is today mostly used as a phenomenological description linked to the world of Islam.' However, fundamentalism can develop from any of the world religions and emerge from any society.

For the purpose of this study, religious fundamentalism is understood as a religious standpoint that does not accept and respect the existence of other religions and wants to impose once

[108] Riesebrodt, Martin and Don, Reneau. 1998. *Pious Passion: The Emergence of Modern Fundamentalism in the United States and Iran.* California: University of California Press. PP. 15-17

[109] Peter Pavlovich. 2009. 'Fundamentalism or Tolerance: What Is the Public Role of Religion in Modern Society?' in *Overcoming Fundamentalism Ethical Responses from Five Continents* Heidi Hadsell/Christoph Stückelberger Eds. PP. 56

religion by force. Therefore, it is against religious equality and tolerance between and among religious groups. This is not however to imply religious pietism which involves living up to the religious fundamentals of once religion.

2.2. Secularism and Religious Diversity

Secularism has been a dominant approach in the management of religious diversity in most states of the world. It embodies the essential nature of a modern state. Except for a few, both western and non-western states of the world institutionalized it in one form or another.

Since George J. Holyoake (1817– 1906), coined the term secularism in 1851, it has been conceived in many different fashions. This is in part due to the historically varied experiences of church-state relations and nation-building in various emerging democracies.

To start with the trendsetter, in his book ‘‘The Principle of Secularism’’, Holyoake defined Secularism as [T]he study of promoting human welfare by material means; measuring human welfare by the utilitarian rule, and making the service of others a duty of life. Secularism relates to the present existence of man, and to action, the issues of which can be tested by the experience of this life-having for its objects the development of the physical, moral, and intellectual nature of man to the highest perceivable point, as the immediate duty of society: inculcating the practical sufficiency of natural morality apart from Atheism, Theism, or Christianity: engaging its adherents in the promotion of human improvement by material means, and making these agreements the ground of common unity for all who would regulate life by reason and ennoble it by service.

Talal Asad[110] traces the term Secularism to mid-nineteenth century northwestern Europe. For him liberal free thinkers to avoid the charge of atheism, which suggested immorality in what was still a largely religious society, first introduced “secularism” and “secularists.” He has distinguished between secular, secularization and secularism and understood the latter as a political doctrine. For him, the term secular refers to “an epistemic category’’ while

[110] Asad, Talal. 2003. *Formation of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity*. California: Stanford University Press. PP. 1

Secularization is the application of this epistemic category and political doctrine to other forms of social and political life.[111]

Secularism has been conceived differently in many social science disciplines notably, political science, philosophy and sociology. Sociologically, secularism has been associated with modernization and the subsequent declining influence of religion in society. Politically, secularism is a separation of state and religion as public and private spheres. Philosophically, secularism refers to a rejection of the transcendental and the metaphysical with a focus on the existential and the empirical. In this connection, Harvey Cox[112] argued that secularism is "the liberation of man from religious and metaphysical tutelage, the turning of his attention away from other worlds and toward this one."

In the same vein Charles Taylor[113], categorize secularism into three interrelated dimensions. First, Secularism is about 'the retreat of religion from the public sphere, the diminution of religion in people's lives or the separation of church and state in public spaces.' Second, related to but wider in scope than the first, Secularity refers to 'the decline of religious beliefs and practices in Western liberal democracies in the form of church attendance.' Third, it is about the diminishing significance religion received in our self-understanding and the recognition that alternative belief systems could have a similar importance as religion.

Bhikhu Parekh[114] distinguishes between weaker and stronger versions as the most common forms of secularism. In the former version, Secularism 'separates state and religion and maintains that the state should not enforce, institutionalize or formally endorse a religion . . . and should, in general, retain an attitude of strict indifference to religion.' In its stronger version, it not only separates politics and religion but it also demands secular reasons as the sole basis of

[111] Ibid

[112] Harvey Cox. 2013. *The Secular City: Secularization and Urbanization in Theological Perspective*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

[113] Charles Taylor. 2007. *A Secular Age*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. PP. 2

[114] Bhikhu, Parekh. 2000. *Rethinking Multiculturalism: Cultural Diversity and Political Theory*. UK: MacMillan Press Ltd. PP. 322

political debate and deliberation.[115] In the same vein, Ahmet Kuru[116] came up with an analytical distinction relevant to this study between assertive and passive secularisms.

Berman et al., who distinguished between institutional and cultural-ideological secularism, developed another distinction relevant to this study. In Institutional secularism, the state separates religion from the direct control of state authority and the mutual official sanction of church and state. Such a model is not antireligious because it rather provides room for religious freedom and legitimizes religious pluralism. Cultural-ideological secularism, on the other hand, takes religion as irrelevant and rests upon the differentiation of the sacred and the profane. [117]

Secularism is taken here to mean state response to religious diversity. It involves the strategies used by a certain state to regulate the way in which religious groups are able to express their religious belief in the public sphere.[118] Based on the above conceptual distinctions made in the study of secularism, the following discussion presents some of the well-known secular modalities of the USA, France, and Turkey.

United States of America: 'Twin-Toleration'

Confronted with the plurality of religious group none of which establishing absolute majority, after the revolution, the founding fathers came up with a new system for relations between the state and religions. The basic idea of American secularism is encapsulated in the First Amendment of the American Constitution which reads "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof ..." This implies the disestablishment clause that is the state could not have officially established religion and legislate on matters of religion whatsoever. This creates what Jefferson calls 'wall of separation.' This notion of separation, however, has remained a contested matter.

[115] Nader Hashemi. 2009. Islam, Secular and Liberal Democracy. Towards A Theory of Muslim Societies. Oxford: Oxford University Press. PP. 105-6

[116] Kuru, Ahmet. 2013. "Ideologies, Institutions and Laws: Religious Freedom in Secular States" in Berman Et al. 2013. *Secular States and Religious Diversity*. Toronto: UBC Press. PP. 165-186

[117] Berman Et al. 2013. *Secular States and Religious Diversity*. Toronto: UBC Press.PP. 9-10

[118] Lori G, Beaman. 2008. A Cross-National Companion of Approaches to Religious Diversity: Canada, France and The United States. In Lori G, Beaman and Peter Beyer ed. *Religion and Diversity in Canada.* Brill. Leiden.

On the one hand, the Establishment clause is taken to mean a green light that gives the state the discretion to aid religion indiscriminately. On the other hand, it implies the idea of strict governmental neutrality on all religious issues. Another key element in America's secularism is the free exercise clause, which ensures freedom of religion without state interference. In the American system, religion is not as such necessarily a private affair; religion can be brought into the public sphere, as long as the government does not promote it. In this sense, the American experience follows the weaker version of secularism and hence religion is understood to be a positive social contributor. This is actually the opposite in the case of French Laïcité.

Laïcité of France

Historically, secularism in France was tied to the need to disengage the state and society from the influence of the Catholic Church. Accordingly, after the revolution and the subsequent establishment of the republic, a very strict separation of church and state was installed based on a law that establishes a very strict regulation on the presence of religion in the public sphere. Since then the Catholic Church remained under strict administrative control by the government and in law.

Under the French system, though the right to religion or religious liberty is affirmed, substantial limitations are placed on its practice in the public arena. The state tolerates only the 'most hidden and interior elements of religiosity'. Hence, religion becomes a private issue. However, it does not imply a strict separation of church from the state but privatization of religion pursued through maximally possible restrictions of expression of religious beliefs by the faithful in public life.[119] This has recently been the case with the prohibition of veils and crosses and other religious attire and decoration in the public space.

Moreover, the state maintains a general critique against religion. Hence, the state is involved in the sanctioning of religious education curricula and it pressures religious groups to "organize themselves into a single centralized church like institutional structure that can be regulated and serve as an interlocutor to the state, following the traditional model of the concordat with the

[119] International IDEA. 2014. *Religion-State Relations*. PP. 4

Catholic Church."[120] In sum, Laïcité represents 'an exacerbated, politicized and ideological form of Western secularism.'[121] A still different version of secularism is the Turkish secular practice where the state-controlled religions specifically Islam.

Turkey: State Controlled Secularism *(Laiklik)*[122]

The secular experience of Turkey historically has its roots in the Ataturk's innovation of bringing Islam and its manifestations under the full and absolute control of the secular state. Accordingly, secularism in Turkey involves bringing all religious activity under the direct control and monopoly of the secular state without necessarily separating all religious affairs from formal political affairs, which is usually the common notion of secular understanding.[123] To this effect, a Directorate of Religious Affairs was established in 1924 to serve as the ultimate authority on the knowledge and practice of Islam. Some of the significant results of the secularist agenda include, the caliphate was routed; the Ottoman dynasty was deported, the article that defined Turkey as "Islamic" was canceled from the constitution, and the Latin letters made to replace the Arabic alphabet. [124]

In addition, autonomous Islamic authorities were dissolved such as religious lodges and Sufi orders; the previous Ottoman codes based on Islamic law were replaced by a secular civil code adopted from Switzerland that outlawed polygamy, religious marriages, and granted equal rights to men and women in matters of inheritance, marriage, and divorce. Besides, the religious court system and institutions of religious education were abolished. [125]

Moreover, in a similar fashion with the French Laïcité, the new secular penal code of Turkey dictates the separation of religion from politics. The Directorate of Religious Affairs was

[120] Casanova, Jose. 2007. 'Rethinking Secularization: A Global Comparative Perspective' in *The Hedgehog Review* PP. 2

[121] Ibid

[122] A Turkish Version of French Laïcité

[123] Alev, Cinar. 2005. *Modernity, Islam and Secularism in Turkey: Bodies, Places and Time*. Public Worlds, Volume 14. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. PP. 16

[124] Ibid:17

[125] Niyazi, Berkes. 1998. *The Development of Secularism in Turkey*. London: Hurst and Company. PP. 459-466

authorized among others to supervise the knowledge and practice of Islam, which included the management of all mosques and checking the public sermons given there, the appointment of imams, and the production and dissemination of Islamic knowledge.[126]

One of the most notorious secularist turn made was the unusual decision of the directorate to change the Islamic call for prayers (Azan) from Arabic to Turkish that was chanted in 1932 in the Ayasofya Mosque in Istanbul and later standardized throughout mosques around Turkey. By doing so, the secular state managed to dampen one of the salient public expressions of Islam thereby effectively subscribe it to the new secularist ethos. This was however without success and finally abolished in 1950 by the Democratic Party. [127]

Seen against the Laïcité of France, which totally prohibits the public expression of religion, secularism in Turkey involved not exclusion, but a tightly controlled inclusion of Islam in the public sphere. Similarly, the Turkish approach of secularism differs from the American type of secularism in that the state is protected against the influence of religion through strict control over religious affairs. Thus, against the common Western conception that secularism excludes religion, the Turkish state simultaneously monitors and gives specific public expression to religion.[128]

2.3 Religious Pluralism in Secular Federations: A Comparative Analysis

This section throws light on the baggage of secularism in furnishing religious pluralism and tolerance in the context of selected federal states. It is also, about how the secular constitutions accommodate religious diversity in federal states of India and South Africa. In doing so, it begs analysis is on significant constitutional provisions, other relevant legal documents and prominent court decisions pertaining to religious pluralism and tolerance in the respective federation.

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[126] Cinar, *Modernity, Islam and Secularism in Turkey*. PP. 17

[127] Azak, Umut. 2010. *Islam and Secularism in Turkey: Kemalism, Religion and the Nation State*. London: I.B.Tauris & Co Ltd PP. 54

[128] Albayrak, H. Sule. 2019. "Religious Pluralism and Religion-State Relations in Turkey." In *Religions* ,Vol 10, No. 61

Moreover, the working of secularism in India and South Africa is compared with the Ethiopian one through identifying certain areas that include the nature of the secular i.e. whether the secular system of these federations is religious inclusive or not; is religion only a private right or not i.e. the public place of religion; cooperation between state and religion and whether religion is recognized as being important to society or not in the aforementioned states.

2.3.1 India: Policy of Principled Distance

India will be a land of many faiths, equally honored and respected, but of one national outlook.[129]

With its independence from Great Britain in 1947 and the subsequent promulgation of a new constitution, which came to effect in 1950, India has become the largest secular democratic republic in the world. However, up until the 42nd amendment made in 1976, the term secular was not part of the constitution.[130]

The Indian federation comprises 28 states and 7 union territories organized largely on ethnolinguistic grounds. Nonetheless, in a unique case of Punjab, a religio-linguistic factor was taken as a basis of a state organization.

India is a country of deep religious diversity. There is probably more diversity of religions in India than anywhere on the earth. The country has no official state religion, but religion plays a central role in Indian daily life through its temple ceremonies, festivals, pilgrimages, family religious traditions and the like. Aside from hosting almost all the major Abrahamic religions of the world, India was also the birthplace of Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism. It was also the home to one of the oldest religions of the world, Zoroastrianism. While India is the cradle of Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism, Islam too has a long tradition of existence. So are also Judaism, Christianity, and Baha'ism having their followers in India.

As early as the 12th century, India began to have Islamic bases as wave after wave of Islamic groups came down to India. In addition, the confluence of the two religions i.e. Islam and

[129] Jawaharlal Nehru. Speech on 24 January 1948

[130] Sen, Ragini et al. 2014. *Secularism and Religion in Multi-Faith Societies: The Case of India*. Switzerland: Springer International Publishing. PP. 4

Hinduism gradually produced a cultural syncretism, which is exemplified by the Urdu language – an amalgam of Persian and Hindi. Christianity came to India with St. Thomas who came to India in 50 A.D. and brought the teachings of Jesus along with him – even before Europe. Contacts between India and other cultures have led to the spread of Indian religions throughout the world, resulting in the extensive influence of Indian thought and practice on Southeast and East Asia in ancient times and, more recently, in the diffusion of Indian religions to Europe and North America.

According to the 2011 Census, 79.8 percent of the 1,210 million people enumerated in India were Hindu, leaving 244 million people who adhere to other religions. Hindus are the majority in twenty-eight states of the republic, except for Jammu and Kashmir, where they accounted for 28 30 percent, and Punjab, where Hindus make up 38 percent. In the other states, Hindu majorities ranged from 41 percent in Manipur to 95 percent in Himachal Pradesh.[131]

Nationally, Muslims are the next largest religious group, outnumbering all other religious groups taken together. In 2011, among every 1,000 Indians, there were 142 Muslims but just 23 Christians, 17 Sikhs, seven Buddhists, and four Jains. Unlike Hindus and Muslims, Christians, Jains, and Sikhs are concentrated in a few states. The four southern states of Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka accounted for half of the Christian population of the country. Sikhs are concentrated in the Punjab, which accounted for 57 percent of the 20.8 million Sikhs in 2011. In Maharashtra, the majority of India's 7.0 million Buddhists live. The Majority of the 4.5 million Jains live in states of Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Karnataka and Delhi.[132]

According to Rajeev Bhargava[133], as far as Indian religious diversity is concerned there are two types of diversity: horizontal and vertical. By the former, he argued, is about the existence of multiple interpretations of core beliefs and practices of a given religion while the latter signifies a hierarchical structure with which some members are excluded from the dominant practices and

[131] https://www.census2011.co.in/

[132] Ibid

[133] Rajeev Bhargava. 2011. "State religious diversity and the crisis of secularism" http://www.opendemocracy.net. PP. 6

are forced to develop their own practice as it is the case with Dalits and women within Hinduism. Each major religion is subdivided along the lines of religious doctrines, sects and cults. This is true both of indigenous religion – Hinduism, Sikhism, Buddhism and Jainism – and of introduced religions, especially Islam and Christianity.

Religion is taken far more seriously in India than it often is in the West and by virtually the entire population. Followers of India's religions, particularly Hindus and Muslims, have created what Indians call "communities", groups who largely coexist peacefully but live and worship in separate social circles.

The Indian model of secularism[134] meets the needs of deeply religiously diverse societies and complies with principles of freedom and equality. As it is the case with the Ethiopian constitution, the Indian Constitution has the following features with regard to equality of religions, freedom to practice one's faith, equal opportunity in matters of employment, etc.

The Indian Constitution provides that all persons have the freedom of conscience and free profession, practice and propagation of religion as long as it is not against public order, morality and health. Hence, all Indian citizens have the right to choose their own religion, to profess and practice it, as well as to propagate it to others.[135]

The constitution also extends such rights to religious communities who have the right to "establish and maintain institutions for religious and charitable purposes; to manage its own affairs in matters of religion; to own and acquire movable and immovable property; to administer such property in accordance with the law."[136] From this, it can be said that religious rights are recognized both as an individual and group rights. Article 30(2) of the constitution also grants religious groups to establish and administer their own religious educational institutions.

[134] The term secular or secularism was not part of Indian constitution until the 42nd amendment of it in 1976.

[135] See Article 25 (1) and (2) of Indian Constitution.

[136] See Article 26 Ind. Cons.

Besides "The State shall not discriminate against any citizen on grounds of religion and sex.''[137] Hence it grants equality of opportunity in matters of employment for all citizens irrespective of their religion.[138] However, as opposed to its Ethiopian counterpart, the Indian constitution grants Freedom as to payment of taxes for promotion of any particular religion.[139] From this, one can argue that the Indian constitution went one-step ahead in ensuring freedom of religion than the Ethiopian one.

Another area of divergence between the Indian model and the Ethiopian one has to do with the role of government in religious education. Article 28 states, "(1) No religious instruction shall be provided in any educational institution wholly maintained out of State funds.' This provides for the possibility that religious educational institutions in India could function as long as their budget comes either totally or partially from non-state funds. Seen against the Ethiopian reality, which entirely prohibits even partial support for religious-based educational institutions, the Indian experience shows a clear departure. This is again animated in section (2) of the same article which provides that 'Nothing in clause (1) shall apply to an educational institution which is administered by the State but has been established under any endowment or trust which requires that religious instruction shall be imparted in such institution.

In the case of educational institutions funded by and/or recognized by the state participation in religious instruction remains a matter of individual choice. In this connection, section 3 of article 28 dictates

> 'No person attending any educational institution recognized by the State or receiving aid out of State funds shall be required to take part in any religious instruction that may be imparted in such institution or any premises attached thereto unless such person or, if such person is a minor, his guardian has given his consent thereto.'

[137] See Article 15 (1) and (2) Ind. Cons.

[138] See Article 16(2) of Ind. Cons.

[139] See Article 27

Articles 29 and 30 contain provisions for the protection of cultural and educational rights of religious and linguistic minorities. This has the implication that the State has no religion of its own and it treats all religions equally. In addition to the above features, As per Article 26, 28 and 30 of the Indian constitution, religious groups are allowed to establish and maintain religious institutions and to establish and administer educational institutes and to conserve their distinct identities.

The Supreme Court of India (SCI) had characterized the secular nature of the Indian constitution in the following words:[140]

> "There is no mysticism in the secular nature of the State. Secularism is neither anti-God nor pro-God, it treats alike the devout, the antagonistic and the atheist. It eliminates God from matters of the State and ensures that no one shall be discriminated against on the ground of religion.

Secularism in India is 'a distinctively Indian and differently modern variant of secularism.'[141] By distinct, he argues 'I only mean embedded in it is a specific and interestingly different way of interpreting and relating the basic constituents of secularism.' The important question is then what makes the Indian secular venture a 'distinct' one?

In answering this query, Bhargava argues that Indian secularism is distinguished from other versions by five features. First is its explicit multi-value character. Second, the idea of principled distance that is poles apart from one-sided exclusion, mutual exclusion and strict neutrality. Third, its commitment to a different model of moral reasoning that is contextual and opens up the possibility of multiple secularisms, of different societies working out their own secularisms. Fourth, it uniquely combines an active hostility to some aspects of religion with equally active respect for its other dimensions. Finally, it uniquely attends simultaneously to issues of intra-religious oppression and inter-religious domination.

[140] The court's ruling came out of the case between Saint Xavier's College v St of Gujarat, in 1974

[141] For more on the unique features of Indian Secularism see Baghrava, Rajeev. 2006. 'The Distinctness of Indian Secularism' in T. N. Srinivasan (ed.) *The Future of Secularism*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press

Indian secularism did not erect a wall of separation between state and religion as it is the case of secularism in the west notably the US. The logic behind the idea of principled distance is that the state must keep a principled distance from all public, private, individual-oriented, or community-oriented religious institutions for the sake of the equally significant values of peace, worldly prosperity, dignity, liberty and equality.[142]

Contextual secularism, on the other hand, recognizes that the conflict between individual rights and group rights or between claims of equality and liberty or between claims of liberty and the satisfaction of basic needs cannot always be adjudicated by recourse to some general and abstract principle.[143]

As per the Indian constitution, the state appears to possess all the features of a secular state. A secular state function based on the principle of non-establishment. Accordingly, the state should remain neutral to any of the religious group and there is no official religion. Nonetheless, this by no means implies that a secular state is anti-religious but it does mean the state is non-religious. Hence, the Indian constitution rules out theocracy and the establishment of religion. Under Article 60 of the constitution, envisage a secular state based on a strict adherence to non-establishment giving the President of the Republic the option of not taking oath in the name of God.

This feature is also seen in Article 27, which rules out the public funding of religion that declares 'no person is compelled to pay any taxes, the proceeds of which are specifically appropriated in payment of expenses for the promotion or maintenance of any particular religion or religious denomination.' Moreover, Article 28(1) further strengthens this by declaring 'no religious instruction is to be provided in any educational institution wholly maintained out of state funds'. Similarly, under section three of the same article, it is stated that 'no person attending any educational institution…. shall be required to take part in any religious instruction or to attend any religious worship that may be conducted in such institution'. The second feature of a secular state is associated with the value of religious liberty, which entails specifically the right of members, individuals as well as sects, of any religious group to criticize, revise or challenge the

[142] Ibid

[143] Ibid

dominant interpretations of their respective religion. Thus, the secular state stands out to protect the freedom of citizens, either to follow or not, whatever religion they want.

In this regard, Articles 25(1) of the constitution meets the second condition of a secular state in proclaiming 'all persons are equally entitled to freedom of conscience and the right freely to profess, practice and propagate religion.' The third feature of a secular state – non-preferentially to all members of every religious community– is also part of the same article. Here the state will act without any preferential treatment towards any of the religious groups that accord religious liberty to its members. Fourthly, in a secular state individual citizens are free not only to choose the religion of their interest but also to remain without a religion. This right to remain non-religious is also included under article 25 that entitles every citizen to freedom of conscience.

The fifth characteristics of a secular state have to do with the principle of non-discrimination. In this regard, the Indian system guarantees equality of citizenship. (Articles 14, 15(1) and 29(2)). Hence, article 15(1) prohibits the Indian state not to discriminate against any citizen based on religion, race, caste, sex and place of birth or any of them. Article 29(2) declares that no citizen shall be denied admission into any educational institution maintained by the state on grounds only of religion race etc. This is the sixth secular feature which states shall not discriminate on grounds of religion for admission to educational institutions.

The seventh feature of a secular state is to extend equal respect for everyone in the political arena. Article 16(1) & (2) of the Indian constitution affirm this feature by guaranteeing equal opportunity for all citizens in matters relating to employment or appointment of any office under the state. It also provides that no citizen, on grounds of religion or race, be eligible for or discriminate against in respect of any employment or office under the state.

The Indian constitution embodies the value of active citizenship. This is clearly attested under Article 325 that declares a general electoral role for all constituencies and the clause on universal franchise. It states that no one shall be ineligible for inclusion in this role or claim to be included in it on grounds only of religion, etc.

In sharp contrast to the Ethiopian system, which says nothing concerning religious minorities, the Indian constitution designate provision for rights of religious minorities thereby recognize

religion as a community based right.[144] Besides, the state is obliged to give aid to educational institutions established and administered by religious communities and religious instruction is permitted in educational institutions that are partly funded by the state.[145] In so doing the Indian system significantly, deviate from the usually held conception of secularism that erects a wall of separation between state and religion.

More important is the fact that the Indian secular system allows the state to interfere in religious matters. For instance, the Indian constitution bans untouchability[146] and the state has enacted laws that abolish child marriage and lift the taboo on inter-caste marriage sanctioned by Hinduism. Thus, unlike the wall of separation view of secularism, Indian secularism supports the state to engage in religious reform hence enjoins it to interfere in religion, and avoids strict neutrality.[147]

India has devised a political framework where the attempt has been to incorporate minorities as an integral part of the polity while allowing them a modicum of religious space. In the Indian example, secularism does not mean anti-religion but is associated with respect for all religions, and the community loyalties are viewed as various levels of a wider national loyalty, crystallizing themselves at different gradients with different sectional interests. In their totality, these are the best interests of national integration.[148]

[144] See Article 30 (1)

[145] See Article 30 (2)

[146] See Article 17 of the constitution that empowered the state to obliterate the caste system, central to Hinduism, by abolishing untouchability and by making the enforcement of any disability arising out of it an offence punishable by law.

[147] See article 25 (2) (b) of Indian Constitution

[148] Akhtar Majeed. Et al. 2007. Unity in Diversity. Learning from Each Other. Fourth International conference on Federalism. New Delhi: India. PP. 48

2.3.2 South Africa: Co-operation between State and Religion

Indeed, Desmon Tutu has a truth to call South Africa a rainbow nation.[149] It is a state where various diversities are manifested in a manner resembling the colors' of a rainbow. This fact is ingrained in the very preamble of the 1996 constitution of the new South Africa 'We the people of South Africa…Believe that South Africa belongs to all who live in it, united in our diversity'.

Although many remember South Africa by its racial difference and the racial injustice perpetrated by the apartheid regime, now a day South Africa has become one of the success stories of functioning democracy and economic development in sub-Saharan Africa. This was however achieved after long years of an arduous struggle for freedom finally culminated with the creation of independent democratic South Africa under the leadership of its first President Nelson Mandela.

The new South Africa had a democratic constitution in 1996. Although the South African political system resembles strong features of a federation, the constitution avoids the term federal.[150] The Republic of South Africa is composed of nine provinces. In contrast to the political practice in Ethiopia where regional states are organized mainly along ethno-linguistic lines, provinces in South Africa do not coincide with racial or tribal boundaries.

With a hybrid form of government, the Central government has a bicameral legislature. The National Assembly, whose members are elected by proportional representation on a party-list system, consists of 400 representatives. The second chamber, the National Council of Provinces is a 90-member council composed of representatives of both the provincial executives and the legislatures. Each province has ten representatives of which six representing the legislature and the remaining four representing the executive of provincial governments.[151]

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[149] Habib Adam. 1997. 'South Africa - The Rainbow Nation and Prospects for Consolidating Democracy.' *African Journal Political Science*, Vol. 2 No. 2, 15-37

[150] Van der W, Janis. 2005. South Africa (Republic of South Africa) *Handbook of Federal Countries*. Forum of Federation. PP, 301-323

[151] Rajya Sabha Secretariat. 2009. *Second Chamber in Indian Parliament: Role and Status of Rajya Sabha*. New Delhi: Government of India Press

Since independence, the Africa National Congress (ANC) that created a high degree of centralization in policymaking has dominated the political process in South Africa. This is actually the case with Ethiopia where the EPRDF has dominated the political process since the downfall of the military regime in 1991. Thus, notwithstanding the specific political situation in these states, whether the federal system of Ethiopia and South Africa could pass the litmus test of regime change is yet to be seen.

Religion has been an important aspect of the life of many South Africans. The country hosts many of the world religions of Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Hinduism and Buddhism as well as African traditional religions. This diversity derives from the colonial period that brought a host of religions from other countries through an influx of colonized servants, political prisoners, convicts, slaves, indentured labor, missionaries, farmers and traders. Religious communities that were not European or white were marginalized and relegated as the "other."[152]

Apartheid subsequently institutionally entrenched different forms of discrimination against those who were not classified as "white." Although the most visible form was racial, others included sex/gender-based discrimination and discrimination against non-Christian communities.[153]

As far as religion is concerned, 79.8 percent of the population follows a form of Christianity. Among the Christian population, Reformed churches make up 7.2 percent; Anglicans 3.8 percent; Methodists 7.4 percent; Lutherans 2,5 percent; Presbyterians 1,9 percent; Congregational churches 1.4 percent; Roman Catholics 8.9 percent; Pentecostal churches 7.3 percent; and other churches 12 percent. African independent churches have a membership of 40.8 percent of the total Christian population. Apart from Christian followers in South Africa, there are also 0.2 percent followers of the Jewish religion; 1.1 percent Islam followers; 1.3 percent Hindu followers; and 0.1 percent Buddhist believers. In addition, South Africa is a stronghold of African traditional religion in hosting 12 percent of the total of African traditional religion followers of Africa.[154]

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[152] Waheeda Amin. 2006. "Overcoming the Conflict between the Right to Freedom of Religion and Women's Rights to Equality: A South African Case of Muslim Marriages." *Human Right Quarterly*. Vol, 28. PP, 729-794

[153] Ibid

[154] This figure is based on the 2001 census because the 2011 national census did not include religion as a question.

The 1996 constitution, for the first time in South Africa history, guaranteed freedom of religion. Since then South Africa has changed from a 'Christian' state and become a secular state where all religions receive equal treatment.[155] The apartheid system was not only on purely racial differentiation but it had a religious undertone too. It was then double oppression done in the name of both race and religion. In consequence, the struggle against the apartheid regime was not only a racial struggle but also a struggle for religious liberty and equality. [156]

The people of South Africa are religious in view of the fact that they believe religion is essential to their life. For many believers, their relationship with God or creation is central to all their activities. It concerns their capacity to relate in an intensely meaningful fashion to their sense of themselves, their community and their universe. Religion provides support, nurture, and a framework for individual and social stability and growth. Religious belief has the capacity to awake concepts of self-worth and human dignity that form the cornerstone of human rights. It affects the believer's view of society and founds the distinction between right and wrong.[157]

Cognizant of this fact, under section 15 (1)) the Freedom of 'conscience, religion, thought belief and opinion' are guaranteed. This freedom includes both the right to hold a religious belief and to express such a belief in practice; also the right to enjoy one's culture, practice one's religion, use one's language; and also to form, join and maintain cultural, religious and linguistic associations.[158]

As per the suggestions of the supreme court of SA, the freedom of religion clause is supposed to

> uphold principles and values: South Africa is an open and democratic society with a non-sectarian state that guarantees freedom of worship; is respectful of and

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[155] Annie Leatt. 2007. 'Faithfully Secular: Secularism and South African Political Life' *Journal for the Study of Religion*, Vol. 20, No. 2 , PP. 29-44

[156] Cornel W. du Toit. 2006. 'Religious Freedom and Human Rights in South Africa after 1996: Responses and Challenges.' *Brigham Young University Law* Review. PP, 677-698

[157] Kristin Henrard. 2001. "The Accommodation of Religious Diversity in South Africa against the Background of the Centrality of the Equality Principle in the New Constitutional Dispensation." *Journal of African Law*, Vol. 45, No. 1, PP. 51-72

[158] Rashida Manjoo. 2006. South Africa: Respecting diversity and difference - the challenge facing a secular democracy http://www.wluml.org/node/3409

> accommodatory towards, rather than hostile to or walled-off from religion; acknowledges the multi-faith and multi-belief nature of the country; does not favor one religious creed or doctrinal truth above another; accepts the intensely personal nature of individual conscience and affirms the intrinsically voluntary and non-coerced character of belief; respects the rights of non-believers; and does not impose orthodoxies of thought or require conformity of conduct in terms of any particular world view.[159]

In the South African constitution, religion is one of the equality rights. It is enlisted under equality provision hence 'non-derogable' with respect to unfair discrimination. Implicit in the notion of equality is the requirement that all religions be allowed to manifest and instruct regarding their beliefs. Therefore, the commitment to equality justifies the constitutional guarantee entrenching every person's right to freedom of religion.[160]

From this, it can be said that the Constitution guarantees the state acknowledgment of various belief systems and their accommodation within a symmetrical framework of equality and non-discrimination. Accordingly, the State does not take sides on questions of religion by imposing belief, grant privileges to or impose disadvantages on adherents of any particular belief, requires conformity in matters simply of belief, participate in purely religious controversies or disregard people who have different beliefs.

Moreover, the constitution recognizes the collective right of persons belonging to a religious community to practice their religion. Hence it permits the enactment of legislation to recognize either marriage concluded under a system of religious, personal, or family law or systems of personal and family law that are adhered to by people who profess a particular religion.[161]

Accordingly, the South African Bill of Rights provides that: 'Persons belonging to a cultural, religious, or linguistic community may not be denied the right, with other members of that community – (a) to enjoy their culture, practice their religion, and use their language; and (b) to

[159] Waheada Amin, as above note 152. PP. 750

[160] Ibid

[161] Ibid

form, join and maintain cultural, religious, and linguistic associations and other organs of civil society.'

In line with this, the South African legal systems permit the parallel existence of unofficial legal systems alongside the official state law. Accordingly, religious groups have their own laws on how they are structured, what they expect from their member and according to which they claim the right to operate in society. Such unofficial laws include the laws of Hindu, Muslims and Jewish religions.

This public nature of religion is also manifested in the constitutional recognition for collective religious practice in state institutions. In contrast to the Ethiopian system[162] that prohibits the collective performance of religious practice in South Africa 'Religious observances may be conducted at state or state-aided institutions', as long as they follow rules made by appropriate authorities and they are conducted on an equitable basis and that attendance is voluntary.

This suggests that this provision does not give preference to one religion over others.[163] However, in both South Africa and Ethiopia, the state does not provide subsidies for religious-based educational institutions. For instance, the education provision of the SA constitution provides '...state subsidies for independent educational institutions'.[164]

The South African jurisprudence also recognizes the public nature of religious freedom. According to Justice Sachs quoted in Jain T, Benson[165]

> Certain religious sects do turn their back on the world, but major religions regard it as part of their spiritual vocation to be active in the broader society. Not only do they proselytize through the media and in the public square, but religious bodies also play a large part in public life, through schools, hospitals, and poverty relief. They command ethical behavior from their members and bear witness to the

[162] See the discussion on MoE Directive on Religious practice in Educational Institutions.

[163]Waheeda Amin as above note 147. PP. 749

[164] Section 29 (4) of SA. Cons.

[165] Iain T. Benson. 'What can be Learned from the Experiences of Various Societies in Dealing with their Principal Trouble Spots?' in *Universal Rights in a World of Diversity* – The Case of Religious Freedom 253-288, PP: 262

> exercise of power by State and private agencies; they promote music, art, and theatre; they provide halls for community activities, and conduct a great variety of social activities for their members and the general public. They are part of the fabric of public life and constitute active elements of the diverse and pluralistic nation contemplated by the Constitution.

Thus, the constitution recognizes religious freedom both as individual and collective rights.

As the case in Ethiopia, religious freedom is not an absolute right in South Africa. According to the limitation provision of the constitution the rights may be limited by such 'reasonable and justifiable' in an open and democratic society based on human dignity, equality and freedom, taking into account all relevant factors, including – (a) the nature of the right; (b) the importance of the purpose of the limitation; (c) the nature and extent of the limitation; (d) the relation between the limitation and its purpose; and (e) less restrictive means to achieve the purpose.[166]

Another legal document concerning the issue of religious pluralism is the South African charter on Religious rights and freedoms. This charter perhaps represents the unique experience of South Africa's secular experience in creating strong cooperation between the various religious group and the state in defining the character of secularism in general and inter-faith relations in particular.

It was drafted over several years of deliberation by a Continuation Committee of academics, religious leaders, government commissioners and international legal experts in consultation with all the major religions in South Africa, human rights groups and media bodies. The Charter was finally endorsed at a ceremony on 21 October 2010. The charter is a document with a preamble consisting of eight articles followed by the charter itself comprising twelve articles.

It defines the freedoms, rights, responsibilities and relationship between the state of South Africa and its citizens of religious belief.[167] Besides, it provides for the entitlement of religious

[166] Section 36 of SA.Cons.

[167] For an introductory remark on the Charter see Benson, I. 2011. "South African Charter of Religious Rights and Freedoms." *International Journal of Religious Freedom, 4* (1), 125-134

institutions for not only recognition and protection but also cooperation in a constitutional state. It also gives emphasis on the importance of the recognition and effective protection of the rights of religious communities and institutions in fashioning a spirit of mutual respect and tolerance among the people of South Africa.[168]

The Charter expresses what freedom of religion means to religious believers and religious organizations within a South African context, as well as the specific rights, responsibilities and freedoms that are associated with freedom of religion. Some of the provisions that directly link with freedom of religion include the right to gather to observe religious belief (article 1); freedom of expression regarding religion (article 6); the right of citizens to make choices according to their convictions (article 2); the right of citizens to change their faith (article 2); the right of persons to be educated in their faith (article 7); the right of citizens to educate their children in accordance with their philosophical and religious convictions (article 7); the right to refuse to perform certain duties or assist in activities that violate their religious belief (article 2(3)); and the rights of religions to institutional freedom (article 9).

In sum, the Southern African system creates a cooperative framework between the government and the various religious groups embodied under the South African charter on Religious rights and freedoms and elaborated in many Supreme Court decisions. Besides, the constitutional recognition awarded to the parallel existence of personal religious laws has been significant in the exercise of religious rights among non-Christian religious groups. Overall, the South African experience could be summarized under a quote from the National policy on religion and education:

> In a co-operative model, both the principle of legal separation and the possibility of creative interaction are affirmed. Separate spheres for religion and the state are established by the Constitution, but there is scope for interaction between the two. While ensuring the protection of citizens from religious discrimination or coercion, this model encourages an ongoing dialogue between religious groups and the state in areas of common interest and concern. Even in such exchanges, however, religious individuals and groups must be assured of their freedom from

[168] See the Preamble of Charter of Religious Rights and Freedoms.

any state interference with regard to freedom of conscience, religion, thought, belief, and opinion. [169]

2.4 Conclusion

This chapter provides for the varied understanding of the concepts of religious pluralism and tolerance in the literature. It is emphasized that the idea of religious pluralism can be seen from different perspectives that ranges from mere religious diversity within a given state to active engagement on the part of the state that take religious pluralism as a positive value. Beckford's four dimensional classifications comprises the major perspectives about religious pluralism and provides a comprehensive analytical tool to empirical religious diversity, normative views of pluralism, frameworks to sustain and regulate religious diversity, and everyday interactions around religious diversity hat include

In Christian tradition, concerning religious truth and salivation, there are three basic categories namely religious exclusivism, religious non-exclusivism and Religious pluralism. Accordingly, religious exclusivist is someone who believes the religious perspective of only one basic theistic system or only one of the variants within a basic theistic system to be the truth or at least closer to the truth than any other religious perspective. Someone is a religious non-exclusivist when he/she denies that the religious perspective of any basic theistic system or variant thereof is superior to all other religious perspectives. Thus, this perspective could be used to explain the differences between religions and within themselves. And someone is a religious pluralist when he/she claims as non-exclusivist that no specific religious perspective is superior and also makes the positive assertion that the religious perspectives of more than one basic theistic system or variant thereof are equally close to the truth.

This chapter also see the two broad types of tolerance appear in the literature namely tolerance as restraint and respect. The former implies the restrain the majority sustain in allowing the religious other to practice its religion. As respect tolerance needs more than restrain and involves a matter of respecting the beliefs and practices of the religious other without necessarily accepting it.

[169] South Africa National Policy on Religion and Education

In understanding the dynamics of religious pluralism and tolerance looking into the issue of religious fundamentalism seems pertinent. Notwithstanding the various conceptualization of it, there are still some similar characteristics of which many scholars take holy books as a crucial element in fundamentalism. This also negates the association of fundamentalism with the world of Islam and depicts the fact that no specific religion has a monopoly of religious fundamentalism. It is argued religious fundamentalism is a religious standpoint that does not accept and respect the existence of other religions and wants to impose once religion by force. Thus, it is against religious equality and tolerance between and among religious groups.

Most states of the world employ secularism as a response to religious plurality. The principle of secularism premised on separating state and religion. But the nature and degree of separation vary across states. The most notable secular varieties of the world are represented by the secular experiences of USA, France and Turkey.

The chapter also discussed the secular experience of India and South Africa and shown that secularism has a different face in different countries. The Indian case clearly exhibits the flaw in the usual assumption that secularism is about strict separation. It shows in a state as religiously diverse as India how the state still could manage such diversity without erecting a separation wall and even innerving in purely religious matters. The experience in South Africa also demonstrates the possibility that state and religion could cooperate in the promotion and protection of religious freedom while the state is still secular.

Chapter Three

Religious Pluralism and Tolerance in Ethiopia: A Historical Perspective

As already mentioned, one way of understanding religious pluralism and tolerance has to do with the frameworks under which religious diversity is regulated and recognized in a given state. This will, in turn, help us to explain how the policies of the state, directly and indirectly, influence inter-religious relations. Based on the notion of 'management of religions'[170] this chapter dwells on the issue of religious diversity and its management under the Monarchy of Haile Selassie and the Military rule of Derg. Granted these regimes cover the modern constitutional history of Ethiopia, analysis is made on the constitutional approaches followed regarding religious diversity. Besides major historical antecedents to and current dynamics of religious pluralism and tolerance is also uncovered.

3.1 Haile Selassie Regime: Imperial Constitutions of 1931 and 1955

After the death of Empress Zauditu, Ras Tafari was crowned king Haile Selassie I of Ethiopia in 1930. As emperor, Haile Selassie continued and expanded the modernizing efforts under Menelik II. It was during his reign Ethiopia had its first constitution in 1931. This constitution established a parliament but limited it to an advisory role while it gave the emperor retained near-absolute power. Hence, the constitution gave the land, the people and the law to the emperor.

As far as religion is concerned, the constitution legitimized the dominant position of Orthodox Christianity as a state religion and emphasized the Christian legacy of the state. This is clearly seen in the Preamble, which reads:

> ከክርስቶስም ልደት በኃላ እስከ ቴዎድሮስ ዘመን ድረስ አለመኔና እስላም ፈላሻም ዙሪያዋን ስለከበባት ወደ ሃይማኖት ትግል ተመልሳ ይህ የሃይማኖት ትግል በግዛቷ ውስጥ እየባሰና እየከፋ በመሄዱ በኃይልና በጉልበት የቀድሞው ግዛቷን ለማስፋፋት ሳይመቻት ቀረ ይልቁንም አረመኔና እስላም ዙሪያዋን ስለከበባትና ሃይማኖቷን ለማስካድ ስላስጨነቃት እርሷም

[170] Bryan S, Turner. 2011. Religion and Modern Society: Citizenship Secularization and the State. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. PP. 11

ለክርስቲያን ሃይማኖታ ቀናተኛ ስለሆነች የባህር ጠረፎቿን እየለቀቀች ወደተራሮቿ እየወጣች ለመጠባበቅ ግዴታ ሆነባት...ግራኝ መሃመድ ስላጠፋትና ስለያያትለጥቂትጊዜ አንድነቷን አጥታ...

Disbelievers and Islam, which attempted to compel and change its religion…, surround the Ethiopian government and since she has got the firm zeal to [Orthodox] Christianity, in response, she is forced to leave out her coastal territories and seaports and remained on the mountainous parts of the country to defend the rest.

Moreover, one of the rationales of this constitution was to establish a regulation based on the ideals of Orthodox Christianity accepted by the church.

አምስተኛው ነገር የጥበብ መዠመሪያ እግዚአብሄርን መፍራት ስለሆነ ካባቶቻችን ሲያያዝ የመጣውን ኦርቶዶክስ ተዋህዶ ሃይማኖት ቤተክርስቲናችንም የተቀበለችውን መጽሃፋችን የሚያዘው በጎ ልማድ የሚጸናበትን ደንብ ለመስራትና ለማቆም ነው::

Fifthly, because wisdom starts with the fear of God, and in order to establish the Orthodox Tawhido religion and to erect the tradition that is accepted by our church and dictated by our book.

Under the 1931 constitution, Ethiopia was not legally a theocratic state where state and religion were fused together. However, state policy and practice were highly influenced by a Christian understanding of Ethiopia. Both locally and internationally, Ethiopia was presented as a Christian state. [171]

With this constitution, Haile Selassie had managed further to strengthen the centralization of power in his hand. One such case was the Kingdom of Jimma, which lost its autonomy guaranteed during Menelik. In 1930, Haile Selassie increased the amount of annual tribute to the center which Abbaa Joobir, the new king, was unable to pay it. Taking this as a pretext a Christian governor was appointed to Jimma. In 1932 the imperial army invaded Jimma and

[171] Friedman, G. S. 1989. "Religion and the Marxist state in Ethiopia: the case of the Ethiopian Jews." *Religion, State and Society*, 17 (3), 247-256. PP. 249

abolished the kingdom altogether thereby ended not only its hereditary rule but also once-flourishing Islamic centers in Ethiopia.[172]

As far as religious policy is concerned, the Italian interlude represents a historical turning point in that it halted the dominance of the Orthodox Church at least for a while. The Fascist government declared a pro-Islamic policy that further exacerbated the tension between Christians and Muslims. [173]Pro-Islam measures by the invaders include the construction of 50 new mosques, restoration of 16 old ones, financing the pilgrimage to mecca, allowing the teaching of Arabic in Islamic schools and subsidized Muslim political and religious hereditary leaders.[174]

Granted the hardship they were in practicing their religion and the unprecedented religious freedom they had got during the Italian rule it was no wonder that some Muslims had worked with them.[175] It should also be noted that some of the provincial Christian ruling class supported and cooperated with the Italians.

In addition, there were Muslims who stand by the side of their country and vehemently opposed the divisive policy of the invaders. One such prominent Muslim intellectual was Sheikh Sayid Muhammad Sadiq of South Wollo who questioned the candor of the Italian policy of Islam and refused to recognize Italian rule and cooperate with Fascist authorities, and as a result, suffered hardship and imprisonment.

Moreover, many Muslims had fought for their country, defending its sovereignty alongside their Christian fellows in the struggle against the fascist Italian occupation. Oumer Samatr from Somali, Yayehu Amado in Awssa and Ifat, in Gille Hassen Oumer, in Wollo, Gamaza and Kombolcha Hassen Ahmed Yassin, in Gawane Mohammed Oumer Alisha and Ahmed Kullu Bass had bravely fought the occupying force and contributed to the final liberation of their

[172] Uhlig, Siegbert (ed.) 2003. *Encyclopaedia Aethiopica.* Wiesbaden: Verlag Otto Harrassowitz. PP. 15

[173] Hussein Ahmed. "Coexistence and/or Confrontation" PP. 9

[174] Hussein Ahmed. 1994. PP, 775-776

[175] Ibid:774-775

country in 1941.[176] In South Wollo Borana, Muslims resisted the Italians alongside their Christian brothers and defended their country leaving aside internal differences and conflicts. Hence, they went to the Muslim-Graveyard called Dimma to use it as a shelter.[177]

The struggle of Muslim Ethiopians did not bring equal recognition of religion from the state. Rather the state criticized them for aligning with the Italians and subjected to the same pre-Italian period policy of exclusion. Thus, the restoration of Haile Selassie brought no change as far as religious equality is concerned.

Accordingly, the Ethiopian Orthodox Church regained its dominant position and launched an aggressive missionary policy in the 'pagan area' of southern Ethiopia. In Arsi predominantly (Muslim area), under the backing of the state the head of the Church baptized a large number of people in 1941 and two years later the church had converted nearly 20,000 people. Despite the official declaration of religious equality in 1944/45 political, socio-economic, and cultural discrimination against Muslims continued.[178]

This was done in line with the language and religious homogenization policy of the regime that aimed at creating a culturally homogenous society through Amharic language and Orthodox Christianity. Hence, in the religious sphere, the government engaged in bringing non-Orthodox Christians to adopt the official religion.

With the promulgation of the 1955 revised constitution, Ethiopia became a theocratic state. The prime cause that necessitates the revision of the revised constitution was not religious. However, it was under this constitution that Ethiopia had officially become an Orthodox Christian state.

The preamble of this constitution clearly put Emperor Haile Selassie as an elect of God. More importantly, the constitution provides the monarch with a divine power to rule his subjects. If one reads carefully the preamble of the constitution, he/she will understand the fact that the

[176] Wudu Tafete. 2011. "Ya Hymanot Mechachal Bethiopia." (Amharic) in Shiferaw Bekele ed. *Bahil ena Lemat Bethiopia* Forum for Social Science.

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constitution provides the utmost significance for religious precepts. One best example in this regard is the article, 7 which requires the coronation of the emperor to be held in accordance with the provisions and laws determined by the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. Thus, the constitution is tailored to fit the Ethiopian Orthodox Church.

If one goes through, inter alia, Articles 16, 20, 21 and 23, one can understand the extent of incorporation of religious elements into the constitution, which indicates how the state is committed to defending EOC. Consequently, one can deduce that the EOC had the central place in the 1955 revised constitution in particular and the political system of the country in general.

As per article 16 to be a member of the imperial family one should profess Ethiopian orthodox faith among other criteria. The same applies to any member of the 'Council of Regency' who is supposed to take an oath in front of the Emperor and administered by the patriarch.

On his day of coronation, the Emperor is obliged to take an oath, which includes '[…] that we profess and will defend the Holy Orthodox Faith based on the doctrines of St. Mark of Alexandria professed in Ethiopia since the Holy Emperors Abraha and Atsbiha.' In the same vain article 23 put the same requirement on the crown prince to make the above mentioned oath.

Nonetheless, under Article 38 the 1955 constitution inculcates the principle of non-discrimination: "There shall be no discrimination among Ethiopians [based on kinship, wealth, religion, ethnicity, language, sex, and political affiliation] with respect to the enjoyment of all civil rights." Despite such important constitutional deviation, the praxis remains unchanged throughout his reign.

Broadly, speaking, state and religion were intermingled under the Imperial regime. It is worth mentioning here that, the Ethiopian Orthodox Church was the only recognized religion. This is underscored by article 126 of the constitution that the Ethiopian Orthodox Church is the established church of the Empire and is supported by the state. Most importantly, the same article states that the emperor is to profess the Orthodox faith. On the contrary, other religions were not recognized and there was no freedom to follow other faiths.

More often than not, Muslims, to hold any political position had to be a member and a defender of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. As Markakis[179] rightly argued during Haile Selassie's period, the access to Public life was closed for Muslims. Therefore, though under article 40 of the revised constitution guarantees non-interference in the exercise of the rites of any religion by residents of the empire, the prevailing condition was not conducive to do so for non-Orthodox believers. In other words, the prevailing environment was not favorable to believers of other religions, thereby constraining the principle of religious freedom in the country. In fact, it is asserted that Emperor Haile Selassie's rule was criticized for treating Muslims in Ethiopia as "second class citizens" because of their religious affiliation. However, for Tekeste Negash (1997), Haile Selassie was more liberal towards Muslims than the Ottoman Empire.

Without taking whether it was a genuine endeavor to answer the quest for equality or a mere leap service and a tactful policy move to appease international audience among other its Arab neighbors, Haile Selassie had managed to show a sign of religious accommodation towards non-Christians. Hence, the existence of Muslim government officials under Haile Selassie's government, the translation of the Islamic Holy Quran into Amharic by his direct order; the good office he shows during the celebration of Muslim Holyday through inviting Muslim leaders to his palace and the establishment of Sharia courts were important marks of tolerance to Muslim subjects.[180]

Although the granting of freedom for Muslims to have their own courts was a positive development, the narrow area of jurisdiction given to them and lack of official recognition under the state codes were unfortunate. Even today, despite the constitutional recognition of Muslim personal courts their area of jurisdiction remains the same. [181]

The language policy of the state had also affected religious equality and disfranchised non-Orthodox Christians in that as Amharic became the working language of the state; both

[179] Markakis, J. 1989. "Nationalities and the state in Ethiopia." *Third World Quarterly*, 11(4), 118- 130

[180] Hussen Ahmed. 2006. "Ethiopian Islamic Literature in Arabic and Amharic." In *Dirasat Ifriqiyya.* Issue No 35, 97-112. PP. 102

[181] Mohammed Abdo. 2011. 'Legal Pluralism, Sharia Courts, and Constitutional Issues in Ethiopia.'in Mizan Law Review Vol. 5 No.1,

missonary churches and Muslim schools were instructed to follow suit. However, the latter resisted this and demand Arabic as a language of instruction. [182]

Another significant feature of religious contestation in the Haile Selassie period was the growing assertiveness among Muslims in claiming their religious rights. This was especially the case during the post-liberation period. Given the celebratory period of religious freedom, they had under Italian occupation, after liberation, Muslims wanted to retain the already tested rights. Accordingly, they began to challenge the government's favoritism for the Orthodox Church. Even in some areas, this challenge had manifested itself in an armed struggle. In this regard, the struggle of Sheikh Qatbary is a case in point.[183]

In order to contain such tendencies, the government had established the national association of *Yager Fiker Mahiber*. This association was established in 1942 under the leadership of Makonnen Endalkachew with the prime aim of mobilizing Muslims in line with government policy and neutralizes divisive attitudes. However, membership was open for Christians alike.[184]

Another important institutional mechanism employed to ensure religious homogenization was the Minster of Community development established to integrate non-Christians and Muslims. However, this Minster did not last long and after only two years of existence abolished. The emperor later established the department of religious affairs in his private cabinet. Among others, this department was charged with the task of rapprochement between the government and various religious groups.[185]

The government was keen on strengthening the Orthodox Church to engage in evangelization. Accordingly, the patriarch actively seized the opportunity and launched a series of campaigns in many parts of the state. Despite the regimes favoritism to the Orthodox Church, other Christian (Protestant and Catholic) denominations were also allowed to pursue proselytization in the pagan

[182] Wudu Tafete. 2006. The Ethiopian Orthodox Church, The Ethiopian State, and The Alexandrian See: Indigenizing The Episcopacy and Forging National Identity 1926-1991. Unpublished PhD Thesis University of Illinois. PP. 241

[183] Wudu Tafete. 2006. The Ethiopian Orthodox Church, PP. 242

[184] Ibid: 245

[185] Ibid: 266

areas of southern and southwestern Ethiopia. As a result, evangelical and protestant churches expanded and tolerated because they offered humanitarian, technical and educational aid as well as relief assistance to the victims of the recurrent famines of the day. [186]

At the regional, level too, the regime's religious policy both before and after the Italian conquest was not different. For instance, Muslims in Wollo were subjected to a special tax- to the church and were not able to construct a mosque up until 1932. Hence, up until the coming of Italian occupation, there was only one mosque in Dessie. In contrast, at that time, there were already four churches at Dessie.

Education was also used as a tool of Christianization. In Dessie Muslim, students were subjected to systemic baptism. Muslims in Dessie opposed this move and wrote a letter to the emperor which read

> ….የልጆች አባት የሆንን ሁሉ ከፍ ባለ ደስታ ላይ የተሞላን ሆነን የትምህርታቸዉን ፍሬ እናገኛለን በማለት ስንተማመን አሁን በወሎ ጠቅላይ ግዛት የተላኩት ብጽዕ አባት የሆኑት ሕዝቡን በማሰልጠን ፈንታ ከላይ ተጠቀሰውን ‹ሃይማኖት ግል ሃገር የጋራ› የሚለውን በመዘንጋት ጥቂት ገንዘብና ቁንጣ ሱሪ ኮት እየሰጡ ብዙ እስላሞች ወደ ተዋህዶ ሃይማኖት እንዲተመቁ ስላደረጉ ‹ሃይማኖት ግል ሃገር የጋራ› በሚለው የፍቅር ሰንሰለት ተሳስረን የምንኖረውን ወንድማማቾች የሚለያይ መስሎ ስለታየን ለክቡርነትዎ ማመላከት ግድ ሆነብን።[187]
>
> While we were all happy and certain to reap the fruit of our children education the newly appointed representative of the Orthodox Church for Wollo province, rather than educating the people and disregarding the above mentioned ‘The country is for all whereas Religion is private’ by giving some money, shorts, trousers, coat, baptized many Muslims to Tawahedo religion. Concerned that this approach would undermine the lofty and integrative precept of “the country is for all and religion is private,” we are appeal to your Highness.

[186] Ibid: 253

[187] Ahmedin Jabel. 2017. *Sostu Asewoch Ena Ethiopiawyan Muslimoch Tiglena Msewatene(Amharict)* Herein after Sostu Asewoch.

In so doing Muslims in Wollo advanced a critic of Haile Selassie's religious policy in reference to the government's rhetoric of 'country is for all and Religion is private' as a mere propaganda tool or a leap service to religious tolerance. Similarly, Wolloye' who resides in Addis Ababa submitted a related appeal against the baptism undergone in Wollo and more importantly criticized the use of government tax money for Christianization.

> በወሎ ግዛት የተሾሙት ጳጳስ ልብስና ጉርስ እየሰጡ የእስላሞችን ሴቶችና ልጆች እየሰበኩ ክርስቲያን ለማድረግ ስለሞከሩ ይህ ስራ ከሁለቱ ሃይማኖት ወጥተው ሌላ መንፈስ የሚሰማውን ሕዝብ ስለሚፈጥር፣የነዋሪዎችን ህሊና ስለሚናውጥ ለስብከት የሚወጣው ገንዘብ ለትምህርት ታክስ ከወጣው ተቀንሶ የተሰጣቸው ነውና…[188]
>
> The bishop appointed to Wollo province has tried to baptize Muslim women and children by giving cloth and food, and this could make them out of both religions, create a people with a different spirit, and disturb the integrity of the residents, and because the money given for proselytization is derived from tax allotted to education…

This shows the difficult situation the Muslims of Dessie were in where they indirectly financed their own baptism.

In sum as far as religious pluralism and tolerance during Haile Selassie period is concerned it is best characterized as repressive tolerance where non-Christians were relegated to a secondary citizen status notably Muslims. This was manifested in the prohibition of Muslims to own land. Besides, they were not allowed in the civil service and sharia courts were granted no legal status. Still to come, Muslim communities also were not entitled to the substantial subsidies given to the EOC.

Aggrieved by such discriminatory practices of the regime on 20th April of 1974 in a mammoth demonstration Muslims flooded the streets of Addis Ababa and presented their demand before the then Prime Minister Endalkachew Mekonen. This spectacular and massive Muslim demonstration of, stimulated by a series of protest movements against imperial order in February

[188] Ibid: 217

of the same year, was a manifestation of a long-simmering dissatisfaction and injustice over the discriminatory policy towards Muslims pursued by the preceding Ethiopian regimes. [189]

The major demands were about religious equality. Hence, the demonstration called for the separation of religion from politics openly denounced the notion that Ethiopia was an island of Christianity surrounded and besieged by Islam, and declared that it was the home of the adherents of other faiths, including Islam.

Although most of the demands have not been answered, this historic demonstration was important in systematic articulation of the Muslim cause and effectively demonstrates that Muslims of Ethiopia are a group worth to be reckoned with. Hence it has furnished the subsequent rights claims of Muslims vis-à-vis the state and the Christian populace.

To the astonishment of the regime, Muslims were able to gather support from a section of their Christian brethren. In addition, despite the unsuccessful attempt made by the EOC to curb Christian participation many Christians willingly gave their support for Muslims and criticized the regime's discriminatory practice. Against the regimes, anti-Muslim rhetoric and official intolerance, the support of Christians to the Muslims was proof of the existence of 'informal tolerance' at grassroots. This is, however, not to deny the social prejudice against Muslims run deep among the Christian populace until today resulted out of the church and state propaganda.[190]

The military government later issued an official decree as a response to the demands of the demonstration that the three Islamic festivals would be observed as public holidays for the first time in the history of the country and declared the separation of religion from politics. [191] This is meant Orthodox Christianity lost its status as the state religion.

[189] Bahru Zewde, A History of Modern Ethiopia, PP. 231

[190] Ibid

[191] Wudu Tafete. 2006. The Ethiopian Orthodox Church, PP. 292

3.2 Derg: Secularism under PDRE

The student movement was against both the imperial government and the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. For the students, the church was taken as a conservative institution in control of one-third of the state land and supporter of the oppressive imperial government. Pertinent to their socialist ideals the students denounced the luxurious life of some of the bishops with Mercedes cars.

More importantly, they opposed the church's centrality as a nucleus of national identity and urged the separation of state and religion. Messay Kebede, emphasized the role of the Orthodox Church as part of traditional Ethiopian life to contest the 'alien' view of Marxism as follows

> People of my generation offered the greatest resistance to Marxism when they remained faithful to Orthodox Christianity. Let us admit it, the story of the spread of Marxist-Leninist views among the young of the 60s and 70s is the story of Westernized Ethiopians who, having walked away from the traditional beliefs of their people under the impact of Western ideas, were craving for a substitute. [192]

In February 1974 students, workers and soldiers began a series of strikes and demonstrations that culminated on September 12, 1974, with the deposition of Haile Selassie by members of the armed forces. Chief among the coup leaders was Major Mengistu Haile Mariam. A group called the Provisional Military Administrative Council, known as the Derg was established to run the country, with Mengistu serving as chairperson. In late 1974, the Derg issued a program for the establishment of a state-controlled socialist economy.

In March 1975, Ethiopia became a republic and the monarchy officially abolished. The fall of the Monarchical regime and the subsequent control of state power by the Military Derg had ushered a new chapter in Ethiopia's history in many respects. With the adoption of socialism as state policy, the government nationalizes all rural and urban land; institute a command economic system. In a rather radical policy move, the derg regime adopted secularism and ended the hitherto inextricable marriage between Church and state. This was not without implications. It not only abolished the centuries-old relation between state and religion (Orthodox Christianity)

[192] For more on this see Messay Kebede. 2008. Radicalization and Cultural Dislocation in Ethiopia 1960-1974

but also shattered the asymmetrical religious balance between and among religious communities at least in law.

On April 21, 1976, the Derg under its program of the National Democratic Revolution of Ethiopia (NDR) prohibits discrimination based on religion. Moreover, as part of article V, section 1 of the program all religious groups were recognized. It reads

> '[t]he right to self-determination of all nationalities will be recognized and duly respected. No nationality will dominate another one since the history, culture, languages, and religion of each nationality will have equal recognition in accordance with the spirit of socialism'.

Thus, derg for the first time officially recognized ethnic and religious diversity of the state.

For more than a decade, the Derg ruled the state without a constitution until the promulgation of the PDRE constitution in 1987. The preamble of the constitution preaches equality of religion in the country. Thus, one's religion cannot be taken to be more important than and/or superior to others' religion.

Under article 46 (1), the constitution also guarantees freedom of religion. More importantly, the constitution clearly outlines that state and religion are separate in the sense that one cannot interfere in the affairs of the other.[193] It is under this constitution that Ethiopia has come to be a secular state for the first time. Thus, citizens were free to practice their own religion so long as it does not contravene with the interest of the state and the revolution, public morality, and the freedom of other citizens.

Nonetheless, the practice on the ground had suggested otherwise. The Derg, in its Marxist vein, saw both religions as outdated, a brake on 'development', and suppressed their public manifestation and institutional growth. In doing so, the regime had employed various covert means that discourage religious practice.

[193] See Article 41(3) of PDRE Cons of Eth.

According to Widu[194], the Orthodox Church had undergone one of the challenging periods in its history. The regime attacked the EOC as a 'bastion of feudalism', expropriated its land property including most of its urban real estate and ended its receipt of government subsidies.

During this period, to deter church participation, public political meetings were arranged on Sunday morning; Churches were searched for stored arms and sheltered political opponents disregarding church sacredness and butchers were encouraged to open their shop during major Christian fasting seasons. Its members were also subjected to restrictions on religious observation. Hence, political cadres were not allowed to visit a church and engage in religious marriage. Overall, the Ethiopian Orthodox Church was reduced to a mere religious organization with very little political significance.

The cadres of the regime were at the forefront of denouncing religion and indoctrinating the people about the superiority of Marxism-Leninism. The following incident from Wollo clearly show the anti-religious policy of the regime

> An enthusiastic young cadre was haranguing them (peasants) earnestly why are you asking God for rain? Do not look up in the sky for help; Look down at the earth. God will not bring rain, neither God nor rain bring you prosperity. Don't spend your time praying. We, under the new state, can control nature. All you need to do is to listen to the guidelines of comrade Mengistu Haile Mariam, and the country will soon be on the road to new prosperity.[195]

The regime's policy towards Protestant groups was also guided by its anti-religious rhetoric. The various protestant group were initially fascinated by the revolution and its message of liberation from imperial oppression and appreciated the end to the longstanding dominant position of Orthodox Christianity as a state religion. However, the Derg shut down churches and congregations and imprisoned Protestant leaders. Many Protestants still remember the execution

[194] Widu Tafete. 2006. The Ethiopian Orthodox Church, PP. 290-302

[195] Eide, Oyvind. 2000. Religion and Revolution in Ethiopia. Oxford: James Currey.

of Gudina Tumsa, Secretary-General of the Mekane Yesus Church, in 1979 as a glaring case of Derg's persecution on Ethiopian Protestants.[196]

For Muslims, the 1974 revolution and the subsequent changes represent a huge rapture in their quest for religious equality. According to Hussein, even though the rebirth of Islam in Ethiopia in the 1970s was part of the worldwide revival of Islam, one of the most decisive domestic factors that contributed to the former was the outburst of the popular revolution that deposed the Ethiopian monarchy in 1974. This created favorable conditions for disadvantaged and oppressed communities such as Ethiopian Muslims to demand a radical change in the state's policy towards them.

Accordingly, the Derg regime recognized Islam and accorded equal rights to it. Muslims made significant gains, including recognition of their religious holidays, less job discrimination, more mosque building, and a higher Hajji quota. More importantly, the Ethiopian Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs is established in 1976 in the aftermath of the revolutionary changes.

Although its establishment represents a defining moment for Ethiopian Muslims in terms of state recognition, throughout the period of the military rule, it only functioned as a de facto, not de jure, organization. Attempts to secure a legal personality and a license for the council, one of the age-old demands of Ethiopian Muslims, was failed partly because of the traditional hostility, and suspicion of, Islam as a potential ally of anti-Ethiopian forces and partly because of the incompetence, corruption (financial, administrative and electoral) and enmity within the leadership of the council. This has damaged its credibility to represent the Ethiopian Muslim community.

The relationship between Ethiopian Muslims and the government, however, gradually deteriorated because of its economic and anti-religious policies that were inspired by the ideology of Marxism-Leninism. Thus, the regime withholds the already granted rights to the Muslims. Both Christians and Muslims were forced to restrict their public activities and foreign contacts.[197]

[196] Ibid.

[197] Abbink, 2008:260

By 1975, it was clear that Mengistu intended to consolidate his hold on power. This led to criticism from the civilians left, particularly after several top leaders of the derg were killed in early 1977. Chief among opponents was the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party (EPRP), which by the beginning of 1977 had launched a systematic campaign to undermine the military regime. The EPRP conducted urban guerrilla warfare against the regime, referred to as the "White Terror." The government responded with its own "Red Terror" campaign. Consequently, between 1977 and 1978, the derg killed thousands of people (both Christians and Muslims) suspected of being enemies of the government.

The regime's war in Eritrea and in Tigray had also affected the lives of many. Elders in the study area still remember the effect of Derg's forced recruitment of soldiers. According to an informant, many Islamic schools in the area were emptied because students were recruited as soldiers. Islamic religious students were taken in masse to the war fronts.

In general, derg envisaged a 'cultural-ideological' secular model that separates the sacred and the profane and rejects religion as superstition. Such a model had threatened religious institutions and doctrines. Hence, the constitutional recognition of religious freedom and the separation of state and religion remained on paper. Both the Majlis and the EOC synod were under the scrutiny of state

3.3 The Road to Federalism: The 'Religious Question'?

The issue of religion in the student movement was subsumed under the nationality question that mainly questions the notion of Ethiopian culture embodied in Amharic language and Orthodox Christianity. One of the student leaders captures this[198]

> Is it not simply Amhara and to a certain extent Amhara-Tigre supremacy? Ask anybody what Ethiopian culture is. Ask anybody what the Ethiopian language is. **Ask anybody what Ethiopian religion is**. Ask anybody what the Ethiopian dress is. It is either Amhara or Amhara Tigray. To be a genuine Ethiopian one has to speak Amharic, listen to Amharic music, **to accept Orthodox Christianity**. In

[198] For more on the Student movement and the nationality question see Balsvik, R. 1985. *Haile Selassie Students: The Intellectual and Social Background to Revolution*, 1952-1977 at 277

> some cases to be an 'Ethiopian', you will even have to change your name. In short, to be an Ethiopian, you will have to wear an Amhara mask …. (Emphasis mine)

Thus for the student movement, religious discrimination was recognized as part of national oppression. Later the Derg regime had attempted to deal with the issues raised by the student movement until it was deposed after years of fighting by EPRDF. Although the overriding anti–derg fronts were organized along ethnic lines, some of them used religion as a basis of their struggle.

This was clearly manifested in the nature of political actors that dominate the political arena both before and after the federal process. Throughout this process identity question has been high on the agenda as a rallying force of resistance against the center. Many of the armed groups raised their arms in the name of ethnic equality against the assimilationist policy of the center. However, in some cases, the resistance had also exhibited a religious undercurrent. This was the case with Afar Liberation Front, Ogaden Liberation front, The Islamic Front for the Liberation of Oromia, Western Somali Liberation Front where Islam is taken as a central element of once ethnic identity.

The emphasis on ethnicity as organizing principle and participation in the transition process inhibited the accommodation of various views on Ethiopian politics. A glaring example is the absence of representatives of religious bodies in the transitional conference. Nonetheless, members of Islamic groups from Los Angeles were represented.

The Eritrean liberation struggle was initially dominated by Islamic elements and religion had been a cause of disagreement and division within the Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF) and impacted the nature of the struggle since then. Established in 1961 the Eritrean liberation Army was a self-proclaimed Islamist group. Although there were Christian members in it, the ELF pursued a policy of segregation, both with regard to its own members and troops and in the areas or zones falling under its control, thereby alienating non-Muslims. Even today religion serves the

cause of resistance against the Isaias regime in the establishment of the Islamic opposition group notably Eritrean Islamic Salvation Movement-EISM.[199]

The religious question was also an issue among Oromo nationalist groups. This was specifically the case with Islam, which was taken as a protest religion against Abyssinian domination through Amharic language and Orthodox Christian religion. In this connection, Trimingham observed that the expansion of Islam among pagan in Ethiopia was due to it being hostile to the religion of the conquering force and served as a protest religion for the conquered.

The religious question was also an issue among Oromo nationalist groups. This was specifically the case with Islam that was taken as a 'protest religion' against Abyssinian domination through Amharic language and Orthodox Christian religion. In this connection, Trimingham[200] observed that the expansion of Islam among pagan in Ethiopia was due to it being hostile to the religion of the conquering force and served as a protest religion for the conquered. Similarly, in the Bale resistance of 1963-70 religious inequality was one of the major causes that ignite the struggle against the monarchy. Gebru Tareke quoted its leader position as

> "[...] Notice when the Amhara occupied our country with the help of European imperialists in 1885-1891, many of our people was massacred. Then the survivors were allotted like slaves to the settlers who partitioned our lands among themselves. Remember that they plundered and distorted our historical legacy that is widely known that they violated our dignity, calling us the filthy Oromo. Do you realize how many times you have been denied justice in the courts of law? You, Muslims, your religion has been denigrated and you do not share equality with Christians. Innumerable crimes that were not committed by European colonialists on the African peoples have been perpetrated upon you. You have been crushed for eighty years now."[201]

[199] Prunier Gérard and Éloi Ficquet. (Ed). 2015. *Understanding Contemporary Ethiopia: Monarchy, Revolution and the Legacy of Meles Zenawi*. London: Hurst. PP. 101

[200] Trimingham, 1952. Islam in Ethiopia, PP. 101

[201] Gebru Tareke. 1991. *Ethiopia: Power and Protest: Peasant Revolts in the Twentieth Century*. New York: Cambridge University Press. PP. 131

Another insurgent group that rallied around the ethnoreligious agenda was the Islamic Front for Liberation of Oromia. It was established in 1985 and based in eastern Ethiopia. On the eve of the downfall of the Derg regime, the group was in control of some territory in the countryside in the Harar highlands and around Jijiga. Later it joined the TGE with three seats of the total twelve seats allotted to Oromo political groups. [202]

The Somali region of Ethiopia has been a hotbed of Islamic insurgent movements. This is no wonder given almost all ethnic Somalis are indeed Muslims and hence the link between Somali nationalism and Islam appeared a natural one. During the transition period, some of the Somali based parties participated in the national conference for peace and reconciliation and later secured some seats in the constitutional commission.

The Western Somalia Liberation Front (WSLF), founded in the mid-seventies was part of the transition process until it withdrew after fallout with EPRDF. Another group in the region is the Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF). It was created because of schism within WSLF in 1985. Another significant horn-based radical Islamist organization is Al-Ittihad al-Islamia (Islamic Union Party). It was established in the 1980s to remove Barre from power and establish a united Somalia state including the Ogden territory of Ethiopia.[203]

Another political organization with an Islamic profile is the Benishangul People's Liberation Movement. BPLM was established in 1983 to fight the Derg regime. In the 1990s the group had won the support of the National Islamic front who supplied a faction of it with arms, training and bases, and facilitated the entry of Islamist elements into the regional government. The BPLM claims to represent the grievances of the Berta in regional politics. The Sudanese faction within the BPLM demanded Benishangul national self-determination. In achieving its aim, BPLM declared jihad against the Ethiopian government and began military operations against government infrastructure, military outposts and resident highlanders.

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[202] Dereje Feyissa. 2011. The Potential and Sign of Religious Radicalization in Ethiopia. Research Report Submitted to DFID-Ethiopia.PP. 12

[203] See Adam Lockyer. 2006. "Opposing Foreign Intervention's Impact on the Course of Civil Wars: the Ethiopian-Ogaden Civil War, 1976-1980." Paper presented at the *Australasian Political Studies Association Conference* University of Newcastle.

In general, this shows that religious identity has partly contributed to the existence of armed conflicts in pre federal Ethiopia. In support of this, in their study of the nexus between religion and armed conflicts in all sub-Saharan states over the period between 1990-2008, Basedau and Vüllers[204] conclude that though religion is certainly not the major variable to explain armed conflicts in sub-Saharan Africa, religious variable substantially impacted armed conflicts in many cases. Accordingly, they put Ethiopia as one of the six cases where religion and conflict connected in all four dimensions, wit, identity, ideology, organization and behavior. Based on their estimate within the study period, Ethiopia had witnessed forty-two fatalities of religious violence manifested in 'assaults on religious targets, assaults by religious actors and violent clashes between religious groups or between religious groups and security forces.[205]

Given the religious undercurrent in some of the major ethno- nationalist conflicts in unitary Ethiopia and the cover-up in many cases of ethnic and religious identity, the adoption of ethnic federalism would go a long way towards defusing the religious issue.

3.4. Conclusion

Taking religious pluralism as a framework of regulation and recognition within a given state this chapter shows how the regimes of Haile Selassie and Derg managed religious diversity in Ethiopia.

During Haile Selassie I period the state legitimized the dominant position of the Orthodox Church and no or little freedom was given to other religious groups. Besides, state policy and practice were highly influenced by a Christian understanding of Ethiopia. This chapter also see how the short the short rule of the Italians impacted both state-religion and inter-religion relations after the restoration of Haile Selassie to power. Accordingly, after restoration Haile Selassie once again emphasised the dominant position of the EOC and brought no change as far as religious pluralism is concerned. Rather through the policy of language and religious homogenization, the state continued its repressive tolerance where non- Christians notably Muslims were relegated to a status of secondary citizens.

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[204] Basedau, Matthias, Et al. 2011. 'Cutting Bread or Cutting Heads, Results from a New Data Base on Religion, Peace and Conflict in Sub-Saharan Africa 1990-2008.' *GIGA Working Papers* No.159

[205] Ibid: 13-16

The derg period represented a huge rupture in the history of Ethiopia in that it for the first time proclaimed secularism and equality of all religious groups. Against this constitutional stipulation of religious equality and freedom the state suppressed the public manifestation and institutional growth of all religious groups. This period was also characterised by the emergency of various armed groups that pushed ethnic justice. And among some of these armed groups the religious agenda served as a source of identity and organization.

Chapter Four

Religious Pluralism and Tolerance in Federal Ethiopia

With the downfall of the Derg regime in 1991 and the coming to power of EPRDF Ethiopia has embarked on a political order meant for accommodating societal diversity of the country. To this effect, in 1995 Ethiopia officially became a Federal Democratic Republic. This was, however, the continuation of the process of devolution of political power that has been set in motion since the downfall of the Derg regime in 1991.

As mentioned above religion has been a basis of socio-political mobilization during the revolution. EPRDF came to power with the goal of restructuring the Ethiopian state anew. Accordingly, with no delay, the EPRDF led government began to implement various policies to appease the quest for ethnic and religious freedom. Hence, with a radical breakthrough from the past, it announced the equality of all ethnic and religious groups of the state. This radical shift resulted in a new dynamics of the relationship between and among the various ethnic and religious communities. The very first Article of the 1995 Ethiopian Constitution made this fact explicit saying, “This constitution establishes a federal and democratic state structure.”

The Ethiopian federation consists of nine regional states carved based on settlement patterns, language, identity and consent of the people concerned. These are Tigray; Afar; Amhara; Oromia; Somali; Benishangul-Gumuz; the SNNPR; Gambella and Harar. Hence, the ethno-linguistic criterion has played an essential role in the creation of these states.

The FDRE constitution provides for the division of power between the federal and regional states. Hence the duties and responsibilities of the federal government include foreign relations, national defense, Inter-state commerce, currency, immigration, communication, inter-state water resources while the regional states are allotted the power to: draft their own constitutions, administer land and other natural resources, levy taxes and duties on revenue sources reserved for the states, enact civil service laws, and establish state police. Ethiopia is a parliamentary federation with two houses: House of People Representatives (HPR) and House of Federation (HoF).

The Ethiopian federation has many unique features as the use of ethnolinguistic criteria for the establishment of constituent units, the explicit recognition of the right to secession, constitutional interpretation through the non-legislative upper house of the federal legislature, and non-representation of the regions in the upper house.

4.1 Religious Pluralism and Secularism under FDRE

The new federal constitution guarantees a number of fundamental human rights and freedoms. Like other fundamental rights, freedom of religion has been realized, individuals and communities began to enjoy this right; as a result, various preexisting religious groups began to flourish, and a number of new denominations mushroomed astonishingly.

Writing on EPRDF's Revolutionary democracy and religious pluralism in Ethiopia, Haustein and Ostebo argued that the regime's ideology of revolutionary democracy has enabled religion as a force for social mobilization and as a point of reference for attempting to define nationhood in Ethiopia. The lifting of earlier restrictions on religious expressions made religion more visible in public and led to a sharp increase in religious activities and religious diversity.

According to the 2007 census, the current religious composition of Ethiopia is Ethiopian Orthodox Christians hold the majority with 43.5%, Islam (34.0%), and Protestant Christianity (18.5%). There is a considerable regional variation with regard to religious predominance. Muslims are dominant in the Afar Region (95.3%), Dire Dawa (70.8%), Harar (69.0%) and the Somali Region (98.4%), as well as in the special enumeration areas (92.5%). Orthodox Christianity predominates in Addis Ababa (74.7%), Amhara Region (82.5%) and Tigray Region (95.6%), whereas Gambella and Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples' Region are largely Protestant 71.1% and 55.5%, respectively. This implies, although, the constituent units were designed primarily on ethnolinguistic bases most of the regions are predominantly populated by a single religious group.

What are the secular features of the FDRE constitution? In the very preamble of the constitution, recognize the character of the state as a multi-ethnic and religious state. It says 'fully cognizant that our common destiny can best be served by rectifying historically unjust relationships and by further promoting our shared interests'

With this act of recognition, it officially ended the century-old assimilationist state policy of successive regimes. It represents a move towards the politics of accommodation that needs state preparedness to accommodate its diversity. According to Tierney [206]

> […] such preparedness to face the state's reality is, in fact, a sign of the state's strength and an indication that it has the self-confidence to flourish through embracing positively the deep diversity upon which it was constituted.

Hence, such recognition of religious diversity is a clear indication of the state's tacit admission of the asymmetric nature of the relationship between religious groups in the past and its commitment to rectify it. This is especially significant for the non-orthodox religious groups who had been rated second-class citizens and hard-pressed under the concerted effort of church and state.

The constitution has also bestowed sovereignty to the Nation, Nationalities, and Peoples of Ethiopia that speak a different language and follow different religions. It also accords the NNPs' the right to self-determination and develops their language and culture. Thus, the constitution confirmed the absence of the assimilationist policy of the past that had employed Amharic language and Orthodox Christianity.

Article 3(1) of the constitution also implicates the recognition of religious diversity. This article provides a new flag placed a yellow pentagram and single yellow rays emanating from the angles between the points on a light blue disk centered on the three bands to signifies the desire of the 'nations, nationalities and peoples' of Ethiopia who profess different religions to live together in equality and unity.

As already noted a secular state stands on the principle of non-establishment. This is clearly indicated under the art 11 of FDRE constitution that states, "State and religion are separate, there shall be no state religion, and the state shall not interfere in religious matters and religion shall not interfere in state affairs." Hence, it prohibits the state to choose among religions and adopt any

[206] Tierney Quoted in Yonatan T. Fisseha. 2010. *Ethnic Diversity and Federalism: Constitution Making in South Africa and Ethiopia.* Surrey: Ashgate. PP. 32

religion as the state religion. Thus, all religions are positioned equidistance to the state so that no one is favored against the interest of others.

Besides the constitution prohibits any religious influence what so ever in the affairs of the state and state involvement in religious belief and practice of religious groups. Accordingly, any religious worldview will not be a basis of state decisions and actions, and the state could not judge upon the rightness and wrongness of religious beliefs.

Another secular feature of the FDRE constitution is provided under article 27 that guarantees everyone's right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. This freedom encompasses both the inner personal belief as well as its external manifestations both individually and collectively. Thus, one can argue that the constitution recognized the right to freedom of religion as both individual and group right without clearly setting exit strategy when both rights coincide.

Specifically, Sub art 1 provides for values of religious liberty that encompass citizen's right to hold or adopt a religion of one's choice including to remain without religion. By extension, this may also entail the right of members of a given religion to criticize, revise and even challenge the dominant interpretations of their religion.

Sub article 2 of the same article grants citizens to manifest their religion through worship, observance, practice and teaching. As per this, citizens are entitled the right to live a religious life following their religious specific prescriptions both in matters of belief and practice. Similarly, citizens could also manifest their religion through teaching hence are free to produce and communicate their religious idea to the public through media outlets; import religious materials; establish contact with their religious brethren both in and outside of the state; engage in proselytization.

Sub art 3 prohibits the state to engage in any form of coercive act that aimed at restricting or preventing citizens from holding a particular religion. Hence, whatever religious belief citizens might adopt the state should remain neutral unless otherwise it practically endangers the rights of religious others and the public at large.

The third dimension of the secular principle involves the prohibition of religions not to interfere in the political and administrative affairs of the government. As long as the government is

responsible to serve all religions equally, no religion could pressure the government to enact any law or policy that advances its particular interest. Hence, by any measure, irrespective of the number of followers or financial capacity no religion could influence government decision-making.

Another element of freedom of religion has to do with the right of parents to foster their children according to the religion and belief of their choice. Nonetheless, as per Art 36(2) of the constitution when need arise the child is at liberty to choose a different religion.

As per article 90(2) of the constitution, education is free from religious, political and cultural influences. It prohibits educational institutions from being an arena of religious expansion and competition. It also involves the absence of religious-based discrimination in education service provision. Hence, one cannot establish educational institutions exclusively for a certain religious group and disfranchise citizens due to their religious affiliation during admission.

Although there has not been religious discrimination in terms of equally providing educational service to members of all religions, educational institutions have been a center of religious expansion and competition. For instance, the quest for prayer places within campus premises has been a cause of disagreement among religious groups.[207] Moreover, in many cases, this has resulted in disputation between university management and students. Part of the problem has been the absence of a regulation that clearly set the limit of religious practice on university campuses. In an attempt to solve this problem in 2008, the Minister of Education had come up with a controversial regulation.[208] However, it faced strong opposition from both Christian and Muslim groups. This is recently manifested in tensions (May 2018) between Orthodox Christian students and administrations in Hawassa and Arba Minch universities over the application of the secular regulation.

[207] For more see Mohammed Dejen. 2016. Contested Secularism in Ethiopia: The Contention between Muslims and the Government. Unpublished PhD Thesis Addis Ababa University, College of Law and Governance Studies. Available at SSRN: https://ssrn.com/abstract=2831300 or http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2831300. PP. 218-224

[208] Ibid: 90

The Constitution envisages a democratic society in which pluralism of belief is an essential feature. That is why Ethiopian secularism seems to tolerate individual religious manifestations in public domain; of course, without the connotation of government involvement.

In this connection, Mark Cladis[209]' writing on the role and place of religious discourse in democratic societies came up with four models on the role of religion in public space. These are religion over the public space (in which religion is necessary for the health of public and political life); religion banned from the public space (in which religion is kept out of public and political discourse); public landscape as religious space (in which the health of society depends on a shared civil religion); and public landscape as varied topography (in which religious views are not initially treated as a special case, but rather are treated like any other more or less comprehensive view that may offer a voice in public and political debate. Applying this to the Ethiopian context, it could be argued that religion has been banned from the public landscape in that religion is kept out of politics.

Arguably, the Ethiopian secularism is not simply about removing religion from societal life, but about removing it from State affairs. Here one needs to distinguish the concept of "society" from the concept of the "State." In this sense, the Constitution seems to warrant the neutrality of the State towards religion, hence, this does not implicate as an absence of religion in the society, but as religious pluralism- of different religious options equally present, manifested and enjoyed in the society.

Ethiopia's concept of secularism as laid down in the constitution is stricter than that of Indian and South African secularism. This strict secularism manifests itself, for example, in the prohibition of the presence of any religious influence in the educational context. The State promotes religious freedom through a strict separation of religion and government, instead of by indulging itself in religious matters. Of course, in some respects, Ethiopian secularism is also even stricter than the United States', when one looks at the role of religion in politics and the educational system.

[209] Mark Cladis 2009. "The Role of and Place of Religious Discourse in Democratic Societies" in Religious Diversity in Canada *Policy Research Initiative* Vol. 10, No 2

Nonetheless, this strict separation might not be always preserved. In his recent speech in Gambella region, the new Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed reiterated this saying

> As far as religion is concerned, the quest for religious equality is good. The general principle that the state shall not intervene in religion and religion shall not intervene in state maters is right. However, this is not always workable. Balance is needed. …religion influences government officials through wisdom and knowledge. There is no zero relation between state and religion. On the other hand, the government, as it is the case with other states, should control religious institutions as to whether they correctly spend the money they gathered through *Meba* and *Zakat*…. By law, the government does not intervene in the day-to-day activity of religion and religion does not intervene in the day-to-day work of the government. Nonetheless, the red line between us i.e. our boundary is not always static and unrelated. Each of us is present in the other. On matters of common concerns, we shall work together but on matters that separate us, we shall control our hand from interference.

Formally, the constitutional recognition of religious equality and religious freedom has redressed past injustices done over non-orthodox Christians and brought to an end Derg's socialist restriction on religious practice. This has resulted in a symmetrical religious scene that enabled all religious groups to exist as equal and minimize religious tension that would otherwise further antagonize interfaith relations in the country.

As stated before the federal dispensation has not only affected the ethnic configuration of the state but also affected the religious character of the state. Hence, with the religio-pluralist policy of the state, the religious scene has become diversified which in turn resulted in the emergence of new religious groups and the revival of the old ones. Significant in this regard is the revival of Muslims, Protestant groups and Waqifannaa among the Oromo. This has challenged the usual religious polarization along with Muslim and Orthodox Christian religious groups and expanded the religious arena. The post-federal demographic upsurge of Protestant groups attests to this fact.

The EOC has not remained unaffected. Now facing the revivalist trend among Muslims and Protestants alongside the symmetrical relation the constitution envisages among religious groups the church has entered in a renewed effort in asserting its indigenousness and began to engage in proselytization.

Besides, the granting of tax exemption and the provision of legal entity status can be viewed as a positive development in the exercise of religious freedom in Ethiopia. Although belatedly, the establishment of a directorate dedicated to the affairs of religious groups under the Ministry of Federal Affairs is an indication of the government's understanding that religion has become an issue that needs political reckoning and its willingness to promote religious tolerance and pluralism.

4 .2 Management of Religious Issues at the Federal Level

Religion is one of the cross-cutting issues in Ethiopia. Cognizant of this fact the federal government has established institutions that manage religious affairs. Although belated, the establishment of two directorates under the former MoFAPD now Minster of Peace has been a major development in the administration of religious issues at the federal level. As far as the role of civil society in the accommodation of religious diversity is concerned, the establishment of the Inter Religious Council of Ethiopia (IRCE) both at the federal and regional level represents a positive step. Especially the council establishment has the potential for enhancing interfaith dialogue and nurturing religious peace. Moreover, IRCE would play a key role in linking the government and the religious institutions thereby create a common understanding in resolving faith-related problems.

4.2.1 Ministry of Peace

Initially, this Ministry was organized as the Minister of Federal Affairs and Pastoral Development Later with the recent reform, it becomes the Ministry of Peace. The establishment of the minster has indicated the growing interest of the government in controlling issues of national importance in a more direct way than leaving it to regions. The two directorates meant for managing religious diversity are still preserved in the new minister. This is a clear indication of the government’s concern to check unwanted signs of religious intolerance.

The Ministry through its two directorates has been the major body in administering religious issues at the federal level. The major functions of these directorates include plans to ensure tolerance and trust among religious institutions and coordinate the implementation thereof; promotes social virtues that existed and exist between religious followers; based on the constitution it prepares legal frameworks as time demands, facilitates awareness creation forums at various levels and follow up implementation; it prepares rules and guidelines on the grant and use of worship and burial places; in consultation with religious institutions prepares rules and regulations to systematize preachers' license and service in religious institutions; it conducts research on issues that might cause conflict between and among religious groups.[210]

Up until recently, there have not been offices meant for administrating religious affairs at the regional level. Based on the recommendation of the Minster such offices have been established. Hence, in Oromia and SNNPR regions it is organized at the deputy office level. In Tigray and Amhara regions, on the other hand, it is organized as a separate work process down to kebele level. [211]

One of the major tasks of religious affairs directorate has been registering religious groups. Moreover, until now eight hundred seventy-five religious organizations are registered. Here it should be noted that despite the presumption that administering religious affairs including registration is the mandate of the region, regional states have not been entitled to do so. In the past regional states were allowed to register and issue a license to religious organizations.[212] However, this has created inconsistencies across regions and challenge the unity of religious groups. The controversy between the EIASC and Ahlul Sunna Wal Jamma At-Tawhid was a case in point.[213] This Salafi group is accused of preaching extremist teachings in Wollega Zone of Oromia regional state. The later was registered in the Oromia region without the recognition of the former.

[210] Informant interview with Ato Hiluf, expert in the MoFAPD, 2016 Addis Ababa

[211] Ibid

[212] Ibid

[213] Informant interview with Haji Masoud, Addis Ababa, 2017

Although the power to administer land is in the hands of regional governments, the ministry has been working on resolving complaints regarding the allocation of burial and worship places. In light of the discrepancies at the local level in granting burial and worship, places the ministry's role to oversight will help mitigate religious favoritism.[214]

An important area of achievement for the directorate in this regard is the preparation of draft regulations on the allotment of worship and burial places. This regulation clearly established the necessary criteria a religious group must fulfill to request for worship and burial places and set general guidelines on how to construct a place of worship. Although not ratified and the existence of challenges of implementation, such regulation will help contain unnecessary competition over land and minimize illegal construction that could otherwise create discord among religious groups.

Due to the lack of regulations meant for guiding the allocation of burial and worship places at the federal level regional states have been promulgating their own regulations. In Amhara regional state, for instance, under the office of Trade and Industry office, a document that guides the allocation of worship and burial places is prepared in 2011.

Since 2011, the ministry becomes notorious among the Muslim populace due to its alleged involvement in the process of inviting the Ahbash and facilitating their conference to indoctrinate anti-Wahabiya teaching. It has also been at the forefront of the struggle against extremism through giving policy direction and following its implementation at all levels.

4.2.2 The Inter Religious Council of Ethiopia

Despite the growing needs for them, religious dialogue forums are few in Ethiopia. Among the few such organizations is the Inter Religious Council of Ethiopia (IRCE). It is established in 2010 after yearlong deliberation and consensus-building works. According to Haji Masoud, the religious groups along with the strong support of MoFPD took the initiative for its establishment. Its establishment was preceded by religious tensions and conflicts that occurred in the same year in different places such as in Jimma, Gurage Zone, in Wollo Dessie. It was a conflict born

[214] Ibid

council. [215] Constitutionally speaking there is no clear indication that allows the government to establish such institutions.

The major mission of the council is to promote and systematize interfaith learning and collaboration towards addressing certain common concerns by targeting and bringing together religious leaders and institutions of various faiths at national and regional levels, to identify potential areas of cooperation with a special focus on building trust and strong mutual relationships among the various religious communities.[216]

The council is composed of seven religious groups namely, the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church (EOTC), the Ethiopian Islamic Affairs Supreme Council (EIASC), the Ethiopian Catholic Church (ECC), the Evangelical Churches Fellowship of Ethiopia (ECFE), the Ethiopian Seventh Day Adventist Church (SDAC), the Ethiopian Evangelical Unity Churches (EEUC), and the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus (EECMY). Seen in line with the religious demography of the state the council represents about 96 % of the religious groups in Ethiopia. This explains the limited number of religious groups include in the council. Nonetheless, other mechanisms of participating in non-member religious groups should be devised.[217]

One of the reasons behind the creation of IRCE was to curb the influence of religious extremism.[218] In achieving this council has recently completed a project in Jimma and found significant results in containing religious extremism in the area. The council is organized in all regions and in the capital Addis Ababa and Dire Dawa administrations.

Since its establishment, the council has been working on many areas. This includes the publication of a training book on 'Building the Value of Peace' based mainly on a religious understanding of peace. The book was carefully formulated with a sustained deliberation of representatives from member religious groups. In a bid to ensure, its wider acceptance member

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[215] International Crisis Group. 2016. 'Ethiopia: Governing the Faithful' *Crisis Group Africa Briefing* N°117. PP. 5

[216] See IRCE. *Ya Haymanot Taquamat Dimse*

[217] Ibid

[218] Interview with Hajji Masoud, Addis Ababa ,2016

religious groups were encouraged to review it together with their constituents and the council had organized meetings with other stakeholders to evaluate the contents of the book.

Besides, the council has been organizing many conferences for creating awareness in selected areas where the risk of religious extremism is believed to be high. Since its establishment, the council has organized one national and two regional consultative and experience sharing workshops with the participation of 870 religious leaders and FBO technical staffs in Addis Ababa and Amhara regional state on the issues of Harmful Traditional Practices (HTPs), HIV and AIDS, Maternal and Youth reproductive health, and peace. [219] During these deliberations, the need to strengthen the institutional capacity of IRCE to undertake advocacy and public awareness was highlighted and it was stressed that FBOs need to integrate women and youth health issues in the teachings of their spiritual. Moreover, IRCE was urged to incorporate maternal health in its strategic plan, and facilitate women and youth dialogue forums. The workshops culminated with joint declaration statements made by participating in religious institutions.

According to Haji Masoud, the council has done remarkable works in a short period of time. The national and eleven regional inter-faith councils were established in the last two years with the concerted efforts of faith-based institutions and federal and regional governments. It also works with MoFPD in many areas. In cooperation with the ministry, the council has been working on problems of good governance over the allocation of worship and burial places. Up until now, the council has received over four hundred such cases and after proper evaluation refers them to MoFPD for final decisions. Besides the council has also been part of the process of amending the draft regulation on registration of religious institutions and associations.[220]

Since its establishment, the council has encountered many challenges. The council has suffered criticism for working with the government which for some is nothing but part of the system of controlling religious groups. Initially, it was a legitimacy challenge. Many were not in a position to accept the council as an independent institution. Some even take it as an “unholy alliance” at the service of the regime. Some elements from the EOC especially MK has been critical of it.

[219] Ibid

[220] Ibid

According to a member of Mk, although its establishment is not bad, its neutrality is doubtful. [221] The very establishment of the council was not welcomed by the group, which takes it to mean degrading the status of EOC- the 'Mother Church' and belittle its dominant position making it one among equals.

Given the wide range of functions the council has, the need for finance is critical. In this regard, despite some donor supports the council has been debilitated by financial problems in extending its branches to all regions of the states and expands its outreach.

Another major challenge of the council has to do with a limitation in implementing common decisions. According to a worker of the council, 'it has not been a problem to agree on common issues but when we return to our religious institutions the situation is not usually conducive in implementing decisions of the council.' This is partly due to the lack of trust the council face among members of religious institutions.

Despite all these limitations, the council remains one of the major forum for inter-religious dialogue at the formal level. Depending on whether it withstands unnecessary government interference or not the council will develop into a more robust institution that enhances peaceful coexistence among religious groups.

4.2.3 Minster of Education- Directives for regulating religious observance in Educational Institutions

The directive aimed at enforcing the provisions of the constitution pertaining to equality rights and non –discrimination (article 25), freedom of religion (article 27), provision of education (article 90 (2)) in the context of educational institutions. Moreover, it also serves as a tool for the implementation of the 1994 Education and Training Policy of the state.

The Directive is intended to govern three major issues in educational institutions; dressing, worshiping and dietary codes of conduct of students. In relation to worship, the Directive bans any form of group worship inside educational institutions. Accordingly, it bans group worship in the premises of educational institutions and forbids requesting the administration to establish

[221] Interview with a member of Mahbre Qidusan Addis Ababa, 2016. According to Crisis Group (2015), The IRCE was particularly associated with the then Ministry of Federal Affairs that for a while provided offices.

congregational worshiping places inside the campus. It also prohibits the celebration of religious ceremony unless with the permission of the concerned authority.

According to Mohammed[222], the Directive limits the rights and freedoms of religious groups, hence jeopardize the principle of secularism, one of the fundamental principles of the FDRE Constitution. For him, it is a '…self-defeating, undemocratic and morally incorrect.' The directive is self-defeating because it belittles the spirit of the constitution that guarantees group rights and marginalized the already disfavored groups. It is also undemocratic because it prohibits the constitutional right of Muslims to freely exercise their religion in public spaces. Besides, it is also morally wrong to limit the choice of individuals on what to wear or not to wear.[223]

4.3 Secularism and the Dynamics of Christian-Muslims Relations in Federal Ethiopia

According to Hausten and Ostebo, changes in the post-1991 Ethiopia ushered new developments in the religious configuration of the state. With the religio-pluralistic policy of the state has resulted in the emergence of competing narratives among religious groups with a reconfigured self-understanding and a vigilant view on the religious other.[224]

There exist divergent views on the existing secular venture among Christians and Muslims of Ethiopia. This subsection discusses the major views of Christians and Muslims towards the secular venture. It also focuses on the character of inter-religious and intra religious relations on the one hand and the relation between state and religions on the other.

As gathered from focus group discussions and interviews, many Muslim focus group discussants agreed that the adoption of secularism is a positive development. Muslims had welcomed the political change and even organized demonstrations in Addis Ababa and other major towns supporting the changes. According to a Muslim activist:

[222] Mohammed, 2016. Contested Secularism, PP. 210

[223] Ibid: 12-13

[224] Haustein and Ostebo. 2011. 'EPRDF's revolutionary democracy and religious plurality: Islam and Christianity in post-Derg Ethiopia.' *Journal of Eastern African Studies* Vol 5, Issue 4

> In fact, we, Ethio-Muslims, have never been against the current government, rather supported it and tolerated most of its provocative-interference in our affairs but now it has publicly crossed the red line.[225]

Muslims have benefited from the federal project in many respects. This includes the lifting of restrictions on Hajji, major Islamic festivals declared public holidays, on Friday public office hours adapted to prayer times, regulations for the construction of mosques and schools/madrasas eased and Sharia (Islamic law) courts' legal status clarified. Thus, the secular state reinforced the legal status and public role of Islam. One of the most important developments is the increasing involvement of Muslims in the overall socio-economic and political affairs of the state. Despite the still huge gap that exists between religious groups, enrolment in secular education the participation of Muslims in modern education is improved.

As mentioned earlier the participation of Ethiopian Muslims in political affairs of the state has been minimal. This was mainly due to the socio-economic and political barriers the state has had erected born out of a policy of containment that took Muslims as a fifth column. This was specifically the case with of Haile Selassie regime where usually Muslims had to make an uneasy choice between either joining the bureaucracy or leave their religion.

In relative terms in post-federal Ethiopia Muslims, participation in the political affairs of the state has shown signs of improvement. The restructuring of the state has created a new political and administrative space for Muslims to participate at all levels. Nowadays, though nominal, Muslims are now represented in the administrative echelon of the state from the federal level down to kebele level. In addition, most surprisingly Ethiopia has now a Protestant prime minister and a Muslim deputy prime minister. Besides, of the thirty members, cabinet six Ministers are Muslims. Nonetheless, given the secular system, their mere existence in no way implies substantive representation, which makes their presence a nominal one.

Up until 1995, the EPRDF policy towards Muslims was more of a positive nature in that the regime asserted itself as a defender of religious equality and a redeemer of the Muslim community from religious injustice committed in the past. Muslims largely the secular state not

[225] A. Naser cited in Dereje, F and Bruce Lawrence. 2014 'Sufi-Salafi debate: The Ethiopian Turn toward Moderation' *Journal of Contemporary Islamic Studies* PP,5

only because it brock the hitherto inextricable bond between the state and EOC but also opens a new hope for religious expression.[226]

However, this outlook began to change since the events of 1995 that shape the policy of the regime. These include the assassination attempt on Hosni Mubarak and the alleged involvement of Islamic groups; the increase in Islamic jihad in Eritrea; military confrontations between Al-Ithad, a Somali based Islamic group that operated actively in the Ogaden region in Ethiopia, and the Ethiopian government; and the hostility between EPRDF and the National Islamic Front of Sudan in the mid-1990s. These events explain the changing nature of the relation between Muslims and the government from 'uneasy accommodation to confrontation.' [227]

Despite Muslims recognition of EPRDF as the most liberal of the Ethiopian governments, they nevertheless still raise a number of rights issues. The case of Muslims in Aksum has been one of the major concerns for Ethiopian Muslims. Despite the constitutional stipulation, the right to religious freedom that includes building places of worship Muslims in Aksum has no mosque. An informant from EIASC said

> **የቀድሞው የኢትዮጵያ እስልምና ጉዳዮች ከፍተኛ ምክር ቤት ፕሬዝዳነት የነበሩት ሸህ ኪያር አማን ቤተ-መንግስቱ ላይ ስላለው የመስቀል ምልክት ተጠይቀው ሲመልሱ መንግሰት ደርግ የሰራውን የአብዮት ሃውልት አላፈረሰም።ስለዚህ ይህም እንደዛው ነው።እኛ ይልቅ እንዲህ በቀልድ እንኳ መመለስ የከበደን በአክሱም ለምን መስጂድ አይሰራም የሚለውን የሙስሊሙ ጥያቄ ነው።**
>
> The former president of EIASC-Sheikh Kiar Aman while replying on why the cross signs still there over the fence of National Palace, he replied 'The government did not demolish the revolution square of the Derg. So this is similar.' However, the question that we still are unable to answer is why mosque construction is prohibited in Aksum.

[226] Jon Abbink. 2014. "Religious freedom and the political order: the Ethiopian 'secular state' and the containment of Muslim identity politics." *Journal of Eastern African Studies,* Vol. 8, No. 3, 346–365. PP. 348

[227] Ibid: 352

This has been one of the major issues of contestation between Muslim and Christian religious groups and a dilemma of our secularism. Whereas Muslims base their claim on the constitution that allows religious freedom that entails the construction of worship places, Orthodox Christians on their part emphasized the sacred nature of Aksum as a holy place of Orthodox Christianity. The government position has not been clear. On the one hand, it recognizes the legitimacy of the Muslims' claim but on the other hand, it remains reluctant to persuade the church in reversing its age-old decision. Thus, Aksum represents the failure on the part of the government to put the secular principle in place.

A more recent controversial Muslims concern is the Ahbash controversy (see chapter 7). This issue has brought the quests of Muslim rights claims to the fore. Besides, it raised questions about Ethiopia's secular state model and about inter and intra-faith relations among religious groups.

In general, three reasons explain the emerging pattern of relations between the Muslim community and the government. Firstly, there is ambiguity on the status of Muslim religious law and self-organization. Secondly, the interest of the government in checking the Muslim community against unwanted developments in the direction of religious fundamentalism. Thirdly, the absence of specific laws that explicate the nature and character of the secular order.[228]

Unlike Muslims, the view from the EOC towards the federal venture has been cautious. Since the downfall of the Hail Selassie regime, the EOC had lost its privileged status. It's a hitherto strong link with the state that has impacted its relation with the regime as it has often seen as a stronghold of religious-nationalist views against the post-1991 ethnic-nationalist-rhetoric of the day.

With the new federal pluralistic dispensation, the church hitherto privileged by Monarchical regimes find itself as just one of the players in a religious arena. The church had felt the impact of the changes early in 1991 when Patriarch Paulos replaced its patriarch with the alleged role of the government in the process. This was not without controversy. Emphasizing the ethnic origin

[228] Ibid

of the Patriarch Paulos, opponents criticized the alleged interference of government in church affairs. Even more controversial was the replacement of the General Secretary of the church with a government appointee. Moreover, the secession of Eritrea as an independent state has brought the establishment of an independent Eritrean Orthodox Church hence the split of the Orthodox Church into two.

Ethiopia has often been held up as an example of religious pluralism and tolerance successfully implemented in a state in which Christianity represents not only a large majority of the population but also dominates the national culture. Examples abound of the two major religious groups, Ethiopian Christians and Muslims co-existing and working together harmoniously for decades while elsewhere in the world religious differences have torn communities and nations apart. However, as the forthcoming discussion will show, there has been a growing tendency of religious intolerance in many parts of the country including the hitherto tolerant Wollo. This is actually puzzling given the religio-pluralist policy of the state as seen in the previous section that unequivocally provides for religious equality and tolerance.

This is partly associated with the fact that the adoption of secularism is not accompanied by the necessary setups needed to implement it. This has created a situation where the government was not in a position to give a timely response to the newly emerging dynamics of religious contestation. The new liberal opening and the subsequent diversification of the religious scene demand more than the mere declaration of secularism. Given the nature of state-religion relations and the limited experience, we had in secular practice there should have been a robust effort on the part of the state in nurturing the principle and practice of secularism.

Various factors affect inter-religious relations either directly or indirectly. This includes infrastructural factors, historical and contextual forces, political forces, social and cultural forces, and outside influences. By historical and contextual forces, it involves past confrontational situations between Muslims and Christians, their place and possible reactivation in the collective memory as discussed in the previous chapters. This section focuses on the emerging dynamics of religious contestation at the federal level manifested in terms of state-religion relations, inter and intra-religious relations. In doing so, this section serves as a basis for analyzing the situation in Wollo in the coming chapters.

4.3.1 Inter-Religious Relations

One of the major areas of contestation between Muslims and Christians is the issue of religious fundamentalism/extremism. It is about forced proselytization of religious others; an exclusivist tendency that rests upon absolute truth claims and fails to recognize the very existence of other religious groups.

According to a government document fundamentalism is about transgressing the constitutional stipulation of secularism. It involves violating the freedom of religion and belief of others; denying religious equality of others, any attempt to establish a religious state and religiously influencing secular educational institutions. Both Muslim and Christian informants agree on the likelihood of fundamentalism in all religions. However, while cautious in distinguishing between good Muslims from bad ones, many Christians believed that Muslims have more propensities to the fundamentalist call than Christians do. For them, no religion is inherently bad but there are those who misinterpret the holy text to their advantage in creating a rift between religious groups.

Muslims on their part point towards MK as a Christian extremist group. Most Muslim respondents pick it as a prime example of anti-Muslim sentiment within the EOC. Otherwise called the 'Association of Saints' this group represents a neo-conservative camp within the EOC. Established in the wake of the new federal dispensation this group stands to preserve the identity of EOC vis-à-vis the growing influence of Protestantism and Islam. Many accused the group of its nostalgic ideas of 'Christian Ethiopia' that defies the pluralist nature of the status quo. most Salafists view MK as a challenge to religious pluralism and accuse it of religious fundamentalism. In the name of defending the church, the MK has been advocating anti-Islam rhetoric. According to Ahmedin Jabal-a prominent Muslim activist, it was the MK, which published an article that discredits the prophet of Islam. MK, on the other hand, presents itself as a defender of the church against the assault of Islam and Protestantism.

Interestingly enough, both Christians and Muslims seem to agree on one extremist group Takfir Wal Hijra. This group is known for its strict adherence and literary interpretation of Islamic jurisprudence. Accordingly, it aimed at restoring the unity of the Umma by establishing a

caliphate through armed struggle against Jews, Christians, and apostate Muslims.[229] In addition, true to its fundamentalist fervor it accuses other Muslims of kufr- disbelieve. Another extreme believes of the group includes it is haram (forbidden) to pay tax to a Christian government since natural resources belong not to the government but Allah.

This group had taken root in some parts of Qallu Woreda of until dismantled by government forces. According to local informants, the importer of the group to the area was a former attorney Jemal, with his fallout with the Woreda government over appointment, started to preach Takfirist ideas to local peasants and organize resistance against Woreda government not to pay land tax. The group is implicated in the 2009 religious conflict in Jimma where many Christians were killed. The group is banned among many Islamic countries and the majority of Islamic scholars reject it is as an extremist group that does not represent Islam.[230]

The Orthodox Church has viewed Islamic revivalism with consternation. It particularly feels threatened by the new historical and physical space that Muslims have gained in post-1991 Ethiopia. For many Christian informants, one of the consequences of the religio-pluralist policy of the state has been the growing extremism among Muslims. According to Zemene[231]- a Christian informant- in the name of religious freedom, many Muslims are exposed to adopt an extreme form of Islam that challenges the existing culture of religious tolerance. For him, new practices of Muslims such as veiling and shorting trousers were unknown in the past. However, as Abbink[232] rightly points out this represents a discursive Christian resistance that mistook all aspects of Islamic revival in Ethiopia as a manifestation of extremism.

The government has put "religious extremism" as one of the major challenges of the state alongside "chauvinism" and "narrow nationalism." It has been critical of the existence of

[229] Dereje and Bruce. Sufi-Salafi. PP:15

[230] Ostebo 2010. "Islamism in the Horn of Africa: Assessing Ideology, Actors and Objectives." International Law and Policy Institute, Report Series, Oslo. PP:13

[231] Informant interview, 2016, Kombolcha

[232] Abbink, Jon. 2014. Religious Freedom and the Political Order: The Ethiopian 'Secular State' and the Containment of Muslim Identity", in *Journal of Eastern African Studies.* PP. 357

extreme elements within religious groups. According to government policy documents[233], the problem of religious extremism is a problem common to both Muslims and Orthodox Christian. The government criticized the EOC for the politicization of church preaches which has even become an outright political campaign.

Another major area of contestation that has been shaping Christian –Muslim relations is competition overbuilding worship places. The Places of worship have served as a tool of public manifestations of religious expression. Building such places has been an arena of competition between religious groups. The post-1991 religio pluralistic policy of the state has resulted in ease on the public manifestation of religion. Hence, religious groups have been expanding their public presence through the construction of worship places across the state. However, this process was not without contestation in that many incidents of confrontation between religious groups have occurred in various places of the country.

In South Wollo, this has been one of the major areas of religious competition between Christians and Muslims. Notwithstanding, some astonishing instances where both religious groups have participated in the construction of each other's places of worship, South Wollo has witnessed confrontations over building places of worship. Now a day the number of worship places is taken as a determining factor in asserting once religious visibility in the ever-diversified religious scene. This is seen in increasing politicization of allocation of land for worship and burial places in many urban centers of the zone and elsewhere in Ethiopia.

Many Christians have resented the construction of mosques in places where there are few Muslims. For them, such constructions are not made for religious purposes but are part of the foreign-based effort in 'Islamization' of Ethiopia.

A Christian informant[234] expressed his anxiety in the following words፡

> በየቦታው እየተሰራ ያላው መስጊድ ብዛት ስታይ በእውነት በዚህ አጭር ጊዜ ውስጥ ተሰርቶ ነው ለማለት ይከብዳል። ለኔ መቼም ተሰርቶ ነው ከማለት ተዘርቶ ነው ማለት ይቀለኛል።

[233] See MoFPD. 2013. *Ya Haymanot Bizhanet Ayayaz Bethiopia*

[234] Informant interview with Henok Asrat 2016, Kombolcha

ምክንያቱም ጥቂት ወይም ምንም ሙስሊም የሌለበት ቦታ ሰይቀር መስጊድ ተገንብቶ ታገኛለህ። ይህ ደግሞ ሊሆን የሚችለው በውጭ የገንዘብ እርዳታ እንጅ በሌላ አይመስለኝም።

When you see the number of mosques constructed, it is difficult to say it was constructed in such a short period. For me it easy to say it was sowed than constructed. Because you found mosques in places where there are few or no Muslims.

Although such exaggerated expressions do not represent the view of the majority of Christians, still many share the feeling that the construction of mosques here and there' is not a healthy development. Most Christian informants attributed the expansion of Mosques to the advent of Salafism. They contend that thanks to Saudi petrodollars many mosques have been built not only in Muslim majority areas but also in the areas where Muslims are very few. It is true that many new mosques have been constructed in many towns and villages of Wollo with the financial support of foreign-based finances through Ethiopian intermediaries.[235] Salafi respondents, on the other hand, reject such allegations as unnecessary fear and argue that it is, after all, it is constitutional right to have worship places as far as it is within the legal framework. In a seemingly deliberate attempt to responding to such fears, in 2013 the government officially blocked foreign-based financial assistance to such purposes.

Notwithstanding the role of foreign assistance in the construction of mosques, religious freedom has been instrumental in the expansion of mosques. In the past, Muslims were not in a position to construct mosques as the need arises even with foreign assistance. In many cases, attempts at mosque construction have faced Christian popular protest, bureaucratic obstruction and delay. Moreover, even after 2001, as the researcher himself witnessed, many mosques have been constructed fully funded by domestic sources mainly through the concerted effort of lay Muslims.

On many occasions as part of the competition and show of supremacy, both Christian and Muslims happen to claim the same place simultaneously. Orthodox Christians challenged the construction of mosques of Furqan and Robit Bilal in Dessie town. In the case of the Furqan

[235] Abbink, Jon. 2007. "Transformations of Islam and Communal Relations in Wallo, Ethiopia", in Soares, F. Benjamin and Rene Otayek (eds.) Islam and Muslim Politics in Africa. Palgrave Macmillan, New York. PP 73-74

mosque, Christians were against its construction because they claimed that the land belongs to them. Accordingly, they appealed to the city administration to confirm their ownership. Finally, through the reconciling work of a Christian religious father, the issue was solved and the land was given to Muslims. Similarly, the construction of the Bilal mosque was opposed by Christians based on the claim that the sound from the caller of the minaret could disturb the church and the Abun located nearby. Later by the concerted effort of Muslims and officials of the city administration in winning the goodwill of the clergymen of the church, finally, the mosque is constructed in the Robit area of Dessie.

Moreover, in 2009 Dessie has witnessed the worst problem of religious tension that aroused fierce disagreement and clashes. The cause of the disagreement was a plot of land given for the construction of two churches at the top of a hill called Azewa Gadal. Muslims' opposed the decision of the city administration on the ground that there are no Christians (only one) in the area and historically the area had been one of the centers where forceful conversion of Muslims was perpetrated and there was a mosque. Finally, the government decided the land to remain neutral and stopped church construction. In opposition, Christians organized a demonstration, the police reacted with gunfire that left three people dead and fourteen wounded.

According to the assessment of the administration and security office of the zone, there is a spread of the illegal establishment of worship places through changing private buildings into churches and mosques. Focus group discussants and individual interviewees raised this issue as one of the major sources of tension. Some informants opined that the spread of such illegal worship places is due to, on the one hand, the failure on this side of local administration in giving timely decisions for legal requests and is the result of unnecessary competition among religious groups on the other. Still others emphasize the increasing religiosity among followers and the resultant need for public religious space. A Muslim informant[236] has seen it differently. For him

> አሁን እየታየ ያለው ውድድር መነሻ በተለይ በሙሰሊሞችና በፕሮቴስታንቶች አካባቢ የሚሰተዋለው አዲሰ የተገኘውን ዕድል የመጠቀምና የድሮውን እጥረት የማካካስ ስሜት እና በክርስቲኖች በኩል የሚታየው በሌሎች እየተቀደምን ነው የሚል አረዳድ ይመስለኛል።እንዴት

[236] Interview with Jemal Hassen, 2016 Dessie

ብትል ኦርቶዶክስ ቤተ-ክርስቲያን ከነበራት ተጽዕኖ አንጻር ያለምንም ተወዳዳሪ በፈለገችው ቦታ መገንባት ትችል ነበር።ይህ ደግሞ ለሌሎች ያልተሰጠ ዕድል ነበር። አሁን ግን ለሁለም እኩል ዕድል ሲሰጥ ውድድሩ ተከሰተ።

The recent competition for building worship places is I think due to the passion on the side of especially Muslims and Protestants to seize the opportunity and redress past shortage and the perception among orthodox Christians that 'we are being surpassed by others. 'Thanks to its dominant position, the Orthodox Church had able to build wherever it wants without any competitor. This chance was not given to other religious groups. Now when the chance is given to all the competition emerged.

Thus, he emphasized the role of the religio-pluralist policy of the state that opens a new opportunity for exercising freedom of religion that inculcates building worship places. However, this analysis could not explain the whole picture in that the competition is the result of a culmination of other factors also.

One such factor is the absence of a clear regulatory law that governs this issue. Up until now, there has not been any proclamation at the federal level that governs the allocation and use of worship and burial places. Despite the lack of rules and regulations meant for governing the allocation of burial and worship places at the federal, regional states have prepared their own regulation as per their power to administer state land. However, it should be noted that the lack of a uniform regulation might result in differential treatment of religious groups in regions, which in turn becomes a source of tension.

In 2011/12, the Amhara regional state Industry and urban development office came up with a regulation to decide on the grant of worship places in urban areas. The regulation contains a preamble and ten articles. The regulation is born out of the need to address the ever-increasing demand for worship places among religious groups and provides a uniform platform to administer the issue.

According to this regulation in order to receive land, a religious institution should have a legal personality from an appropriate religious institution or a certificate of legal registration.

Although this could apply to those religious groups with central institutions this could disfranchise splinter groups thereby affect their religious right. Besides, this could also further accentuate intra – religious debate in the control of central institutions and promote tyranny within religious groups.

A related matter of registration at the national level has been controversial. Despite the constitutional talk of religious equality and freedom, the legal requirement for registration of religious institutions allowed the EOC to remain aloof to this process. This has been a reason for Muslims and Protestants' resentment taking it as a differential treatment on the part of the government against the declared religious equality. Although it is difficult to clearly understand the underlying motives of such actions the government reluctance in implementing the requirement for registration over EOC could be attributed to its fear of antagonizing the Christian populace, which is politically inexpedient. It also shows the dominant posture the EOC still entertains in the eye the government circle whose center is dominated by politicians with Orthodox Christian background at least in the name.

Besides, it implies the unchanged nature of this particular law to fit with the current secular system, which is believed to have ended past discriminatory practices. This begs the need for entrenching the secular principle in both state laws and institutions. Generally, as far as religious freedom and equality are concerned the current system has achieved a lot. This has been manifested in the growing presence of religious groups in the public space in general and the enhanced position of Muslims and Protestants in particular.

4.3.2 Intra-Religious Relations

Almost all religions of the world exhibit some form of internal diversity and part of the problem with religious contestation is harbored within the circle of religions. Similarly, in Ethiopia, despite the variation across religions, both Muslims and Christians encounter such internal frictions that at times engulf inter-religious debate.

The tension between the Orthodox Tewahedo and Tahadiso

The EOC is not new to intra religious contestations. History is a witness to this. Although it seems difficult to locate, at least in the Ethiopian context, the start of intra orthodox debate, the

available historical literature implicated such debates as far back as the reign of Emperor Zara Yaqob that witnessed divisions within the church between the followers of Ewostatewos and Estifanos over the cult of the virgin Mary. In modern times of Ethiopia, during the reign king Tewedros, the church was entangled with doctrinal differences over the nature and birth of Christ.

More recently, the EOC has been witnessing controversy over the need for church reform. Characterizing the church as a 'stagnant' institution, the 'Tahdiso movement' advocates the idea of church reform. Refuting this as the 'agenda of Protestantism', the Tewahidos' vocalized by the Mahibre kidusan derogatorily dub them Ortho-Pente. This designation is important in situating the case within the wider inter-religious competition of EOC with protestant Christians over the soul of Christian believers. The 'Tahdiso' on their part criticizes MK for name-calling thereby rejects the existence of such a group called Tahidso, and takes the reform question as a genuine orthodox agenda. The controversy first emerged in the theological colleges of EOC and later became an issue in other institutions of the church that ranges from the Holy Synod to churches. Still today, there is a heated debate going on in social media unabated.

At first sight, such controversies appear to be minor divisions and insignificant in provoking conflict within the Christian populace. However, seen in the end, such issues will have the potential to destabilize the church establishment and create much deeper antagonism between the EOC and Protestant churches, which are already fighting for the Christian soul in all fronts. A more pronounced internal division is also observed in the Islamic camp.

Sufi – Salafi Debate

Muslims have been suffering from internal divisions that gave birth to the various understandings of Islam notably manifested itself in the Sunni-Shia divide and the Salafi-Sufi debate. As part of the global community of Islam-Umma, Ethiopian Muslims have not been immune to this process. The intra-Muslim debate is manifested in terms of a different reading of the Quran, different traditions enacted; different authorities respected and favored different views about non-Muslims.

As noted earlier, both in popular and official rhetoric, for long Islam in Ethiopia is conceived in its Sufi variant characterized mainly by its tolerant nature. Dubbed in Amharic Nabaru Islemina-

Sufi Islam has been the prime way of Islamic religious expression in Ethiopia. However, this is contested by the emergence of new ways of professing and practicing Islam. This is no wonder given the geographic proximity of Ethiopia to world Islamic centers and the huge advancement made in transport and communication technology that made information exchange easy. With the end of the strict perhaps anti-religious secular, model of the Derg in 1991 various Islamic movements begun to flourish in Ethiopia's religious scene. The major Islamic reform movements in today's Ethiopia include the Salafi, Tabligh Jammat, and the Intellectualist movement.

According to Ostebo the emergence and growth of such Islamic reform movements have led to increasing both inter and intra-religious tensions. Significant in this regard is the emergence of the Salafi movement and its interaction with the Sufi tradition. Still more important is the recent controversy surrounding the Ahbash movement.

In spite of its prior introduction to Ethiopia, it was after 1991 that Salafism has momentum. Fundamentally, Salafism is about returning to the Islam of 'righteous predecessors'- Salfa Sualihin. It advocates the practice of Islam in its pristine form and rejects later additions as bida-innovations prohibited in the religion of Islam. Hence, the Sufi practices among others celebration of Mawlid (birthday of the holy prophet), Saint Veneration, visiting graves (Ziaratul Qabir) fell under attack.

The coming of some Lebanon sheikhs and the subsequent training organized for thousands of religious leaders over religious extremism and related issues has ignited yet another contestation among the Muslim populace. Known for its stern anti-Salafi stance, Ahbash has appeared as a neo-Sufi challenge against Salafi expansion. Despite the group, prior existence in Ethiopia soil it was after 2011 that it began to surface in the public arena. In south Wollo city of Kombolcha, the group has established a religious education center – Madrasatul Abu Musa Al-Ashare for training students over the creed of Ashariya.

Moreover, the group has been closely working with the Kombolcha Woreda Islamic council Majlis in organizing training secession on Aqeeda in almost all mosques. The group's rapid expansion in Kombolcha town and surrounding areas is associated with the strong presence of the shrines of popular Sufi sheikhs and a relatively little acceptance of Salafism has among the Muslims. Besides, the group's appearance as a 'defender of Sufism' has facilitated its easy

integration with the ulema class. Hence, many people still do not consider the group as a distinct group but as an anti-Wahhabi movement. One of the manifestations of the growing Ahbash-Salafi divide has been over marriage. In recent years, it is now common to ask the Aqeeda of a person before accepting a marriage proposal. This shows the group's deep involvement in shaping the view of the Muslim mass at the grass-root level.

As gathered from informal discussions with many orthodox Christians the adoption of secularism has helped the resurgence of Islam. For them, under secularism, the Muslims are 'getting too far'. The ever-increasing construction of mosques in many parts of the country and the public appearance of Muslim women wearing Niqab are sources of worry for many Christians. Adding fuel to this worry is the violent confrontations of Muslims and Christians in various parts of the state. Notable in this regard was the Jimma incident where members of the extremist Takfir Wal Hijra attacked many Christians. Often times Orthodox Christians put this incident as a typical manifestation of the growing problem of Islamic extremism.

Since the 2011 Ahbash controversy, the relation of the government with a section of the Muslim community has been strained. The government persistently defends its participation in the training organized by Majlis inviting some Lebanese Sheikhs was only concerning the issue of secularism. In contrast, Muslims accuse the government of meddling in the internal affairs of Muslims by facilitating the training by Ahbash Sheikhs thereby contain Salafism.

Salafists had largely supported the opposition. Hence, the major centers of strong opposition had been observed in the Salafi strongholds of Dessie, Garba, and Kemisse of the Amhara region, to mention some. The Ahbash controversy has shown the growing fear of Islamic extremism among the government and the continuation of the long-held view of Islam as a problem child to Ethiopia.

4.3.3 Government Interference in Religious Affairs

In Ethiopia too, history has shown that state interference in matters of religion has been a rule than an exception. Taken against the Christian propensity of the monarchical regimes and the inextricable relationship developed thereof, it is no wonder that the state was the kingmaker in church affairs and vice versa. It is, however, wondering to observe when the state meddling in religious affairs under a constitutionally sanctioned secular system.

At the national level, many instances attest to alleged government interference in religious affairs. It is argued that the reason behind state interference in religious affairs has to do with the fundamental lack of legitimacy of the regime and its lack of trust towards religious groups that mandate political maneuvering and co-optation over religious leaders.

The initial accommodating policy of EPRDF has been conflated with its increasing tendency in watching and controlling religious groups. Some sort of EPRDF politics of interference has affected both the EOC Synod and EIASC. While Muslims and Orthodox Christians blame the government of interfering in their religious affairs the latter claimed its actions have still been within the secular framework and defending the system against extremism. The tendency of the government to control religious groups has also created a situation where local actors have been manipulating it to advance their confessional interest.

Although to a different degree, the interventionist impulse in EPRDF's view on the religious organization has not spared the EOC. The regime has been critically watching any attempt of opposition political mobilization within the church. In 1991, the replacement of the general directorate of the synod by the alleged government involvement was the first encounter between the regime and the church. More controversial indeed was the appointment of Abune Paulos as Patriarch. Emphasizing his ethnic origin as a Tigrian his detractors contested his appointment and taken it to mean yet another manifestation of Tigrian dominance in controlling power in the religious front too.

let us now see it in the case of the EOC the most dominant religious actor in Ethiopia. According to Daniel Kibret, the church had never been free from government interference.

The government is criticized for interfering in the appointment of the patriarch, which according to the teachings of the church is supposed to be a matter of spirituality, not a worldly matter. Recently after the death of patriarch Paulos, many in the diaspora criticized the alleged involvement of government in the process of electing the incumbent patriarch Marqorious. The government has been adamantly rejected by such intervention and in turn, accuses the exiled synod and opposition groups in attempting to position their own favorite person. Another major contestation between the church and the government was the issue of the Waldiba Monastery. This was due to the irrigation project started around this monastery that according to the former

it damages part of the age-old monastery. The government ridicules such allegations as baseless and points its finger on former EPRP leaders working in VOA and remnants of CUD.

According to Abbink[237], the government in many ways intervened in the affairs of Ethiopian Muslims. It repeatedly interferes in the EIASC elections, closed Muslim periodicals and youth associations, and facilitated the Ahbash training of Muslim leaders. During the election of members to a new council in January 2004, a government representative from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs attended the voting session. This was mainly aimed at cleansing the council of Salafi and to control against possible "extremist" influence within Ethiopia.[238]

However, for Hassen Taju, a prominent Muslim Writer, the government's interest to watch out religious affairs should not always be taken as unnecessary.

> ኢትዮጵያ ውስጥ መጂሊስ ያለስምምነት ሊቋቋም አይችልም። የመንግስትን አላስፈላጊ ጣልቃ ገብነት ልትቃወም ትችላለህ እንጅ "ጭራሽም ወደኔ አትዙር" ልትለው አትችልም። ከመንግስት ጋር መስማማት ያስፈልጋል ምክንያቱም እስልምና አሁን ባለው ተጨባጭ አለም ጥንቃቄ ያስፈልገዋል። ስለዚህ ከሙስሊሙ ውጭ ያለው ወገን "ተቋሙን ያልሆኑ ሰዎች ተቆጣጠረውት ወደ መጥፎ አቅጣጫ ሊመሩት ስለሚችሉ ስጋት አለኝ" ካለ ስጋት አለው ማለት ነው። መንግስት "አክራሪ ሃይሎች እጃቸውን አስገብተው ህዝብ ሊያተራምሱ ይችላሉ" ካለ ሌላው ቀርቶ ኦርቶዶክስም "ሙስሊሞች ጎረቤቶቹ ስለሆኑና የሀገሬ ጉዳይ ስለሆነ ያሰጋኛል" ካለ ያሰጋቸዋል ማለት ነው።. . . ተቋሙ የእኛ ነው፤የሚያመጣው ጣጣ ግን ሁሉንም ነው የሚጎዳው።
>
> In Ethiopia, it is impossible to establish Majlis without agreement. You could oppose unnecessary government intervention but you could not say 'never look at me'. It is necessary to agree with the government. This is because Islam in our recent world context needs special care. So if non-Muslims argue 'in case of the institution falls under improper men that could drive it to bad directions I do have a fear' and even the orthodox say 'It is my concern that extremist forces in the

[237] Abbink, 'Religious Freedom and the Political Order...'. PP. 357

[238] Isaac Eshetu Ed. *Where is the Ethiopian Muslim?* Addis Ababa: PP. 320-341.

> majlis could destabilize the people', hence it becomes their concern too. [....] The institution is ours but the possible challenges risk all. Nonetheless, this does not in no way means establishing a majlis that is fully comfortable to the government.

In the case of Muslims, this has been further complicated by the government's position of favoring the Sufi element (*Nebaru Islimina*) as "peaceful" and "tolerant" against the 'radical' Salafists. Part of the problem is associated with the strong hand of the office of Administration and Security, which handles the issue of religion at the local level. This has been manifested in the strong hand of the office in influencing the promotion and demotion of Imams and the involvement of the office in orchestrating the confiscation of Mosques allegedly controlled by Salafists. Although the government's action could be justified by its role in protecting peace and security, its involvement in supporting one sectarian interest against the other appeared problematic.

At different levels, non-Sufi Islamic reform groups have been harassed, intimidated, and wrongly incriminated by the Sufi –led Majlis for advocating the strict teaching of Islam[239] On answering such criticisms an Ahbash teacher said what has been problematic to us is that Wahabiya has come in the name of Sunna. It is difficult to differentiate who is a real follower of Sunna or Wahabiya.

With the start of the Ahbash training the role of the government involvement in the intra-Muslim debate, become apparent. Officially known as the Association of Islamic Philanthropic Projects" (Jamiyyat al-Mashari al-Khayriyya al-Islamiyya) the Ahbash represents a neo-Sufi trend within Islam. The group leader – Shaikh Abdulah al-Harari from Ethiopia (hence the name al-habashi) and his followers took over the association in 1983 and began to spread the ideas of moderation and political passiveness.[240]

[239] See draft report by Inter-Africa Group and MoFPDA. 2016. Countering the Threat of Violent Extremism in Ethiopia.

[240] Kabha, Mustafa and Haggai Erlich (2006) "Al-Ahbash and Wahhabiyya: Interpretations of Islam", in *International Journal of Middle East Studies*. Vol. 38 No. 4: Cambridge University Press.

More specifically the group is known for its fixation with Islamic creed and its vehement rejection of Salafi creed as un-Islamic. The group is also known for its practice of Takfir i.e. denouncing opponents as disbelievers.

Despite the existence of is center in the Kolfe area of Addis Ababa, until the coming of some Lebanese member of it in 2011 little was known about the group and its activities among the public at large. The government support for the Ahbash doctrine has been evident in the active participation of government representatives in the training sessions in the name of combating extremism.

For instance, the researcher has observed in Tahuldare Woreda that under its administrative and security office enlisted predominantly Salafi populated Kebele as extremist areas and working towards whipping out any Salafi element. Muslims with a non-Sufi theological standpoint is blackmailed as 'extremists' and entered the list of those who are 'not cleaned from Salafism'. Thus, being a Salafi has become a sign of disease that needs eradication.[241] However, the government is not preaching Sufism in mosques, its anti-Salafi stance and support given for the Sufis go far beyond the red line of secularism.

In almost all mosques in major towns of South Wollo, now became under the control of the Sufi-led Majlis. In many mosques of Dessie town, Salafi oriented Imams and mosque committee members have been expelled and replaced by Sufi affiliated Muslims. For instance, in Kombolcha town the woreda Majlis took Taqwa mosque-formerly a Salafi mosque- and turned it into an Islamic school of Ahbash- Madrasatul- Ashariya.[242]

The fact that the decision to make the Majlis election in kebele by the Majlis has also been opposed by Salafists and some Sufis who argue that as the matter concerns only Muslims it should have been administered in mosques. Arguably, this was part of the fear on the side of government and Majlis that the Salafists could control the process thereby elect their own men. In the words of government spokesperson Shimeles Kemal- 'Controlling such an institution

[241] Informant interview with anonymous Informant, Haiq, 2017

[242] See Ethiopia Islamic Affairs Supreme Council Guideline for Administration of Mosque. 2015:5. This guideline differentiated between mosques under Sufi's and under the administration of Wahabiya/Salafiya. In Salafi administered mosques, Sufi practices such as Mawlid are strictly forbidden.

would help legitimize, theological legitimize, its activities,"[243] The Majlis in has part argued that polls outside mosques could be manipulated."

For whatever just reason the decision is made, it violets the spirit of secularism in that it disfranchises the segment of a religious group (Salafists) while promoting another one (Sufis).

Moreover, such sectarian understanding has been observed in the construction of new mosques. In recent times, it is common to check the sectarian identity of those who demand land for the construction of new mosques. Hence, unless the confirmation of the Sufi-led Majlis for being Sufi is received no one could able to receive land for building a mosque. This in a way prohibits the exercise of religious freedom lawfully thereby paving the way for the expansion of illegal construction of the mosque.

In general, containing extremism is one thing but supporting Sufism is another. What the government has been doing in this regard is self-contradictory in that it is untenable to defend secularism while transgressing it. In addition, it is against the spirit of federalism that furnishes diversity and a secular venture that presupposes the existence of a plurality of religious groups and internal differences within them. Fanatic politicized understanding of Islam as a religion of warfare and the presentation of Islam as a religion, which is flexible and adaptable to local systems of faith and cultures, are both problematic.

Another issue of secularism that involves the government is the manipulation of public office for religious favoritism. As gathered from focus group discussions and interviews 'religious favoritism' has been one of the growing challenges of religious pluralism and tolerance in the area. There is a growing tendency among public employees to serve in favor of their religious brethren. According to a government document, this has been one of the challenges faced in the struggle against eradicating the 'extremist element'. This has also recurred in the public discussions organized by the Woreda government. A participant in one of such discussions put the problem of religious favoritism and the failure of the government thereof as follows

> መንግስት መጀመሪያ ራሱን ያጥራ።ስንቱ ነው የመንግሰት ወንበር ይዞ ስራውን የሚሰራው።
> አሁን ሃረቡና ገርባን ብንወስድ መደረ አክራሪ ዉሃብይ ነዉ የመንግስትን ቢሮ የሞላው።

[243] https://www.voanews.com/africa/ethiopian-muslims-protest-ahead-islamic-council-election October 5, 2012

መንግሰትም እኛ ስንጮህ እያወቀ ዝም ብሎ ኖሮ ብዙ ችግር ከደረሰ በኃላ ነው በራሱ ሲመጣበት መሯሯጥ የጀመረው።

Let the government first clear itself. There are many who seize the position and serve their own purpose. For instance in Harbu and Gerba government office is stuffed with the Wahabi fundamentalists. While we were shouting, the government knowingly remained silent and now after many problems created and when it turns to itself began to act.

Some of the Muslim informants attributed the problem of religious favoritism and the related government politicization of Islam with the alleged infiltration of offices by members of MK According to Mohammed, MK has penetrated the government and directs the attention of the government towards Muslims in the name of fighting fundamentalism. However, this comment seems a little exaggerated recent government effort in better secularizing its bureaucracy indicates to this direction. In Kombolcha, for instance, bureaucrats were subjected to criticism over their religious service and forced to opt to either stop religious service or leave government office.[244]

In contrast, some Christian and Sufi Muslim informants argue that one of the major strategies of Salafi expansion in the area has been through infiltrating government through controlling public offices. According to a government document, such tendencies have been in Masha, Harbu, towns of the zone. In Masha town, for instance, some security personnel was accused of impartiality in serving their religious brethren. Similarly, in the small town of Harbu, some health and education institutions are suspected of religious discrimination in their service. In some places of the zone, local officials have been weak in making timely decisions for religion-related demands. In Argoba special Woreda, Christians are not allowed to construct a church. In Kombolcha town, the quest of Evangelical Churches for burial places is not addressed.

According to a government document at the different echelons of the bureaucracy, some failed to separate between their religious identity and government responsibility. This anti-constitutional

[244] Informant Interview Henok Asrat. 2016. Kombolcha

abuse of power has been on the rise in recent times. In the same document, the government acknowledged the problem in the following words

> የኦርቶዶክስ አማኝ ከንቲባ ሲሆን ለኦርቶዶክስ መሬት የሚሰጥበት፣ የፕሮቴስታንት አማኝ ለፕሮቴስታንት፣የእስልምና ሃይማኖት ተከታይ ደግሞ ለሙስሊም ሀይማኖት መሬት ቅድሚያ የሚሰጥባቸው አካሄዶች በአንዳንድ አካባቢዎች በግልጽ የታዩበት ሁኔታ አጋጥሚል።
>
> In some places, there is a tendency to favor once religion against the other hence when an orthodox became a mayor he tends to give land to the orthodox, a protestant mayor for the protestant and when a Muslim became a mayor tend to favor Muslims.

However, to a lesser degree, such religious favoritism has also been observed in day-to-day government service provisions. This has been the case in universities where some instructors have been accused of favoring their co-religionists in allocating results. For instance, two female Muslim students of Wollo University had suffered such a problem at the hand of an instructor allegedly a member of MK.

This might partly be associated with the growing importance of universities as a center of religious activism among religious groups. Although such problems beg further study and appear insignificant at first sight, it, however, indicates a clear sign of a growing challenge of mistrust that could further antagonize religious relations.

4.4 Conclusion

The FDRE constitution recognizes religious plurality of the state and institutes a secular system that clearly separates state and religion. To this effect it inculcates many provisions which that depicts the secular nature of the state.

Formally, the constitutional recognition of religious equality and religious freedom has redressed past injustices done over non-orthodox Christians and brought to an end Derg's socialist restriction on religious practice. This has resulted in a symmetrical religious scene that enabled all religious groups to exist as equal and minimize religious tension that would otherwise further antagonize interfaith relations in the country.

This chapter also discusses about the management of religious issues at the Federal Level. In this regard the establishment of Minster of Peace has been a major development in the administration of religious issues at the federal level. As far as the role of civil society in the accommodation of religious diversity is concerned, the establishment of the Inter Religious Council of Ethiopia (IRCE) both at the federal and regional level represents a positive step. One of the reasons behind the creation of IRCE was to curb the influence of religious extremism. Hence, the council has the potential for enhancing interfaith dialogue and nurturing religious peace. Moreover, IRCE would play a key role in linking the government and the religious institutions thereby create a common understanding in resolving faith-related problems.

This chapter also assess a directive prepared by Minster of Education- for regulating religious observance in educational institutions and conclude that the directive has many limitations as far as religious freedom is concerned. More importantly, the directive clearly shows the absence of a clear policy guideline that explain the nature and character of Ethiopian secular model.

The institution of the secularism and the religio-pluralist policy of state have brought new dynamics of religious pluralism and tolerance in Ethiopia. This is mainly seen in the changed character of inter and intra religious relations. It is stressed that government interference in religious affairs has affected the secular environment in general and religious relations in particular.

As far as religious freedom and equality are concerned the current system has achieved a lot. This has been manifested in the growing presence of religious groups in the public space in general and the enhanced position of Muslims and Protestants in particular.

Chapter Five

Religious Pluralism and Tolerance in Wollo: A Historical Perspective

'People will not look forward to posterity who never looks backward to their ancestors.' (Edmund Burke)

There is indeed a lesson in History. Cognizant with this fact, from a historical perspective, this chapter dwells on the religious background of the study area with an emphasis on the introduction and early interaction of Christian and Muslim religious communities of Wollo. In doing so, while focusing on the Wollo region, it dealt with the introduction of Islam and Christianity to Ethiopia. Besides, this chapter examines the religious policy of the state towards Wollo under 'Neo- Solomonid' emperors[245]. First, it seems imperative to introduce the study area.

5.1 Wollo: An Overview

To begin with, the nomenclature, 'Wollo' is first used in the post 16th century as a name given to the ethnic and geographic area of the southern part of medieval Amhara province.[246] Initially, it was an ethnic name for one of the various Oromo settlers who inhabited the area since the sixteenth century. Afterward, the designation attained a wider territorial and ethnic undertone. Due to a culmination of various factors, the territory of Wollo enlarges and shrinks at different times.

Located in the northeastern part of Ethiopia, Wollo has been at the juncture of multiple ethnic and religious identities. Besides its crucial location, the 'melting pot' character of Wollo is attributed to its climatic and geographic diversity. While its eastern part exhibits a scorching heat, the highland massifs of Wollo remain cool.[247]

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[245] This is clearly seen in the self-proclaimed names, titles and slogans the emperors assumed namely Tewodros (The Husband of Ethiopia and Fiancé of Jerusalem), Yohannes (The king of Zion) and Menelik (The Lion of the tribe of Judah).

[246] Hussein Ahmed. Islam in Wollo pp 1

[247]Bahru Zewde. 1998. Forests and forest management in Wollo, in historical perspective. *Journal of Ethiopian Studies* 31(1):87-122

Wollo has been a diverse society. Historically its diversity is due to the early Christian settlement and establishment of Christian centers and communities; the brief conquest of Imam Ahmed, the Oromo population movement; the establishment of Muslim dynasties and the resurgence of imperial power in the second half of the nineteenth century.[248]

Wollo the historical dates to the medieval province of Amhara, which was populated by the Wollo clan of the Oromo people.[249] Citing the existence of ancient churches in the area, Trimingham claimed that Christian Amhara populated Wollo. Criticizing this as 'misleading' Hussein in his part argued that it was only a small part of the Wollo under the control of Christian Amhara. During this period, the provinces under Wollo were the provinces of Qeda, Wag, Lasta, and Angot.[250]

Beginning from the last quarter of the sixteenth century the historical Wollo had witnessed the Oromo movement. Clans from both the two major subdivisions had settled in different parts of Wollo. The clan of Wollo belongs to the Karrayu branch of Baraytuma Oromo. The name Wollo is believed to be the name of the second son of Karrayu who had six sons namely Warra Bukko, Warra Gurra, Warra Noleilu, Warra Karrayu, Warra Iitu, and Warra Noleali.[251] There are conflicting traditions about the names of the various clans and sub-clans of the Wollo. A recent oral material found in 1972 provides ten sub-clans that make up the clan of Wollo as Ali Bet, Abbay Bet, Chirracha, Laga Hida, Laga Gora, Laga Ambo, Warra Himano, Koreb, Ruga, and Sagarart.[252]

Trimingham on his part argued that many Wollo do not belong to the Oromo ethnic group. Especially, the Wollo of the highest region of the plateau in the east and in the south, the Amhara Saignt west of Dessie, the massifs of Legambo and Legahida and the Wara Ilu plateau.[253]

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[248]Hussein, Islam in Wollo.PP. 2-3

[249] Ibid: 1-29

[250]Ibid:4

[251]Ibid:15

[252]Ibid:16

[253] Trimingham, Islam in Ethiopia. PP. 23

Territorially, the historical Wollo region is extended from the Bashilo river which separates it from Amhara, by the Blue Nile from Gojjam and by the Wanchit and Jama from Shoa, in the northeast by the Mille and in the east by the Danakil plain.[254]Wollo is drained in a westerly and easterly direction. The Beshilo River and its tributaries cut through the highlands of the western part to join the Abbai River on the southwestern border of the province. On the other hand, the Awash River, with its tributaries flowing from the escarpment, drains eastwards into the Danakil desert. High plateau, rugged mountain chains, and steep slopes are characteristic of northern, western, and central Wollo.

With the federalization of Ethiopia, the historical Wollo is partitioned among the Afar, Tigray, and Amhara regional states. The latter retained much of it under North and South Wollo administrative zones. As already indicated this study is conducted in South Wollo. The Zone is bordered on the north by Semien Wollo, on the northwest by Debub Gondar, on the west by Mirab Gojjam, on the south by Semien Shewa and the Oromia region, on the northeast by Afar region, and on the east by the Oromia zone and Argobba special woreda.

With the total area of 17,067.45 square kilometers, the Zone has a total population of 2,518,862, of whom 1,248,698 are men and 1,270,164 women. South Wollo has a population density of 147.58. In terms of ethnic diversity, the Amhara ethnic group (99.33%) comprises most of the zone and other ethnic groups make up the remaining 0.67% of the population. Accordingly, Amharic is spoken as a first language by 98.65%; the remaining 1.35% spoke all other primary languages reported.[255]

One region in which Islam and Christianity are very much equally represented demographically is Wollo. However, South Wollo is a predominantly Muslim populated area with 70.89% of Muslims, and 28.8% profess Ethiopian Orthodox Christianity. Pursuant to its strategic location in northeastern Ethiopia, both Orthodox Christianity and Islam are well established in the area.

[254] Ibid: 24

[255] Central Statics Agency Census Report 2007.

5.2 Introduction of Islam and Christianity to Wollo

It should be clear in the outset that our purpose here is not to provide the religious history of Ethiopia in its totality. However, an attempt is made to single out the significant historical trajectories that would help us in understanding the nature of long-aged religious interaction between Christians and Muslims thereby establish a historical link with the current dynamics of religious pluralism and tolerance in Ethiopia specifically Wollo. This perspective, as David Robinson[256] rightly puts, situates 'the multicultural and multi-religious identity at the heart of Ethiopia's history.'

5.2.1 Islam in Wollo

Thanks to the early introduction of Islam to the area, Wollo has been one of the major centers of Islam in Northern Ethiopia. There exist several traditions on the introduction of Islam to the area. One such tradition suggested Wollo had received Islam as early as the 9th century from the Sultanate of Ifat in northeastern Shewa where it had flourished since then. Ifat was closely attached to Islamic tradition and has contributed to the diffusion of Islam in the surrounding areas and to other parts of Ethiopia including Wollo. According to Ahmed[257] the 'Ulama of Ifat, Darra and Southern Wollo have exchanged rich experiences and contributed a lot by enriching Islamic religion and culture. From this, it can be deduced that Muslim communities were established in Wollo in pre-Ahmed Ibrahim's Conquest.[258]

Another tradition attributed the earlier introduction of Islam to the area through *Jabarti*-Muslim traders and clerics of Zeila whose descendant's latter penetrated the Ethiopian interior regions including Wollo. Accordant to this tradition originally, the Jabarti were descendants of a Yemenite or a Hijazi mystic named Ismail Ibn Ibrahim.[259] There are also other traditions that emphasize the role of immigrant families from Arabia for the dissemination of Islam in Argoba

[256] Robinson, David. 2004. Muslim Societies in African History. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

[257] Ahmed Oumer. 2006:14

[258] Hussein, Islam in Wollo. PP. 47

[259] Popularly known as Ismail Jabarti

and Qallu areas of eastern Wollo. The *Ad kabir* clan of Tamben in Tigray is also associated with the expansion of Islam to the area.[260]

In general, it could be argued that despite the lack of any conclusive evidence as to the exact date, the available oral traditions showed that Islam had been introduced to the area as early as the 9th century as but not later than the time of Ahmed Gran in the 16th century.

Since its introduction, Islam in Wollo has expanded peaceably mainly through traditional Islamic education and the various Sufi brotherhoods. It is worth to note that this juxtaposition of Sharia and Tariqa has been one of the dominant features of Islam in the area and elsewhere in Ethiopia.

Wollo has been a center of Islamic education[261] hence the name *Al-Azhar* of Ethiopia to implicate the famous Islamic center of learning in Egypt. Two of the four schools of Islamic jurisprudence have been thought and followed. The Shafiyya is the dominant school in Wollo followed by the Hanafiyya School. The Shafiyya School is believed to reach the areas as early as 12th c by the ancestors of the Argoba of Ifat. The man responsible for the introduction of this school to the Dawayye area was a certain Mufti Dawud who studied Islamic education in Zabid, Yemen and upon his return established a center in a place called Gaddo.

The second-largest school - Hanafiyya – was brought to the area by Kabir Hamza and has a significant follower in Qallu, Borena, Warra Himanno, Warra Babo and Yajju. Although at an individual level, there were some isolated followers of the Hanbali School in the Qallu area during the time of Haji Bushera Geta.[262]Its limited acceptance was mainly attributed to the theological stance that emphasizes strict adherence to Islamic law and uncompromising insistence on doctrinal and ritual conformity to it. Even nowadays, it is argued that almost all present-day Salafists tend to favor this school and there is no well-established center known for teaching the Hanbali rite.

The earlier introduction of these schools to the area has made Wollo not only a center of Islamic education but also facilitated the largely peaceful spread of Islam in the area and beyond. These

[260] Hussein, Islam in Wollo. PP. 65-66

[261] The Islamic curricula includes among others *Fiqh, Hadith, Tafsir , Nahw, Sarf*

[262] Hussen. Islam in Wollo. PP-67

centers of learning had attracted many students from other places of Ethiopia who upon completion of study return and established their own center. Although to a lesser extent, many still visit Wollo as a place for further studying the Islamic sciences.

In Ethiopia, there is no place, where Sufism has a stronghold than in Wollo. It is a sanctuary of many of the Sufi centers of both old and recently established ones. These include the century's old center of *Jama Negus* (1845) and more recently established *Tirusina* (1949). Other major Sufi centers in Wollo include Dana (North Wollo), Geta (Qallu) and Challe (Warra Babbo).

5.2.1.1 Sufism in Wollo

Sufism has a long history in Ethiopia. It has been the oldest and predominant strand of Islam in the country. According to Braukamper (2004), Sufism was first introduced to Ethiopia through Yemen in the 16th century.

Wollo has long been one of the major centers of Sufism in Ethiopia hosting popular Sufi shrines. The introduction of Sufism to the area is associated with the peaceful nature of Islamic penetration. The various Sufi brotherhoods were important vehicles of Islamic expansion in Wollo. They were brought in the second half of the 18th century through the agency of indigenous scholars who received initiation in their pilgrimage to Sufi shrines. Thus, it is argued that the introduction and expansion of Sufism to Wollo was mainly attributed to the efforts of local actors in receiving and dissimilating it. [263]

One such brotherhood was the Qadiriya that was introduced to Wollo from Harar in the 19th century through Shaikh Jamaluddin Mohammed of Anna who received the tariqa from Faqih Hashim of Harar.[264] Other Sufi tariqas in Wollo include Samanniya and Shadhiliya.

In today's Wollo Sufism has been taking a downward turn. This is manifested among others in the sharp decline to pilgrimage to shrines and a general reluctance to follow Sufi prescriptions. This is associated with the decline in the importance of Sufi shrines as a center of Islamic

[263] Ibid.

[264] Ibid

education and a source of charismatic Ulema who possess Baraka.[265] With the demise of the first generation of Sufi leaders, Sufi shrines gradually turned out to be more of a center of popular Islam than a place of Sufi orthodoxy where Sufi 'extravagancy' is tamed by Sharia.

According to Hussein 19th, Wollo witnessed the rise of Sufi- scholars and reformers who had struggled to introduce and reform to the largely popular nature of Islam practiced in their communities.

The earliest Muslim reformer of Wollo was Sheikh Muhammad Shafi (1743-1806/7) of Jama Negus. He was born in Warra-Babo near Lake Hayq. He criticized the popular nature of Islam in the area, which was highly related to rituals and ceremonies than fulfilling one's religious duties. Other than fighting the Christian communities in surrounding areas, the sheikh had also fought with the Muslims of Reqqe for their laxity in religious observance and negligence of ritual prayer. Besides, he also accused the ulema class of their failure to lead the community properly through teaching and implementing the principle of Islam and engaging in a selfish pursuit of amassing gifts.[266]

The Sheikh had covered many areas including Borena, Dawayy, Jama and Ahya Fejji with his reformist mission of both reforming Islam and converting Christian communities until he finally settled at Jama Negus.[267]Shaikh Mohammed Shafi is also remembered with the institutionalization of the celebration of the Prophet Birthday at his center. The Shaikh had visited Hijaz where he asked the religious authorities for waging a holy war against Christians. However, his request was not approved. Before he returned home, he had visited the tomb of the prophet and received another way of serving Islam through the celebration of Mawlid.

Another Sufi reformer of the time was Shaikh Jafar Bukko Siddiq (1793-1860) who was born from a saintly father in a place called Gatirra. After completing his education, he waged religious reform in many places in South Wollo. The Shaikh was against unislamic traditional practices and rituals related to Chat chewing; violation of Islamic law by the Muslim religious

[265] Ibid: 95-100

[266] Ibid

[267] Ibid

establishment who unlawfully appropriate Zakat and offerings made at funeral service and secular authorities who showed little respect to Muslim clerics and deviate from Islam.[268]His zeal for reform was born out of his uncompromising stance on matters of faith and practice. In addition to his struggle at reforming Islam, Shaikh Jafar was also known for being ascetic and established many Sufi centers in the area.

Shaikh Jafar's reform mission had both religious and social dimensions. In the case of the former, his mission represented a struggle to replace the survival and persistence of some elements of old belief and practice with pure dogma and practice. Socially, his stance against the prevalence of customary law to replace sharia meant that his reform ideas were not confined to affect Muslims but also other members of the community at large.

Thus, the life of these prominent Sufi reformers of 19th century Wollo depicts the appearance of a Jihadist and a Sufi in one persona. It also shows the erroneous assumption that Sufists are more tolerant towards religious others than Salafists. Besides, it refutes the assumption that associate Islamic reform with Salafism and Sufism with religious laxity.

South Wollo hosts many of the historical mosques in Wollo. Established in 1764, the mosque of Jamma Negusis was constructed by Hajj Mohammed Shafi in Salmene town of Albuko *Warada* located 46 kilometers southeast of Dessie. According to informants, it was here the celebration of the anniversary of the birthday of the Prophet Muhammad was celebrated for the first time in the history of South Wollo.[269]

Another historical mosque of South Wollo is known as the Derbitu Dare-Selam mosque. This mosque was constructed in 1766 in the Wogidi Woreda-western part of the zone. Shaikh Beshir-a prominent Shaikh who is remembered by the Muslim community of the area in his role for teaching and expansion of Islam built it. [270] In Qallu, the mosque of Geta was established during the time of Emperor Tewodros by *Hajji* Bushra Said-popularly known as *Saidul-Ba*. It is found 15.5 kilometers far from Kombolcha.

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[268] Ibid

[269]Informant interview with Shaikh Surur March 2016, Kombolcha

[270] Mohammed Seid. History of shrine of Dagger. PP. 20

It is worth noting that these centers had been arenas of interfaith relations and even syncretism between followers of Islam and Christianity. Both Christians and Muslims travel to such centers for seeking blessing, to relive from an ailment, seeking a child and for many other reasons.

Many of the mystical orders are practiced in Wollo. The Qadiriya was the first Sufi order introduced to the area in the 19th century by Faqih Hashim of Harar and remained dominant until now. Ibrahim Nagash of Warra Babbo had brought the Shadhiliya order. Sheikh Seid Ibrahim (Sheikh Challe) of Warra Babbo and Sheikh Juhar Haider of Shonkee also practiced the Samanniya order. Sheikh Habib and Sheikh Bashir followed the Tijanniya order and the latter was responsible for its expansion in Borena, Warra-Himano and Warra Babbo.[271]

Despite the existence of a strong ulema class, saint veneration had been a popular practice among Muslims of Wollo who used it as a compensation for the observance of prescribed religious obligations.

In today's South Wollo Sufism and Sufi shrines have a significant following among the majority of the Muslim populace notably in rural areas. A recent development that put the issue of Sufism at the center of intra-Muslim debate both at the national and local levels is the coming of the Ahbash- as a neo-Sufi trend of Islam.

Official known as the Association of Islamic Charitable Projects (AICP), Ahbash was founded in 1930. Since 1983, with the coming of 'Abdallah ibn Muhammad ibn Yusuf al-Harari (1910–2008) as its leader, the group assumed the name Al-Ahbash alluding his Ethiopian origin. The Sheikh was born in Harar where he first encountered a local Salafi Sheikh Abdurrahman Yusuf whom he accused of bringing Salafism to Ethiopia. In 1948, he left (or expelled from) Ethiopia and spent some time in Jerusalem and Damascus until he permanently settled in Beirut in 1950.[272]

In terms of ideology, the group belongs to a neo-traditional camp and advocates the doctrine of Ashariya, the school of Shafiya and the Sufism of Rifayya, Qadiriyya and Naqshbandiyya.

[271] Hussein. Islam in Wollo. PP- 68-71

[272] Kabha, Mustafa and Haggai Erlich. 2006 "Al-Ahbash and Wahhabiyya: Interpretations of Islam" *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 38, No. 4, pp. 519-538

According to Hamzeh and Dekmejian[273], Ahbash also incorporates elements of Shia beliefs in its teaching. In the words of Sheikh Abdullah Al Harari

> We are an Islamic association that represents no innovative deviations, like those introduced fifty, Two hundred, or six hundred years ago. The first one is the ideas of Sayyid Qutb... the second One are those of Muhammad ibn Abdul-Wahhab, and the third are those of Ibn Taymiyya, from Whom Abd al-Wahhab derived his thoughts. We are Ash'aris and Shafiis. The Ash'ariyya is the Basis of our belief, and the Shafi'iyya is our daily code.

Sufism plays an important role in the construction of the al-Ahbash collective identity. Nonetheless, for the public at large, the group is known for its anti-Salafi theology that stresses on exposing the 'anthropomorphic' beliefs of Salafism. This has invited fierce resistance from Salafi groups that went to the extent of assassinating its leader Sheikh Nizar al-Halabi in 1995. Since then the activity of Ahbash in Lebanon began to decline. However, under its current leader Shaykh Houssam Qaraqirah, vowed to "steer clear of extremism, violence and terrorism…" and still commands influence in non-Islamic countries through Lebanese diaspora.

Against its Salafi detractors, Ahbash defends many Sufi practices as 'good-innovations' that are consistent with the Quran and Sunna including but not limited to giving allegiance (baya) to the pious ancestors; practicing tahlil (upholding the name of Allah by prayer and singing); celebrating Mawlid (Prophet's birthday); visiting the shrines of saintly ancestors seeking blessing and praying loudly after mosque services.

Nonetheless, Ahbash appears different from other Sufi groups in its diametrical opposition against Islamist opponents. Accordingly, the group vehemently opposed what they call 'innovative deviations' of Ibn Taymiyya, Mohammed Ibn Abdal-Wahab and Sayyid Qutub, and accuse them of religious extremism. Ahbash also stands against the goal of political Islamists for the establishment of an Islamic state and denounces the practice of takfir.

[273] Hamzeh, A. Nizar and R. Hrair Dekmejian. 1996. "A Sufi Response to Political Islamism: Al-Ahbash of Lebanon." *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Beirut. PP. 217-229.

The major areas of contestation between Ahbash and Salafists revolve around the issues of the Personification of God and His Omnipotence; the Word of the Qur'an and Its Eternal Nature; Reaching God through Cult of Saints and Rulers, Islam, and Politics. [274]

5.2.1.2 Local Muslim Dynasties in Wollo

One of the major factors for the expansion of Islam in Wollo had been the role of Muslim Oromo leaders who had used Islam as an ideology of territorial expansion and consolidation that help the emergency of ruling families and local dynasties with varying territorial control and political influence.

Since the seventeenth century, Wollo had witnessed the emergence of chiefdoms and ruling families. In south Wollo, the earliest of such dynasties was the Mammadoch of Wara Himano (c.1700–1916), a second Muslim dynasty in Wollo next to the Yajju dynasty that was dominant in the era of princess. Its founder was a certain Godana Babbo-a Muslim Oromo cleric whose ancestor was believed to be from Arsi and settled in a place called Mammad in Garfa. The emergence of this dynasty was significant in shaping the religious character of the area in that its leaders had championed the consolidation and expansion of Islam.[275]It was the first to declare jihad in the name and interest of Islam, the first to adopt the prestigious title of *Imam,* and the longest surviving Muslim Oromo dynasty.[276]

Significant in this regard was the reign of Mohammed Ali (r.ca. 1771-1785) in that it was an important period in the further expansion of the domain of the dynasty and the consolidation of Islam.[277]Muhammad Ali had employed Islam to strengthen his power basis tactfully aligning himself with prominent Muslim scholars and jurists' notably *Shaykh* Ali Adäm who immigrated to Bilän in southern outskirts of Desse town from Northern Shewa and *Shaykh* Talha b. Jafar,

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274 Mustafa Kabha and Haggai Erlich. "Al-Ahbash and Wahhabiyya…" as above note 272

275 Ibid

276 Mohammed Hassen. 1983. *The Oromo of Ethiopia, 1500-1850: With Special Emphasis on The Gibe Region.* Published PhD Thesis. PP,239

277 Hussein, Islam in Wollo. PP. 117-119.

Hajj Bushra Ay Mohammed of Gata and others. Moreover, he was even inclined to make *Sharia* the basis of the legal system in his domain.[278]

Batto succeeded Muhammed Ali (1785-90). After him, Batto's brother and Muhammad Ali's son, Amäde Kollase came to power. Amade completed his father's plan of territorial expansion by incorporating the districts of Amhara into his domain. It was during the reign of Amade its territory extended as far south, Wancit and Jamma Rivers, and as far west as the Abay River.[279]

Like his ancestors, Amade was committed to strengthening the position of Islam in Wollo. In so doing was reported to enforce conversion and blamed for destroying churches. Similarly, Liban had promoted the dissemination and growth of Islam in his domain. As part of his religious enthusiasm, he damaged some of the local churches, turns them into mosques, and lost his life while in operation to convert a Christian district to Islam.[280]

Successive rulers of the dynasty followed this policy until the last of them-Mohammed Ali-whose conversion to Christianity was not only turned the tide of Islam in South Wollo but also thwarted its role as a political force. Had it not been for his 'apostasy' and subsequent enthusiastic participation in his patron's policy of Christianization the history of Islam would have been different. Similarly, its impact in shaping the nature of Christian-Muslim relations in the area was not less significant.

Other than the principality of Warahib, another was also several local dynasties though with smaller territorial expanse and weaker political influence in southern, southwestern, and eastern Wollo. One such dynasty was Qallu whose rulers claimed control over the upper basin of the Borkanna River. It was possibly founded by a certain Amitto Lubbo who believed to live around the early eightieth century and ruled over the larger parts of southeastern Wollo. His grandson Berru Lubbo had ruled Qallu in the 1830s and 1840s.[281] During his reign, Qallu's territory

[278] Ibid: 121 and 176-177

[279] Ibid: 122

[280] Ibid: 124

[281] Ibid: 126

extended over the area between the frontiers of southeastern Tigray in the north to the border with northeastern Shawa.[282]

The chiefdom of Garfa was found bordering Qallu on its northwestern and eastern frontiers and the western distinct of the territory of the Southern Afar. In the north, Qallu had the contending neighbors of Warra Babbo and Tahuladre. On the west, the Qallu rulers claimed control over Albuko and Artumma in the south was also under its sphere of influence. Further, south a commercially strategic district of Dawway had also been under its over-lordship for a long time against the constant brawl by the Reqqe hereditary nobility.[283]

Another local dynasty in 19th century Wollo was the Laga Gora dynasty-under the house of Gattiroch- that exercise indirect control over other neighboring petty dynasties of Laga Ambo, Laga Hida, and Jamma. The Borena dynasty under Wadje Berru was another local dynasty in 19th century Wollo.

As Hussein rightly argues except for the dynasty of Warahimano the role of Islam as an ideology of political, legitimacy and territorial expansion had been weak.[284]However, the fact that Islam still had a prominent position in many of the chiefly courts of Wollo indicates the strong position of Islam. This dominant position was not replicated in the lives of the Muslims in that there were popular anti-Islamic practices drinking wine and offering of expiatory sacrifices.[285]This partly justifies the popular assumption that Muslims of Wollo are lax in their religious observance.

5.2.3 Introduction of Christianity in Wollo

With the growing influence of Axum as a world trading power, Christianity had also developed was expanded southward to Wag and Lasta and was growing in adjacent Agew areas of present-day north Wollo.[286] This made Wollo as one of the early Christian establishments in Ethiopia.

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[282] Harris cited in Hussein, Islam in Wollo, PP. 127

[283] Ibid

[284] Ibid

[285] Ibid:128

[286] Harold, G. Marcus. 1994. A History of Ethiopia. PP. 10

Beginning from the 9th century the power and prominence of Axum were eventually undermined. This was partly due to the rise of Islam and the domination of the Red Sea by Arabia. This had forced Axum to move southward and influenced the spread of the Christian kingdom inland into the highlands as far south as the Bashilo River currently Wadla Delanta woreda in North Wollo administrative zone.[287] This clearly attests to the early introduction of Christianity to Wollo.

Hence, the Christian settlement in Wollo dates from the late Axumite period. It was a place where many churches, monasteries, and imperial residences were founded by the early medieval emperors. ZeraYa' iqob (1434- 68), the emperor associated with a very clear religious policy that aimed to strengthen the church and the monarchy, founded the church of St. Mary of Gishen. Later emperors continued to establish religious centers in the area. Be'ide Maryam (1468-78) founded Atronse Maryam, Na'od (1494-1508) founded Genete Giyorgis in Gishen, and Libne Dingil (1508-40) constructed Mekane Sillase.

5.3 State Religious Policy towards Wollo

With the end of the era of princes and the consolidation of central authority, a new dynamic of the relationship began to emerge between the Christian state and Islam. Under this subsection, the three major successive emperors of the period and their religious policy in general and towards Wollo are discussed while emphasizing the impact, reaction, and consequences to local Muslim communities. By doing so this section helps us understand how state policy in the past was instrumental in shaping the character of religious relations between Christians and Muslims of Wollo.

5.3.1 Tewodros II's Religious Policy towards Wollo

Better known for his unionist and modernizing zeal and his heroic death at Mekdella fighting the British expedition, Emperor Tewodros II's religious policy in general and on non-Orthodox Christians was not a success story. After a year of his coronation in 1855, Emperor Tewodros issued a decree commanding Muslims to convert to Christianity or leave his country. This had a huge impact on the Muslim population of his royal seat at Gonder. Hence, most of them unwillingly abandoned their religion and became Christians and others leave Gonder to other

[287] Ibid

areas and preserve their Islamic religion.[288] In his letter to Queen Victoria, Tewodros presented himself as a redeemer of past Empire taken over by non-Christian [Oromo] and Turks [indigenous Muslims]. Tewodros argued: [289]

> "My fathers, the Emperors, having forgotten the Creator, He [God] handed their kingdom to the [Oromo] and the Turks [Muslims]. However, God created me, lifted me out of the dust, and restored the Empire to my rule. He endowed me with power and enabled me to stand in the place of my fathers. By this power, I drove away from the [Oromo]. As for the Turks, I have told them to leave the land of my ancestors. They refuse. I am going now to wrestle with them.

Thus, this shows his zeal towards his religion and the interest he had to clear non-Christians from his empire. Initially, king Tewodros 'showed deep religious faith and strict adherence to Christian moral standards and strongly supported the monks to evangelizing the pagan inhabitants of the country. Consequently, many people including Muslims unwillingly converted to Christianity.[290]

During his reign, Tewodros had sought both doctrinal and religious unity. In ensuring doctrinal unity among Orthodox Christians, he forbade the doctrines of the *Qebat* and *Tsegga Lej* sects and sanctioned all Christians to profess the Tewahedo doctrine. Anyone who failed to abide by this decree was severely punished, thus his order was generally accepted, and theological disputation gradually died out.[291]

Wollo had been one of the troublesome provinces for Tewodros's policy of unification both as a bastion of the 'kingmakers' of the tumultuous political period of the *Era of Princes* and predominantly Muslim populace. Immediately after crowned as *king of kings* of Ethiopia, he did not spare time to launch an expedition to Wollo but without success. In his reign, he had marched to Wollo five times. Hence, a popular saying has it

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[288] Abdussamad H. Ahmad. 2000. "Muslims of Gondar 1864-1941." *Annales d'Éthiopie, Vol 16, No 1 P. 161 172*

[289] See David Robinson as above note 38

[290] Sergew Hable Sellassie and Tadesse Tamerat. 1970. "The church of Ethiopia : a panorama of history and spiritual life"

[291] Ibid

የቴዎድሮስ ፈረስ ታላቁ ታጠቅ ትንሹ ጉሎ

ጅራቱ ትግሬ ግምባሩ ወሎ።

Tewodros's big horse [is called] Tataq, the smaller one [is] Gullo

Its tail is in Tigre; its forehead is in Wollo

Such repeated campaigns to Wollo were instigated by both political and religious pursuits. Politically, Tewodros had wanted to end the political power of Wollo regional dynasties notably the *Mammadoch* dynasty of *Warra Himano*. In addition, as a 'slave of Christ,' he wanted to weaken and neutralize Islam in Wollo and to convert Muslims to Christianity. According to Robinson, for Tewodros political supremacy over Wollo was sought to Christianizing and re-Christianizing the population thereby inhibits the return to the Muslim Oromo rule of the country during the era of princes.[292]

5.3.2 Yohannes IV and the Policy of Christianization in Wollo

The former Kassa Mircha[293] later king Yohannes IV is best remembered not only for his heroic struggle against the Egyptian aggression in *Gundet* and *Gura* but also for his ruthless religious policy towards non-Orthodox Christians specifically Muslims of Wollo. Following his predecessor footstep in earnest, he employed religion as a vehicle for unification. His reign represented 'the last dramatic, violent confrontation between Muslims and Christians in Wollo.'[294]

His religious policy can better be epitomized in the historic *Council of Boru Meda* and the subsequent edict in Wollo. For Sergew, Wollo was chosen because 'the whole of Wollo had been a Christian center with many historic churches and monasteries before the sixteenth century when it was Islamized by Ahmed Gragn.' However, according to Hussein Ahmed, the Islamization of Wollo predates the war of Ahmed Gragn.

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[292] Robinson David. *Muslim Societies in African History*. PP. 118

[293] According to Donald Crummy 'A hagiographical chronicle attributed the name to the king's intention to baptize the peoples of Ethiopia, in emulation of John the Baptist.'

[294] Abbink, "Transformation of Islam …" PP. 69

Both rulers and the clergy from Shewa, Gojjam, Gonder, and Tigray were summoned to the Council based on prior proclamation made by Yohannes. Hence, Yohannes, Menelik, Ras Adal, Ich'ege Tewoflos, and many of the aristocracy acted in the capacity of judges in religious matters. The Muslim rulers of Wollo, *Imam* Muhammad Ali and *Imam* Abba Watew were also present together with the aristocracy of the province.

In an extensive deliberation on the contested natures of Christ, the adherents of both doctrines i.e. *Hulet Lidet (Tewahdo) and Sost Lidet* presented their views respectively. The latter spearheaded by the clergy of the Debre Libanos monastery insisted on a third birth through the Holy Spirit. However, the council challenged the advocates of *Sost Lidet* to substantiate their claim through the holy books and threatened to excommunicate them. Upon their failure, Yohannes excommunicated and ordered the detention of the heads of religious centers advocating the *Sost Lidet* doctrine.

Convened in 1878, immediately after the *Leche Agreement*[295] that marks the zenith of his Emperorship, the council declared Tawahedo doctrine as the only doctrine and told adherents of the other sects to conform or suffer persecution. Consequently, it ended the doctrinal controversies that ravaged the Orthodox Church since the seventeenth century. As far as the unity of the church was concerned, the Council of Boru Meda is generally regarded as a positive and historic step.[296]

However, before its final closure, the council had an important issue to deal with - the issue of Muslims. As per the request of one of the participants from the clergy who raised the issue to the council, a recommendation was forwarded to proclaim "ወደ ክርስትያን ሃይማኖት ጉበቱህ ያልተጠመቅህና ያልቆረብህ እስላም ትቀጣለህ።" This means literally, 'Any Muslim who failed to convert to Christianity would be punished'

With further deliberations, Yohannes IV conquered with such recommendations and promised to avenge the blood of Ethiopia shed by Gragn saying

[295] This agreement was significant in the reign of Yohannes in that his last provincial power contender, Menelik of Shewa, officially accept his emperorship over Ethiopia.

[296]Bahru, Zewde. *A History of Modern Ethiopia 1855 – 1974*. PP. 34

> የኢትዮጵያን ደም እበቀላለሁ። ግራኝ ኢትዮጵያን በሃይል በእሳትና በሰይፍ እንዳሰለማት እኛ የቅዱስ ማርቆስን ሃይማኖት ካላሰደግንና መሰረት ካልጣልን ማንም ሊሰራልን አይችልም።
>
> I would avenge the blood of Ethiopia. As Gragn Islamized Ethiopia through force, fire and sword if we do not promote the religion of Saint Marcus and build a firm base no one could do this to us.

Immediately after the council of Boru Meda, the emperor had a church of Sillase built there. He also restored the landholdings and donated church furnishings to the monastery of Hayq Estifanos at Ambassal. A leading cleric, Akale Weld, was appointed head of this church and the spiritual teacher for the whole of Wollo.

Thus, Muslims were told to renounce their faith and embrace Christianity in not more than three years and traditional religious groups within two years or face confiscation of their land. Similarly, Muslim officials were ordered to choose either of their title or of religion. The reactions varied. The political leaders generally acquiesced. Thus, two prominent converts were Muhammad Ali, baptized into the EOC as Mikael, and Abba Wataw, who became Hayla-Mariam. Others conformed outwardly, praying to the Christian God in the daytime and to the Muslim Allah at night thereby reinforcing the unique juxtaposition of Islam and Christianity that we find to this day in Wollo. Thus, they remained "Christians by day, Muslims by night."

This juxtaposition could be seen in the day-to-day interaction of both groups. It is said that Muslims of Wollo had devised various techniques to overcome the religious challenge without necessarily compromising their religious creed. In an instance, Muslims used to employ *Qahar*[297] *Yimesgen* instead of *Egzabher Yimesgen* in replying to a greeting from a Christian counterpart.

Emperor Yohannes and king Menelik addressed the Wollo Muslims:

> …we are your apostles. All this used to be Christian land until Gragn ruined and misled it. Now let all, whether Muslim or Oromo [pagan] believe in the name of Jesus Christ! Be baptized! If you wish to live in peace preserving your

[297] In Islamic tradition, Qahar is one of the 99 names of Allah.

> belongings, become Christians. … Thereby you will govern in this world and inherit the one to come.[298]

The council had also legitimized the imperial and ecclesiastical establishment to undertake mass and forced baptism of Muslims of Wollo. [299] Such campaigns had significantly affected the Muslim community and the process of Christian- Muslim interactions in the area. In the words of Hussein Ahmed,[300] 'the policy arrested the development of the flourishing Muslim culture in the region as it led to the destruction of mosques and centers of Islamic learning, the burning of books and the dispersal of scholars. It also marginalized indigenous Muslims and disrupted the process of Christian-Muslim interactions.'

Moreover, Muslims were also subjected to construct churches and pay special tax-*Yesenda gibir*- to the clergy other than a tribute. Nonetheless, the council had also its negative historic leap towards religious intolerance, which still recurs in the public discourse of religious persecution of Muslims of Ethiopia. Many Muslims still refer to it in justifying the 'historic injustice' done to them in imperial Ethiopia. For Bahru 'in many ways, his religious policy lacked the liberalism and spirit of tolerance that he had shown in the political field.'[301]

Through the Boru Meda council, Yohannes not only aimed at abolishing for the last time the doctrinal differences within the Orthodox Church but also the unity of religion. Accordingly, he made Orthodox Christianity as the official religion of the state and raised his sword against those who differ both in doctrine and in faith, most notably Muslims of Wollo.

Taking religious persecution into consideration Muslims of Wollo had suffered so much in the hands of Yohannes IV than any other leader in Ethiopian History. Following his predecessor footsteps sternly, in the name of Christianity, he directed his cruelty towards Muslims of Wollo.

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[298] R.A. Caulk, 1972. "Religion and the State…" *Journal of Ethiopian Studies*, Vol. x, No. 1. PP. 24.

[299] Citing T.W. Arnold. 1913. Hussein Ahmed said the proclamation by Yohannes IV affected about 50,000 people in Wollo.

[300] Hussein Ahmed. 2006. "The Dynamism of Religious Conversion In the History of Ethiopia: Some Reflections" in *International Journal of Ethiopian Studies*, Vol. 2, No. 1/2 pp. 195-205. PP. 201

[301] Bahru, Zewde. *A History of Modern Ethiopia 1855 – 1974*. PP. 48

Those who want to remain loyal to their religion refused his decree and preferred exile to other places notably to Gurage and Arsi areas. In addition, others remained in Wollo and opted to resist under the leadership of local religious leaders as sheikhs Talaha Jafar[302]. Shaikh Ali Adem Jiru[303] had also fought the contingent of Yohannes IV with a cavalry force of 500 in northwestern Hayq and died there in Wahilo.

Immediately after the edict, Yohannes and his vassal Mikael campaigned to Rayya and Yajju. Ras Mikael as a vassal of Yohannes had played an important role in executing the Christianization policy. In an instant, he repeatedly marched with the emperor in the latter's expeditions against local resistance of Talha Jafar and participated in many other christening operations in Raya and Azebo. In his domain too, he actively supported the construction of Churches as the church of Madhin Alem church in Dessie as a replacement for the ancient church burned by Gragn Ahmed.

Against his Muslim background and late Christianity Mikael had shown little tolerance towards Muslims. In an instance, in Dessie, he ordered the hands of his former friend to be chopped who wrote 'how could you become harsh over your former allies'. Thus, his policies towards Muslims were concomitant with the emperor and his Oromo linage and Muslim background had done little to restrain his unkindness over Muslims of Wollo.[304]

Externally Yohannes remained adamant to accept his coercion of Muslims. In his letter of 24 November 1879 to Queen Victoria, he wrote

> "We Christians debated amongst ourselves about religion. We made them (the sectarians) enter the Alexandrian creed. The Muslims have heard and seen all this, begged me saying, 'We have no father book; so, baptize us and make us Christians.' In addition, I replied 'All right, if you like, become Christians.' In

[302]Sheik Talaha was one the most renowned Islamic leader

[303] The first Muslim militant cleric who led an armed opposition against the policy of forced conversion of the Wallo Muslims imposed by Yohannes was Shaykh Ali Adam, originally from Jerru in northern Shawa. His militancy was derived from two sources: he was a disciple of Shaykh Muhammad Shafi and his father was renowned for his efforts to spread Islam in Reqqe. Shaykh Ali fought a contingent of Yohannes's army at Wahelo (northwest of Lake Hayq), where he and his overzealous followers lost their lives

[304]Ahmedin Jabel. *Sostu Asewoch*. PP. 201

> addition, the Ethiopian Muslims became Christians of their own volition. There is nothing I have done by fire. It is because they wished and by their own choice that they were converted."[305]

His internal policy towards Muslims has affected its external relations with neighboring Sudan. The Mahdi who claimed to represent Muslims across the border was concerned over the Christianization of Muslims under Yohannes. In the late 1880s, the Khalifa became particularly concerned about the expansion of Yohannes to the northwest, as well as his forced conversions of Muslims. The hostilities continued for several years along the frontiers between "Muslim" Sudan and "Christian" Ethiopia. The Khalifa's forces sacked Gondar in 1888 and the decisive battle came in 1889 when Yohannes attacked the Mahdist fortress of al Qallabat. He was on the verge of winning when he was wounded and later died. His death led to the retreat of the Christian armies and rejoicing in Omdurman.[306]

Hussein Ahmed captured the central understanding of the two emperors that shaped their policy towards Muslims:

> Tewodros II and Yohannes IV, perceived Islam, especially Islam in Wollo, as an internal source of a direct challenge to their policy of unification and centralization, and allegedly, as a domestic ally of expansionist powers, Egypt, and (for Yohannes IV) the Mahdist Sudan… in their overall perception of Ethiopian Islam, they did not, therefore, show any departure from the old medieval Christian view which identified Islam as a force of disintegration and a threat to the very survival of the Christian state and society. It was only in the specific policies, which they adopted towards Muslims, and in the intensity and ruthlessness with which they attempted to implement them, that they differed radically from their predecessors.[307]

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[305] See Caulk, "Religion and State in 19th c Ethiopia."

[306] Robinson, David. *Muslim Societies in African History*. PP. 176-177

[307] Hussein, Islam in Wollo. PP. 160

In general, the policy of Yohannes IV towards non-religious others in general and the Wollo Muslims, in particular, had a deep mark on the character of the religious pluralism and tolerance in the study area.

5.3.3 Menelik II and Guarded Tolerance

The geographic unification process of Ethiopia was initiated by Tewodros, consolidated by Yohannes, and sealed by Menelik. With the latter, Ethiopia happened to host a multitude of new communities and religions. This had influenced his religious policy in that with the inclusion of a large section of Muslims and traditionalists to his empire he reversed the 1878 edict that called for a 'Christian Orthodox only' state.

As far as Wollo is concerned, in 1876 Menelik was in Warra Illu and declared that

> Since the people of Wollo are now Muslims, they will become our brothers if possible, within a year, if not, in two years, through baptism or communion… I have come not to plunder and destroy the Wollo people, but to treat them with respect and affection, and to teach them [Christianity] so that they will delight in the joys of this world and enter, by the grace of Christ, the Kingdom of God.[308]

However, his fatherly attitude did not restrain to follow the footstep of his master. As a loyal vassal, Menelik was the major actor of Yohannes's Christianization policy. For instance, in 1884, he led a campaign against Talha and two years later, he joined Yohannes in the expedition to the areas of Cheffa, Reqqe, Artumma, Garfa, Qallu, and Warra Babbo. With such and other campaigns Menelik had seen the stiff resistance of local Muslims foreseen the danger of pursuing such policy and adopted guarded tolerance based on freedom of worship to non-Christians.

However, this did not fundamentally grant equality to non-Christians in that Christianity remained a state religion and Muslims were watched closely and suspiciously. In his domain, Shawa Menelik had implemented the religious policy of his overlord. In *Gamza*, he threatened the local leader to lose their rule unless otherwise converted to Christianity. Consequently, one of

[308] Harold G Marcus. 1995. *The Life and Times of Menelik II: Ethiopia 1844-1913*. Red Sea Press. PP. 58

the hereditary rulers Adam submitted and accepted Christianity and ordered the construction of the churches of Randoyye and Eddo in Chaffa.[309]

In an instance, he wrote to Abba Jiffar of Jimma and criticized the use of Arabic language in the region saying 'አገሩን የአረብ አገር ማድረግህ እንደሆነ ቁርጡን ንገረኝና ዉላችን ይፍረስ።' *If you want to make the region an Arab, tell me the truth and let us end our agreement.*

Although the state religious policy was changed, nothing had improved for non-Christians and subjected to political and social prejudices as ever before. Though unsuccessful, Menelik had attempted mass conversion to Christianity. He encouraged missionary work among the newly incorporated people of the empire and facilitated church construction in many Christian areas to replace churches destroyed by Imam Ahmed. This was done through the interdependence of the Church and the state in the newly conquered territory.

> "This [the role of the Church] was recognized and promoted by emperor Menelik II, who had priests carry the *tabot* into newly incorporated Oromo, Sidamo, and other non-Christian and Semi-Muslim areas of the empire, giving his military conquest the character of a crusade. Churches were built in these areas, guarded by troops of occupation, made permanent by feudal grants under which the local population made the *Gabbar* (serf) was permitted to remain on the land as sharecroppers and people of the feudal Church"[310]

5.3.4 Lij Iyasu and the Aborted Tolerance

Iyasu was a challenge to the state ideology of Christian Ethiopia. His reign represented an abortive move in the direction of religious accommodation. While loyal to his Christianity, he transcended the religious boundary in attracting his Muslim subjects to the national fabric of Ethiopianness.

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[309] Ahmed Hassen. 2002. "Emperor Menelik's Attempts towards Political Integration: Case Study from North-Eastern Shoa (Ethiopia), 1889-1906." in *Annales d'Ethiopie*. Vol 18, PP. 231-243

[310] Messing, S. 1985. *Highland Plateau Amhara of Ethiopia,* in L. Bender Eds. New Haven, Connecticut: Human Relations Area Files. PP. 180 cited in Abbas Haji Gnamo. 2002. "Islam, the orthodox Church and Oromo nationalism (Ethiopia)" *Cahiers d'études africaines*, 165, XLII-1, PP. 99-120

This was however against the long-established hegemony of Orthodox Christianity in Ethiopia. His opponents deliberately misrepresent his accommodative approach towards Muslims, as a propaganda tool to charge him of religious conversion. While overlooking his marriage ties with Christian chiefs of Wallaga, Goijam, and Yaiju, they pronounce his marriages to the daughters of the Muslim chiefs. Similarly, his alleged support in the construction of mosques was emphasized ignoring his founding of churches and endowments to monasteries.[311]

In fact, however, as both Ethiopian and foreign sources increasingly make clear, Iyasu did not intend to disestablish Orthodox Christianity in favor of Islam. Confused as it certainly was, his policy can be interpreted as one of trying to redress the injustices of the past, of making the Muslims feel at home in their own country.

Despite his initial refusal of the quest of Shawans' to enthrone him Ras Teferi actively involved in the coup d'état that dethroned Lij Iyasu. In his later book, he accused Lij Iyasu of apostasy in ten pieces of evidence.[312]Refuting the Shawan accusation Lij Iyasu said

> **የሸዋ ሰው እኔን እስላም ሆነ ብሎ አመካኝቶ ይሕው አድማ አድርጎብኛል። አኔ እስላሞችን ማሰጠጋቱና ወዳጅ ማድረጌ የኢትዮጵያን ወሰን ለማስከበር፣ግዛታችንንም እስከ ባህር ለማድረስ እንዲረዱንኝ አስቤ ነው እንጅ ሃይማኖቴን ለውጬ እስላም አልሆንኩም።**

[311] Bahiru , History of Modern Ethiopia, PP. 124

[312](Haile Selassie I 1976: 48–49). "**1)** He married four wives claiming: 'the Qur'an permits it to me.'[…] **(2)** He built a mosque at Jijjiga with government funds and gave it to Muslims.**(3)** At the time he sent to Mahazar Bey[…] our Ethiopian flag […] on which he had caused to be written the following words (in Arabic): 'There is no god but Allah and Muhammad is the messenger of Allah.'**(4)** He wore Somali Muslim clothes and the Muslim turban, held the Islamic rosary, and wasseen to prostrate himself in the mosque.**(5)** He was seen praying and reading the Qur'an having had it transcribed in Amharic characters.**(6)** On the head gear of his special guards he had embroidered the legend 'there is no other god but Allah'.**(7)** H. H. Ras Makonnen had built a church at Harar and had made the area adjoining thechurch into a dwelling for the clergy; giving the Muslims a place in exchange; then, 32 years later, he (Ledj Iyasu) expelled the clergy and restored it to the Muslims.**(8)** When a girl was born to him he saw to it that she would grow up learning the Muslim religion, and he gave her to the Muslim Madame Hanaf and said: 'Bring her up on my behalf.'**(9)** He despised the descent of Menilek II, which comes direct from Menilek I, and claimed to be descended from the Prophet Muhammad; assembling the great Muslim sheikhs, he spent the day convincing them of his genealogical calculations.**(10)** The day on which our great king, Emperor Menilek […] died, instead of mourning and of arranging lamentations, he went out horse-riding to Jan-Meda and spent the day playing combat-games"

> Shawns have accused me of converting to Islam and then conducted a conspiracy to remove me from power. I have attempted to establish good relationships with Muslims with the intent of securing our national border and seeking a sea outlet, but I have not converted to Islam.

He, therefore, made an oath to this effect in front of the aristocracy with him. His frequent visit to the peripheral areas and the marital ties he established with Muslim notables thereof attests to his wider plan to establish a secure international border with a sea outlet.

Some of the major attempts of religious accommodation towards Muslims include the marital ties he made with Muslim provincial leaders of Jimma, Harar, and Afar. Although a temporal gesture in his visit to the Muslim areas he wears as a Muslim, enter into mosques and sponsor Muslim festivals. According to Harold Marcus, all this was for nation-building than imperial exploitation. Moreover, his attempt to integrate the Muslims was to 'reduce the empire state's chronic unrest and benefit the economy.' However, his detractors had distasted it as anti-Ethiopia and conspired to dethrone him. In addition, both internal and external situations were in their favor. Internally, his frequent absence from the palace had created a vacuum in the center and lends them an opportunity to orchestrate the anti- Iyasu agenda. More importantly, his positive gesture towards Muslims was a recipe for disaster. In an empire that traces its origin to King Solomon and accepted 'Christianity even before Christ himself' such moves were very intolerable. Hence, they turned up anything that would signify their claim of his acceptance of Islam.

This was of course readily available in his support for the Somali anti-colonialist leader-Said Mohammed Abdullah; the marriage ties and other relations he had with Muslim notables. For

instance, his accusers used the following picture to incriminate him of changing his religion.



The role of the church was critical in deposing him from power. His sponsoring of church construction did not convince the Church not to involve in the conspiracy of the aristocracy against him. Hence, had it not the church excommunicated him the aristocracy could not be successful in ending his reign too early. Bahru compared the policy of Iyasu with his predecessors

> In this, he represented a revolutionary departure from the past. Tewodros, a man of wide vision in many respects, was bigoted when it came to Muslims, particularly the Muslims of Wollo. Yohannes, liberal and almost federal in his politics, was even more uncompromising on the question of Orthodoxy and Christianity. Menelik, builder of the largest empire Ethiopia has ever seen, did little to integrate the heterogeneous entity into one nation. Iyasu's religious policy was the first major attempt to tackle the question of national integration, a question that has not been satisfactorily solved to this day.[313]

[313] Ibid

5.4 Conclusion

This chapter furnishes the historical antecedents to the present situation of religious tolerance and pluralism in South Wollo. The early introduction of Christianity and Islam to the area has created cultural intimacy between the followers of the two religions and resulted in the emergency of hybrid culture of the Wolloye.

Other major historical factors that shaped the nature of religious pluralism and tolerance include among others the war of Ahmed Gragn, the Oromo expansion, the consolidation of the Christian kingdom under the solomind kings and their policy towards Wollo.

More specifically this chapter has shown that religion had been a basis of royal ideology and affected the subsequent religious polices of successive 19th-century emperors of Tewodros, Yohannes and Menelik.

It is also underscored that there exists divergent understanding of religious pluralism and tolerance which mainly depends on once frame of reference on the issue of religion, religiosity, religious knowledge and generational variations.

Thus in order to have a clear picture of religious pluralism and tolerance in South Wollo one needs to unleash the historical trajectories that led to the present conditions. This however, must not obscured observers to see recent changes both internally and externally that affects religious pluralism and tolerance in terms of Christian –Muslim relations.

Chapter Six

Religious Pluralism and Tolerance in Wollo, Ethiopia

6.1. General Context

It is a widely held view that Wollo has a culture of religious tolerance. The question, however, is what explains this 'culture of tolerance and coexistence' in Wollo i.e. had it been a genuine culturally embedded social phenomenon or an imposed rhetoric made possible by state machination. Another related question rightly raised by Abbink[314] in this regard is about 'whether it is durable or whether it has always been a temporary and vulnerable outcome of contingent historical processes, with tensions under the surface.' It is also worth asking on what are the manifestations of religious pluralism and tolerance in present-day South Wollo. How do peoples of Wollo negotiate among competing and conflicting sets of religious norms and ideals?

This chapter, therefore, builds on the previous chapter and focuses on the existing character of religious pluralism and tolerance in South Wollo. This is done by selecting some major areas of religious interaction that can relatively depict the still existing practices of religious pluralism and tolerance. It should be clear in the outset that these areas are not the only ones. The choice is made considering their relative significance among Orthodox Christian and Muslim informants in terms of manifesting religious pluralism and tolerance.

Before directly delving into answering the questions raised above, it seems imperative to cast some light on the different characterizations of the very nature of religious relations in South Wollo. This is because the dominant position that Ethiopia and specifically Wollo has a culture of religious tolerance has not been without contestations.

In understanding, the religious culture in Wollo it seems important first to understand whose tolerance we are dealing with. The idea of religious tolerance in Wollo implies different things to different people. Hence, it depends on our frame of reference in terms of among others religion (Christian -Muslim), one's conception of religion, religiosity, religious knowledge, and generational variations.

[314] Abbink, Transformation of Islam, PP. 66

Besides, the historical process that brought the current situation in Wollo is also critical in understanding Wollo's religious culture. Important in this regard is historical trajectories that shape the societal character of the Wollo and gave it its present profile. The early introduction of monotheistic religions to the area, Wollo's geographic location along the long-distance trade route, the war of Ahmed Gragn, the Oromo expansion to the area, the consolidation of monarchical rule after the end of *Zemene Mesafint* had all contributed to the making of today's Wollo and its religious culture. Thus, other than debating over the existence of tolerance in Wollo, one needs to look into the socio-cultural and political background to it. It is under this context that we situate the existing models of religious tolerance.

The early contact between Muslims and Christians had created a situation where both religious groups had developed ways of living together with tolerance. The largely peaceful introduction of Christianity and Islam in the area and their indigenous character has helped the development of 'cultural literacy'. This concept is concerned with our capacity to learn about spiritual traditions other than our own, to know commonalities that bind all religions together and differences that set them apart. Moreover, cultural literacy is also about having the right attitudes toward both commonalities and differences that gave the development of a tolerant culture. Nonetheless, sometimes, cultural literacy might result in cultural intimacy thereby assimilation. This is more so in case of a minority culture that lives under the shadow of a majority culture.

For many Muslim informants, tolerance in Wollo was made possible due to a lack of religious knowledge and practice among Muslims. According to them despite the early introduction of Islam to the area and the existence of many prominent Sufi sheikhs, Islam has not been a central issue among the Muslim populace. This is partly associated with the Sufi nature of Islam and its tolerant nature in adapting itself to the existing cultural practices that conform to the confines of sharia. Muslims in Wollo and in Ethiopia in general, are to a large extent non-literate and depend on the oral and ritual transmission of the faith.[315] Thus, lay Muslims had no problem in interacting with Christians not only in non-religious matters but also in participating in Christian festivities. Other than differences in being Muslim and Christian, the impact of religious affiliation in delimiting the religious boundary appeared minimal.

[315] Ibid, 67

Abbink[316] summarized how the nature of Islam in Wollo helped to the existence of a tolerant culture in the area.

> Wollo provides us with a model of Islam that was not antagonistic or nationally divisive, the effectiveness of which depended on its indigenous character and its historical interactions with Christianity, on economic integration, on tolerance or at least creative integration of preexisting ethnocultural characteristics into a Muslim way of life, and on a structural rejection of exclusivist identities.

In contrast, many Christian participants in focus group discussions are of the opinion that despite all the odds over them Muslims in the past had a cordial relation with their Christian brethren. They associate the current change mainly with the emergence of *Mete Islimina* that does not respect and accept the existence of others. Ato Taddese Belyneh, a Christian informant from Kombolcha disagree with the idea that religious knowledge as a factor for the changing nature of religious relations in the area

> **ድሮ ድሮ ሙስሊሙም ክርስቲያኑም አንድ ላይ ነበር። የሚገርምህ በፍች እና በአረፋ አበ ሸህ ሙሃመድ ታጁ ቤት ተሰብስበን ነበር የምናሳልፈው። እሳቸው ዳዐዋ ሲደርጉ ሁሉም ያለቅስ ነበር። እንግዲህ እሳቸውን የመሰለ አሊም ክርስቲያኑንም እኩል ሲያስተናግዱ ኑረዋል። ታዲያ አሁን የመጡት ከሳቸው በላይ እስልምናን አውቀው ነው ክርስቲያኑን አይንህን ላፊር የሚሉት።**
>
> In the past, we (Christians and Muslims) used to be together. To your surprise during Eid al-Fitr and Eid-al-Arafa, we used to celebrate together with Sheikh Mohammed Tajudin. When he made Da'wa, we all fall in tears. A prominent Sheikh such as he used to accommodate Christians. So how the newcomers who are not knowledgeable than him avoid the Christians.

This has been a widely held view among many Christian elders in the area. Besides, it negates the view that always relates tolerance to Muslims making a concession. For them, the 'intolerant' tendency among the Muslim youth is the result of the introduction of Saudi based Wahhabi Islam, which is ignorant of the local situation.

[316] Abbink, Transformations of Islam, PP.73

As stated before the introduction of Islam to the area mainly through the agency of Muslim clerics and immigrant families who had mainly used peaceful means to convert the local population.[317] This had enabled the local community to develop a positive perception and avoid the perverted conception of Islam as a religion of war and conquest.

The peaceful nature of the introduction of Islam could also be associated with the distribution of the four Islamic schools in the area. According to Hussein of the four Islamic schools the Shafiyya and Hanafiyya, schools predominate in Wollo. The later success was partly due to its tradition of moderation and its tendency to avoid extremist views concerning literary interpretation and application of the sacred law of Islam.[318] In contrast, the Hanbali School was not accepted due to its strong stance on doctrinal and ritual matters. Here it is worth to note that most Salafists tend to incline to the Hanbali School.

A related source of religious tolerance has been the use of language as an expression of tolerance and solidarity among the Wolloye. The use of Amharic as a common language has been an important social string that bond Muslims and Christians together in Wollo. This has been especially the case with Muslims of Wollo who indigenize Islam using the Ajami manuscript wherein writing Arabic in Amharic letters. They used Ajami to propagate the idea of Islam in a manner suitable for local conditions. Hence, the use of Amharic as a language of Islam instead of Arabic has helped indigenize Islam and adapt to local culture.[319]

The ethnic heterogeneity of the peoples of Wollo was also significant in the emergence of a hybrid Wolloye Culture. Wollo's ethnic diversity has also influenced the cultural orientation of the people and creates an open and pluralistic society. This is manifested in popular dictum as- '**ወሎ ገራገሩ**' implying Wolloyes' sociability relaxed and character. They are comfortable with the element of exposure and inclusion. As depicted in the following poem the people of Wollo are proud of being 'Pure Ethiopians' where various ethnic and religious groups put their mark on their identity.

[317] Hussein, Islam Wollo. PP. 61

[318] Ibid: 66

[319] Rukya Hassen, "Language as an Expression of Power and Identity in the Amharic Speaking Muslim Community of Wollo." At www.cfee.cnrs.fr/IMG/pdf/Rukya-english.pdf

One of the major historical phenomena in shaping the culture of Wollo was the Oromo population movement. The Oromo expansion to the area in 18th c resulted in the intermingling of Oromo culture with local culture, which is still visible today in many areas of South Wollo.

This was made possible due to the fact that in their expansion, the Oromos', rather than imposing their language, culture, or religion on the conquered people they assimilated themselves the community they conquered by adopting the religion (either Christianity or Islam) of the people among whom they settled.[320]

In the same vain Teshale[321] argued the fact that the Oromo expansion was mainly done for grazing land and settlement spaces coupled with its egalitarian nature had facilitated their easy integration with the local people. Similarly, in Wollo many of the Oromo clan had converted their 'traditional' religion to Islam.

One of the crucial aspects of Islam in the 19th century Wollo was heavily influenced by the culture of the Oromo. Many of the traditional belief system and practice which are recognizable in 19th century Islam in the region and which the contemporary Muslim reformers attempt to eradicate were large of Oromo origin.

Still today, there exists an Oromo cultural element in many traditional religious practices of Wollo Muslims. For instance, the Wadaja[322] ceremony had been a dominant practice between both Muslims and Christians of Wollo. It is 'a communal prayer gathering accompanied by a feast of bread or roasted corn and coffee, beer or hydromel a portion of which is given to Waq.'[323]

Isenberg and Krapf also observed the unique blend of Islam and Oromo culture among Wollo Muslims in the practice of Wadaja

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[320] For more on the character of Oromo expansion see Levine, Donald. 1999. *Greater Ethiopia: The Evolution of a Multi ethnic Society*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press.

[321] Teshale, Tibebu. 1995. *The Making of Modern Ethiopia, 1896-1974*. Lawrenceville: The Red Sea Press Inc. PP:39

[322] For Wollo and Raya Oromo the term Wadaja means Islamic evening prayer. See Trimingham. *Islam in Ethiopia.* PP. 262

[323] Ibid

> The Wollo [Oromo] are much engaged in saying prayers and in blessing the country. They observe a custom I have never seen with other Mahomedans. They assemble early in the morning, say their prayers, take coffee, and Tohad (sort of tea) and smoke tobacco. This ceremony is called Wadacha. It lasts on Wednesday and Friday until after midday. They believe that they receive revelations from Allah on the Wadacha.[324]

Another important feature of the religious life of Muslims of Wollo was the prevalence of saint veneration that involved seeking the blessing of pious clerics. This was done in compensation for the prescribed Islamic obligations. In general, the popular nature of Islam manifested in the mix of traditional elements within it had created a favorable situation for the emergence of a tolerant culture.

The war of Ahmed Gragn had affected the religious demography and cultural contour of the region. The war has resulted in the looting and burning down of the old churches. In Wollo, for instance, the church of Makana Selassie was converted to a mosque.[325]As it was the case with a thousand years of Christian dominance against non-Christian Ethiopians, Imam Ahmed had destroyed churches and forced conversion.[326]Granted the central role of the church in imperial politics, Gragn's actions must have born out of the thought that by destroying the Church, he could break the backbone of the stiff royal resistance to his rule.[327]

Nonetheless, Gragn had also cases of peaceful negotiations with Christian leaders and afterward order his men "Do not burn the Church and do not kill the monks. Take away the treasure that is in the church and the island…"[328]In another incident, a Christian challenged the Imam saying, "I will not become a Muslim. I did not come to do that. I will not separate myself from my religion, to which my fathers and my forefathers died." Gragn replied "You are more admirable than those who embraced Islam; you are stronger in your faith than they…Then don't do it. You are a great

[324] Ibid 198

[325] Hussein Ahmed , Islam in Wollo, PP. 14

[326] Sihab ad-Din, The Conquest of Abyssinia. PP. 107

[327] Genenew Assefa. 2007. Recasting Gragn, The Aborted Islamic Government of Ethiopia.(1529-1543) PP. 16

[328] Sihab ad-Din. 2003. *Futuh Al-habasa The Conquest of Abyssinia (16th Century).* Tsehai Publishers PP. 272.

Christian…."[329]Although it is difficult to know whether such incidents represent his religious policy in toto, or isolated events presented to glorify Gragn, it, however, contrasts the church's characterization of him as 'bestial'.

As far as Islam in Wollo concerned the war of Gragn had given impetus to the indigenous Muslim communities in that it resulted in the influx of militant clerics and the founding of new Muslim settlements which later become instrumental in the consolidation of Islam in the region.[330]In sum, the Gragn war had put its marks on the religious culture of Wollo in that it is still important in shaping the understanding of religious identity among Christians and Muslims of Wollo.

In Wollo, there is a long history of religious conversion. The people of Wollo had experienced a recurrent wave of large-scale religious conversion. Notwithstanding, the existence of a natural and peaceful way of religious conversion, the conversion efforts of Ahmed Gran and the post-era of princes Christian Emperors had impacted the religious demography of the area. As stated earlier the reign of Yohannes IV was critical in this regard. This partly explains the existence of many Muslims with Christian ancestry and vice versa in the area. Still today, many emphasize the presence of mix-faith lineage as a source of religious tolerance in Wollo.

As mentioned elsewhere in this paper, South Wollo has been a Muslim majority area with a strong Ulema class. For them, the Christian populace had been a subject of Islamization. Accordingly, the revivalist efforts of the revivalist and reformist Sheiks of 19th century Wollo had targeted not only reforming their own Muslim communities but also surrounding Christian communities' at times using force. A Sufi Sheikh Surur

> በተለይ በዚህ በኛ አካባቢ ብዙውን ሙሰሊሙ ከካፊሩ ጋር ተከባብሮ ነው የኖረው። ለዚህ እንግዲህ ሰበቡ ምንድን ነው ያልክ እነደሆነ የካፊሩ ወገን አነስ ሰለሚል እኛኑ መስሎ ነው የኖረው። እንዳውም እኛ ነን አንዳንዴ ወዲህ ጫን የምንለው።

[329] Ibid

[330] Hussein, Islam in Wollo. PP. 13.

> In our area, the majority of Muslims and Christians have been in respect. The reason behind is that the people here are predominantly Muslim with some Christians. Even at times we Muslims tend to dominate the Christians.[331]

This is against the presumed view that Muslims, in general, have always tolerated Christian intolerance. It also confirms the mixed nature of the relationship between Muslims and Christians in South Wollo. Hence, for the ulema class, the Christians of the area had been taken subjects of Islamization. This was especially the case during the 19th century Wollo characterized by the revival and reformation of Islam. Nonetheless, these do not preclude anti- Islam state policy perused during successive monarchical regimes.

For the common people, religious tolerance is situated in the day to day informal interactions of social life where except for some emphasis on the religious boundary, in many respects religion has little significance in determining the nature of the interaction. Hence, both Christians and Muslims participate in each other's secular social events and even at times in religious celebrations.

This ranges from the simple task of greeting to the most enduring act of interfaith marriages. Like other Ethiopians, the Wolloye has no difficulty in saluting their religious other. This is readily available in the religious understanding of both Muslims and Christians where peace is taken as a central element. For the Christians greeting is God's property as captured in the popular dictum of Christian Ethiopians ለእግዜር ሰላምታ and for Muslims- the *AS-Salam* is one of the names of Allah.

As argued elsewhere, many Muslims and Christians of Wollo have limited knowledge about the religious other. This has manifested in the existence of syncretic religious practices that have both Christian and Islamic elements. For a Christian peasant of Wollo participating in Wadaja has no problem as it the case with a Muslim Wollo who accompanies a tabbot during Epiphany.

[331] In South Wollo the number of Christian populace have been in sharp decline even in some places churches have been closed due to absence of worshipers. In many instances, Muslims have resisted the transfer of Tabbot to other areas and supported the Christian clergy.

As said before the Wadajja ritual is widespread in Wollo. It could be organized in different forms for various purposes. Usually when a child or other member of a family is believed to be possessed by a jinn or bad sprit both Muslims and Christians usually arrange *Hijaba*- a kind of Wadaja. It is after attempting this they look for other medical solutions. Interestingly enough when Christians organize Wadajja the beseechers are all Muslims and call upon Allah and the host replied with Ameen. A Christian informant, Amelework, from Kombolcha put her experience in the following words

> ዱዓን አይቸበታለሁ። ከዚህ በፊት ከባሌ ጋር ተለያይቸ ነበር የምኖረው። ከዚያም አንድ ቀን የዱበርቲ ዱዓ አስገባሁ። እናም ዱዓው ሰርቶ ብዙ ሳንቆይ ከባሌ ጋር አበረን መኖር ጀመርን። እኔ ክርስቲያን ብሆንም በዱዓው ስላመንኩ አላህ ሃጃሽን ያውጣው እያሉ ሲመርቁኝ አሚን አሚን እላለሁ። ያው አላህ በለው እግዚአብሄር አንድ ነው ልዩነቱ የቋንቋ ነው።
>
> I have seen the power of Dua. I and my husband were living separately. One day I summon duberti dua. Because of that dua, a little after, we were united and start living together with my husband. Although I am a Christian since I believe in dua when the call upon Allah for fulfilling my will I accepted saying Amen Amen. Whether you call Allah or Egzabihier, it is similar to the difference is only of language.

Such cases show how religion in its day-to-day expression maintains closer relationships with life-related problems and partly depicts the pluralistic understanding of religion among lay Muslims and Christians and the resultant syncretic practices.

6.2 Local Models of Religious Tolerance in Wollo

Notwithstanding, the debate over the character of much-praised religious tolerance in Ethiopia and specifically Wollo, still there exists some social arenas that nurture religious co-existence and cooperation. Through centuries-old interfaith interaction, the Wolloye had developed local models of religious pluralism and tolerance. The fact that both Christians and Muslims of Wollo are indigenous to the area and share many customs have created a pattern of open borders and accommodative social practices. Despite the emerging trend that challenges the preexisting cultures Wollo still exhibits a tolerant culture mainly embedded in the ‘dialogue of life.’

According to Diana Eck[332], dialogue in the community involves inclusive categories that encompass most of the unstructured interaction between people of different traditions. Such dialogues happen spontaneously or organized and concentrate on practical issues of common concern. Therefore, the dialogue of life as practiced by the Ethiopian diverse religious community to live together, to celebrate other's festivals and to mix around with those who are different in religious background, are part of the way to create cultural literacy and build bridges to the others.

In general, a dialogue of life implies a dialogue that encourages positive relation to the people of different religions. It is because a dialogue of life promotes the people to integrate and intermingle with the others in everyday activities as they frequently encounter and interact with each other at any place and at any time. The process of dialogue of life in South Wollo is obviously seen in the mix-faith marriage where families of various religions are willing to live together under one roof. The process can also be seen in the celebration of festive seasons together, where they have a meal of their own and sit together as friends and relatives.

Furthermore, the dialogue of life in everyday interaction is a routine for the people of all and religions in Ethiopia and South Wollo. The differences in religions do not make them feel isolated and hesitate to mix around with the others. In fact, the dialogical process through the process of daily live interaction will overcome prejudice and misunderstanding of the other. Therefore, the dialogue of life is significant for engaging the quest to improve religious tolerance and encourages people to appreciate religious pluralism.

This has been exactly the case in Wollo where much of Christian-Muslim relations have been witnessed at the informal level than in some meeting rooms. For the Wolloye Christian –Muslim relations is a normal daily routine and not necessarily a spectacular matter for them. The experience of an Orthodox Deacon from Semen Gondar- a majority Christian area gives us the glimpse of this fact

> እኔ ከሰሜን ጎንደር ነኝ። እናም እኛ አካባቢ አንድም ሙሰሊም ስለሌለ ሙስሊም ሲባል የሆነ ሌላ አይነት ፍጡር፣ ሰው የሚያርድ አደርገን ነበር የምነወስደው።ባንድ ወቅት ደሴ ዙርያ

[332] Eck, Diana. 1986. "What Do We Mean by 'Dialogue'?" in *Current Dialogue*, Geneva: World Council of Churches.

መንገድ ላይ እያለን ቢመሽብን አሳድሩን ለማለት ሙሰሊም ብቻ ስለሆኑ ቢያርዱንስ በለን ፈራን። መጨረሻ ላይ የግዳችንን ከአንድ ቤት ስንጠይቅ ባጋጣሚ የሼህ ቤት ሆኖ ተገኘ። ከዚያማ ሸህዬው አሰጉበተው ‹‹በሉ እነዚህ ሙሳፊሮች ናቸው እግራቸውን እጠቡ›› በለው አሳጥበው ተንከባክበው አሳደሩን። የሚገርምህ የዲያቆንነት ቆባችንን እያዩ ነው ይህን ሁሉ ያደረጉት።[333]

I am from North Gonder. Because there is no Muslim in our area, we used to consider Muslims as a different creature who simply slaughters others. Once while we were on a journey in Dessie Zuria it became nightfall. Because they were all Muslims, we feared to ask for bed fearing they could slaughter us. At last, when we desperately approached a home it happened to be a home of a Sheikh. Then the Sheikh received us ordered his men 'these are travelers wash their feet' and gave us wonderful hospitality. To your surprise, they have done all this seeing our sign of being deacons.

In Wollo, such practices widely occur among the common people who are known for their accommodative and receptive invitation – *Arhibu*[334]. It not only shows one's readiness to fulfill the interest of the guest through sharing together irrespective of his/her religious identity but it also involves the act of open-mindedness and accommodation of difference.

In South Wollo religious tolerance and pluralism have been seen in many aspects of social interactions that range from neighborly relations, mutual religious accommodation, interfaith marriage. Another factor that nurtures religious tolerance in Wollo has to do with kinship association across religions.

6.2.1 Communal Institutions: Edir and Iqub

Self-help associations play a pivotal role in Ethiopia's social milieu. Of such important social intuitions, Edir and Iqub are widespread throughout the country. Edir is a kind of burial association when in time of death of a member or his/her relative a funeral service is provided for the deceased and a fixed amount of money collected from the member on monthly basis is given to the legitimate member of the family of the deceased. This has been an arena of interfaith interactions and religious tolerance among the Wolloye. An interesting case in this regard is

[333] Informal discussion with Desta, August 2017

[334] Although originally an Arabic term with Islamic connotation, it has been commonly employed among Muslims and Christians of Wollo with a wider connotation.

eighty years old mix-faith Edir in Kombolcha known as *Augusto Blukoa*[335] where Muslims and Christians tolerate one another in their dealings with the religious differences in burial traditions of Islam and Christianity. Of the one hundred and fifteen members, eighty-six of them are orthodox Christians and the remaining twenty-nine are Muslims.

As already seen in both Dessie and Kombolcha there is a growing tendency for having religious exclusive Edir. However, there are many who argue for mixed religious Edir. An informant from Kombolcha argued

> እኛ እኮ አንድ ላይ የነበርን ሰዎች ነን። አብሮነታችን በዚህ (በሃይማኖት ልዩነት) የሚፍታ አይደለም። ሃይማኖተኛ አብሮነት አይጠላም። እኔ የነሱን አምላክ አላመልክ እነሱም እንደዛው። በእድራችን የኔን ካላመለክ የሚል ነገር ሰምተን አናውቅም። እስኪ በኔ ሞት በእድር የተነሳ ሃይማኖትን የቀየረ ካለ አሳዩኝ። አንድም አላውቅ።
>
> We were together for a long. In addition, this cannot be obliterated by our religious difference. A religious man does not hate togetherness. I do not worship their God and vice versa. In our Edir, no one proselytizes the other. Would u please show me a man who has changed his religion due to membership in mixed religious Edir? I know no one.

This in a way criticizes those who make their case for religious exclusive edirs on alleged religious principles. Some of the major criticisms leveled against such edir include incompatibility of burial rites in Islam and Christianity and differences over meat consumption. In Islamic tradition, women could not follow the bier. However, in Christianity, there is no harm in doing so. More importantly, as meat represents a strong mark of religious identity, many are not in favor of the preparation of meat alongside the food of the religious other.[336]

6.2.2 Affinity (*Amachicha*) Relationship

In South Wollo and elsewhere in Ethiopia *Amachicha* relationship is taken as a kin relationship. It emerges both in inter and intra religious marriage. In the case of the former, usually, it is at a

[335] Established in 1945, this Edir was the first in history of Kombolcha and still remained a mix-Faith Edir.

[336] Ficquet, Eloi. 2006. "Flesh Soaked in Faith: Meat as a Marker of the Boundary between Christians and Muslims in Ethiopia." In Muslim-Christian Encounters in Africa, ed. Benjamin F. Soares, 39–56. Leiden: Brill.

later stage that respective families accept and formally engage in affine relationships. Although mixed marriages are ideal for inter-religious encounters, more often than not, such relations are fragile. This is due to; on the one hand, such marriages are not the ideal choice for religiously concerned families and on the other the likelihood of religious difference flare-up between the spouses and families. Issues of naming a child, his/her religious education and religious conversion appear to create disagreement among families. Nonetheless, the field data indicated that still today interfaith marriage has served as a social glue that attaches Muslims and Christians together.

Kinship tie has also been an important promoter of religious tolerance in Wollo. This is a wider issue that needs a separate study but suffice here to say is many Wolloyes' have mixed religious kinship background. This is among others seen in many peoples who have names such as Taklebirhan Mohammed i.e. a Christian man with a Muslim father. In addition, in Wollo it is a little easier to find a Christian named Mohammed than elsewhere in Ethiopia. This is one of the unique models of coexistence in Wollo.

6.2.3 The Practice of Interfaith Marriage

Interfaith marriage, which is also traditionally called mixed marriage, refers to marriage between partners professing different religions, Islam and Christianity, in this case. Interfaith marriage typically connotes a marriage in which both partners remain adherents to their distinct religion, and as such, it is distinct from concepts of religious conversion.

Islamic Law has different regulations on interfaith marriage, depending on which of the two spouses is Muslim. A primary legal concern is that the children are assured to all be Muslim. Islamic Law permits a Muslim man to marry up to four non-Muslim women from the People of the Book (Christians and Jews), however, they must be chaste and all of the children usually must be brought up Muslim.

However, according to Qur'an, 5:5, Islamic Law prohibits Muslim women from marrying outside of Islam. It is argued that the verse that permits Muslim men to marry non- Muslim women is not valid any more today due to several reasons including its incorrect interpretation. Marriage between a Muslim woman and a non-Muslim man is possible only in the condition if he accepts Islam completely so that he shall boycott the other faith and believe only according to

Islam. However, if the man accepts Islam just for the sake of marriage, the marriage will not be valid i.e. it is Islamically illegal.[337] In Christianity too, notwithstanding the various interpretations are given by Christian denominations, interfaith marriage is not allowed, according to 2 Corinthians 6:14, and in some cases Deuteronomy 7:3. Similarly, as per the rules and procedures of marriage in the EOTC absolutely prohibits interfaith marriage. Moreover, the Church prohibited any marriage performed outside of the church by its followers. The *Fetha Nagas*t confirms it as follows:

> If a Christian marries an unbelieving woman, he must command her to embrace the faith; women who are believers must not marry men who are not of the faith, lest the men convert them to their faith and cause them to lose the [true] faith. If a Christian woman marries a non-Christian man, she shall be expelled from the community. If she repents and leaves him, the community shall accept her as an apostate converted from her impiety.

In contrast, such marriage is supported indirectly as per 1 Corinthians 7:12–14 of the bible, which dictates, "For the unbelieving husband is sanctified through his (believing) wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified through her believing husband".

As it is implied in the religious scriptures of both faith groups, the issue of interfaith marriage is allowed based on certain prerequisites, especially in Islam. Mainstream Muslims and Christians also relentlessly condemn interfaith marriage in the region. Despite condemnations from families, neighbors and friends, there are many cases of the practice of interfaith marriage in the region.

Cases of Inter-Faith Marriage

The couple lived together for seven years holding their own religion. 'We respect each other' said Misrak Asgedom, an orthodox Christian and a wife of a Muslim - Demese Belay. Since the beginning, we agreed to hold our religion and we have been living accordingly. During holidays, we celebrate together except for eating meat together. For that, we prepare a separate dish. For instance during Muslim holidays when he went for Eid prayers I prepare everything and he

[337] Informant: Sheikh Rashad , May 2016

slaughters a sheep or goat according to his religious prescriptions and though I don't eat from it I cook for him and of course separate dishes for me. Besides, we have two children and we agreed that to baptize our first child and became a Christian, and the second child is not baptized so that he will most likely become a Muslim. Strikingly this couple divides between their children alongside the religion of each. In many instances, children born in mix-faith families tend to choose their own religion.

Aster and her Husband

Aster, who is a Christian marry a Muslim man has been living together for the last ten years. The couple usually attends to their respective worship places and even cooperates in this regard. According to him, she usually reminds him of prayer time. Besides, she washed my prayer mat with special care to meet the Islamic prescription thereof and put it in a separate place.

> ሃይማኖት ማለት ለኔ የእምነት ጉዳይ ነው። ሁላችንም ደግሞ የወረስነው ከቤተሰብ ነው። ስለዚህ ሁለታቸንም የየቤተሰባችንን ሃይማኖት ይዘን ስለተገናኘን በዚህም አብሮ መኖር እነደሚቻል ሰለተማመን ወደ ትዳር ገበተናል። እስካሁንም እግዚአብሄር ይመስገን ሰላም ነን።
>
> For me, religion is a matter of belief. We all inherit it from our families. When we meet, we were with our religion and agree to live together and without changing it. Since then thanks to God, we are living peacefully.

Concerning the consumption of meat, the couples are comfortable with food slaughtered by either a Christian or a Muslim. However, whenever her husband's family comes home his wife prepares food slaughtered by Muslims and when her family member comes to visit she prepare meat slaughtered by a Christian.

Priest Asnake and his wife W/ro Gete

This couple is from Wagidi woreda. W/ro Gete –a Muslim is married to an orthodox Christian priest named Asnake. According to the former, though a priest, her husband used to respect my religion and say nothing while I perform Salat. On my part, I used to brew Tala- (a traditional Ethiopian beer) against my religious prescription. Until he died, we were living in peace. After him, I have married a Muslim man named Alemu.

Although, neither the church nor the mosque did bless their marriage, the couples had stayed in the spirit of religious pluralism and tolerance. She married her second husband-not for because he was a Muslim but just a man of her choice.

In urban areas, the tradition of interfaith marriage is developing. My sisters' friend named W/ro Zahara is a Muslim. She is married to an Orthodox Christian named Ato Mekonen without the consent of her parents in Kombolcha. This couple has got three children so far. W/ro Zahara had completed the whole Quran and had been a practicing Muslim known for her religious piety. Her husband, on the other hand, is the son of a priest who undergoes under a strict Orthodox Christian discipline. Her relatives are, constantly nagging her to either divorce him or convince him to change his religion. However, not all this withstand their courage to live together under a single roof. Such cases stand against the argument that interfaith marriages are but happen between religiously lax individuals. For my mother, it is difficult to question such matters because this is የእህል-ዉሃ ነገር- a matter of destiny that happen in an unpredictably compelling natural way.

Another couple who are my own acquaintance lives in Harbu. Ato Tilahun is a Muslim from Borena who came to Kombolcha as a Health Officer and married an orthodox Christian wife-Iyarus. Whenever the family needs meat, W/ro Iyarus called for a Christian to slaughter the animal at hand since her husband does not mind eating meat slaughtered by Christians. In spite of the fact that the Christian family of the wife demands her to attract him to Christianity and the family of the husband demands him to attract her into Islam. The two families even advise the couple to choose either Christianity or Islam. The couple, however, remains steadfast and lives their own life without any difficulty so far.

Even when the degree of religious orthodoxy among families is high, such marriages (especially when there are children) tend to serve as a bridge of religious tolerance. A Muslim father has reiterated this fact in the following words

> መቼም አታጋጥመኝ ነው። ካጋጠመ በኃላ ግን መቻቻል ነው። አሁን እኔ ልጇ ካፊር አግብታ ሁለት ወልዳለች።እኔ እንግዲህ ስሜ ቃልቻ ነው።ጉድ ሆንኩ ብዙ ለማላቀቅ ብዙ ጥረለሁ። ነገር ግን የወለደች ጊዜ ነገሩ አከተመ ብዬ ከቤተሰቡም ጋር ደህና ሁነን ትቼዋለሁ ለምን ደም ከተነካካ በኃላ ወዴት ይሄዳል በማለት። አሁን ላንተ ካፊር ያልኩትን ቃላት እንኳ እነሱ ፊት አልለውም።ለመኖር ሲባል ወዴት ይደረሳል።

> It is nice to curb it before it happens. However, once happened the option is but to tolerate. My daughter married a kafir and has two children. I am known for being a religious learned man. Stricken by it I had attempted to separate her but when she gave birth, I decided to stop and establish good relationships with the family of my son in law. Because once a blood relation is established, there is nowhere to go. Even I will not use the word kafir in front of them. This is so for the sake of coexistence.

Notwithstanding the challenges such as these couples encounter, the existence of interfaith marriage has been a source of peaceful interaction among religious groups. Nonetheless, it should be noted, despite the existence of relatively many cases of interfaith marriage in the study area, it does not represent the mainstream way of doing marriage.

6.2.4 Neighborly Relations

This is an important indicator of a good relationship between two communities in religiously diverse societies is inter-religious marriage. It brings the family of mix faith to meet, interact and live together under one family. It is one of the unique settings within which religious groups enter into a 'dialogue of life'[338] is through neighborly relations with the religious others. Such relation is a key element of social life in the area as elsewhere in Ethiopia. The Ethiopians called such interactions *Gurbetina (*literary: Neighborliness*)* which encompasses participating in each other's social ceremonies that run through birth to death. Another important manifestation of *Gurbetina* is evident during the celebration of religious holidays when neighbors invite each other and pass on good wishes to one another saying *Enquan aderesachihu*-and *Malkam Baal (Happy Holiday*). Most of the time, they prepare a separate meal for their neighbor on such occasions and share together anything other than meat.

Although not as vibrant as it was before neighborly relations remain a major arena of religious co-existence in the area. However, a lot more should be done in enhancing such a valuable culture of togetherness with difference thereby withstand the currents of an extremist pseudo-religious claim for limited contact with religious others. As the following cases from southern

[338]E. Akinade Akintunde, "The Precarious Agenda: Christian-Muslim Relations in Contemporary Nigeria," on http://www.macdonald.hartsem.edu/articles_akinade.

Wollo show people in Wollo still cherish their culture of togetherness and resist the idea of social separation.

Good neighborly relation is an important social value and sign of religiosity in both Islam and Christianity. For instance, in Islam, it is an established fact in both Quran and prophetic injections that Muslims are expected to live peacefully with their neighbors irrespective of differences in their religion, social status, ethnicity and language.

There are innumerable injunctions from the Prophet on this regard: The Prophet said whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day should not hurt (trouble) his neighbor.[339] In another hadith, he said Gabriel continued to recommend me about treating the neighbors Kindly and politely so much so that I thought, he would order me to make them as my heirs.[340] He also said by Allah, he does not believe! By Allah, he does not believe! By Allah, he does not believe!" It was said, "Who is that, O Allah's Apostle? He replied, 'That person whose neighbor does not feel safe from his evil'.[341] He also forbids believers to harm their neighbors saying 'Anybody who believes in Allah and the Last Day should not harm his neighbor, and anybody who believes in Allah and the Last Day should entertain his guest generously and anybody who believes in Allah and the Last Day should talk what is good or keep quiet'.[342]

Moreover, Islam allows even to allow his/her neighbor to fix a wooden peg on his/her wall to construct a house.[343] Islam also orders Muslim women not to look down on any gift from their neighbors even if the gift is as small as the trotters of a sheep.[344]

Subsequently, the people who belong to the two faith groups have got strong intimacy and love to their neighbors irrespective of their differences in their religion. Both urban and rural Muslims and Christians participate in holydays, weddings, burial ceremonies, and other festivals.

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[339]Sahih Al-Bukhari Hadith, 7:114

[340] Ibid, 8:43

[341] Ibid, 8:45

[342] Ibid, 8:47

[343] Ibid, 3:643

[344] Ibid, 3:740

During a Christian wedding, the host prepares a feast for both Christian and Muslim neighbors slaughtering animals in their respective faiths. Similarly, during a Muslim wedding, the host prepares the feast for both Christian and Muslim neighbors. Otherwise, the wedding or any other ceremony appears to be incomplete and disgusting for the host and even appears as a source of criticism.[345]

Both Muslims and Christians participate in the funerals of the religious others. During such occasion, they both attend such ceremonies and send their condolence through *Laqso madrese*-consoling the family of the deceased (usually preparing food) - who stay at home for someday receiving visitors. Failure to attend on such occasions is taken to mean neglecting Gurbitina and has the potential to disrupt personal relations.

The Wolloye also accommodate to the other cultures and respect the way the others' practice of their religions. As part of their neighborly relations, Muslims and Christians help each other to the extent of allowing their home for the ceremonies of religious others. Despite their mutually exclusive religious practices, Christians and Muslims in South Wollo are generally positive towards the religious practice of others. Many Christians even have Muslim prayer mats in their home. They allow Muslims to pray inside their home saying *Lagnam Tsliylin* –Pray for us also. In the area, there exists a culture of respect for religious men both in and out of one's religion. This shows the value people in south Wollo attach to religion and the resultant respect given to the religious practice of others. The researcher had witnessed such experience where a Muslim Sheikh allowed a Christian renter of his house to brew *Talah* (homemade brewery) in spite of the strict prohibition Islam put on brewery and alcohol.

Emama Bosi and W/ro Zeyneba

This neighbor lives together for about ten Years. Emma Bosi- an orthodox Christian had rented a house from a Muslim- W/ro Zeynaba. 'Throughout this period' said the former 'we have lived cordially'. She continued 'I have never considered Muslims as different but for me, religion is a matter of individual choice. If you see my family background they all are Muslims. I became Christian due to marriage with my husband who is a Christian.' Since then she remained loyal to

[345] Informant interview Mohammed Ali, October 2016.

her Christianity and resisted the push from her Muslim relatives to return to Islam. It is this mixed religious background that helped her in having the exemplary relations with her neighbor Zeyneba. According to the latter, ‘ We participate in each other’s coffee ceremony and during my turn sheikh Hussein (her husband) usually read the Hadith of the prophet of to all of us including Emma Bosi who even at times urged the Sheikh to read more.’ Concerning this Emma Bosi commented ‘What astonishes me a lot is that what is read is also available in our book. For instance, in one of the hadith that I remembered backbiting is forbidden which is similarly the case in Christianity.’ Nonetheless, she added that the fact that her Hadith lesson did not affect her Christianity. She is still frequent goer to the church and observes other Christian etiquettes.

W/ro Almaz and W/ro Aminat

Ermias’s Mother W/ro Almaz and her neighbor Aminat have been neighbors for the last ten years. Throughout these years, their relationship has been cordial. The former is a Muslim convert to Christianity due to marriage and has little knowledge about Christian precepts. The later on the other hand is a Christian converted to Islam. Their prior knowledge of their neighbor’s religion has enabled them to have an amicable relationship. W/ro Almaz succinctly put how she receives her Muslim guests and neighbors

> **ሙስሊም እንግዳም ሆነ ጎረቤት ቤቴ ሲመጣ የሚፈልገውን ሁሉ ነው የመናደርግለት መስገጃም ቢፈልግ እዚሁ አለን ጎረቤት ከጠራንም ከሙስሊም ስጋ ቤት አምጥተን ነው የምናሰተናግደው ልጆቼም ጎረቤቶቻቸው ጋር አብረው ቁርአን ቤት ሲሄዱ እንኳ አልከለክላቸውም።**
>
> When a Muslim guest or neighbor came to our house, we prepare everything. If he/she wants to prayer, we have a prayer matt. When we invite our Muslim neighbors, we bring from a Muslim Butchery and accommodate them. In addition, I do not object even when my children go to a Quran school along with my neighbors’ children.

6.2.5 The Abbagar Institution

Another example of religious coexistence in Wollo is that of the mediating, not purely religious, the role of local Muslim leaders and Orthodox-Christian as well as more traditional spirit

mediums or local experts called Abbagar to help people solve disputes related to family, insults, land, debt and many other issues.[346]

Throughout ages, the Wolloye have developed different customary institutions of conflict resolution through which arbitration is given to various disputes that range from homicide to petty crimes. One such customary conflict resolution mechanism is the Abbagar. Otherwise, known as "blood dryers," they play an important role in reconciliation, especially in homicide cases, and their curse is much feared.[347]

Although it is more of a secular institution, it is an important arena for interfaith interaction in the area. As a traditional conflict resolution, it serves as a common arena in which both Muslims and Christians present their cases and seek resolutions. The basic function of this institution is dispute resolution.

An Abbagar –a traditional Muslim judge is selected from among the elders of the community as a man of justice and responsible to look after disputes and the resolution thereof. Although common among Muslim dominated areas, both Muslims and Christians willingly present their cases to the Abbagar and accept his decision as final. This is so because the religious affiliation of the litigants has no relevance. They worked to find common ground between two parties, based on shared underlying principles of piety and justice, in a way that a state court could not do. Thus, Christians are also accommodated in such a process and have justice without religious discrimination.

According to Abbink, the success of the Abbagar is 'precisely because they do not assume any political role. On this basis, they gain authority and claim adherence – while at the same time respecting and affirming the identity of their "clients" in their own respective religions.'[348]

A related institution is the *Bele* institution where local elders *(Sheni)* and burial associations engage in act of reconciliation. *Bele* is where community members were called to a public

[346] Abbink, Jon. 2014. 'Religion and Politics in Africa: The Future of "The Secular",' in *Africa Spectrum* 3/2014: 83-106. PP. 88-89

[347] Ibid

[348] Ibid

meeting and were expected to walk over a stick or rope and everyone present would have to swear that they were not guilty and did not know who committed that particular crime. As a secular institution, members of the community participate in it irrespective of religious differences. Besides, local elders would be selected based on their quality in reconciliation and life experience than religious affiliations. Due to the fear of the curse of the *sheni* and social exclusion (fent) people usually do not dare to lie but if a person lies, it is widely believed that the curse would bring sickness and death not only on the individual but also will pass to his/ her successive generation.

6.2.6 Pilgrimage to Shrines

One of the common practices among the Christians and Muslims of the area is the practice of pilgrimage to shrines. Pilgrimage has been an important character of most major religions of the world. Both Muslims and Christians of Ethiopia undertake a pilgrimage to different religious sites that attract pilgrims from various geographical locations and all lifestyles.

Pilgrimages create bonding among pilgrims of various social, geographical, religious and political backgrounds. This bonding creates a generation of communitas characterized by common feelings, presumed equality of pilgrims and the presence of camaraderie sharing of supplies and sleeping places.[349] The feeling of communitas removes pilgrims' roles and status they have within their societies and as a result, all pilgrims are equal in status and role at pilgrimage centers.[350]

Pilgrims undertake such journeys motivated by various factors including healing powers of pilgrimage centers, the rituals that take place during pilgrimage periods, the presence of holy springs and the charisma of spiritual leaders who are believed to be endowed with supernatural powers of healing and performing various miracles. Besides, Pilgrims also visit religious centers and shrines to fulfill their pledge by handing over gifts for fulfilled wishes.

[349] Turner 1974: 53 cited in Gemechu Pilgrimages and syncretism: Religious Transformation among the Arsi Oromo of Ethiopia.

[350] Ibid: 201-203

As explained earlier South Wollo is a center of Islamic education and hosts many Sufi shrines mainly established as the center of knowledge and religious devotion. As indicated above Sufi Islam had a long history in South Wollo where Muslims constitute the majority. Sufi shrines have been an important arena of interreligious interaction. Notable Sufi shrines in Wollo include the shrine of Anna, Dana, Jamma Negus, Geta, Dagger, Challe, Massal, and many others. Most of these Sufi shrines were established from the late eighteenth to the early nineteenth century.

One of the major functions of Sufi shrines in south Wollo has been the celebration of the prophet's birthday. During this occasion, both Muslims and Christians of near and far, participate. As Meron rightly argues shrines as faith institutions have been a center of ethnic and religious interaction against the dominant view that presumes the hardening of social bordering and conflictual relations in the post federal Ethiopia.[351] According to her, in line with their significance as 'nodal points across differences', shrines rarely serve the purpose of conversion. Rather adherents of different faiths come together seeking the Baraka of the place without challenging the salience of their religious boundary.[352] This indicates the positive role Sufi shrines have been playing in creating an arena for interfaith interaction.

Sufi shrines had also been serving as a center of customary justice where shrine leaders take the role of the judge and resolve disputes. In this regard, the shrine of Dagger located in Kalala Woreda of the South Wollo zone represents a unique experience of conflict resolution. According to Mohammed[353] upon the request of the people of the area to Sheikh Sharafadin to represent his son as a mediator he refused and rather gave his lance as his persona to represent him as a mediator by declaring that breaking once promise to the *Shifaa* would bring severe punishment. Hence, when a dispute arises the protagonists will approach the family of Sharafidain for resolution and the later will bring the lance locally named *Shifaw* as a mediator. It is widely believed that whoever seeks justice in front of *Shiffaw* will not be wronged be it a Muslim or a Christian.

[351] Meron Zeleke. 'We are the same but different': Accounts of Ethiopian Orthodox Christian Adherents of Islamic Sufi Saints *Journal for the Study of Religion* 27,2 (2014) 195 – 213

[352] Ibid

[353] Mohammed Seid. n.d. The History of the Shrine of Dagger. Unpublished MA Thesis. Department of History Addis Ababa University. PP. 1

The shrine of Mesal is another typical customary court in the area. Located in the rim between South Wollo and north Shawa the shrine has been popular for effective dispute resolution among the Wolloye and beyond. The shrine of Mesal is known for its effective role in resolving disputes including cases referred from formal courts.[354]The researcher had the opportunity to attend some of the proceedings of this customary court in 2016. The importance of Mesal as an effective court has to do with the belief attached to the ability of the *Silet* (Sword) of Mesal to punish not only the untruthful but also up to his/her seven generations.[355]

As opposed to Dagger where the majority of the people are Muslim, in Mesal the majority of the people are orthodox Christians and many of the shrine followers appear to be Christians. This is partly due to the location of the shrine in North Shewa with a significant Orthodox Christian populace. More importantly, this has much to do with the 'efficacy' of Sufi Sheiks a source of blessing and the accommodative character of Sufism.

Sufi Islam and its religious leaders accommodate and tolerate customs and traditions experienced by pre-Islamic communities of South Wollo. The Muslim scholars who understood the deep-root and persistent traditional values and customs of the Muslim community of South Wollo forced to devise a new mechanism to make their effort of reform effective. Thus, religious leaders called the people to come together to celebrate the anniversary of the birthday of the Prophet. The people began to use the occasion to commit traditional rituals and ceremonies, which were previously observed under trees and other popular places. It was after the end of the rituals and ceremonies that *Shaykhs* discuss the tenets of Islam. As the people observed ceremony, their hostile attitude towards *Tariqa* teachers changed and they began to accept their teaching.[356]

Certain Sheikh's, on the other hand, devise a different strategy in approaching the local community through redefining traditional rituals within an Islamic framework. One such sheikh was Sheikh Sirag Mohammed of Tirusina. Hence in his attempt to accentuate the Islamic identity

[354] The effectiveness of Mesal is seen among many people who found easy to lie in the name of Allah or Egziabher than in Mesal. In other words, it easy to seek ones right by accusing the perpetrator in Mesal than to ask him in the name of Allah or Egziabher or in formal courts.

[355] Informal talk with attendants at the Shrine at Mesal, 2016

[356] Mohammed, History of the Shrine of Dagger. PP. 91

of his zawiyya, traditional Oromo practices of *Wadaga*, *talama*, and *Zar* were redefined as *zikr*, *mawlid*, and *ginn* respectively.[357]

One of the popular shrines in the study area is the shrine of Geta located in Qallu Woreda. Sheikh Hajj Seid Bushera established it around the second half of the nineteenth century. The founder was originally from Ifat, a place in the present-day north Shewa zone of Amhara regional state. According to an informant, before settling here the founder was believed to wander around different places with the same name as Geta. [358]

Genealogically, the founder is believed to link with Sheikhul Akbar Muhidin Ibn Arabi of Andalusia whose genealogy is claimed to be linked with the Prophet Mohammed. The hereditary line of Hajj Bushera is Hajj Bushera Hajj Ay Muhammad Hajj Abdurrahman Hajj Suleiman Hajj Aw Ahmed Hajj Wolle Muhammad. The current custodian of the shrine is Hajj Muhidin Hajj Ahmed Hajj Muhammad Wolle Seid Bushera.[359]

Hajj Bushera was a religious scholar and a devoted Sufi. This was exemplified in his five hundred religious books[360] and a daily zikr of 100,000. He was a teacher of around 12,000 students at different times from around Ethiopia and even abroad. A well-known religious scholar named Dahlawi (a foreigner) was a student of Seid Bushera. Succession is based on the male line of the respective custodian. Hence, when a custodian died one of his sons assume custodianship. Accordingly, after the death of the founder, his son Hajj Muhammad Wolle became the custodian and this similar trend had been applied up until the current custodian Hajj Muhidin.

The adherents of Geta mainly visit the shrine seeking the blessing of the Shaikh and to say their prayer for their various needs. They come from all over Ethiopia and beyond. Specifically, the annual celebration of Mawlid has been an important occasion of Muslim-Christian interaction in

[357] Bruzzi, Silvia and Meron Zeleke. 2015. "Contested Religious Authority: Sufi Women in Ethiopia and Eritrea'' in *Journal of Religion in Africa* 45, 37-67.

[358] Informant interview with Imadudin Muhidin, Geta, 2016

[359] Ibid.

[360] Some of the well-known books written by the Sheik include *Minatul Ilahiya* and *Umdatu Ahlul Tofik*

that approximately one-third of the participants are Christians. In addition to Mawlid, there is a dua ceremony every Thursday night and Friday until noon where both Christians and Muslims participate.[361]

6.2.7 Mutual Cooperation in Building Worship Places

As explained above under chapter five one of the challenges of religious pluralism and tolerance has been the heightened competition over land for building worship places. However, against this trend, there have also instances of interfaith cooperation over constructing worship places in different parts of Wollo.

For instance, in Kombolcha town Muslims had played a significant role in the construction of Saint Gabriel church in 1950. According to informants due to the absence of Church in the town at that, the time when a Christian dies the mourners had to go to a nearby district *Ancharo* where a church and a Christian cemetery were located. However, once it happened that due to the sloppy nature of the road to *Ancharo* a corpse falls down. Seeing this Muslim member of the edir in consultation with Christians requested the Abun in Dessie for the construction of a church in Kombolcha to solve the problem of Christians who were few in number in the town. Finally, the Abun accepted the request and both Christians and Muslims made financial contributions for the construction of the church. In acknowledging the huge contribution of one of the Muslim leaders of the time-the late Omar-Sudan, the Church, on its 50th year's anniversary, remembered him and awarded a certificate to his son Muhammad Omar.[362]

Similarly, one of the oldest mosques in Kombolcha Umar Ibn al Hathab mosque is also constructed with the financial contribution of some prominent Christian merchants in the town and Christian students in the nearby school had carried stones during break time.[363]

More recently, a prominent Christian Trader in Kombolcha named Ato Gebreyese had contributed ten thousand birrs to the construction of Khalid Mosque in 1998 E.C. According to Shaikh Endris, astonishingly the mosque construction committee had refused the donation of

[361] Informant interview with Imadudin Muhidin, Geta, 2016

[362] Informal Discussion with Mohammed Yimam. Addis Ababa, 2017

[363] Informant Interview Kombolcha April 2016.

Shaikh Hussein Ala-Muhidin- a Muslim business tycoon- accusing him of involving in illegal business sectors. Here religious identity is overshadowed by communal solidarity.

In Dagan town of Qallu Woreda- a Muslims dominated area- due to the absence of Christian burial places the few Christians had to go as far as Kombolcha and Bati. Later, both Muslims and Christians consulted and decided to ask the Abun at Dessie for the building of Saint George church. To this effect, the Abun accepted and gave them the tabbot of Saint George for the establishment of the church.

The question worth asking is how we set a workable model of tolerance for both Christians and Muslims that renovate existing practices of co-existence into a tolerance based on equality, mutual trust, knowledge and understanding.

6.3 Conclusion

The preceding discussion shows that the historical processes that brought the existing societal character of South Wollo is critical in understanding the current status of religious pluralism and tolerance in the area. Accordingly, the major historical trajectories that shape South Wollo's religious culture are the early introduction of monotheistic religions to the area, Wollo's geographic location along the long-distance trade route, the war of Ahmed Gragn, the Oromo expansion to the area, the consolidation of monarchical rule after the end of Zemene Mesafint.

This chapter also underscores that despite the emerging trend that challenges the pre-existing cultures of religious tolerance Wollo still exhibits a tolerant culture mainly embedded in the 'dialogue of life' that encourages positive relation between Christians and Muslims of South Wollo. It is because dialogue of life promotes the people to integrate and intermingle with the others in everyday activities as they frequently encounter and interact with each other at any place and any time.

This is manifested in the existence of some social arenas that nurture religious co-existence and cooperation. Some of the major locally situated aspects of religious pluralism and tolerance in South Wollo include communal institutions of Edir and Iqub; Affinity (Amachicha) relationship; interfaith marriage; neighbourly relations; the Abbagar institution; Pilgrimage to Shrines and mutual cooperation in building worship places.

This implies how religious pluralism and tolerance is situated in the day to day informal interactions of social life where except for some emphasis on the religious boundary; in many respects religion has little significance in determining the nature of the interaction.

It also shows how religion in its day-to-day expression maintains closer relationships with life-related problems and partly depicts the pluralistic understanding of religion among lay Muslims and Christians of South Wollo.

Chapter Seven

The Advent of Islamic Reform Movements and the Changing Contours of Religious Pluralism and Tolerance in South Wollo

Both Islam and Christianity have a long history in Wollo. It has hosted long-aged centers of Islam and Christianity. Since their introduction, both groups live side by side for centuries in a predominantly peaceful manner. As elsewhere different Islamic groups exist in Wollo. Up until recently, Sufism has been almost the only strand of Islam in the area. However, later various Islamic groups began to emerge. This has been especially the case in the post-1991 period where Islamic reform groups such as Salafism have grown in size and influence.

It is therefore worth asking whether the emergence of such groups affects the nature of religious relations in the area and how the post-1991 religio-pluralistic policy of the state facilitates the diversification of the religious arena thereby creates a new dynamics of religious relations among religious groups. Here the emphasis is on how the Ethiopian secular model affected the nature of contestations between Orthodox Christians and Muslims of South Wollo. What are the major trajectories of Christian-Muslim relations in Wollo since the post-1991 secular order? Did the new secularism help enhance peaceful coexistence between religious groups or accentuate religious contestation? What does the new secular order mean to various religious groups? How do the various religious groups view the new secular model in terms of exercising religious freedom and enhancing equality?

7.1 Islamic Reform Movements in Ethiopia

Muslim identities have been very much in transformation during the last century and a half. The Salafi reformists and the modernists, the Muslim Brothers and the liberals, and more recently the Islamists and Muslim activists, besides those who engage in new approaches to reading the Quran or Sufism, indicate an immense variety of new interpretations and applications of Islam, that is to say of new and articulated Muslim identities.

Over the course of the last two decades or so Ethiopia has experienced a reconfiguration of its religious landscape. Hence, under the current secular dispensation, many Islamic reform

movements have been surfacing in the religious arena. These include groups with purist and extremist or fundamentalist interpretations of religion.

Here, a religious reform movement implies a movement that advocates for religious change as a change occurring within the same religious system without shifting once religious affiliation from one religion to another.[364] It entails changes in the actions and behaviors of believers towards certain religious precepts. For instance, such actions where a Muslim man stops visiting a Sufi shrine seeking for Baraka (blessing) or when a Muslim starts to celebrate the birth of prophets birthday and when he/she stops calling the name of saints for tawasul-intercession in his/her Dua (Supplication) indicates religious change. In general, it involves 'a reciprocal process of stimulus and response between advocators of a particular idea and targeted audiences'.[365]

For our purpose, we emphasize here on the Salafi movement in particular because of its significance in shaping not only Christian-Muslim relations but also a relation among Muslims. Before we examine the role of Salafism in shaping the character of religious pluralism and tolerance since 1991 in the area, a brief sketch of its nature, introduction and expansion in Ethiopia is in order. However, this does not preclude the existence of other reform movements both in the past and in present with varying goals and methods.

Historically, Salafism was connected with the idea for and the need to stick with the footsteps of the righteous followers- *Salafah Salihien*- of the true tradition of Islamic belief and practice. In its modern understanding, Salafism is seen as a revivalist movement associated with the ideas of the 12th Century Sheikh Ibn-Taymiyyah who was instrumental in shaping the ideology which later day followers like Abdul Wahab had based their reform agenda in a more robust manner.[366]

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[364] Østebø, Terje. 2009. 'Religious Change and Islam: The Emergence of the Salafi Movement in Bale, Ethiopia' In: *Proceedings of the 16th International Conference of Ethiopian Studies,* ed. by Svein Ege, HaraldAspen, Birhanu Teferra and Shiferaw Bekele, Trondheim

[365] Ibid

[366]The term Wahhabism is an English designation for the religious movement within Islam founded by Muhammad Ibn Abd al-Wahhab (1703-1792). The name *Wahhabiyya* derived from the name of the founder. Members of the movement describe themselves as *Mujahidin* (Unitarians), those who firmly uphold the doctrine of the oneness of God

He opposed to any custom and belief threatening and jeopardizing the glorification of the one God. It views as un-Islamic and therefore condemns such practices as using the name of any prophet, saint or angel in a prayer; calling upon any such beings for intercession and making vows to them; and visitations to tombs of saints. The main tenets of Salafi teaching stick to the concept of Tawhid. Against differences on many issues within them, all Salafists agree on the centrality of Tawhid- the oneness of Allah- that negates associating.

Salafism is a complex phenomenon. Hence, scholars distinguished between three strands namely Purists, Political activists and Jihadists. Purists mainly focus on missionary and educational activities hence are disinterested with political engagement. Political activists, on the other hand, engage in political activities in the form of creating political parties to uphold the interest of Muslims. Jihadists on their part advocate the establishment of an Islamic state by any means possible including violence.[367]

7.2 Salafism in Ethiopia and Wollo

The earliest possible period for the introduction of Salafism in Ethiopia was during the Italian period where the later favored Muslims. However, even before the advent of Salafism, there were attempts made by Sufi Sheikhs in protecting Sufism from local elements of belief and practices. The concept of revival has a long history in Islam. It has passed through many revivalist efforts by individual revivers. It is now evident that in pre-modern times sharia-minded Sufism was a major factor in the efforts at renewal and reform of Islam.

In Wollo, there were revivalist movements by individual sheikhs who negate the mixing of cultural elements with Islam and even wage war to eradicate it. Attempts made by Sheikh Jafar Bukko and Sheikh Bushra[368] Getta in dismantling traditional practices associated with chewing chat are cases in point. Still more radical Sufi attempt in Islamic revival is represented by the Jihad wars of Sheikh Muhammad Shafi (popularly called *Mujahidu*) of Jamma Negus who

[367] Wiktorowicz, Quintan. 2006. "Anatomy of the Salafi Movement." *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* Vol, 29 No 3, PP. 207-239

[368] The founder of Getta sheikh Said Bushera was known for his opposition of consumption of Chat and even ordered the clearing of Chat tree around the area.

extensively campaigned against surrounding Christian areas. This is against the standard notion of associating reform movements with the recent Salafi reformists.

According to Ostebo[369], the Salafi movement was first introduced to Ethiopia during the Italian occupation. Taking the EOC as a symbol of Ethiopian nationhood and exploiting the sense of victimhood among Muslims, the Italians pursued a policy of divide and rule hence support the latter through pro-Muslim policies including sponsoring a pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina.

With this, Muslims not only begun to practice their religious duties but also establish contacts with the Muslim world and became exposed to a new interpretation of Islam. Although being exposed by no means guarantees acceptance it is likely that at least some of the Hajji pilgrims answer to the call of Salafism.

More importantly, trans-local trade and foreign education helped the expansion of Salafism. The former facilitated the emergence of a new class of merchants who brought new impulses back to their locality. The latter on the other hand is explained the increasing number of Ethiopians who returned from studies in Saudi Arabia. [370] Thus, the religio-pluralist policy has helped the expansion of Salafism not only because it enhances its public visibility but also in renewed contact with the outside world.

With the new opening of religious liberty, the Salafi community now has a large following among many Muslims in many areas of the country notably in Bale, Arsi and the group is expanding into Silte and Gurage of Southern Ethiopia.[371] In South Wollo Salafism has a strong presence in Dessie, Mekane Selam, Gerba and Degan.

Concerning the character of Salafism in Ethiopia, Ostebo argued that Salafism in Ethiopia is neither political nor jihadist.[372] Salafism in Ethiopia is native and healthy. It is hybridized with

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369 Ostebo, Terje. 2014. "Salafism, State Politics, and Question of "Extremism" in Ethiopia." *Comparative Islamic Studies.* PP. 168

370 Ostebo and Tronvol. 2010. "Islamism in the Horn of Africa: Assessing Ideology, Actors, and Objectives." In International Law and Policy Institute Report. PP. 22

371 Ibid

372 Ostebo, "Salafism, State Politics…"

the realities of the country that made it peaceful and localized Salafi. This was however against its character during the initial stage of expansion where cases of aggressive behavior by young Salafis that have shallow knowledge of Islam who disrespectfully stopped their parents from arranging the coffee ceremony, desacralized Sufi shrines and ridicule religious fathers.[373]

Despite this, it 'clearly belongs to the purist trend' and 'Salafism in Ethiopia from the beginning had the form of a home-grown movement, in the sense that the new ideas were introduced by Ethiopians, and not by foreign missionaries.[374]Thus, local Ethiopians not Saudi missionaries were instrumental as an importer of Salafi ideas upon their return from Saudi Arabia.

Nonetheless, one cannot downplay the role played by foreign-based Islamic associations and their missionary activities in the 1990s. In this regard, the Muslim World League and its section of the International Islamic Relief Organization (IIRO) had been an important basis of Salafi support. The Saudi funded IIRO, for instance, had a Salafi orientation and headquartered in Aweliya school- a center of gravity for anti-Ahbash sentiment and protest against the government. Other important organizational backups for Salafi expansion include Islamic Africa Center (IAC) that facilitated scholarship for Ethiopian Muslims to Islamic countries and the Dawa and Knowledge Association (DKA) known for sponsoring the publication of popular Salafi books translated into local languages.[375]

Another major factor that explains the expansion of reform movements in general and Salafism in particular, has been higher education institutions.[376] With the expansion of universities across the state in recent decades, many Muslim students have the chance to attend higher education. This has created a favorable condition for reform movements to seize the opportunity and spread their interpretation of Islam to the student populace through organizing Muslim Jamma- largely

[373] Ostebo, Terje. 2008. "The Question of Becoming: Islamic Reform Movements in Contemporary Ethiopia." *Journal of Religion in Africa* Vol, No 38, PP. 416-446. PP. 422

[374] Ibid: 420

[375] Bawer, Oumer. 2012. "Competing for Legitimacy: Trends of Change and Continuity Islamic Reform since 1991 in Jimma, Ethiopia." in *Proceedings of the Third Annual Research Conference of Jimma University*. 255-275. PP. 262

[376] Ibid: 274

dominated by Salafi oriented students. Such Jammas have been instrumental in spreading the Salafi idea through organizing Islamic knowledge programs in nearby mosques.

Thus, while we talk of Islamic reform movements in Ethiopia it seems imperative to understand both the long-standing and indigenous character of Islam and its interaction with the Christian community for about fourteen Centuries and the post-1990s developments that facilitate religious reform in Ethiopia.

Coming to the study area, the introduction of Salafism in South Wollo was associated with the return of some sheikhs from Saudi Arabia who brought the Hanbali theology and Fiqh to the area. However, this process was not in an organized manner rather individual efforts were critical in disseminating the Salafi idea.

The expansion of the Salafi movement in South Wollo is associated with certain isolated individuals who accept Salafism. However, as an organized movement, Salafism takes root in South Wollo after the fall of the Derg. The late Shaikh Yahiya al-Ansi- a Yemeni who had lived in Dessie, known to advocate Salafi ideas even during the Derg.[377] He used to help orphans through his connection with rich donors from Saudi Arabia. It was probable that he had adopted Salafi teaching through this channel. According to an informant, the role of Yahiya was instrumental in recruiting Ethiopian Salafists and facilitated their coming to Dessie.[378]

One such individual is a certain Shaikh Talha Mohammed - a former Sufi who later advocates Salafi teachings while studying Islamic education in Saudi Arabia. As he returned from Saudi in 1994, Shaikh Talha had rented a house in Dessie and began to recruit students-popularly known as *Yetalha lijoch* (sons of Talha) among the youth who later become instrumental in spreading Salafi teaching in other parts of South Wollo.

In Kombolcha, the first to preach Salafism in the town was a certain Sheikh Mohammed Ali. A returnee from Sudan, he had listed thirteen points of difference with the Sufi oriented Islam.[379]

[377] On Yemeni Arabs in Dessie, see Hussein Ahmed. 2000. "Archival Sources on the Yemeni Arabs in Urban Ethiopia: The Dessie Municipality" in *History in Africa*, Vol. 27 PP. 31-37

[378] Interview with Hassen, Addis Ababa, 2016

[379] Interview with Mohammed Ali, Kombolcha 2016

Another individual crucial in harboring the Salafi idea was a friend of the former sheikh Ali Kutbe or Abaye - as his followers used to call him. It was in 1996 in his house that the Salafi first opened Quranic School and attempted to erect their own separate mosque but demolished by the order of the municipality for being illegally constructed.

Initially, the movement was limited in conducting charity activities helping poor and orphaned families through distributing food items. Later with the entrance of businesspersons to its fold, Salafism has shown momentum. Since its inception, Salafism has not been a hidden movement in that many rounds of debates were made with Sufi sheikhs notably the prominent Shafiyya sheikh Mohammed Tajudin, known for his harsh criticism of Salafism. In Kombolcha, in 1993 the woreda Islamic affairs council organized two round debate over the major points of differences over theology and Islamic practices.

An important element in the rising of Salafism in Ethiopia and in Wollo has been the rapid expansion of urban centers. Hence, Muslim reformism cannot be seen out of the context of the massive urbanization process in the country.[380] It should be noted that the impact of religious reform varies from urban to rural areas. In south Wollo, initially, Salafism has been limited to urban areas but later expanded in rural areas Warahimano woreda and small towns like Bati, Gerba, and Degan.[381] This was partly related to the fact that most of the Sufi shrines are situated in rural areas with greater influence on people's life and lesser exposure of the people to Salafism.

In cities like Kombolcha, a Sufi stronghold in South Wollo, Salafism is not successful due to the presence of a strong ulema class. The situation in Dessie is different. Being one of the oldest urban centers in Ethiopia Dessie has been a major center of Salafism in the area.

Dessie's role as a center of modern education has helped members of the Muslim community to have access to international Islamic literature. In this connection sheikh, Seid Mohammed Sadiq was a case in point. By his initiative, international Muslim magazines were read among Muslim

[380] Manuel Joao Ramos. 2013. 'From Beleaguered Fortress to Belligerent Cities' in State and Societal Challenges in the Horn of Africa: Conflict and Processes of state formation, reconfiguration and disintegration. Center for African Studies. University Institute of Lisbon.

[381] According to government training document these areas have been listed as a Salafi dominated area.

clerics of the town. The most important of such publications were *al-Manar* of Muhammad Rashid Reda (1865-1935), a Syrio-Egyptian Muslim publicist and scholar who advocates the combination of Islamic education with modern sciences and Sakib Arsalan ideas on Islamic solidarity.[382] This had probably affected the thoughts of sheikh Seid who later became a champion of Muslim rights in Ethiopia and heavily criticized successive regimes for religious discrimination against non-orthodox religions notably Islam.[383]

The importance of Dessie as a Salafi stronghold was evident in the latest tension between the government and sections of the Muslim community where the city had witnessed recurrent anti-government and anti-Ahbash demonstrations. Besides the leading figure in such protests and later a leader of the 17-member committee-Abu baker, Ahmed was a resident of Dessie. More importantly, the Salafis controlled most of the mosques in Dessie through Salafi oriented Imams and the administrative Committee. Still to come, the city has been a springboard for its expansion in many areas of South Wollo.

In South Wollo Salafism was not able to win the hearts of many ulema. This made Salafism remain a movement of the youth and its followers face the criticism of being *Jahil* or less educated.

As in other parts of Ethiopia Salafism in South Wollo has remained a homegrown movement where the major actors of its introduction and expansion have been those Ethiopians who returned from religious education in the Gulf States. In addition, this had influenced the character of Salafism to a large extent that local Salafists had tried to adjust the original teaching to local contexts. This illustrates the adaptability of their basic ideological percepts as evident in the fact that Salafists neglected some elements of their teaching that lacked resonance in the local context.

[382] Endris Mohammed. 2007. Sheikh Sayyid Mohammed Sadiq (1897-1977) Philological, Historical and Patriotic Legacy. Unpublished PhD Thesis

[383] Ibid

Accordingly, despite the general view of Salafism for a limited engagement in societal affairs, Salafis recognize the fact of religious plurality in Ethiopia thereby underscore the need for maintaining cordial relations with non-Muslims.[384]

Initially, the Muslim populace did not take the activity of the movement seriously. Its activity was limited to establishing Quranic schools. However, later the movement began openly challenge certain Sufi practices hence its difference with Sufism became crystal clear. This stage showed minor violence where new Salafi youth began to openly attack whatever they consider as a *bida*. Many Salafi informants still remember how they used to confront their families and forced them to stop chewing chat, drinking coffee. However, later with the recruitment of former Sufi sheikhs to the Salafi camp, such violence began to decline and teaching Salafism to the populace takes precedence.

In his study of Salafism in Bale Ostebo has argued that Salafism has largely remained a movement for religious purity. The same analysis applies to Salafism in South Wollo too were the main target of Salafi activity has been over reforming Islam from Sufi oriented practices.

The major factor for the expansion of Salafism in South Wollo is associated with the establishment of Markaz (center) and Quranic schools. The religio-liberal policy environment created after the fall of the Derg facilitates this and enhances the freedom of religion both privately and in public.

Post-1991 religious revivals manifested among others in the greater appearance of religion in the public sphere, strengthening of religious values, and the surge in popularity of religious books and journals. Hence, the religio-pluralistic policy has helped the emergence of reform movements. In other words, political change has opened for religious revival.

7.3. Salafism and Christian-Muslim Relations in South Wollo

With the expansion of Salafism a new dynamics of Christian –Muslim relations emerged in the area. This is mainly due to the introduction of new interpretations of Islam that challenge the long-held Sufi beliefs and practices in the region.

[384] Ostebo, "Salafism, State Politics…" PP. 178

With the emergence of the reform movements in the area, basically, two major dynamics began to emerge. On the one hand, the reformists have significantly altered the public manifestation of Islam. This was against the traditional understanding of Islam and Muslims in the area. In response to new reformist enthusiasm, many Muslims in the area began to freely manifest their religion with a renewed robustness in the form of wearing Niqab and Hijab and growing long beards and shortening trousers by women and men respectively.

As indicated earlier a striking feature of the contemporary Islamic revival is its public character. Islamic reform movements have been a pivotal channel for the reconstruction of Islamic identity. Through this process of identification, the issue of religious identity has become more articulated and objectified, involving the recognition of differences and the demarcation of boundaries both intra- and inter-religious, which in turn have been connected with the rather politicized discourse on ethnicity.

There has been a move toward spontaneous public expression of Islamic identity, through informal dawa or missionary work, use of Islamic greetings and terms (such as MashAllah- "Whatever God wills") in speech, and especially the various forms of veiling that have been adopted by Muslim women, as well as the beard worn by Muslim men. The veil is perhaps the most potent symbol of Islamic revival. This has specifically been widely spread in districts of Oromia nationality Administration (ONA). Although the area is a Muslim majority area until recently one rarely sees a man with Jalabiyyah and almost no women are veiled with Niqab.

Such changes in the Muslim community have affected the nature of religious tolerance and pluralism in the area. With their emphasis on rectifying Islam from traditional elements, Islamic reform movements have challenged the hitherto syncretic religious culture in the area.[385] Many believed that Islamic reform movements had brought religious awareness that led many to stop and shun previous practices as un-Islamic. The expansion of the reform movements has resulted in the new interpretation of Islam. With this, for many Muslims, the idea of being a Muslim and being committed to Islam has obtained a new meaning and significance. These interpretations are

[385] Abbink, Transformation of Islam. PP. 65-83

indirect and sometimes direct expressions of Muslim identity vis-à-vis non-Muslims and other Muslims, as it positions itself in relation to the past, with regard to social action.[386]

This has resulted in Christian resentment and perception that such changes as signs of Akrarinet i.e. religious fundamentalism. Central in their understanding of recent changes among Muslims is the distinction between Nabaru Islmina vs Akrari Islmina and *Yeduro* vs *Yahun*. A Christian mother describe such changes as

> እኔ ከሙሰሊሞች ጋር ብዙ ኑሪያለሁ።የድሮ ሙሰሊሞች ከአሁኖቹ በተለይ ከወጣቶቹ በጣም ይለያሉ። ሁሉን ነገር አብረን ነበር የምንፈጽመው። ሌላው ቀርቶ ጠበል ዳዲቅ ሆነ ክርስትና ብንጠራቸው ይገኙ ነበር። አሁን አሁን ይሄ የት አለ።
>
> I have lived with many Muslims. Muslims in the past greatly differ from recent Muslims especially the youth. We used to do everything together. Even they used to attend during *Tsebal Tsadiq* and christening. Now a day this is not the case.

Many Muslim informants agree with such comments but argue that the reason behind Muslims avoiding participating in such ceremonies is for religious reasons in that to be present during *tsebal tsadiq* and christening is considered as promoting 'disbelief'.

During focus group discussion many Muslims participants argue that due to the lack of knowledge of Islam, they mistook public manifestations of Islam (Niqab, Having a long beard, shortening trousers) as signs of Islamic extremism. This is accepted by many Christians, who argue such practices were not common as in recent times and this is due to the expansion of Wahhabi ideology. A Christian informant[387] comments

> አንድ እኔ ራሴ ያሳደኩት ልጅ መንገድ ላይ አግኝቸው ሰፍ ብዬ ስላም ልለው እጄን ስዘራጋ እጁን ሰበሰበብኝ። ደንግጬ ምነው በለው 'አይ አንድ ወንድ መጨበጥ የሚችለው ለርሱ የተፈቀደችን ሴት ብቻ ነው' ብሎ አለኝ። ተመልከት እኔ እንግዲህ የሶስት ልጆች እናት ነኝ:: አያገባኝ። ለምኑ ነው አለመጨበጡ?

[386] Jacques Waardenburg. 2000. 'Muslims and Christians: Changing identities' in *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations*, Vol, 11 No, 2. PP. 149-162

[387] Informant Interview with Wagaye, 2016 Kombolcha

> When I meet a youngster, that I know from childhood on the way and eagerly I extend my hand for greeting but he refused and said ‘no, a Muslim cannot shake hand with a non- mahram woman. You see I am a mother of three. He could not marry me. Why does he then avoid shaking?

This depicts the sense of frustration Christians feel in the face of practicing Muslims who strictly observe religious rules and the lack of religious knowledge among Christians concerning such issues. Hence, an act of observing one’s religious prescriptions might be taken as being extremism.[388]

In order to better, understand the impact of Islamic reform movements one needs to have a clear picture of the socio-religious milieu of the area. Many Muslims, especially in rural areas, were living largely outside the confines of the sharia; prayers and fasting were less frequently observed, and the consumption of alcohol was almost a normal practice. In many rural parts of South Wollo, it is no wonder to find people drinking alcohol while wearing Muslim headgear.

The experience of a Muslim informant from Dessie Zuria woreda illustrate this fact in the following words

> ባንድ ወቅት አንድ ክርስቲያን ጉደኞችን ሙስሊም ልጅ ያፈቅርና ማግባት ይፈልጋል። እኔንም ሽማግሌ እንድሆነው ይጠይቀኛል። ከሁለት ሌሎች ጉደኞቹ ጋር ሁነን ወደ ቤተሰብ ሄድን። ከድጃ ከምትባል እህታ ጋር ነበር የምትኖረው ወደ ቤታቸው ሰንደረስ የሚገርምህ ዉስጥ ብዙ ሰዎች ጠጅ እየጠጡ እና በሩ ላይ**‘‘ከድጃ ጠጅ ቤት**’’ የሚል ተጽፉል። ቤት ገብተን የጉደኞችንን ሃሳብ ለከድጃ አቀረብን። በሱ በኩል እንደ ተስማማች ነገር ግን መጀመሪያ የእህታን ሃሳብ እንድንጠይቅ ነገረችን። ሙስሊም እኔ ብቻ ስለነበርኩ ልጅታን ለማናገር ስለተመረጥኩ አግኚቹ ሀሳባችንን ነገርካት። እሳም ሃይማኖቴስ እሱ ክርስቲያን ነው እ ሙሰሊም ነኝ በማለት እምቢ አለች ተመልሼ ለከድጃ አለመስማማታን ስነግራት ክርስቲያን ነው እንዴ እንደዛ ከሆነማ ለሃይማኖተ መካስ አለበት አለች።

[388] According to Zakir Naik shaking hand with a woman whom one could marry is also prohibited in Christian tradition too.

> Once my Christian friend fell in love with a Muslim girl and wanted to marry her. He pleaded me to ask her for marriage as ***shimagle***. Accordingly, two other friends of him and I went to her family. She was living with her sister named Khadija, as we approached their home astonishingly I saw many people drinking Taje and above the gate, it is written ***'Khadija Taje Bet'***. We went in and put our friend's proposal and Khadija agreed but told us to ask first her sister's opinion. Hence as a Muslim, I was selected for the task and told her our idea. However, she refused and say 'what about my religion? He is a Christian and I am a Muslim'. I went back and told her disagreement with her sister. The later said 'is he a Christian?' if that is so he should compensate her (for becoming Christian) in the form of Jewelry.[389]

For Salafists, this depicts the situation of many Muslims in rural areas of Wollo who are reluctant in observing religious prescriptions and engage with mixed marriage. According to the many "unislamic" practices emanate from lack of religious knowledge. Nonetheless, in general, the existence of mixed marriage has been serving as social strings that strengthen inter-faith relations in the area.

Other important dynamics have to do with changes in the interaction of Christian and Muslims in the area. Many scholars and Christians in the area are of the opinion that changes within the Muslim community had affected inter-religious relations. For most Christians, the changing nature of Christian-Muslim relations is mainly attributed to the advent of Salafism. Previously normal interactions between Muslims and Christians now become issues of religion that further sharpened the religious boundary between them. According to an informant, even a traditional coffee ceremony has become a religiously contested matter.

> እንደ ዉሃብዮቹ አባባል ከሆነ ቡና እንደ ባህላችን እጣን እያጨሱ መጠጣት ከባዕድ አምልኮ ጋር ስለሚያያዝ ከእስልምና ጋር አይሄድም። ከዚህ በፊት ሙስሊሙም ክርስቲያኑም ባንድ ላይ አወል ጀባ በረካ ጀባ እያለና እየተመራረቀ ነበር ቡና የሚጠጣው። አሁን አሁን ግን ውሃብዮቹ ከመጡ በኃላ ለቡና የመጠራራት ሁኔታ እየጠፋ ነው።

[389] Interview with Masoud, March 2017 Addis Ababa

> For the Wahhabis drinking coffee in a ceremonial way by burning incense is associated with spirit worship hence un-Islamic. In the past, both Muslims and Christians drink coffee by saying *Awol Jaba Baraka Jaba* and blessing each other but nowadays after the coming of Wahhabiyya *Bunna Matararat* - inviting each other for the coffee ceremony- is waning.

Salafists on their part deny such criticism and maintain that changes in interactions are due to the growing awareness of Muslims about their religion that helps them to differentiate which interaction is permissible or not according to Islam. Although one can put all the blame on Salafism, its role in criticizing the religious element of the ceremony is undeniable. Besides the commercialization of coffee ceremony, as it has now been available almost everywhere in public places, it has reduced its status as a traditional ceremony social bond.

As far as the impact of Salafism on Christian –Muslim relations are concerned, the most important change has occurred over communal associations. With Salafism, many Muslim eiders began to flourish. This was prompted by the incompatibility that exists in funeral practices of Muslims and Christians. Other differences over religion have also played a part in the establishment of religious edirs. In Kombolcha, for instance, a mixed edir was split into two due to the founding of a piece of quanta-dried meat- in a dinner ceremony prepared for the family of the deceased. According to Ato Shume[390] , this incident led to the establishment of a Muslim exclusive Edir named *andegna Jamya*.

More importantly, the usually mix-faith communal associations now take a religious turn. In addition, it is uncommon to find religiously exclusive communal associations in the area. For instance, in Kombolcha town the number of mix-faith edirs has decreased and more religious-based edirs are on the rise.

In Dessie, during the research period, there were 160 Christian-Muslim mixed *qire* and 32 Muslim *qire*. The 160 associations have formed a Union of *qire* and the Muslim-based associations were not part of the union.[391] Besides, many of the recently established qires (both

[390] Informant Interview with Ato Shume- Director of Mahal Ketema Edir-Kombolcha

[391] MoFAPD. 2016. Countering the Threat of Violent Extremism in Ethiopia. Draft Report

Christian and Muslim) are exclusivist. This implies the growing importance of religiously exclusive qires among religious groups than the mixed ones.

As stated above one of the strategies for Salafi expansion was through the establishment of religious Edir. Salafists defend such a move as a necessary step for religious purity. According to them in mix-faith Edir sometimes it appears difficult to accommodate religious differences due to the incompatibility of religious prescriptions in relation to burial ceremonies and related issues. Form the Christian side too many edirs have been established on religious bases. This has created a challenge for mix faith Edirs that the number of members who leave and join religious ones is increasing in recent years.

An important issue in understanding the Salafi position towards Christian-Muslim relations is the youth factor. As already noted Salafism has been augmented by the participation of the youth in the dissemination and practice of its ideals. Based on the emphasis of Salafism on the Sunna the Salafi youth began to adhere strictly and taken it to the public sphere. This has hugely affected the Christian perception of Islam and Muslims that has been rooted in Sufi oriented Islam.

Like Sufis, for Salafis, Christians, though 'disbelievers', has a special place in relation to Islam for being receivers of the holy book before the advent of Prophet Mohammed. [392] Hence the People of the Book, the Jews and Christians, have a special station in Islam due to what has been revealed to them of scripture before the sending of the Prophet Muhammad (Sallallahu `Alaihi Wassallam). Allah has permitted Muslims to eat their slaughtered meat and to marry their chaste women. However, alongside this, they are still considered as unbelievers in Allah, His Book and His Messenger.[393]

Nonetheless, they argue that a Muslim is forbidden from worshipping alongside non-Muslims in their places of devotion or participating in their rituals, rites, festivals, mourning and celebrations. Accordingly, many Salafists avoid participating in such religio-cultural practices arguing that doing so involves promoting disbelief. Salafism regards its own theology as the pure

[392] Informant interview Ato Miftah, 2016, Kombolcha

[393] 'What is Salafism' http://www.abukhadeejah.com/our-call-dawah/ retrieved 5/3/2017.

Islam or the pure faith, making relations with outsiders and non-Muslims challenging. A Salafi informant takes on the issue in the following words

> ብዙ ጊዜ በሙሰሊሙም ሆን በክርስቲያኑ ዘንድ ባህልና ሃይማኖትን ለይቶ ያለማየት ችግር ይስተዋላል። የኛ ሀገር ባህል ብዙው የክርስቲያን ባህል ነው። ሙሰሊሙም ከነበረበት ተጽዕኖ አንጻር ይህንኑ ባህል ተቀብሎ የክርስተያን ባዕላትን አንድም የሚደርስበትን ተጽዕኖ በመፍራት ወይም ሃይማኖቱን ባለማወቅ አበሮ እያከበረ ኖሯል። አሁን ግን ይህ ሁኔታ እየቀረ መጥቷል። ለዚህ ደግሞ የሃይማኖት ነጻነት መታወጅና የሙስሊሙ ማህበረሰብ የሃይማኖት ግንዛቤ መጨመር ትልቅ አስተዋጾ አድርጎ ል፡
>
> Most of the time, there exists, among both Muslims and Christians, a failure to differentiate between culture and religion. In Ethiopia, our culture is mostly a Christian culture. Granted the domination they underwent Muslims had accepted this culture and used to participate in Christian holydays either due to fear or lack of religious knowledge. Now, this situation is changing. This is due to the religio-pluralist policy of the state and the growing religious awareness of the Muslim community.

It is true that Ethiopian Muslims and Christians traditionally have lacked a mutual understanding of each other's way of life. In fact, with the highest record of illiteracy especially in the past, the laity in both groups lacks basic knowledge of their religion let alone their neighbors. Ethiopian Christians knew little about Islam and heartened by the state and the church kept twisted ideas about their Muslim compatriot's conviction and practice.[394]

Concerning the participation of Muslims in Christian religious ceremonies and related festivals, a Muslim sheikh has the following to say

> ከክርሰቲያንም ሆነ ከሌሎች ጋር የሚኖረን ግንኙነት ከሁለት አንጻር ይታያል። አንደኛው ሸሪዐው የሚያዘውና ሸሪዓ በሚተገበርበት ሁኔታ ሲሆን ሁለተኛው ሸሪዓ በማይተገበርበት ሁኔታ ተከባብሮ ለመኖር ሲባል ወይም ለደሩራ ተብሎ የሚደረገው ነው። አንድ ሙሰሊም

[394] For more see Abbink, 2011. 'Religion in Public Spaces: Emerging Muslim-Christian Polemics in Ethiopia.' In African Affairs, Vol. 110, No. 439, pp. 253-274

ከነዚህ ወገኖች ጋር በአል ሲሳተፍ ልቡ የነሱን ነገር አምኖና እንደ ትክክል ወስዶ ከሆነ ከዲን ያስወጣዋል። ነገር ግን ለአብሮ መኖር ሲባል በእምነቱ ላይ ፍጹም ጸንቶ በጎረቤቱ በዓል ጊዜ ቢገኝ ዑዝር ይሰጠዋል።

Our relation with Christians and others alike could be seen from two angles. The first one is to follow the dictate of Sharia as allowed or prohibited and secondly for the sake of coexistence or *Darura*. If Muslims participate in the Christian ceremonies believing and taking their actions as right, he/she will go out of Islam. However, if done for the sake of coexistence while being firm in ones' belief he/she will be excused.

Here the concept of darura is key. It is based on the idea that at times of difficulty a forbidden act will be allowed. Accordingly, although such participation in Christian ceremonies is not promoted in normal conditions, it became allowed for the sake of coexistence and avoids dissonance.

7.4 Salafism and Intra- Muslim debates in South Wollo

The character of our secular model that shapes the relationship of the state with religious groups in general and intra-religious contestations has affected the nature of Christian-Muslim relations in particular. In a pluralistic religious scene of Ethiopia, inter-religious relations are not immune from intra- religious contestations. In this regard, the 2011 Ahbash controversy clearly demonstrates the interlocking nature of Christian –Muslim relations with relations between the state and religious groups.

More, the advent of reform movements with a new interpretation of Islam has challenged the dominant understanding of Islam in the area hugely characterized by Sufism. This created a renewed intra-Muslim debate not only over theology but also on the question of religious purity and in relation to matters of social interaction with non-Muslims.

The major areas of contestation lie both over theological difference and on certain Sufi practices. Both groups emphasized the primacy of knowledge of Allah –Tawhid- a subject that usually comes at a higher stage of the Islamic curriculum. According to a Sheikh from Kombolcha, 'it wouldn't be a problem if they don't do some Sufi practices with us but the challenge is how we

negotiate over Allah.' Other areas of difference include Mawlid celebration, visiting graves, pilgrimage to shrines and supplication after Salat.

Another important distinction that reappears in the Ahbash-Salafi contestation is old and new. Both groups take themselves the representative of true Islam and criticize the other as mete-newborn. The Ahbash pride them as part of Ahlulsunna Wal Jamma – a name that sections of Salafists want to be called.

Despite the popular perception of Ahbash as a government introduced Islamic group, it had already entered the Ethiopian soil long before the 2011 controversy associated with the coming of Lebanese sheikhs and the subsequent training they render to Ethiopian sheikhs.

The major criticism leveled against the group is its practice of takfir- declaring someone as non – Muslim. In their unceasing attempt to defend correct Islamic belief, anyone who does not accept their Aqeeda will become a kafir be it a Salafi or a Sufi. Hence, popular Sufi sheiks have also undergone such criticism. Taking this as evidence of some Salafis contest, the groups claim of being Sufi.

As far as non-Muslims are concerned, the group's basic assumption is rooted in its principle of Eitidal that is diametrically opposed to extremism. According to an Ahbash[395], a religious teacher from Kombolcha Ahbash has no problem with non-Muslims. For instance, Christians do not blame Saints but the Wahabiya are accustomed to this.

Although it so early to postulate the full identity of the group, its interaction with non-Muslim has been cordial. With the support of the government to Ahbash, Sufi oriented Muslims have now shown signs of self-awareness. Previously neglected popular Sufi practices such as saint veneration now have a new life. Such impetus for Sufi practices was achieved through its teaching that dresses such practices the wear of sharia. Thus, it seems that the coming of Ahbash has indirectly helped promote Sufism at least in the short run in the area.

One of the major areas of contestation between Sufis and Salafis is the issue of pilgrimage to the shrines or *Ya Shaikh Bota Ziyarra*. For the Salafis, such practice will finally end up with a shirk-

[395] Informant Interview. Shaikh Muhidin, 2016

associating partner to Allah. They even present prominent Sufi reformers as a precursor to recent reforms in the area. Reformist activities of Shaikh Jaffer Bukko, Shaikh Said Bushira Getta and the Jihad of Shaikh Mohammed Shafi (Mujahidu-the Jihadist) are all taken as historical pieces of evidence for justifying reform activities of today. This has also been used as a counter-argument for Sufi criticism of Salafism as a foreign-backed movement of recent times.

The Sufis on their part used the alleged involvement of Arab money to attack Salafis' credibility as a homegrown movement. This was evident in the 'sneer' aired during anti-Salafi demonstration held in the aftermath of the killing of a Sufi Imam Shaikh Nuru in Dessie i.e. ''ዉሃብይ በብር ነው።ሸህ ኑሩ በኢልም ነው።'' which roughly means 'Wahhabism speaks with money but Sheikh Nuru with Religious Knowledge.' This part of Sufi criticism of Salafists as poor in Islamic knowledge and its foreign-based religious knowledge and finance. Concerning the later, Abbink commented that 'massive financial support from mostly informal private circles in Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states funding Islamic revival and expansion in Ethiopia.'[396]

The Salafists themselves are sensitive to such slur and insisted that there have not been outside resources. The evidence that the Sufis use to substantiate their criticism against Arab funds has to do with the growing success of Salafists in businesses allegedly due to outside funds in the name of Zakat. This has been a common perception among mainstream Muslims. Immediately after succumbing to the Salafi ideal, many Salafists turned to a businessperson sometimes even leaving public offices. This has been done through a zakat transfer scheme, which emphasizes on giving zakat as initial capital and making zaka receiver into zaka giver.

Like finance, the issue of foreign-based Islamic education remained a contested matter. In the connection, Hassen Taju asserts the incompatibility of foreign-based Islamic education to the Ethiopian context as follows

> በፊት የነበረው ባህላዊ ስርዓተ ትምህርት ጥሩ ነበር። ዘመናዊ ስርዓተ ትምህርት በሀገር ውስጥ ስለሌለ አንዳንዶች ውጭ ተምረው ይመጣሉ ከውጭ ተምረው የሚመጡት ደግሞ የውጭ አስተሳሰብን ነው ይዘው የሚመጡት። የሳዑዲው የሳውዲን ፤ የግብፁ የግብፅን አስተሳሰብ ይዘው ይመጣሉ። ብዙውን ግዜ የውጭዉ የአስተሳሰብ ዘር ለዚህ ሀገር አፈር አይስማማውም፡ ፡ ስለዚህ ጥሩ ምርት አያፈራም። እስልምና አለምአቀፍ ነው። በሁሉም ሀገራት ተመሳሳይ

[396] Abbink, Transformation of Islam, PP. 73

ነው። እስላማዊ እንቅስቃሴዎች ግን ከሀገር ሀገር ይለያያሉ። ሀገራቱ በራሳቸው ውስጣዊ አጀንዳ ነው እንቅስቃሴውን የሚመሩት።እኛ ሀገር ደሞ ሌላ ሁኔታ ነው ያለው። ግብፅ ከ90 በመቶ በላይ፤ ሳውዲ መቶ በመቶ ሙስሊም ናቸው። እነሱ ሌላ አጀንዳ ነው ያላቸው። የእኛ ሀገር ሌላ ነው። ከ60 በመቶ ያላነሰ ክርስቲያን ያለበት ሀገር ነው። ታሪካችንናተጨባጭ ሁኔታችን ስለሚለያይ አጀንዳችንም ይለያያል። በሀገራችን ወጥ ስርዓተ ትምህርት ያላቸው እስላማዊ የትምህርት ተቋማት አለመኖራቸው ችግሩን እንዳባባሰው ተጠቅሷል።

> The traditional Islamic curriculum was good. Because of the lack of a modern curriculum, some went abroad and came back. The returnees came with the foreign interpretation of Islam those from Saudi brought Saudi's interpretation and those from Egypt brought Egypt's interpretation. Most of the time such foreign interpretations do not fit with the Ethiopian soil. So it became unproductive. Islam is a universal religion and similar in all countries. However, Islamic movements vary across states. Hence led the movement based on their own internal context. In Ethiopia, the situation is different. In Egypt 90% and in Saudi Arabia 100% of the population are Muslims. Their agenda is different. Our country is different because Christians constitute not less than 60% of the population. Hence, our agenda is not similar because our history and context are different. The absence of modern Islamic institutions with an integrated curriculum has expedited the problem.[397]

In South Wollo, the intra-Muslim debate was already underway long before the appearance of Ahbash at the center of the controversy between the government and the Muslim community. One of the leading figures in anti-Salafi rhetoric has been a certain sheikh Omar of Kombolcha. A former student of Haji Mohammed Tajudin, he was known for harsh criticism against Salafism using the books of Sheikh Abdullah al Harare even before the recent controversy at the national level. This explains the strong presence of Ahbash in Kombolcha town with a religious school and the dominance of students from Kombolcha in the anti- Salafi movement in many universities of the state.

The advent of Ahbash in the area has further antagonized intra-Muslim relations in that it reignited the already muted debate between the Salafi and Sufi oriented groups. For the Sufis, the emergence of the Ahbash is a long-awaited answer to their unheard call for containment of Salafism. Before the emergence of Ahbash, the Sufi sheiks' effort to combat Salafism was disjointed and limited to individual attempts made by some notable sheikhs to refute Salafi

[397] Hassan Taju. Interview with Fact Magazine 2013.

criticism. Sheikh Muhidin- a Muslim informant- remembered the initial stage of Salafi expansion in the area

> ከመጀመሪያው ዉሃብያ ሃይ ባይ አጥታ ስትወበራና ቀብር ስታቃጥል፣ ጋቻ ሲሰብሩ፣ ለመውሊድ የተሰራ ምግብ ላይ መርዝ ሲያደርጉ ወደ መንግስት ብንጮህ የሃይማኖት ጉዳይ ነው በሚል ሰሚ አጥተን ነበር። ሸህ ሙሃመድ ታጁዲንም ብዙ ጊዜ በመድረክ ቀረበው ምላሽ ይሰጡ ነበር።
>
> From the beginning when Wahabiya was outrageous and burn Graves, destroy incense burner and contaminate a food prepared for Mawlid celebration, there was no one to stop Wahabiya and our cry to the government was not heard in the name of secularism. Shaikh Muhammad Tajudin tried to respond to such actions in many stages.

The intra-Muslim contestation continues with the advent of more reform groups in the area. A recent development in this regard is the rise of the Madhaliyaa[398] Salafi group, which is both against the Ahbash and other Salafi groups. Madhaliyaa- a transitional Islamic reform movement- that represents a new trend within Salafism. It emphasized the need to focus more on adherence to Tawhid than politics. Known for its strict adherence to Sunna, this group sharply denounces other Salafi groups for neglecting it. Some Salafi informants attributed the recent resurgence of Madhaliyaa to its secularist and apolitical stance rooted in the group ideology that denounces political participation as against 'True Salafism.'

Concerning interaction with non-Muslims, the group is for minimizing contact. This is perhaps partly due to the social context under which the group has emerged i.e. Saudi Arabia. This would be challenging the group to function in the context of Wollo where people live together with religious differences and even sometimes transgressing it.

Notwithstanding the seemingly irreconcilable differences over theology, some Sufi and Salafi informants believe that the intra-Muslim schism has served the alleged interest of the

[398] This group is named after its leader Sheikh Rabi-bin-Hadi al Madhali who was a student of a prominent Salafi Shaikh Al-Albani.

government to incapacitate the post -1991 growing religious awakening of Muslims thereby contain Islam.

In everyday life, though, both the Salafi and Sufis have been practicing the ethos of living and let live. This is made possible mainly through the existence of important pitches of harmony that transcend the sophisticated debate over theology, which is beyond daily concerns of lay Muslims. Abbink succinctly captures the different situations of Sufi-Salafi contestation in Wollo than elsewhere in Africa.

> The emerging tension between Sufi understandings of Islam and reformist–revivalist Islam has often been seen in Africa, but in Wollo the situation is different because of the age-old pattern of reciprocal conversions, the underlying cultural and linguistic similarities across religions, and the intertwining of religion (Islam and Christianity) and politics in Ethiopia, in which Wollo has featured prominently.

In conclusion, this chapter underscores the changing train of interfaith relations after the advent of Islamic reform movements notably Salafism that appears more visible and vibrant since the inception of the existing religio-pluralist secular exercise. With its emphasis to cleanse Islam of traditional elements, Salafism has been instrumental in shaping the character of Christian – Muslim relations.

7.5 Conclusion

The preceding discussion provides that the advent of Islamic reform movements has shaped the character of religious pluralism and tolerance in south Wollo. The religio-pluralist policy of the state allowed the introduction and expansion of new interpretation of Islam to the area. This process has led to the diversification of the religious scene and the emergency of contestation between and among religious groups.

One of the major Islamic reform movements in Ethiopia and South Wollo is Salafism which was introduced to the Ethiopian soil during the Italian interlude. Since the 1991, thanks to the religio-pluralist policy of the state, Salafism has gained a new momentum in the area. Like it was the case in Bale the introduction and expansion of Salafism in South Wollo was mainly attributed to

local actors who had received Salafi teaching in Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states and returned back home as religious teachers. Besides, the establishment of many international Islamic NGOs has also contributed in the expansion of Salafism through channeling foreign funds.

One of the changes that occurred after the coming of Salafism to South Wollo has to do with the changing character of Christian-Muslim relations. This is manifested among others in the resurgence of public visibility of Islamic marks which redefined the perception of the Christian other about Islam and Muslims. This has shaped and reshaped inter- religious relations in the area. Hitherto normal cultural interactions between the two religious groups now gained a religious dimension.

With their interpretation of Islam Salafists criticized many Sufi practices as unnecessary innovations. This has challenged the Sufi character of Islam dominant in the area. Hence, the Salafi expansion caused the emergency of contestation over issues of theology and practice. This has been further heightened with the coming of a neo-Sufi group called Ahabsh in 2011 and the resulted controversies around it.

Conclusion

Religious Pluralism and Tolerance in Federal Ethiopia – A Critical Appraisal of the Wollo Story

Against its long unitary past, Ethiopia has been venturing on federalism in a manner unprecedented in Africa. The adoption of federalism in Ethiopia has affected its social diversity in many respects. This is done through the political reorganization of the state by adopting the ethno-linguistic federal system and secular religio-pluralistic policy. Both the federalization of the state and the adoption of secularism have brought new dynamics of identity politics.

The successive regimes of the Ethiopian state devised various polices in managing religious plurality. Largely under Monarchical Ethiopia Orthodox Christianity predominates until the coming of derg that declared the separation of state and religion and equality of religious groups. The current regime in its part maintained Derg's secular principle but with a religio-pluralist policy that allowed the free exercise of religious freedom and liberalizes the religious market. This ushered a new dynamics of religious pluralism and tolerance.

Since the early nineties, religious-related tension and conflicts have occurred in many parts of the state. This is against the background of a secular constitution that unequivocally recognizes religious diversity and equality as part of a religio-pluralistic policy of the state that helps the free exercise of religious freedoms. Moreover, such incidents obstruct the largely amiable nature of co-existence between religious groups that Ethiopia is known before.

Many factors explain the emerging dynamics of religious pluralism and tolerance in Ethiopia in general and in South Wollo in particular. The religio-pluralistic policy of the state has contributed to the divergence of the religious scene with the emergence of new religious groups and the revival of old ones. This has resulted in a new era of religious competition in terms of exercising religious freedoms enshrined in the secular constitution. Besides, the secular venture has given a new shape not only to the state and religious relations but also to inter and intra religious relations.

Under the current secular system, the state grants free exercise of religious rights to all religious groups. The covert anti-religious obstructions of religious practices of the derg time are no more.

There are no or little cases where government bodies intentionally discourage religious practice More often than not, the religious groups work in tandem with the regime and not challenge its dominant position. However, at times the government put a watchful eye on religious groups to contain unnecessary developments.

This opening for religious practice has brought a new kind of religious competition between and among religious groups. Legally capacitated with the secular constitution, Muslims and Protestants began to challenge the dominant position of the EOC. This has been manifested in the contestations over the public space in terms of religious practice, building worship places, 'media war' and outdoor holy day celebrations among others.

For Protestants, the change has both ended the persecution under the derg and opened an era of religious freedom that facilitates their rapid growth to become the fastest-growing religion in Ethiopia. This seems to antagonize the EOC, which lost many of its followers by protestant proselytization. Muslims on their part have been eventful in utilizing the opportunity in a manner that compensates the lost past and catches up with the dominant EOC. The latter takes this Muslim resurgence a challenge and an expression of Islamic fundamentalism. Accordingly, the increased public visibility of Muslim identity markers in the form of new dressing codes as veils for women and Qemis (Jellabiya) and shortened trousers among men is paralleled with being religious extremism. In the eye of many Christians who know Muslims in a different fashion, these acts of performing Islam are new and part of Arab culture.

Another area of inter-religious competition has been about building worship places. With the secular opening religious groups are now on equal footing in terms of exercising religious freedom including building worship places. In exercising this, religious groups began to vie to surpass one another. Using the newly gained opportunity Muslims have managed to construct many mosques throughout the state in an unprecedented manner. Similarly, Protestants have established many worship places. On many occasions, this has created conflicts and tensions in Addis Ababa and in South Wollo Dessie. The problem is further complicated due to the absence of a clear policy framework that guides land grants for building worship places and the related problem of religious favoritism in allocating such land.

The media has also been an arena of inter-religious contestation. The lift of the ban on the import of religious books enhanced the access of religious groups to various sources of religious material abroad. Internally, it has facilitated the establishment of printing houses attracted by the demand for popular religious books and their translated version in local languages. Consequently, this has resulted in the diversification of the religious market filled with various interpretations of the belief and practice of religious groups. This, in turn, accentuated the contestation both between and within religious groups. This has been especially the case with the intra-Muslim debate between the Sufis and Salafis. Religious groups also use the media in their relationships with other religious groups. Many of the contestations between and among the EOC, Muslims and Protestants happen both at mainstream media outlets and on social media. The rapid growth of communication technology created another social platform that enhanced easy access to information that in turn heightened the encounter between religious groups.

The secular opening has also enabled religious groups to celebrate holidays openly in public spaces. This made the public space a more disputed arena where religious groups use it to show off strength and assert their position vis-à-vis the other. In this regard, Protestants and Muslims are resentful about the nostalgic spirit of the EOC shown in many holiday celebrations notably epiphany.

The secular opening not only brought new dynamics of religious pluralism and tolerance that reshapes the present it also activated the dormant issues of Christian-Muslim contestations over Ethiopia's religious past. Older controversies over the Aksumite King who rescued Muslim refugees and the war of Ahmed Gragn, to mention the major ones, now get a new life. These and other related controversies are clear signs of the diverse characterization of Muslims and Christians on the nature of religious pluralism and tolerance in the past.

The EOC characterized Ethiopia's religious past as accommodation where it tolerated the existence of Muslims and non-Orthodox Christians despite its indigeneity and dominant position. In contrast, Muslims view the past as an era of forbearance where they tolerated Christian domination that relegates them to a secondary position. The government in its part accepts religious intolerance of the state against non-Orthodox Christians in the past but emphasizes the existence of grass-root religious tolerance between Christians and Muslims.

Concerning the controversial nature of Ethiopia's religious past, this thesis argued that understanding the nature of religious pluralism and tolerance demands a wider perspective that encompasses the historical trajectories of the issue in terms of church and state relations, inter-religious relations and intra-religious relations. In other words, in explaining the current nature of religious pluralism and tolerance in Ethiopia and South Wollo one needs to focus both on the way that led us to the present state of religious relations and how the post derg religio-pluralist secular policy changed it.

The major historical process that shapes the nature of religious pluralism and tolerance in South Wollo includes the early contact between the two religions in the area and the peaceful nature of their introduction, the war of Ahmed Gragn, the Oromo population movement and the rise of the neo-Solomonid dynasty in the second half the nineteenth century.

In Ethiopia in general and in South Wollo, in particular, the religious polices of the neo-Solomonid monarchs towards their Muslim subjects had a long-lasting effect on inter-religious relations. South Wollo had faced repeated campaigns by Tewodros II, Yohannes IV and Menelik II that weakened the dominance of Islam in the region. Especially, the Christianization policy of Yohannes IV significantly contributed to the emergence of a mixed religious culture in the area. Due to his campaigns, many Muslims of South Wollo were converted into Christianity.

The cumulated effect of this and other historical processes had resulted in the existence of many people in South Wollo having a mixed religious background that in turn created a situation where religion as an identity marker is tamed by kinship ties. This provides for the development of a religiously pluralistic culture that not only accepts and respects but also at times transcends difference.

The state response towards its religious diversity and the legal regime thereof is critical in explaining religious pluralism and tolerance. In this regard, the modern constitutions of Ethiopia respond to the fact of religious diversity differently. The 1931 constitution, for instance, neglected the existence of Muslims and traditional religions and emphasized the Orthodox Christian background of the state. However, no mention is made about people's rights whatsoever including religious freedoms even to Orthodox Christianity. The revised constitution

of 1955 legalized the dominant position of the EOC by making it the official religion of the state. Ironically, the same constitution prohibits the state not to interfere in the exercise of religions.

With the religio-pluralistic policy of the state, new religious groups began to surface thereby resulted in the differentiation of the religious scene. Hence, the hitherto dominant religious groups now face contestation from the more recent religious groups, which appear to be equal partners to the religious scene secularly set a level playing ground for all. A significant change in this regard is the advent of Islamic reform movements and the changed terrain of both Christian - Muslim relations and relations within Islamic groups.

Wollo, a region in northeastern Ethiopia, is known for its culture of religious tolerance and co-existence. Still today, there are many instances of cordial relationships between Muslims and Christians in South Wollo. These groups still actively engage in neighborly social relations with the religious other, engage in mix faith communal associations (Idir and Equb), cooperate in building worship places, mediate conflicts through Abbagar and pay visits to shrines.

Such local models of religious pluralism and tolerance emerged out of a complex historical process that fashioned the social context in the area and gave its present shape. However, in the last two decades or so Wollo's culture of tolerance has been under strain. With the introduction of new interpretations of Islam, the interaction of Muslims and Christians began to change. This has challenged the preexisting social models of coexistence that Wollo is accustomed to.

With the increasing assertiveness of religious groups hitherto communal social practices have now take a religious shape. Hence, a cultural ceremony has now become a religious one. Such changes involve the redefinition of culture in general and religious relations in particular. Part of this social dynamics can be explained in terms of the very nature of the standings of religious tolerance in the past. Although there were genuine and durable instances of tolerance, there were also many cases of tolerance made under the duress of unhealthy state machination built on shaky ground. Therefore, the emerging dynamics of interfaith relations should not be explained only in terms of the post-1991 secular opening dovetailed with the reconfiguration of the religious scene but also within the context of the historical trajectories of tolerance in the past.

The changing character of Christians and Muslim relations in South Wollo is manifested in the new ways of practicing Islam and its public appearance that altered the way Islam and Muslims

in the area are known before. With the introduction and expansion of Salafism in the area, Muslims began to adopt a different appearance in the public sphere. Now it is not wondering to see many Muslim men with a heavy beard who shortened their trousers and many Muslim women with Hijab if not Niqab. Nowadays many Muslims avoid participating in the religious festival of Orthodox Christians as it is taken to mean being irreligious. This was not without consequence.

Many Christians perceive this trend as a sign of Muslims radicalization caused by the intrusion of foreign-based fundamental Islam. Salafis' emphasis on adopting Sunna in every facet of life that redefines relations with the religious other further adds to the frustration of Christians. Besides, the initial stage of Salafi expansion characterized by an aggressive assault on whatever it considers as innovation challenged many of the hitherto normal aspects of Christian –Muslim relations.

One of the major areas of change in Christian-Muslim relations occurred with regard to mixing faith edirs. With the expansion of Salafism, many religious exclusive edirs are established and the numbers of mix faith edirs are sharply declining. As there are legitimate reasons for the establishment of religious exclusive edirs, there are also many extra-religious arguments used for the creation of separate edirs. Salafi creates many of the religious exclusive edirs among Muslims and it is difficult to find Salafi oriented Muslims as members of mix faith edirs. The Salafis defend this position as a matter of exercising religious freedom.

The competition in building worship places has also represented the changing character of Christians and Muslims in South Wollo. In a bid to exploit the secular opening both groups have been engaging in constructing mosques and churches. This has created a sense of urgency among Muslims and Protestants in constructing worship places in a way that redresses the past and the counter move by the Orthodox Church to maintain its dominant position.

This has resulted in unhealthy competition for control of and contestation over ownership of land. This is even more contested when it is coupled with a lack of good governance manifested in terms of religious favoritism in the allocation of land and the absence of clear policy guidelines that might prevent possible contestation between religious groups.

A related issue that usually comes in the debate over the construction of worship places has been the role of foreign finance. Many Orthodox Christians, associate the rapid expansion of mosques in the area with petro-dollars from neighboring Islamic states notably Saudi Arabia that sponsors Salafism in Ethiopia and elsewhere. Although it is difficult to ignore the impact of foreign finance in the construction of mosques in the area, it is equally problematic to deny the role played by individual donations by Ethiopians in building many mosques.

The recognition on the side of the government that religious extremism is a challenge and the imminent danger its poses should be corroborated by timely policies and practices that emphasize accommodation and coexistence. This, in turn, needs the avoidance of the government's unnecessary intervention in the affairs of religious institutions on the one hand and its constructive role in augmenting the positive non-political role of religious groups in building societal equilibrium on the other.

The Wollo case has clearly demonstrated there is a need for a clear policy framework meant for guiding the practice of secularism. Without such a policy, it would be naïve to bring a workable system that manages state-religion relations and the relation between religious groups. As the case of South Africa demonstrates, a state could remain secular while maintaining positive cooperation with religious groups.

It is not difficult to project that religion is likely to continue as a central marker of identity among many Ethiopians. As religions are based on highly articulated belief systems, religious sentiments can be potent and divisive political forces, even after ethnic rivalries are tamed by democracy and prosperity. Hence, without proper management religion could serve the same disrupting role it has been playing in other federation notably the Nigerian one. This begs a concerted effort in terms of both policy and practice that could build on the positive experience of religious coexistence in the spirit of secularism.

Secularism does not function in a vacuum but needs a cultural setup that could carry and nurture it into state institutions. In Ethiopia, such a cultural environment is yet to be developed to the level postulated in the FDRE constitution. Thus, the government at all levels should work on awareness creation programs on the principle of secularism to its bureaucrats and the public at large.

The emerging strains of religious intolerance should not obscure the long-standing sources of peaceful coexistence and vice versa. As the local models of religious tolerance in Wollo have shown there are still social bricks of coexistence that with proper policy design and implementation could help ensure religious coexistence.

As the various cases clearly demonstrate, religious tolerance can be achieved without necessarily succumbing to the religion of others. Hence, this study emphasizes the need to develop mutual tolerance which erects on the principle of religious equality which necessitates respecting and recognizing the religious other.

In order to strengthen peaceful religious coexistence concurrent responses by the federal, regional and local governments should be devised in line with the secular principle enshrined in the constitution. At the federal level notwithstanding the effort made by MoP in enhancing peaceful coexistence, the lack of a clear national policy on the issue of religion needs an immediate response.

The recent attempts made at the regional level in organizing offices meant for administering religious affairs should be enhanced. As most of the problems happen at the local level efforts should be made in strengthening interfaith forums at the grass-root level through a community-centered approach than state-sponsored forums that usually taken as agents of the state.

In ensuring peaceful coexistence between religious groups, a dialogue is critically important. A dialogue, which is initiated and processed by the religious groups themselves, in a way that harnesses mutual respect and understanding, with the spirit of religious equality and pluralism. Such a dialogue could serve as a stepping-stone for a broad-based religious policy that guides the relationship between state and religious groups and between and among themselves.

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The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa

APPENDICES

Appendix-1 List of Informants

N.o	Name	Occupation	Address
1	Abdurrahman Ali	Lecturer	Dessie
2	Ousman Ali	Business Man	Kombolcha
3	Dereje Solomon	Lecturer	Dessie
4	Henok Asrat	Assistant Lecturer	Kombolcha
5	Sajin Idris Seid	Retired Police Officer	Kombolcha
6	Mohammed Ali	Business Man	Addis Ababa
7	Zemene Shumeye	Lecturer	Kombolcha
8	Merima Yimam	House Wife	Kombolcha
9	Taddesse Belayneh	Retired Civil Servant	Kombolcha
10	Dr. Endris Mohammed	Lecturer	Addis Ababa
11	Shume Kebede	Edir Leader	Kombolcha
12	Qes Solomon		Kombolcha
13	Sheikh Surur	Imam of Selam Mosque	Kombolcha
14	Endris Ali	Business Man	Addis Ababa
15	Emma Bossi	House Wife	Kombolcha
16	Zeyneba Seid	House Wife	Kombolcha
17	Jemal Seid	Academic Vice-dean of Kombolcha College of Agriculture	Kombolcha
18	Sheikh Mohammed	Religious Leader	Addis Ababa
19	Yemane Hassen	A security officer in Kombolcha Woreda	Kombolcha
20	Misraq Asgedom	House Wife	Kombolcha
21	Demese Belay	Civil Servant	Dessie
22	Muhidin Ahmed	Religious Teacher	Kombolcha
23	Hussein Damtew	Business Man	Kombolcha
24	Negash	Teacher	Kombolcha
25	Halefom	MoFPA	Addis Ababa
26	Wagaye Tesfaye	Factory Worker	Kombolcha

27	Imadudin Haji Muhidin	Works in the Shrine	Shrine of Geta
28	Mohammed Ali	Buisness man	Kombolcha
29	Bukhari Seid	Accountant	Addis Ababa
30	Sintayehu Yimer	Lawer	Dessie
31	Jemal Hassen	Lecturer	Dessie
32	Hajji Mesoud	Public Relation Director IRCE	Addis Ababa
33	Sheikh Umer Dawed	Religious Teacher	Addis Ababa
34	Sheikh Rashad Mohammed	Imam of Shonke Mosque	Addis Ababa
35	Anonymous	Worker in Tahuldare Woreda administration	Haiq
36	Anonymous	Worker in Tahuldare Woreda administration	Haiq
37	Tensaye Getachew	Security Officer of Qallu Woreda	Kombolcha
38	Worke Mohammed	Widow	Addis Ababa
39	Yusuf Ahmed	Religious Student	Dessie
40	Miftah Ali	Student	Bistima
41	Shaikh Hussein Nuru	Business Man	Arba Minch
42	Ahmedin Jemal	Business Man	Addis Ababa
43	Yalew Abebe	Civil servant	Kombolcha
44	Kedir Mekonen	Factory Worker	Kombolcha
45	Tsehaynesh Ali	House Wife	Kombolcha

Appendix 2 -Interview Guide

Salafism in South Wollo

I. Introduction
- When Salafism was first introduced in the area
- Who were the forefathers? Prominent Salafi figures or individuals who were at the forefront of introducing Salafism in the area.
- How Salafism was introduced i.e. was it an organized movement or through individual efforts

II. Expansion
- The initial stage of expansion
- Major strategies employed in attracting new adherents to Salafi teaching.
- Main components of Salafi ideal and its points of difference with other orientations of Islam like Sufism.
- Main Salafi centers in South Wollo, especially Dessie, be it education centers, Quranic schools and more importantly popular Salafi mosques
- Salafism and its interaction with Sufi Sheikhs
- The role of Dessie as a stronghold of Salafism and its expansion in other parts of Wollo. Identify other (Urban and rural) areas of Salafi expansion
- The role of foreign finance in the form of zakat or any other in Salalfi expansion in the area

III. Salafism and Christian –Muslim relations in the area
- Christian-Muslim relations in the area in general
- The standing of Christian-Muslim relations after the advent of Salafism
- The negative elements of Salafism that affect Christian- Muslim relations concerning social life in general and edir and Iqub in particular
- The role of Salafism in protecting the interest of Muslims
- The view of Salafism concerning Ethiopian Orthodox church
- The 2001 E.C clash between Muslims and Christians in Dessie over a plot of land in *Azawa Gedel*
- Salafi response to Christians criticism of religious fundamentalism or *Akrarinet*

IV. Salafism after the coming of Ahbash

- Main ideas of Salafi opposition to Ahbash i.e. Ahbash in the eye of Salafism
- The role of government in the dispute between Ahbash and Salafism
- The current standing of Salafism in the area