

The Dynamics of Interreligious Relations: Religious Diversity, Peaceful
Coexistence and Tension in Jimma Zone, South Western Ethiopia

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Declaration

I, Asebe Amenu, hereby declare that, this dissertation entitled as “The Dynamics of Interreligious Relations: Religious Diversity, Coexistence, and Tension in Jimma Zone, South Western Ethiopia” is my original research work. It contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text. The reporting procedures do comply with the expected standards and regulation of the University.

Asebe Amenu

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Abbreviations

CSA: Central Statistical Agency

CSOs: Civil Society Organizations

EECMY: Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus

EOC: Ethiopian Orthodox Church

EPRDF: Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front

FBOs: Faith-Based Organizations

IRCE: Interreligious Council of Ethiopia

NGOs: Non-governmental Organizations

MoFA: Ministry of Federal Affairs

OLF: Oromo Liberation Front

OPHCCE: Office of Population and Housing Census Commission of Ethiopia

SNNP: Southern Nations Nationalities and Peoples of Ethiopia

UNESCO: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

U.S: United States of America

Abstract

Interreligious relation is a dynamic and contentious issue in Ethiopia's multi-religious setting. This research focuses on investigating the factors promoting peaceful interreligious interactions in Jimma Zone, South Western Ethiopia, which is generally perceived of as an area of interreligious tensions and conflicts. Despite the global importance of religion nowadays, few academic works address the dynamism of interreligious relations, particularly the dualism of interreligious interaction: deep-rooted peaceful coexistence on one hand and emerging issues of interreligious tensions in a religiously diverse setting on the other. Previous literature underemphasizes the influence and interaction of socio-cultural networks and interreligious relations. Interreligious relation is not made in a vacuum, and recognizing this fact, the influence and interaction of multiple organs were underemphasized in the previous literature. This particular study was informed by the theory of functionalism and multiculturalism, which have been developed to explore social cohesion in a society divided along religious lines. Shaped by conflict and identity theories, multiple causes of interreligious disharmony were also explored. Thus, this study advanced understanding of interreligious relations from multiple viewpoints, contributing to collective actions against emerging threats of religious divide and tensions in the country. It employed mixed research approach, with a foundation on pragmatism or methodological pluralism. It was a cross-sectional study employing survey, in-depth and key informant interview, involving 384 residents in the survey along with 25 in-depth and 12 key informant interviews. The data collected from the field using multiple methods were analyzed using a mix of qualitative and quantitative methods of data analysis to arrive at comprehensive conclusions. The study found that socio-cultural factors strongly contribute to maintaining peaceful interreligious encounters. Indigenous socio-economic institutions such as *iddir*, *ikub*, and *dabo* contributed positively to binding Muslims and Christians together, and communal coffee ceremonies fostered neighborhood attachments irrespective of religious differences. The influence of social values gained from religious capitals and doctrines promoted peaceful interreligious coexistence in the study localities. However, recently, despite the deep-rooted existence of peaceful encounters, interreligious conflicts have emerged due to the revival of new religious groups, competition over religious preaching and converts, resource, and social/political dominance. It was also found that the relationship between religious institutions and the state was not clearly separated and even exacerbated by the government's interference in

religious affairs and labeling expansion and recognition of religion as political activism and radicalism. The contribution of other organs such as religious leaders, local elders, interreligious councils, and faith-based organizations was positive in shaping peaceful interreligious relations although the legal environment for their operation was not conducive. Overall, indigenous neighborhood networks need to be promoted and preserved to sustain a socially integrated society. There is an imperative for utilizing social and religious capital to promote a trusting environment, with interreligious understanding and dialogue at the local level.

Chapter One

Introduction

1.1. Background of the Study

Religion is increasingly a renewed force that is recognized as an important factor in the social lives of the modern world (Davis, 1994; Hynes, 2007; Wijsen, 2007). It is one of the contemporary dynamic social processes worthy of social research. As a basic social institution, it provides essential functions to individuals, groups and the society at large. However, the role of religion in society is dubious. At an individual level, it satisfies personal, spiritual, and emotional interests, but plays two contradictory functions at a societal level. On one hand, it is a source of harmony. For several authors, religion serves as a fiber that socially integrates actors and structures in a society. Thus, it functions as a source of social cement that glues society together and deters conflict between social groups gripping divergent interests together. The socially integrative and unifying power of religion is visibly apparent in ethnically diversified societies (Velikonja, 2003). On the other hand, religion operates as a source of tension between social groups and individual actors in a society (Haar and Busuttil, 2005). These tensions and conflicts lead to social and political instability (Furseth and Repstad, 2006; Haar and Busuttil, 2005; Wijsen, 2007).

In a world characterized by religious diversity, the need for the study of the dynamism of religion and interreligious interaction remains pertinent. Currently, the persistence of religious diversity and varying forms of interreligious relations across the world with its changing face discredited the tenets of classical sociological perspectives, which often assumed that the power of religion declines as society enters into variant forms of modernization and rationalization. Although classical secularization theorists purported the integrative and disruptive power of religion falls, the place of religion in the era of industrialization and urbanization grows stronger (Bruce, 2010). Even more evidently, the 21st century witnessed a revival and resurgence of religion in politics and in other spheres of social life. This corroborates that religion continues to be a powerful influence in the present world. With the emergence of globalization, there were many signs of religious revivals, extremist examples including the 9/11 attack on America, and other movements in the name of religion in the Middle East and Africa that attracted the attention of social scientists (Wijsen, 2007).

The role of religion and the nature of interreligious relations are major issues of modern social science research. The proliferation of many religious institutions and their effects on inter-societal interaction are attracting wider scholarly attention. Thus, the study of the interaction between followers of different religious groups is one of the focus areas of sociological investigation. In particular, the study of how and when religion becomes a source of peace or a common folder of tension in diverse tradition is sociologically relevant. The place of religion and interreligious relations are inter-connectedly shaped by the power of religion in both public and private spheres. Therefore, the study of the nature of religion and the influencing factors of an interreligious relationship in a religiously diverse setting of Ethiopia is the main focus of this research.

Studies have shown the persisting dynamics in religion and interreligious relations across differing contexts of the world. For example, the work of Wijzen (2007) confirmed that the interaction between different religious groups in East Africa is characterized as peaceful coexistence as well as conflict. The interreligious relations in the region do not exclusively appear as conflict ridden or fully promote peaceful co-existence; but rather it combines tolerance in some contexts and conflict in another circumstance. Concomitant with this reality, the research at hand considers different forms and facets of interactions between Muslims and Christians in the context of the existing socio-political order in Jimma area, an area characterized by emerging dynamics of interreligious dynamism in modern Ethiopia. It also examines the alternative means of peaceful interaction, against emerging religious tensions.

Overall, the changing features of interreligious relation are attributed to different socio-economic and political factors. Soares (2006) and Wijzen (2007), for instance, explained interreligious relationship in the context of the historical influence of global imperialism. Muzaffar (2005) identifies specific factors which contribute to interreligious tensions, including political factors such as elite manipulation of mass sentiments towards specific political goal and the use of a religious majority group of political purpose. The same author also pinpointed that modern nation states strive to develop a unique national identity based on certain religious group, and economic factors such as economic dislocation, migration and competition over scarce resources. Similarly, Fox (2008) complements and considers that the level of secularism (i.e. the extent to which government refrains from involving in religious affairs) operates as among the major influencing factors in interreligious tension and conflict between religion and the state in many countries of Sub-

Saharan Africa Region including Ethiopia. Likewise, Rufai (2011) found out that in religiously diverse countries like Nigeria, unequal recognition of different religions by the state and unequal participation of these religions in politics and the democratization process contribute to interreligious tension and conflict. These diverse socio-economic and political settings and frameworks underpin the exploration at hand.

The dynamism of interreligious interaction is one of the topical social issues of social research in Ethiopia as the country is endowed with different religious traditions. There are more than four religious groups which live harmoniously with one another. Orthodox Christianity, Islam, Protestantism, Catholic, and other indigenous religions are the major religious denominations in the country (OPHCCE, 2007).

Orthodox Christians constitute 43.5 percent of the total population in the country (OPHCCE, 2007). It became the major religion after first introduced in the 4th century and expanded to the interior region of the country (Abbink, 1998; Hussien, 2006; Tadesse, 1972). The study of the history of Orthodox Christianity in Ethiopia presented two major points of significance to the background conditions of the present study of interreligious interactions. First, the practice of religious expansion in Orthodox Christianity was presented both as peaceful and conflictual, which resulted in complicating relations with Islam and indigenous religions (Hussien, 2006; Tadesse, 1972). Second, the prolonged alliance of Orthodox Christianity and the state until the 1974 revolution resulted in the dominance of the Orthodox Church (Hussien, 2006).

Muslims constitute 33.9 percent of the total population of the country (OPHCCE, 2007). Muslims had their first contact with Orthodox Christians in the 7th century by Arab Muslim immigrants including members of Prophet Mohammed's families as political asylum seekers and were peacefully welcomed by the Axumite state of Ethiopia and these contacts rapidly increased during the 8th century onwards (Abbink, 1998; Samuel, 2008; Tadesse, 1972). There is a consensus among these scholars that the initial relation between Orthodox Christians and Muslims at their first contact in the country was peaceful (Erlich, 2013). However, it was after the 13th century that the state of tension between the two religions erupted into open warfare due to socio-political and economic rather than spiritual factors. The confrontation reached its peak during the 16th century, when Ahmed Ibn Ibrahim al-Ghazi (Ahmed Grag) opened war against Christian Ethiopia. The conflict finally resulted in the supremacy of Christians aided by external forces (Abbink, 1998; Erlich, 2013; Hussien, 2006). Abbink (1998) mentioned that this conflict changed Christians' image towards

viewing Muslims as a “danger from within” although the conflict was mainly driven by economic rather than religious factors. Likewise, Erlich (2013) asserts that competing expansion and the struggle for hegemony was the main reason for the suspicious and hateful relation between Orthodox Christians and Muslims in Ethiopia.

This contradictory historical relationship between Orthodox Christians and Muslims mirrors the contemporary perspectives in interreligious relations in the country. Dereje (2011: 14) uses Markakis’s (1974) notion of presenting the contemporary roots of Muslim-Christian tension in Ethiopia in the context of the “official myth of a purely Christian state” and Haileselassie’s description of Ethiopia as “an island of Christianity in a sea of Islam.” For centuries, until the present government took power, Ethiopia was presented as an outpost of Semetic civilizations and as a Christian country and viewing other religions as alien, was the dominant perspective, which negatively affected peaceful interreligious relations in Ethiopia (Levine, 1974).

Protestant people comprise 18.6 percent of the total population of the country (OPHCCE, 2007). Protestantism was introduced in the 19th century and rapidly expanded during Haileselassie’s regime supported by Western missionaries (Tibebe, 2009). Tibebe points out that there were three main sects that propagate Protestantism in Ethiopia: the Lutherans (Mekane Yesus); the Sudan Interior Mission (Kale Hiywot) and the Mennonite Mission (Meserete Kristos and Mulu Wengel). The Lutherans were the earliest denomination in the country. The Sudan Interior Mission was introduced into the country from the South in the 1920s while the Mennonite Mission was introduced to Ethiopia after World War II.

There were varying forms of interaction between the Protestants and other religious groups. During the *Derg* regime (1974-1991), Protestants were persecuted due to the alleged suspicion that they had a political connection (anti-socialist ideologies) with the western countries (Tibebe, 2009). Tibebe (2009: 5) described that Protestants were perceived by other religious groups as being “anti-culture and anti-Ethiopian nationalism.” Mains (2004) added that Protestants in Ethiopia have weak social relation with the state and other religious groups, and they exhibited no feeling of national unity. Based on this, he concluded that Orthodox Christians and Muslims have strong social interaction while Protestants were socially excluded.

After a long period of lacking of religious equality and recognition in the country, the changing political system in 1991 paved a room for the proliferation of different religious institutions in the country (Abbink, 2014; Dereje, 2011; Desplat, 2005). Following the fall of

the *Derg*, EPRDF (Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front) seized power in 1991 and gave equal recognition and freedom for all religions by guaranteeing that religion and the state are separated, at least in principle. This alleged liberal policy of religion contributed to the increasing legitimacy of government and the revival of different religious organizations in the country (Hussien, 1996). EPRDF's constitution, which aimed at accommodating ethnic and religious diversity, enhanced the significance of religious virtues and symbols, enabling the articulation of religious identities and the demarcation of religious boundaries, which increased intra-religious diversity and interreligious tensions (Ostebo, 2007). These challenging issues of religious diversity and the development of relatively liberal religious policies created new forms of interreligious relations worthy of scholarly attention.

There are two dominant contradictory ways of explaining interreligious relations in Ethiopia. On the one hand, interreligious relations in the country were explained both in terms of conflict and co-existence for a long period of time (Abbink, 1998). For this, there are indigenous forms of social interactions between ethnically and religiously diverse groups, which positively influence interreligious relation (Mains, 2004). Mains (2004) states that some local associations such as funeral, *ekub*, *iddir*, and other forms of bonds are important in creating social ties between different ethnic and religious groups. He adds that although there are politicized religious conflicts at the national socio-political level, there are continuous mutual interaction and interdependence between Muslims, Orthodox Christians, and Protestants on the basis of these local associations. However, the role of these local associations in creating interreligious and interethnic harmony is under-represented in practical and academic works. Ethnic and socio-cultural networks are also positively related to peaceful interreligious communications. Sarbaha's study in Ghana (2010) and Sianipar (2011) in Indonesia found that some cultural elements bind Christians and Muslims. In Ethiopia too, Gnamo (2002) explored the roots of ethnic identity in the context of multiple identities. He asserts that the unity among Oromo people is not based on religion but rather it is rooted in ethnicity. In a society where these indigenous networks are strong, interreligious tensions rarely occur. On the other hand, recently, interreligious conflicts are emerging in Ethiopia (Abbink, 2014; Hussien, 2006; Ostebo, 2010; Wondwosen and Jerusalem, 2010). Many cases of conflict between followers of different religious groups were reported in Addis Ababa (Afewerk, 2009), Dessie (Birhanie, 2009), Gondar (Haileyesus, 2012), Jimma and Ilu Ababora in 2006 and 2011 (Gemed, 2012; Zelalem, 2010).

These studies identified that interreligious conflicts were caused by economic issues, competition for supremacy, politicians' manipulation of religion, questions of recognition, internal differentiation, and religious extremism. Moreover, the nature of interreligious relations is highly influenced by actors' manipulation of religion (Davis, 1994). For instance, Little (2007) and Karbo (2013) identified various organs that have significant roles in shaping interreligious relations in Ethiopia. Karbo asserts that religious leaders in the history of Ethiopia played a crucial role both in teaching and mobilizing people for peace. Furthermore, he points out the significant role of the recently established Interreligious Council (IRCE), which is believed to be the major actor in the management of religious related tensions.

Jimma is one of the hotspots of religious dynamism in Ethiopia. Historically, present day Jimma was known as the five Gibe states, namely Gera, Gomma, Guma, Jimma, and Limmu (Trimingham, 1952). Jimma was one of the economic and Islamic centers of the country. Following Minilik II's conquest at the turn of the 19th century, Jimma has been developed contacts with people of other parts of the country. The area was the economic center and connected to the main caravan routes, which was stretched from east to west, north to south (Yonas, 2002). Trimingham (1952) stated that between 1840 to 1870, the Five Gibe States adopted Islam. Gomma, today's Agaro area, was the first to embrace Islam; Limmu, present areas of Didessa and Seka converted next; Guma on the third step, Gera, the present day west of Jimma also embraced Islam in 1866, and lastly Jimma embraced Islam. Among many other factors, the merchants' movement along the trade routes made the expansion of Islam successful in Jimma. The area's economic strength facilitated the expansion of the religion linking them with eastern and southern parts of the country as well as with Egypt and Sudan. Consequently, the majority of the people of Jimma belong to Islam.

One of the main events that made Islam a dominant religion in Jimma was the peace treaty made between King Aba Jifar II and Minilik II. Minilik II's conquest of the west Oromo states such as Wollegga led by Ras Gobana reached the five Gibe states. The leaders of all the five Gibe states peacefully submitted to Minilik. Abba Jifar II of Jimma agreed to pay Minilik II tribute in order to retain his political and religious autonomy. Abba Jifar II was allowed to retain power and promised to prevent the construction of Orthodox Christian churches in Jimma in return. This relationship was maintained up until Abba Jifar II's death in 1932, and the heavy taxation and political imposition in Jimma was reappeared until the reign of Haileselassie (Mains, 2004).

In Haileselassie regime, Christianity slowly expanded in the area, particularly Orthodox Christianity in 1930s and Protestantism in 1920s (Yonas, 2002). Yonas pointed out that Protestantism was introduced to Jimma through facilitation of Thomas A. Lambie and the Sudan Interior Mission team leader Bongham and slowly expanded to urban and rural areas attracting many followers. In general, there is a consensus between the historical reports that trade was the main factor that created interethnic and interreligious contact in the area. Consequently, present day Jimma has become ethnically and religiously diverse area where different ethnic, linguistic and religious groups with multiple interests coexist in harmony.

Following the fall of the *Derg*, which officially denied the expansion and preaching of religion, EPRDF took power in 1991 recognizing religious equality and freedom. This recognition facilitated the revival of different religious organizations in the country including Jimma area (Hussien, 1996; Tibebe, 2009). Currently, Jimma is religiously diverse and exhibit vigorous religious expansion and revivalism. It has witnessed both prolonged peaceful coexistence and interreligious conflicts between Muslims and Christians (Mains, 2004; Gemed, 2012; Zelalem, 2010). On one hand, the area was understood as politically stable and socially cohesive (Yonas, 2002; Gulumma, 1993) and on the other hand violent conflicts among the followers of Muslims and Christians were reported particularly in 2006 and 2011 around Omonada and Agaro.¹

Therefore, based on the assumption that the situation of interreligious relations are usually determined by specific socio-economic and political contexts, this research is mainly aimed at studying the factors influencing interreligious interaction in Jimma Zone. Here, as a defining feature of interreligious relationship, the different sources of peaceful interreligious coexistence and conflict were explored. In this context, the place of local institutions, neighborhood ties, and various forms of religious capital in shaping peaceful interreligious relation were examined. In addition, the role of different actors such as the interreligious council, religious leaders, local elders, faith-based organizations, and government structures in shaping interreligious relation were also investigated.

¹Reuters on its March 13, 2011 report stated that a clash between Muslims and Christians erupted in Asandabo area of Omonada woreda. The conflict was caused by a rumor that a Koran had been desecrated (discarded in a toilet) in a Christians' compound. BBC on its 15 October 2006 news announced that a series of clashes between Muslims and Orthodox Christians near the town of Jimma, Agaro, erupted the last month over celebration of 'demera,' which resulted in hundreds of homes were destroyed in the violence, as well as religious centres destructed. There were two contradicting ideas as a real cause of the conflict. On one hand a significant element in conflict was the need for Muslims to be free from any non-Muslim interference or government interference and on the other hand Christians'', particularly Protestants dramatic expansion and emergence of Islamic revivals with radical ideologies exacerbated the problem (Abbink, 2014).

1.2. Statement of the Problem

Against the predictions of early secularization theorists such as Comte, Durkheim and Weber, the late 20th and early 21st century studies witnessed the resurgence of religious issues profoundly influencing world socio-economic and political milieu (Davis, 1994; Soares, 2006; Wijsen, 2007). Religion and its manifestations such as its integrative role, intolerance and conflicts are contentious issues of social science research (Haar & Busettil, 2005; Wagner & Bhatai, 2009; Wijsen, 2007). Since the 19th century, studies have been conducted to address the dynamics of religious interactions in laying the milestone for the contemporary concerns. Classical sociological theories such as Durkheim's study of religion as the cement of society, Marx's treatment of it as the opium of the people, Weber's analysis emphasizing religion as a source of social change, and Merton's study relating it to the functionality and dysfunctionality have profoundly shaped contemporary theoretical analysis of religion and its place in society (Ritzer, 2008). As a result, the study of religion relies on contextual and simultaneous relevance both from its integrative and disruptive perspectives.

In a world of religious diversity, how different religious groups interact with one another becomes a focus of academia and socio-political attentions (Cheetam, Pratt, and Thomas, 2013; Soares, 2006). Various sociological studies of religion and interreligious relations have been undertaken in Africa based on the conventional premise that Africa is "a rainbow of religions" (Chitando, 2008: 103). However, studying the nature of interreligious relations and their influencing factors beyond a description of individual religious groups received little emphasis. Stating this gap, Soares (2006:2) argues:

It is truly astonishing how much less academic research there has been on the actual interactions of Christians and Muslims in Africa.... This is despite the fact that for many centuries, Muslims and Christians have encountered each other in Africa since the time of the Prophet Muhammad, when Muslims from Mecca are reported to have sought refuge in Christian Ethiopia... However, their interactions in Africa are still not properly understood. In light of recent conflicts in Africa, it seems all the more imperative that scholars devise new and better ways of understanding interactions between Muslims and Christians on the African continent.

Soares (2006) pointed out that studies of religion in Africa mainly focus on an explorative and descriptive analysis of individual religious groups rather than the interplay between different religions. Some of the limited studies undertaken in different parts of the continent concerning interreligious interaction focus on interaction between Christianity and

Islam as the dominant non-indigenous religions with their effect on indigenous religions by overlooking the fact that Islam and Christianity are also indigenized religions in the continent influencing all aspects of people's lives (Sarbah, 2010; Vilhanova, 2010). These studies generalized interreligious relations as an instance of both peaceful coexistence and conflict. Sarbah (2010) studied the state of Christian-Muslim relations in Ghana and found that their interrelationship is characterized by peaceful and harmonious exchanges of information contrary to the preconceived view of generalizing Muslims-Christians as instances of intolerance, tensions, and conflicts. He contends that such positive exchanges have received little attention in the study of religions in the continent. Wijzen (2007) also emphasizes the roots of Muslims-Christians peaceful coexistence. Hence, in a society where multiple religious groups are flourishing, the study of interreligious interaction is highly warranted. The intention of this study is to investigate the forms of interaction between diverse religious groups which include Muslims and Christians (Orthodox Christians and Protestants) exploring their multiple causes of peaceful coexistence or conflicts in specific local context. More precisely, the aim of this study is to investigate the roots of both interreligious tensions and peaceful coexistence, including the state-religious institutions relation in the context of Jimma Zone.

Over the last few decades, various studies have been conducted on the role of religion in Ethiopia. These studies indicated that religion strongly influenced public and private spheres of life (Abbink, 1998; Karbo, 2013; Levine, 1974; Markakis, 1974). As far as the religious landscape of Ethiopia is concerned, the vivid memory that first comes to our mind is the episode of Orthodox Christians' dominance and its complicated relations with Muslims. This historical memory fascinated many social science researchers in the country. With the exception of Tibebe (2009) who focused on the study of Protestantism, historical studies of religion in the country focus on this perspective alone (Abbink, 1998; Hussien, 2006; Levine, 1974; Markakis, 1974; Taddese, 1972). Other studies such as MoFA (2012) and Afework (2009) indicate interreligious relations in Ethiopia as generally characterized by peaceful coexistence. Although there were occasional interreligious conflicts between Orthodox Christians and Muslims due to competition for territorial expansion, economic and political dominance rather than spiritual, there was peaceful coexistence between the followers of different religions at local levels (Abbink, 1998; Desplat, 2005; Karbo, 2013; Levine, 1974; Samuel, 2008). The sources of this peaceful coexistence have been inadequately studied and documented in the country. Abbink (1998) admitted that Ethiopia is endowed with socio-

cultural traditions including marriage, trade relations, migration, land inheritance, and social and kinship organization may have provided the main reason for the pattern of religious tolerance, which has not been systematically studied.

Religion-based conflict and intolerance were rarely reported before the 20th century except the war of Ahmed Gragn and resistance from followers of indigenous religions. It was only during the last three regimes in which very few cases of religious related conflict and intolerance were reported (Desplat, 2005; Karbo, 2013). Although conducive environment for religious operations has been created after 1991 in the country, repeated interreligious conflicts and tensions between government and religious institutions have been manifested. In 1991, the EPRDF officially declared that the state would avoid involvement in matters of religion and religions should also cease to interfere in the affairs of the state. Following this, Ethiopian Muslims, Orthodox Christians, Protestants, Catholics, Wakefata and other religious groups achieved a much greater sense of freedom and equality than under previous regimes (Dereje, 2011; Hussien, 2006). However, while the constitution guaranteed religious freedom, religious tensions in different parts of the country, including Jimma Zone were growing in scale and impact (Birhane, 2009; Gemed, 2012; Zelalem, 2010).

In Ethiopia, instances of open conflict between different religious groups broke out in the recent years. This is most markedly between Christians and Muslims in Addis Ababa, Dessie and Jimma (Birhane, 2009; Afework, 2009). In 2011, a conflict between Muslims and Christians (both Orthodox Christians and Protestants) occurred in which dozens of people were killed, churches burnt; thousands of residents were displaced in Jimma. It also challenged the previously established peaceful interreligious coexistence. These incidents of conflict openly occurred mainly in two areas of Jimma zone: Agaro and Omonada. Therefore, such repeated incidents of tensions on one hand and the existence of peaceful interreligious coexistence and cooperation on the other hand constitute a puzzling phenomenon. It is known that all sorts of positive or negative social interactions are the product of human agency (Davis, 1994). The studies mentioned above did not give due consideration to government, local elders, religious leaders, members of religious organizations, civil society organization, and politicians in initiating peace and interreligious tensions. Little research has been undertaken in Ethiopia regarding positive contribution of local socio-cultural networks in shaping interreligious interactions.

Studies of Christian-Muslim interaction in the country were mainly limited either to conflict or peaceful coexistence. However, conflict and peaceful coexistence are not

separately understood as basic features of social interaction (Dahrendorf, 1959). To fully understand Christians' and Muslims' interaction in a particular setting, an attempt should be made from both perspectives. Indicating the necessity of simultaneously seeing interreligious tensions and peaceful coexistence to understand the general forms of interreligious relations, Soares (2006: 2) contends that "to focus exclusively on either conflict or peaceful coexistence would be erroneous."

Studies by Afework (2009) and government sponsored research by the Ministry of Federal Affairs of Ethiopia (2012) focus on interreligious tolerance, overlooking interreligious tensions and its causes. However, among a few of the previous studies conducted on interreligious interaction in Ethiopia, Ostebo (2010) emphasized the increasing threats of interreligious and the government-religious establishment tensions although bonds between the two religions were not mentioned. Ficquet (2006) also studied a boundary between Christians and Muslims in Ethiopia by focusing on material objects, including clothing, dietary, linguistic, and architectural particularities. Although the study acknowledged the existence of commonalities between the two religious communities, it overlooked religious and socio-cultural artifacts that give a complete picture of material and non-material objects with the capacity of unifying and dividing Christians and Muslims in the country.

A study in Addis Ababa by Birhane (2009) gives particular emphasis to interreligious conflict under-emphasizing interreligious tolerance historically rooted in some indigenous social networks. In Jimma Zone, Zelalem (2010) and Gemeda (2012) carried out studies which indicated the persistent interreligious conflict in the area. The studies attempted to explain religious discord and its underlying causes. However, these works were one-sided, i.e., limited to the study of antagonistic interaction between Christians and Muslims and underemphasizing the role of religious and non-religious actors bringing the two groups together. They emphasized interreligious conflict rather than the existence of religious tolerance and contextually shaped forms of interreligious relations. In addition, studies that deal with the role of ethnic identity, neighborhood networks and local social associations in shaping interreligious relations are not widely undertaken.

From the above overview, the study of religion and interreligious relations in Ethiopia discerns four general gaps. Researches conducted in the field of interreligious interaction in general and Muslim-Christian relations with indigenous religions in particular are inadequate. Most of the studies have dealt with a description of individual religions rather than with the

relationships among religions. Limited studies have attempted to link the interplay between interreligious interaction and socio-cultural, political, and economic factors for the following reasons. Firstly, the study of interreligious relations in the country is dominated by the historical relationship between Orthodox Christians and Muslims by overlooking the place of other religions and their socio-cultural landscapes. Secondly, there are two main traditions in the study of the general features of interreligious interactions in the country. On one hand, some groups of scholars have generalized the state of interreligious interaction in Ethiopia as peaceful coexistence by underemphasizing interreligious tensions and conflict. On the other hand, other scholars view interreligious relations in the country as both peaceful and antagonistic. However, little emphasis has been given to the study of the relationships between different religious groups as shaped by existing socio-political context. Thirdly, the sources of peaceful coexistence between Muslims and Christians in the area have not been studied. Particularly, the place of local networks in shaping interreligious relation in a specific local context was undermined. The role of prominent organs such as citizens, government, religious leaders, local elders, and civil society organizations received little attention. Importantly, when the name of Jimma is raised, the main thing which first comes to our mind is interreligious conflict. The media, the state and the public too generalized the area as characterized by instances of interreligious tensions due to the conflict episodes in 2008 and 2011 and it became a contemporary academic discourse. Consequently, almost all studies undertaken so far in Jimma area overly dealt with religious conflicts by underemphasizing the existence of and the basis of peaceful coexistence. Hence, a study of the mode of interreligious relation and its determinants enormously contributes to the general understanding of social interaction in general and Muslim-Christian relation in particular is helpful to explore the dynamism and causes of encounters between Muslims and Christians. Therefore, this research was aimed at narrowing the prevailing gaps that affect interreligious interaction in Jimma Zone.

1.3. Objectives of the Study

1.3.1. General objective

The main objective of this study was to examine the dynamics of interreligious relation in Jimma Zone. This involves examining different factors determining the varying forms of

interreligious relations with factors that contribute to religious tolerance and those factors that cause intolerance in the study area.

1.3.2. Specific objectives

The specific objectives of this study were to:

- Investigate the mode of interactions between Christians and Muslims in Jimma Zone,
- Explore the role of religious and neighborhood networks in promoting interreligious peaceful coexistence in Jimma Zone,
- Identify factors that trigger interreligious conflicts in Jimma area,
- Describe the role of prominent organs such as interreligious council, local elders, faith-based organizations, and religious leaders in shaping interreligious relations, and
- Examine government-religious institutions' mode of interactions and their implication for interreligious [mis]understandings in Jimma area.

1.4. Research Questions

This study aimed at addressing five specific questions:

- What are the features of the interaction between Christians and Muslims in Jimma Zone?
- How religious and neighborhood networks promote interreligious peaceful coexistence in Jimma Zone?
- What are the causes of interreligious tensions in Jimma Zone?
- How actors such as religious leaders, interreligious council, local elders, faith-based organizations and local institutions shape interreligious interactions in Jimma Zone?
- What is the form of state-religious institutions' interaction and its implication for interreligious interactions?

1.5. Scope and Limitations of the Study

The study aimed at describing the dynamic nature of religion and interreligious relations by focusing on their influences in Jimma Zone. This study attempts to explain the principal issues including political, economic, and social aspects affecting interreligious understandings. The study does not explore all possible impacts of religion at personal and societal levels. Rather, it was intended to be a cross sectional study of how non-theological aspects such as economic relations, indigenous social institutions, and politics influence interreligious interactions.

As stated above, although the issue of religion is widespread and is a topical issue across the country, this study particularly focused on Jimma Zone. In fact, interreligious conflicts have recently been widely reported all across the country in areas such as Addis Ababa, Dessie, Gondar, Harar, Arsi, Bale, Ilu Ababora and Jimma alongside peaceful coexistence in the culture of diverse groups in the country. Although a comparative study of interreligious interactions in the country is enormous, the sample of this study came only from three areas in Jimma Zone, namely, Omonada, Agaro, and Jimma town, areas characterized by religious dynamism. In terms of its limitation, an attempt to obtain reliable data from residents and key informants was challenging. The time planned for field work was extremely difficult due to political unrest in the country, uniquely in Oromia Regional State, where the study area is located. Consequently, field entry and access to informants was time consuming and risky. Many respondents were suspicious and reluctant to provide reliable information. Moreover, some respondents were not willing due to lack of knowledge pertaining to the issue under investigation, and as a result, some informants participated in the study lacked in-depth knowledge of the subject matter of the study. In addition, shortage of financial resource for the research made the data collection process more challenging.

For these reasons, the study mainly focused on the interaction between Muslims and Christians. This limitation made the interaction between Muslims and Christians with *Wakefanna*, an indigenous Oromo religion, under-investigated. Studies in other African countries show that the interaction between indigenous and world religions was an issue of academic concern. Moreover, this study did not explore the interaction between Orthodox Christians and Protestants. A description of multiple roots of peaceful interreligious coexistence was limited to an analysis of socio-cultural institutions available in the area although a comparative study of interreligious relations where these indigenous institutions weakly functioning is equally important for the general understanding of the subject.

1.6. Research Methodology

This study aimed at exploring the state of interreligious interactions and its influencing factors in Jimma Zone. Presented under this section are the methodological issues pursued in this research in a bid to get the objectives accomplished. Accordingly, descriptions of the study area and the general philosophical underpinnings guiding the research design were identified. Here, the study followed methodological pluralism perspective (pragmatism), which includes two philosophical assumptions: positivism and interpretivism philosophy. On

the basis of these philosophical guides, the mixed research design was employed. As such, two categories of methods of data collection were outlined and described: qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection. Lastly, the methods deployed for data analysis outlined.

1.6.1. Historical, physical, and social setting of the study area

Jimma is one of the nineteen zonal administrations of Oromia Regional State, which is located southwest of Addis Ababa. It shares borders with other zonal administrations in the region, namely, East Wollega in the North, Southwest Shewa in the North Eastern, Ilu Ababora in the West, and Southern Nations Nationalities and Peoples of Ethiopia in the South and South East. A report of Finance and Economic Development Office of the Zone shows that Jimma Zone has a total surface area of 18,696 km² all of its land body. The Zone constitutes nearly 5.15 percent of the region's total surface area. The report also indicates that the Zone generally lies with the altitude ranging between 900 and 3334 meters above sea level.

Regarding the climatic condition of the area, most part of the administrative zone comprises three major agro-climates: *Badda daree* (subtropical), *baddaa* (cool) and *Gammoojjii* (tropical). The vast areas of the Zone have a mean annual temperature between 15⁰c-18⁰c while the central parts of the zone have a mean annual temperature between 18⁰c-20⁰c. However, areas along major river valleys (Didessa, Gibe and Gojeb) have a mean annual temperature between 20⁰c-23⁰c. Only a small portion of the area (Gibe Valley) has a mean annual temperature between 20⁰c-23⁰c) (Jimma Zone Finance and Economic Development Office, 2013).

Jimma was once one of the five 'Gibe States' that emerged and became dominant in the second half of the nineteenth century (Mains, 2004; Trimingham, 1952; Yonas, 2002). The present day Jimma was once a central market of that kingdom, which linked the area with that of the Ethiopian highlands contributing significantly to the origin and development of the town (Yonas, 2002). The political, economic, and religious dynamics in the kingdom had important influences on the process of early urbanization of the town. In addition to social and political influences, the established trade routes from Jimma to other parts of the country contributed to the major share for the present state of the area (Yonas, 2002).

According to Oromia Bureau of Finance and Economic Development (2008), Jimma Zone is divided into seventeen rural and two urban *Woredas*, as well as 538 *kebeles*. The present total population of the Zone is estimated to be 2,481,078 (OPHCCE, 2007).

As far as the economic activity of the area is concerned, the main economic activity of the people living in the rural area of the Zone is agriculture. However, the main economic activity in major towns such as Jimma and Agaro are commerce and manufacturing enterprises. It is believed that urban-rural exchange in Jimma and its surrounding has contributed significant business activities (Jimma Zone Finance and Economic Development Office, 2013).

As compared to other western and southwestern Zones in Oromia regional State, Jimma is ethnically and religiously diverse (OPHCCE, 2007). The inhabitants of the Zone are made up of diverse economic, linguistic, ethnic, and religious backgrounds. Oromo is the largest ethnic group in the Zone followed by Amhara, Dawaro, Kaficho, Guraghe, and Hadya.

It was also reported that the coffee economy and political administration of the past regimes positively contributed to the area's social diversity (Mains, 2004). Settlers from central and north Ethiopia, currently, SNNP Region, and the surrounding rural areas also contributed to the dramatic increase of diverse population (Yonas, 2002). Due to political, resettlement program, and search for job opportunities, many people from Shawa, Gondar, Gojjam, Wollo, Tigray, Dawaro, Kaficho, and Yem settled in Jimma starting from the early 20th century. This process was further exacerbated by the scarcity of land, decline in agricultural productivity, poverty, and famine in other parts of the country.

In terms of its religious composition, Islam, Orthodox Christianity, Protestantism, Wakefanna, and Catholic are the major religious traditions in the area. Although indigenous Oromo religion previously dominated the area, conversion to Islam in the Gibe region including Jimma began during the 1800s (Mains, 2004; Trimingham, 1952; Yonas, 2002). Mains (2004) believed that conversion to Islam was further facilitated since the nobility of the region, considered the economic strategy to strengthen their economic relations with Muslim traders. This further facilitated the establishment of Muslim learning centers, where Muslim students moved from different parts of the country specially Bale, Arsi, Illu Ababora, and Hararge to Jimma (Yonas, 2002). A recent statistical survey of CSA also indicates that Islam is the largest religious institution in Jimma Zone comprising about 85.6 percent of the total population.

Orthodox Christianity is the second largest religion in Jimma Zone comprising 11.2 percent (Jimma Zone Finance and Economic Development Office, 2013). Although the exact time when Orthodox Christianity was introduced to the area is not known, some sources

indicate that it was introduced in the area before the early 1930s (Yonas, 2002). However, following Jimma's incorporation into the centralized Ethiopian state, Orthodox Christianity was popularly introduced into the area.

Protestantism is the third largest religion in the Zone constituting 3 percent of the total population of the Zone. This religion also appeared in Jimma during the 1920s aided by the Western missionaries (Yonas, 2002). The Sudan Interior Mission was strongest in the south, especially around Soddo and Walayita, and then introduced to the surrounding of Jimma (Yonas, 2002; Birhane, 2009). The religious demography of the Zone is summarized in the table below.

Table 1.1. *Population of the Study Area by Religion*

Religion	Oromia		Jimma zone		Omonada		Gomma/Agaro	
	1994	2007	1994	2007	1994	2007	1994	2007
Muslims	8,178,085	12,835,410	1,619,423	2,129,321	175,020	236,848	195,059	178,678
Orthodox Christians	7,621,727	8,204,908	39,485	277,917	5937	7273	46,303	31,277
Protestants	1,588,310	4,780,917	28,746	73,843	1939	3685	1680	2852
Others (catholic and indigenous religions)	1,065,904	1,171,698	1,848	5074	51	299	182	216
Total	18,473,820	26,993,933	1,961,262	2,486,155	182,995	248,173	243,376	213,023

Source: Compiled from 1994 and 2007 Ethiopian population and housing census

In addition to the persistence of ethnic and religious affiliations, there are also some local social institutions which mark social belonging and identification in rural and urban areas. *Iddirs* and *Ikubs* represent these indigenous associations. Such institutions are widespread all over the area. Every urban and rural household head is obliged to be a member in *iddir* as a necessity of living. A report from zonal administration's social affair office shows that there were 104 registered *iddir* associations in Jimma town while there were 61 in Agaro and 39 in Omonada Woreda.

This study focuses on two Woredas in Jimma Zone due to their unique feature of interreligious interaction: Omonada Woreda and Agaro town. According to OPHCCE (2007), Agaro town has a total population of 25,458 where 15,452 were Muslims, 8594 were Orthodox Christians, and 1284 were Protestants. Omonada Woreda is also located to the east of Jimma town at about 60 kilometers. The Woreda has a total population of 248,173 where

236,848 were Muslims, 7273 of them were Orthodox Christians, and 3685 were Protestants. Jimma town, the capital of the Zone has also a total population of about 144,835. However, due to the continuous influx of population from other urban and rural areas of the country, there was a high rate in its population increase implicating the ethnic and religious composition of the population of the town.

1.6.2. Philosophical foundation of the research methodology

Needless to mention, underlying all scientific investigations are philosophical assumptions regarding social phenomena, framing why, what and how specific social events are studied and understood. These philosophical assumptions thus inform how the reality about a particular social problem is understood and approached with relevant methods and techniques. Pointing out the relevance of a paradigm in guiding a research, Corbetta (2003: 10) argues, “Without a paradigm a science lacks orientations and criteria of choosing between problems, methods, and techniques. It constitutes a guide.” Similarly, Williams and May (1996: 135) contend that “philosophical assumptions are the explicit, or implicit, starting point for research and they inform the process of social investigation.” Therefore, initially it is worthwhile to frame the dominant philosophical assumptions underpinning the methodology in order to construct a research design employed in this study.

Generally, three philosophical assumptions underlie social phenomena: ontology, epistemology, and methodology (Corbetta, 2003). It is from ontological and epistemological perspectives that social research methodology would be devised. These assumptions have been developed as a framework and guidelines within which one questions what and how to investigate social realities in order to gain knowledge about them (Corbetta, 2003).

Ontology is the study of social beings or realities (Mouton, 1990). Mouton refers this philosophical approach in social sciences as a search for social facts or about all human aspects such as activities, characteristics, institutions, behavior, and products. The diversity of human affairs necessitated the emergence and use of different philosophical assumptions in social research. In a similar perspective, Corbetta (2003) argues that ontology is the question of ‘what’ that studies the nature and features of social reality.

Epistemology, on the other hand, is a philosophical assumption about knowledge, that is, how knowledge is acquired and communicated. Borgatta and Montgomery (2000: 817) argue that epistemological questions denote “the assumption of knowledge including the possibility of valid knowledge, value neutrality, and the nature of validity, the foundation of knowledge, the analysis of different types of knowledge, and the limits of knowledge.” Thus,

epistemology is the question of the relationship between the studies of reality to be investigated.

On these premises, two contradictory views of social reality and knowledge about it can be identified: positivism and interpretivism (Mouton, 1990). Right from the early stages of its inception, sociological thinking and assumptions are dominated by sociological positivism (Ritzer, 2008). As Corbetta stated, positivism generally is “the study of social reality by utilizing fixed conceptual frameworks, the techniques of observation and measurement, the instruments of mathematical analysis, and the procedures of inference of the natural sciences” (2003: 13). It is a philosophical thinking which attempts to apply models and methods derived from the natural sciences to the study of human affairs. In that sense, it treats the social world as if it exhibits features of the natural world, adopting a realist approach of ontology (Burrell and Morgan, 1979; May, 2001). Contrarily, interpretivism was developed as an alternative to the positivist explanation of the social world. This approach was influenced by German historical school mainly the works of Wilhelm Dilthey who viewed social science as spiritual sciences that are radically different from the natural sciences uneasy to share the same method (Burrell and Morgan, 1979). The use of interpretivism is premised on the assumption that the ultimate reality of the universe lies in idea, essentially nominalist in its ontological thinking to social reality. In contrast to the natural sciences, the proponents of this approach stress the subjective nature of human affairs, refuting the application and relevance of the models and methods of natural science to studies of social phenomena (Burrell and Morgan, 1979). Weber (1922/1978) insists the need for use of interpretivism as an alternative explanation of society as follows:

We can accomplish something, which is never attainable in the natural sciences, namely the subjective understanding of the action of the component individuals. The natural sciences limited to the formulation of causal uniformities in objects and events and the explanation of individual facts by applying them. We do not "understand" the behavior of cells, but can only observe the relevant functional relationships and generalize on the basis of these observations. Nevertheless, subjective understanding is the specific characteristic of sociological knowledge. (Weber, 1922/1978: 15).

In pursuance of social research project, these philosophical assumptions inevitably influence the development of different research methodologies. According to Corbetta (2003), Ontological and Epistemological issues are inescapably interconnected with methodological problems. They together lay the philosophical foundation on which to base methodological orientation. As such, ontology, epistemology, and methodology inform social

theorists about the nature of reality, knowledge, means of gaining knowledge, the nature of society and the way of understanding their realities.

Premised on these philosophical assumptions, two social research methodologies emerged and popularly used in social science research, namely, qualitative and quantitative. May (2001) and Corbetta (2003) precisely presented how qualitative and quantitative research traditions were influenced by interpretivists and positivists philosophical assumptions. According to them, influenced by realists, positivists and natural science thinking mainly favored and developed quantitative approach. This is based on the premise that researchers' detachment and avoidance of their values from the topic under investigation will produce true, precise, and wide-ranging laws of human behavior which is the basic aim of science.

The qualitative method, on the other hand, was developed based on the interpretivist assumptions, which mainly assume that a social phenomenon is subjective and dynamic and same methods cannot be employed for the study of all social phenomena (May, 2001). This method is influenced by the works of Max Weber (1949: 79), who rightly asserts that “naturally, it does not imply that the knowledge of universal propositions, the construction of abstract concepts, the knowledge of regularities and the attempt to formulate laws have no scientific justification in the cultural sciences.”

Adhering to realist ontology, on the other hand, the quantitative research assumes that reality is measurable and through scientific investigation knowledge about them is acquired while for qualitative researchers it is unquantifiable and knowledge about them comes from is experience. This again implies that quantitative research is mainly intended for theory/hypothesis testing while qualitative research aims at theory development. Put it in a nutshell, the difference between qualitative and quantitative research is based on the differences in their assumptions about what reality is and whether or not it is measurable (Neuman and Benz 1998). As such, Neuman and Benz persuasively put qualitative and quantitative difference as a “false dichotomy.” They assert that “all behavioral research is made up of a combination of qualitative and quantitative constructs” (Neuman and Benz, 1998: 2) encouraging the utilization of mixed research approach.

Thus, mixed methods research is increasingly recognized as a third major research approach rooted in the philosophy of pragmatism (Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, and Turner 2007). Creswell (2004: 13) clearly articulated the relevance of pragmatist philosophy in the contemporary social science research as follows:

As a philosophical underpinning for mixed methods studies, pragmatism conveys importance of focusing attention on the research problem and then using pluralistic approaches to derive knowledge about the problem... It opens the door to multiple methods, different worldviews, and different assumptions, as well as two different forms of data collection and analysis in the mixed methods study.

Following Johnson et al. (2007: 113), mixed method approach is foothold in pragmatism and is defined as “a class of research where the researcher mixes or combines quantitative and qualitative research techniques, methods, approaches, concepts or language into a single study or set of related studies.” According to Johnson et al., mixed research method is, generally speaking, an approach to knowledge (theory and practice) that attempts to consider multiple viewpoints, perspectives, positions, and standpoints (always including the standpoints of qualitative and quantitative research). Jupp (2006) and Kalof et al. (2008) employed the concept of triangulation to justify the rationale of mixed research methods. Triangulation in this aspect refers to a research strategy that involves approaching a research question from two or more angles in order to converge and cross-validate findings from a number of sources. It is assumed that both qualitative and quantitative approaches can be used in combination in a single study to effectively address specific research questions by enhancing more knowledge and understanding of the issue under investigation. Hence, this approach rejects the methodological purists’ assumption that quantitative and qualitative methods are mutually exclusive and situationalists who believed that both methods are more appropriate under certain circumstances.

In the contemporary social research, Bryman (1988) and Creswell (2004) also realistically contend that combining different philosophical assumptions and methods of research is beneficial for the detailed understanding of social reality from different angles. It facilitates the study both from subjective and objective perspective; understand society at different levels (macro, middle, and micro); collects and analyses data pertaining to qualitative and quantitative divide as a continuum; and analyses and report qualitatively and quantitatively that allows methodological triangulation and enhances validity.

Guided by pragmatists’ assumption, this study mainly employed mixed method approach. Qualitative research is more appropriate to the study of the dynamic and subjectively defined role of religion and varying forms of interreligious relations. Kalof et al. (2008) indicate that qualitative studies mainly focus on exploring what causes what, how people make sense of their setting, experiences through symbols, social roles, identities, and other cultural elements. Following this, people’s experiences of religious and ethnic

identities, interreligious tensions and its causes as well as the role of various actors and indigenous socio-cultural associations in building peaceful interreligious relations were explored. Quantitative method was also used to deal with some descriptive aspects of religion and interreligious relations. Using survey method, some variables such as the level of religious freedom and equality, the number of local social associations in which people rely on regardless of religious difference, the extent of people's relationship at neighborhood level, the views of religious and ethnic identity, and the government's treatment of religious groups were described. Finally, these quantitative descriptions were merged together with qualitative findings under each themes identified, and then the general conclusions were derived.

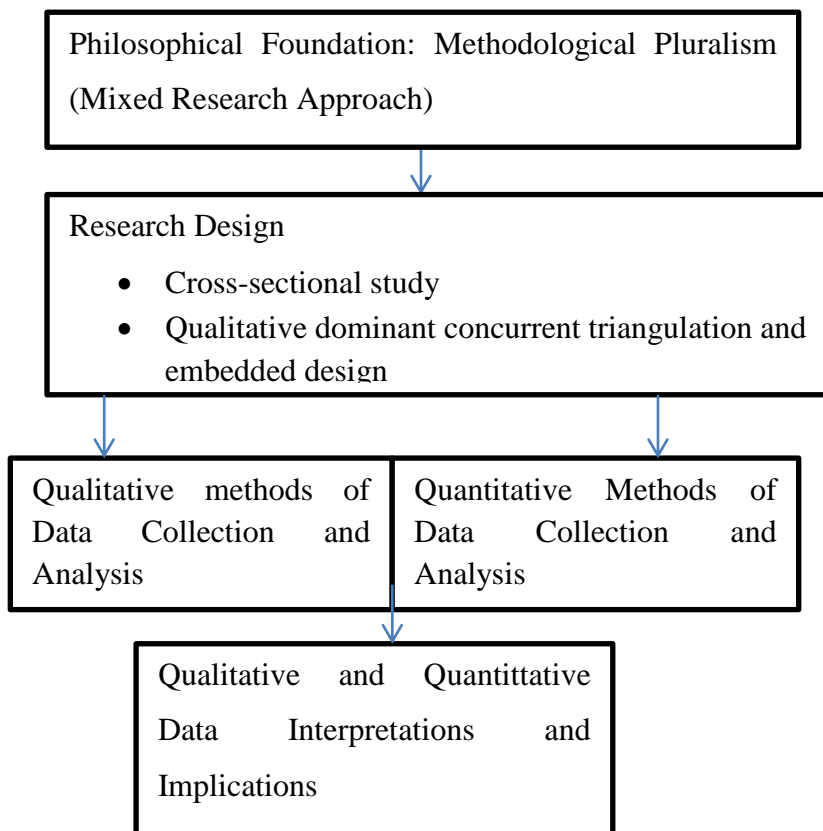
1.6.3. Research design

Research design is a master plan that aids the conduct of the study. It is an exposition or plan of how the researcher decides to execute the formulated research problem (Creswell, 2004). It is a plan, which gives a direction from underlying philosophical assumption, justifying the use of specific research method as well as tools of data collection and analysis.

There are two general research designs in social sciences research. A cross sectional study design is the one which enables us to obtain information from specific group of respondents at a single point in time without any attempt to follow-up over time while longitudinal research collects data repeatedly over time twice or more with the intent of reporting the direction and magnitude of changes of things under investigation (Ruane, 2005). This study mainly employed cross sectional and retrospective approach. The information pertaining to the past and trends were obtained through asking questions related to respondents' past experience. Historical view of interreligious and religion-government interaction, trends in and values of religious and socio-cultural institutions and causes of interreligious tensions were explored. The study followed QUAL+quant² design, where qualitative and quantitative methods were employed to collect and analyze data in parallel and then merged together and implications were realized. It also considered embedded design following Bernard's (2006) suggestion of the fact that qualitative data is embedded in quantitative and vice versa. In this case, quantitative method was employed to support the qualitative finding.

² Johnson et al. (2007: 124) defined QUAL+quant as a mixed methods approach in which one relies on a qualitative view of the research process, while concurrently recognizing that the addition of quantitative data and approaches are likely to benefit most research projects.

Figure. 1.1. Flow chart of the research process



Source: Researcher's own construct

1.6.4. Methods of data collection

1.6.3.1. Qualitative methods of data collection and sampling

This research employed in-depth and key informant interview methods of qualitative data collection. The rationale behind use of these methods was to triangulate methods of data collection. Using these methods, the required information was obtained from different categories of informants. The subjects of this study were residents in the study area with a different religious background. In addition, key informants who were knowledgeable of interreligious interactions and related issues in the study area were also considered.

In-depth Interviews

Interview is a method of gathering information by making a face-to-face interaction with selected respondents on the problem under investigation. Interview method is one of the most popularly used tools of qualitative research (Bernard, 2006; Jupp, 2006; Vanderstoep and Johnston, 2009), and it is typically associated with both quantitative and qualitative

social research and often used alongside other methods. In quantitative research, interview is simply a means of obtaining information through pre-planned list of questions while it is much more than just a tool in qualitative research. It is like a drill to screw deeper into the discursive structures that frame the worlds of 'subjects'. It is as much a way of seeing, or rather a condition for seeing anything at all (Barbour and Schostak, 2005). There are different types of interviews, which mainly include structured, semi-structured and unstructured ones (Bernard, 2006). Unstructured interview is a flexible method of data collection, usually based on a list of guided questions where the researcher asks and probe in order to get insights into the attitudes of the interviewee regarding the problem under investigation. In this type of interview no closed format of questions are used (Williams, 2006).

The main aim of semi-structured method was to learn about the dynamic interreligious relations and its influencing factors. The rationale behind using this method was that it enables the researcher to obtain detailed information; it is flexible and can easily fit to varied environment in which this researcher can readily develop a rapport; and highly permissible to use open ended questions where further issues can be raised through probing in order to gather more detailed information. Hence, it was believed that through in-depth interviews, deep insight on the issue under investigation was gained; complimenting key informant interview and survey method. This method is more advantageous in maximizing response rate than survey method and save time than participant observation/field research method in which the researcher is immersed in the study of everyday life of the people under study.

On the basis of this rationale, extensive in-depth interviews were undertaken with purposively selected persons (residents) in the study area. With this method, the general feature of interreligious relationships in the past and present, the sources of interreligious peaceful coexistence and conflicts, the role of various actors such as religious leaders, local elders, and the place of local social associations and ethnicity were discussed. Local elders were consulted about interreligious interactions at the neighborhood/local level. Extensive discussions were also made by religious leaders to clarify the interreligious interaction from a religious point of view. In addition, leaders and members of local *iddir* association had participated in the discussion of the role of local associations in interreligious interactions in the three study areas (Omonada, Jimma, and Agaro) are thoroughly analyzed. In the course of conducting the interviews, the 2011 conflict event and how it managed on one hand and modes of interaction at neighborhood on the other hand were thoroughly discussed. For

instance, the role of *iddirs*, *ikubs*, forms of cooperation such as *dabo*, and coffee drinking ceremony among neighbors were considered as the major discussion points to explore how people of different religious groups were peacefully interacting.

Although qualitative researchers do not use preplanned and theoretically determined sample size, they select cases gradually based on consideration of context and the depth of information obtained from initially selected informants, based on saturation point (Neuman, 2007). Hence, this research adopted purposive sampling approach, which is one of the non-probability sampling methods where informants were selected on the basis of their knowledge about the issue under investigation.

The data collection process using in-depth interview method was conducted in two phases. Initially, about sixteen in-depth interviews were conducted to obtain the required data. Second, by realizing the gap pertaining to specific issues, additional nine in-depth interviews were conducted. In general, twenty five individual in-depth interviews were conducted. These people were recruited to partake in the research on the basis of the assumption that they were more knowledgeable about the role of religion and interreligious relations from a different perspective. In general, 12 Muslims, 9 Protestants, and 4 Orthodox Christians were interviewed. It also included both sexes; 21 of them were males while 4 were females. The participants were selected from the three study areas. About 11 in-depth interviews were conducted in Jimma while 9 were in Agaro and 5 in Omonada.

Key Informant Interviews

Key informants are special persons selected purposively by the researcher due to their unique knowledge about things under investigation and who are willing to participate and guide the researcher (Bernard, 2006). Corbetta (2003) acknowledged that key informants are persons (member or non-member of the community under study) who are special expertise of that phenomenon. Based on this, some experts who participated in the study gave views of interreligious interaction under the existing political milieu while few experts offered opinions on interreligious relations as third party as an impartial fashion. Furthermore, theologians and religious experts serving in different religious institutions were included to describe the interreligious interaction from religious actors' perspective. In general, twelve key informant interviews were conducted. With these key informants, the general issues related to the causes of interreligious tensions and the role of different actors such as local religious leaders, community elders, and interreligious councils were explored. These informants were selected from the three religious groups, namely, five from Muslims, four

from Protestants and three from Orthodox Christians. The key informants were experts working in the Ministry of Federal Affairs, Oromia Region Justice and Security Bureau, and Interreligious Council Office including Christian and Muslim religious teachers in Jimma area.

In the course of conducting the key informant interviews, cases of events were raised as a method of understanding interreligious interactions. The 2011 interreligious conflict episode in Jimma was taken as an entry point on which local elders and religious leaders explained the causes, the conflict resolution processes, and the role of religious leaders, local elders, faith-based organizations, and government officials. At the second event, cases of interreligious dialogue/cooperation which was initiated by faith-based organizations, particularly Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus were also recounted using in-depth interviews. In general, the role of the interreligious council (at zonal level) and a church (EECMY) was taken as specific cases to explore issues of peaceful interreligious coexistence and tensions.

1.6.3.2. Quantitative Method of Data Collection and Sampling

Survey Method

Survey method was intended to assist the qualitative method. It helps to triangulate methods of data collection. Using survey method, a specified number of residents were selected on a probable basis to provide information through structured interviews. Hence, survey, unlike other methods of qualitative research is characterized by the use of structured face-to-face interview through structured questions with respondents selected based on specified rules. Thus, survey method was applied to measure the level of interreligious relations, religious freedom, religious equality, interreligious tolerance, interaction among neighbors, peoples' participation in various local associations regardless of religious difference, peoples' perception about religious diversity and its effect on interreligious relations, causes of interreligious conflicts, and level of government involvement in religious affairs.

Sampling Design

Sampling is the process by which a researcher selects a subset of a given study population to participate in a study to provide information (Dattalo, 2008). Sampling in

academic research is required due to the difficulty of conducting population research and the unmanageable cost of studying an entire population. Sampling is not only the decision of which people to be observed, but also decisions of including which group, event/cases, and institutions in the study (Miles and Huberman, 1994). Determining sample size and the type of sampling technique used is one of the major difficult exercises in survey research. Although the size of a sample and selection of informants is solely determined by the researcher in qualitative research (Vanderstoep et al., 2009), it is important to determine sample size and sampling techniques employed in survey method based on specified rules.

According to Oromia Bureau of Finance and Economic Development (2008), Jimma Zone is divided into seventeen rural and two urban *Woredas*, as well as 538 *kebeles*. This study focuses on two *Woredas*, namely Omonada and Agaro due to their unique feature of interreligious interaction. Jimma town, the capital of the Zone was also considered in the study due to its administrative and political centeredness where major actors and institutions influencing religion reside. Hence, Jimma, Agaro, and Omonada *Woreda* were purposively identified and chosen as the study area. There were about 61 *kebeles* in the three areas (39 in Omonada, 17 in Jimma and 5 in Agaro). Using proportionate sampling method, eight *kebeles* from Omonada, three from Jimma town and one *kebele* from Agaro were selected. Guided by Bernard's formula, 384 respondents were selected from 12 *kebeles* (Bernard, 2006), which is stated as:

$$n = Z^2 \frac{(P)(Q)}{(Confidence\ interval)^2}$$

Where,

n= sample size

Z= the area under the normal curve that corresponds to the confidence limit we choose.

P= is the true proportion

Q=1-P

$$n = (1.96)^2 \frac{(0.05)(0.05)}{(0.05)^2} = 384$$

A simple random sampling method was employed to reach respondents in each *kebele*. A list of household heads was accessed from *kebele* administration office. Using the same method 32 respondents were randomly selected from each *kebele* and filled up the survey questionnaire with the help of data collection assistants.

Questionnaire

Questionnaire was one of the instruments of data collection used in this study. It consists of a series of questions that respondents read and answer by themselves or with the assistance of trained data collectors. Survey questionnaires were useful for understanding the attitudes and behaviors in a population, examining relationships between variables and determining causal links between them (Kalof et al., 2008). Gorard (2003) and Kalof et al. (2008) identified three different types of questionnaire based on its delivery and their effectiveness in social science research, namely, face to face (sometimes called interview questionnaire, self-administered, and technology based. Elaborating this argument, Gorard (2003:92) described that the face to face questionnaire is more efficient and avoids non-response and related problems:

Face-to-face delivery takes place when the researcher is present while the questionnaire is being completed, and can therefore record the responses himself. This approach is very useful in allowing a wide response that includes those with low levels of literacy and those with visual challenges. Face-to-face, the researcher can read the questions for them, explain any difficult points if necessary and record the responses in as much detail as desired. Since they are present, the researcher can also check who is answering the questions (i.e. that it is the right person) and can stop him or her answering the questions in a non-standard order.

In addition to the advantages, the use of technology and self-administered method in the study area was unthinkable due to low level of technological advancement in the country. Thus, face to face interview questionnaire was employed that made this research successful in reducing non-response rate.

The survey questionnaire was categorized into six parts coinciding with the specific objectives of the research. The first part was about the research participants' background. The second section dealt with respondents' religious identity. The third section asked issues related to religious institutions and their relationships with government since they influence the general interreligious landscape. The fourth was the perception of respondents about interreligious diversity and its implication for interreligious relations. The fifth section dealt with interreligious tensions and their causes. And finally, the last section focused on the role of indigenous local social networks and their function in maintaining peaceful interreligious interactions.

The question items were structured with close-ended questions with a few open-ended ones. In a few cases, Likert scale was employed for items which were difficult to measure.

Some questions were structured on the basis of dichotomous questions (yes/no) just to obtain respondents' agreement or disagreement. Generally, the questionnaire was formulated according to conventional scholarly standard as recommended by Gorard (2003: 100):

I recommend a questionnaire of eight core pages as a maximum, preferably less for self-administered instruments. Or looked at another way, do not go much above 100 separate questions (and even this figure presupposes that most questions use the same response format). Use a standard paper size, printed in black on a white background (although some authorities suggest that light green is the most attractive paper color). Questions should be grouped as far as possible into topics, with spaces between them. Each question should have no more than two sentences of instruction, and a different typeface should be used for instructions and questions.

Therefore, it was a six page questionnaire with eighty nine question items grouped into six sections. Furthermore, to enhance the validity of the questionnaire, two major activities were accomplished. First, a validity test was undertaken through informal procedures. Classmates, friends, and colleagues have seen and commented on the tools of data collection. On the basis of these comments, further refinement of the tool was made. Second, the actual pilot study was undertaken in a selected site around the study area and further modifications were done.

Ideally pilot study should be undertaken on a small sample selected from a population outside of the actual study area but similar to it (Gorard, 2003). A pilot study was conducted to enhance the quality of the instrument. It is one of the research procedures used to test the instruments of data collection (Cresswell, 2004). Pilot test is a method by which a researcher evaluates the tools of data collection, their limitations, clarity, data collection training requirements, and language skills required. Thus, in quantitative research, before administering a survey to a sample, it is recommended that a researcher administers the survey to at least a small group of people to fill it in order to examine whether the questions are clear and that there are no other problems with survey questionnaires (Kalof et al. 2008). It is believed that pilot testing is a necessary condition to avoid mistakes that occur in the actual undertaking of the study. Grounded on this assumption, lots of options to select similar sites were considered. Obviously, it was found that interreligious tolerance and intolerance were widespread features in the study area. Hence, selecting sample for pilot study should take into consideration the existence of these features similar to the three study areas.

Mana Woreda was purposively selected for the pilot study site. The Woreda is located in Jimma Zone at a distance of about 20 km away to the North of Jimma town. The Woreda was selected based on the rationale that like other parts of the Zone/country, there were

evidences of socio-cultural sources of peaceful interreligious interactions. Moreover, Mana area was characterized by some incidents of interreligious conflict in the past few decades.

Accordingly, fifteen residents of the Woreda were conveniently selected and given the questionnaire to fill. After the questionnaires were filled, the researcher personally asked the relevance and clarity of the questions. In addition, the completeness, response category, and response rate were critically observed for further consideration. Based on the comments provided, further modifications have been made to improve the clarity of the questionnaire.

Several comments were obtained from the two-stage pre-testing procedures, namely: informal pilot study with friends and colleagues and actual undertaking of pilot study with some individuals. It was found that some important variables were missed; irrelevant and vague terminologies were detected. Moreover, some questions were repeatedly raised in different languages.

In addition, feedback from the respondents gave the researcher more confidence as respondents stated that the study topic was timely and relevant. However, at the initial stage of the interview most of them were reluctant fearing that it was for the purpose of political consumption since religion was a sensitive security issue during data collection for this study. It was also observed that respondents usually preferred to speak only the positive side of the question or simply chose 'don't know' category. These circumstances forced the researcher to interview or allow them to fill the questionnaire individually. Furthermore, it was mandatory to show them supporting letters to gain their consent. Moreover, the length of the questionnaire was one of the major comments realized. It took them 15-20 minutes to fill up and even some of them criticized it. Realizing this comment, some questions were merged together to avoid repetitions and thereby reducing the length of the questionnaire. Then efforts were made to rearrange its language to make each question more clear, short, and understandable. Finally, it was seen that no major problems warranting major modifications. As all the comments were incorporated, the execution of actual data collection was preceded.

Prior to conducting the pilot test, the questionnaire was translated into the local languages. The decision to determine which language to use was not as such an easy exercise as there was a challenge in deciding which local languages to be used for data collection. First, Afan Oromo is the official working language of the regional state and mother tongue for the majority. However, as the study comprises both urban and rural areas, it was expected that speakers of other languages such as Amharic may be included in the sample. Therefore, the difficulty lies in the complexity of deciding on which language and in what proportion the

instrument should be translated and duplicated. By learning from the pilot study and field assistants, decisions have been made to translate the instruments only to Afan Oromo. This was due to the fact that 1) it is the official working language of the Regional State; 2) the majority of the residents are native speakers; and 3) trained data collectors can translate it into other languages for those who cannot hear/read it.

Conceptualization and Operationalization

Interreligious relation refers to the interaction between followers of different religious groups in specific locality in their daily routine. It takes different forms ranging from tolerance and cooperation to intolerance and conflict. Hence, basic concepts of interreligious relations are listed below with their operational definitions:

- **Level of Interreligious interaction-** interreligious interaction takes place between the followers of different religious groups on the basis of friendship, neighborhood, marriage, cooperation, and membership in various local associations such as *Iddir* and *Ekub*. It is also indicated by a number of village based *Iddir* associations which refers the number of locally established *Iddir* associations and residents' membership regardless of ethnic and religious differences and willingness to cooperatively work with people of different religion. It also comprises the condition in which residents in a village cooperatively work together regardless of religious differences.
- **Level of religious freedom-** refers the ability of people of all faiths to practice their religion and to form religious associations without an external imposition and restrictions. Level of government interference in religious issues is a measure of religious freedom which further refers to whether or not federal or local government exerts imposition on certain religious matters.
- **Level of religious equality-** means a social and political condition where all religions are equally recognized and treated by the government.

Operationalization also entails identification of dependent and independent variables and specification of their measurement. Therefore, the level of interreligious interaction, religious freedom, and nature of interreligious relation (peaceful/conflict) were classified as dependent variables as determined by the existence of local social associations in which all

people become members regardless of religious differences, ethnicity, and various actors' manipulation of religion. All these variables were measured on nominal scales as shown in the table below.

Religious identity and inter-group interactions related variables were included in the survey instrument. For instance, questions regarding the importance of religious or ethnic identities, frequency of attending places of worship and generally respondents' view of religiosity were nominally measured as influencing factors of the contemporary interreligious relations.

In describing the relationship between religious institutions and the government, multiple questions were used to explore the state of the interaction in order to complement an explanation drawn through qualitative methods. To this end, questions measured by a nominal scale such as respondents' self-defined level of freedom to exercise their beliefs and practices, whether or not the constitution limits their religious practices and self-defined level of government interferences in their religious matters were included in the survey instrument.

Moreover, in denoting the level of interreligious interaction, two main questions were asked, which include how frequently respondents are interacting with people of different religions living in their neighborhood and how many of their close friends are followers of a religion different from their own, which can also be measured on ordinal basis. This measure was finally substantiated with qualitative finding. Finally, list of factors were identified and respondents were asked whether or not they agree on an ordinal scale as a critical issue in initiating interreligious conflicts in the study area. These issues include interreligious preaching, competition over land, internal population dynamics and their concerns about an increment of religious diversity.

Table 1.2. Operationalization of major variables contained in the survey method

Variables	Specific Objectives	Unit of analysis	Method of data collection	Scale of Measurement
Religious freedom	To identify factors contributing to interreligious tension	Residents, representatives of religious groups	Survey and in-depth interviews	Nominal
Religious identity	To identify factors contributing to interreligious tension	Residents	Survey and in-depth interviews	Nominal
Village-based <i>iddir</i> associations	To assess the role of neighbourhood networks in peaceful interreligious relations	Representatives and members of <i>iddir</i> associations	Survey and in-depth interviews	Ratio
Cooperation among neighbours	To assess the role of neighbourhood networks in peaceful interreligious relations	Residents	Survey and in-depth interviews	Nominal
Government interference in religious issues	To describe state-religious institutions relations	Residents, representatives of religious groups	Survey and in-depth interviews	Nominal
Religious equality	To describe state-religious institutions relations	Residents, representatives of religious groups	Survey and in-depth interviews	Nominal

1.6.5. Methods of data analysis

Data analysis and interpretation is conceptualized as the process by which different variables or factors involved in the study are isolated, organized into manageable units, coded, and then synthesized to find patterns of relationships between variables (Mouton, 1998). Similarly, for Bernard (2006: 452) data analysis is “the search for patterns in data and for ideas that help explain why these patterns are there in the first place”. There are different ways of data analysis in social research. Interpretivism is one of the popular ways of data analysis in which human behavior, actions, opinions, and interactions are considered as a text comprising layers of meanings. These meanings are subjectively understood and interpreted by the actors themselves and by the researcher (Miles and Huberman, 1994). On the contrary, quantitative data analysis is a means by which researchers collect quantifiable and non-quantifiable data and present them in the form of numerical forms to explain patterns of relationship between variables. Following this general paradigms, Maxwell (1998) maintains that the quantitative approach uses fixed and standardized tools, arrangement, and coherence

of data while qualitative research lacks any such elaborate typology into which studies can be pigeonholed. Maxwell (1998: 69) further elaborates that “in a qualitative study, the activities of collecting and analyzing data, developing and modifying theory, elaborating or refocusing the research questions, and identifying and dealing with validity threats are usually going on more or less simultaneously, each influencing all of the others. In addition, the researcher may need to reconsider or modify the design during the study in response to new developments or to changes in some other aspect of the design.” Bernard (2006) on the other hand, identifies four different types of data analysis. These include qualitative analysis of qualitative data, quantitative analysis of qualitative data, qualitative analysis of quantitative data, and quantitative analysis of quantitative data. He argues that qualitative and quantitative data analyses are inseparable and continuum.

Miles and Huberman (1994) similarly identify three general reasons for linking qualitative and quantitative methods of data analysis. First, the need for corroboration of qualitative and quantitative research through triangulation is paramount. Second, this link is important to develop analysis by providing richer information, and third, it initiates new insights and lines of thinking. Quantitative and qualitative data analysis link is also found in the belief that quantitative data is obtained not only by survey method, but also obtained through documentary sources and interviews (Bernard, 2006; Jupp, 2006). Thus, information was obtained in figures from respondents or secondary sources. Therefore, quantitative data which gathered through the survey and documentary sources was organized and pattern of relationships was developed.

The collected data using survey and in-depth interview methods was processed step-by-step. The process of qualitative data analysis begins with categorization of information by themes and meanings (Miles and Huberman, 1994). It also involves transcription, translation, coding, and working with pattern development to arrive at a general description of the problem under study. In this study, the in-depth and key informant interviews were recorded, transcribed, and translated from the local language (Afaan Oromo) into English. The data were digitally audio-recorded with the consent of the participants and then transcribed and translated into English. Then, categorization and organization of data into themes were accomplished by putting the data into manageable patterns. Accordingly, issues related to sources of peaceful interreligious relations such as drinking coffee together, cooperation, compliance to their respective religious principles were identified. In addition, causes of interreligious conflict such as preaching, construction of mosques/churches, radicalism were

the main themes developed. Moreover, themes related to religious freedom and equality such as the role of government, local elders, interreligious councils and religious organizations were explored. Information obtained through individual in-depth interviews and KII were documented in each category and triangulated with others alongside the results that were obtained through quantitative method.

Description and explanation were the two models of data analysis inseparably used since dynamic social processes under investigation directly described by the researcher from the inside perspective (Miles and Huberman, 1994). Hence, this study aimed at describing issues that are directly obtained from respondents as well as explaining patterns of relationship between variables. Thus, the method of data analysis employed in this research draws on the works of Bernard's and Miles and Huberman's multi-level and multi-faceted explanation of typologies of data analysis and their relationships, within which both qualitative and quantitative data were jointly analyzed.

The survey data were translated by coding the responses. All items in the questionnaire were coded numerically. Once all the data were coded, they were ready for data entering. The survey data were handled and analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 20. The quantitative data analysis method mainly focuses on examination of quantifiable data gathered through household survey method. Initially, the responses obtained through survey method were coded and entered into the software. This helped to use descriptive and inferential statistics in explaining different variables involved in the study. For the descriptive analysis, percentages and graphic presentation of data in a meaningful fashion was carried out. For the responses whose questions were not previously coded, the actual data analysis started, data coding, transcription/translation, and data clearance were the major activities involved. Coding of data involves converting observations and responses into scales or measurements. Each questionnaire and alternative responses were coded and entered into data analysis software (SPSS version 20).

Data cleaning also involves correcting typing errors and checking that all types of codes are correctly written. The other type of cleaning involves checking for completeness. As soon as the questions were returned, rigorous check was made that all responses on response categories were filled with appropriate responses. Example, checking responses that are not proper, alternative responses such as missing values are correctly written. Data processing also includes contingency cleaning. There were questionnaire items with skip patterns. In this regard attempts have been made to identify and correct items for which an

answer should not be given. Missing information was also common problems in all social research. Therefore, serious efforts have been made to see to what extent there are missing values that affect the results of the study. This exercise was also done through data analysis software (SPSS) where it shows the percentage of missing points under each question item. In this regard, there were no large number of missing points in each question and their effect on the general result of the study was insignificant. After qualitative and quantitative data analyses were separately accomplished, an attempt was made to integrate them to arrive at a more coherent and complete conclusion for each of the items included in the study.

1.6.6. Ethical issues

Ethical concerns involve the consideration of the relationship between researcher and the research participants. Research ethics deal with how we treat those who participate in our studies and how we handle the concerns, dilemma and conflicts that arise over the proper way to conduct research (Neuman, 2007; Vanderstoep and Johnston, 2009). For Sieber (1998: 128) ethics of social science research is about “creating a mutually respectful, win-win relationship between researcher and research participants in which participants are pleased to respond candidly, valid results are obtained, and the community considers the conclusions constructive. This requires more than goodwill or adherence to the laws governing research.”

Vanderstoep and Johnston (2009) point out three major ethical issues to be considered in social research, which includes respect for study subjects, benefit, and justice. It is asserted that the autonomy of the participants of the study should be recognized, they should not be harmed, and there should be fairness in the distribution of benefit, if any. To these ends, supporting letters were obtained from university and regional/zonal/*woreda* offices. Supporting letters from different organs, translated instruments, and entry into the field were the key to the actual data collection procedures. The title of the study was sensitive and topical issue across the globe. Moreover, the period of the data collection planned was the aftermath of the 2011 interreligious conflict and the 2015 Ethiopian election when many political parties were mobilizing the community to win mass support. Thus, being suspicious of one another, the field entry was made very difficult and convincing them that it was for academic purpose was not an easy business.

Establishing rapport with the communities in the study area was another means of field entry. Submitting the university’s supporting letter to enter the field sites was not possible. In most of the study sites, almost all the local administrative organs required another supporting letters from their respective administrative organ. For this reason, additional

supporting letter was received from Oromia Regional State President Office, Jimma Zonal Administration Office, Omonada Woreda, Agaro town, and then to each kebele administration in the respective Woredas.

In addition to the clearance letter, the use of field assistants had immense contributions in making the data collection process smooth. In each kebele of the study sites, the researcher approached and used development agents, health extension workers, and other social workers to get access to the residents.

Finally, after getting permission to approach the residents, in each process of in-depth interviews and KIIs, the purpose of the research was precisely introduced. Then the informants were also informed that their participation in this research is essential, but exclusively based on their voluntary participation. They were also informed that there is no direct benefit or harm for their giving information. In addition to the adherence to the formal procedures to enter into the field, the researcher built rapport with a few prominent persons in the study area to facilitate the data collection process by convincing that the study is purely an academic activity.

1.6.7. Validity and reliability considerations

Reliability and validity issues are central to the study of social science due to the fact that social issues are subject to change and this in turn poses challenges to know whether specific research result is reliable or valid. It is due to this difficulty that perfect validity or reliability is impossible, but it is very important issue in social research (Neuman, 2007). Neuman uses reliability and consistency interchangeably, a condition when the research is repeated, the same result should be obtained. Validity on the other hand, refers to the extent to which the findings of the research resemble the actual reality. Thus, scientists are worried of the techniques by which both validity and reliability are enhanced.

Mouton (1998) identifies different mechanisms by which reliability and validity are enhanced. He asserts that researchers ought to accept as a general principle that the inclusion of multiple sources of data collection methods in a research project and the use of different sources of data is likely to increase the reliability of the research findings. Furthermore, Neuman (2007) proposes the pre-testing of data collection instruments such as questionnaire and interviews as a means of enhancing reliability. Thus, it is believed that the mixed method approach employed in this research enhanced the level of validity and reliability. In addition to the use of triangulation method, the researcher's familiarity with the study area enhances

the validity of the research. Since the researcher is not a member of the three religious groups under study, biases that could emanate from personal affiliation were minimized.

The internal consistency for each theme of the survey instrument was also examined by using Cronbach's alpha measure. Initially, question items relating to the perception of religious diversity and views of interreligious relationship were arranged in Likert scales and measured, which was found to be 0.835 (13 items). It indicates a high level of internal consistency. Secondly, the internal consistency for three items relating to the views of interreligious tension and its causes was 0.568 which is an acceptable level. Overall, the internal consistency was 0.849 (17 items), with the largest internal reliability. In addition, to increase the reliability of the data collection instruments, pilot testing was undertaken in a *kebele* out of the study area but which exhibit similar characteristics, with conveniently selected residents.

1.7. Organization of the Dissertation

The dissertation is divided into eight chapters. The first chapter introduces the background conditions and the setting of the research. It identifies the research gaps and objectives addressed by the study. It also outlines the research methodology, including background information of the study area such as the physical setting and socio-demographic characteristics, sampling and methods of data collection and analysis. Chapter two of this thesis portrays conceptual and theoretical perspectives that guide the whole study. It looks at the meaning and the place of religion, both from consensus and conflict perspectives. Efforts have been made to integrate the two perspectives that claim consensus and conflict as the two faces of the same society. Theory of religious pluralism, rational choice theory, and social identity theory were presented to examine multiple facts and dynamism of interreligious relations.

Chapter three presented the origin of Islam and Christianity to the area. It described when and how Christianity and Islam introduced to the area and how they were interacting. Then, this section highlighted Christian-Muslims' interaction at their inception to the country in relation to their respective relation to the state.

Chapter four explored the different sources of peaceful interreligious coexistence. Initially, religious sources of peaceful interreligious encounter were elaborated referring verses in the holy books as recounted by the study participants. Second, socio-cultural sources of interreligious harmony were thoroughly discussed. For this, the place of neighborhood ties, local social institutions such as *iddir*, *equbs*, and *debo* were explained.

Chapter five dealt with investigating the causes of interreligious conflict. This part discussed the issues that may trigger disharmonious relationships which are related to religion, social, political, and economic issues. Interreligious conflict in the study area was measured based on the respondents' views on the causes of interreligious disharmony with items which include economic causes, methods of preaching, revival of religious identities, and issues of religious demography. The sixth chapter described actors influencing interreligious relations in the area. It portrays the role of faith-based organizations, local elders, religious leaders, and interreligious councils.

Chapter seven described the state of religious institutions and state interactions. It was concerned with the description of varying forms of state-religious institutions' interaction and its implication for the general interreligious interactions. First, the legal environment for state-religious institutions relations in the country was discussed. Second, issues of religious freedom, government intervention in religious affairs, and religious equality and recognition were stated. Lastly, intra-religious divisions and their varying forms of relationships with the government and other religions were discussed.

Chapter eight summarizes the findings and conclusions of the study. Initially, major findings were presented in summary, based on each of the five specific objectives listed in the first chapter. Finally, on the basis of the major findings discussed, general concluding remarks were presented.

Chapter Two

Conceptual, Theoretical and Empirical Literature

Introduction

This section discusses some basic concepts that guide the study. It examines the meaning and the place of religion, both from functionalism and conflict perspectives by focusing on how religious issues become a problem and opportunity in the contemporary socio-economic and political contexts. Emphasis is put on the works of Durkheim, Marx, Parsons, Merton, and Dahrendorf's theories. An attempt was also made to integrate the two perspectives based on the assumption that consensus and conflict are the two faces of the same society. The theory of religious pluralism was also employed to understand the sources of interreligious harmony in a religiously diverse environment. Simultaneously, rational choice theory was employed to shed light on how religious competitions and government interventions in religious issues affect peaceful interreligious and religion-state interactions. Finally, social identity theory was also used to examine how religious and ethnic identities have become challenging and sources of interreligious conflicts.

2.1. Definitions of Key Concepts and Conceptual Framework

A conceptual framework explains key issues of the research components diagrammatically, graphically, or in a narrative form. The use of a conceptual framework enables the researcher to be selective in identifying variables that are decisive, having relationships with other variables on which data were collected and analyzed (Miles and Huberman, 1994). In order to specify the objective of this study in a clearer fashion, the definition of the core concepts of the study is indispensable. These core issues include religion, religious pluralism, diversity, religious tolerance/intolerance and interreligious relations. Hence, this section mainly deals with a description of basic concepts and empirical evidences in the light of the given theoretical frameworks. After basic issues of the study were conceptualized, reviews of empirical literature on the basis of specific theories were outlined and discussed.

2.1.1. Defining religion

Religion can be defined in many different ways as it is related to many aspects of human life. It is a highly complex and dynamic concept which encompasses a multitude of practices and behaviors (Durkheim, 1912/1995; Weber, 1920/1963). This study mainly

employed the functional and substantive approach of conceptualizing religion. Employing functional dimension, Durkheim (1912/1995) defined religion as a system of beliefs and practices which unite all people who adhere to it through the church. It comprises the distinction of the sacred from the profane and church provides a place for gathering, contributing to inter-group integration.

For Weber (1920/1963: 29), religion is “the relationship between humans and supernatural power/s to have some rationalized ends.” It is defined in terms of the function that it provides for individuals and society differently. For instance, in his study of world religions Weber describes ‘god of rain’, ‘god of economy’, and ‘god of politics’. Thus, Weber’s definitions of religion enable to understand religion as a form of formal organization which provides certain basic socio-economic and political functions.

Marx views religion as a belief system that shapes the lives of people. However, Marx’s conception was limited to conceiving religion as an ideology which serves as a tool to maintain status quo (Hamilton, 2001). For him, religion is considered as the ‘opium of the people’. It is used as a mechanism by which people forget their suffering in the real world of enslavement, inequality, exploitation, and poverty. It is a system by which people create another world of hope/heaven as a compensation for the existing and real suffering from the oppressions (Marx, 1843/1970). Marx (1843/1970: 1) again elaborates that “religious suffering is the expression of real suffering and a protest against real suffering. It is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, and the soul of soulless conditions.”

On the basis of the above definitions, there are two dominant ways of conceptualizing religion in social science (Davie, 2010; Furseth and Rapstad, 2006), namely, substantivist and functionalist ways of conceptualizing. The former dimension is concerned with analysis of religion by identifying basic characteristics of the content of each religion. Based on this view, Weber (1920/1963) identifies its contents, especially ethics in religions by explaining them in relation to the development of capitalism. Conceptualized differently, Durkheim also makes a distinction between the four components of religion (religious practices, beliefs, ceremonies and church) and their functions in society. Functional definitions present religion in terms of its effect on individuals and society. For example, some functional definitions inspect religion as all human activities that give meaning to life and hold society together (Furseth and Rapstad, 2006).

Beyond substantive and functional conceptualization by Furseth and Rapstad (2006), Bangura (1994: 15) better examines religion from the multifaceted point of view clearly presenting it as:

In a material sense it refers to religious establishments (institutions and officials) as well as to social groups and movements whose reasons d'être are to be found within religious concerns. In the spiritual sense, religion pertains to models of social and individual behavior that help believers organize their everyday lives. In this sense, religion has to do with the idea of transcendence, i.e. supernatural realities; with sacredness, i.e. language and practice that organize the world in terms of what is deemed holy; and with ultimacy, i.e. the ultimate conditions of existence.

Therefore, the analysis of religion from ideological, substantive, and functional perspectives serves as a guide to understand varying forms of interreligious relations and its influences. This study treats religion as an institution that marks the peoples' identity and belonging.

2.1.2. Religious diversity and pluralism

Some social interactions could be understood through analysis of relations between followers of different religions (Soares, 2006; Wijzen, 2007). Since this study aims to investigate forms of interreligious interaction in religiously diverse societies, it is useful to conceptualize religious pluralism, diversity, and tolerance. Here, religious pluralism refers to a condition where a society is characterized by multiplicities and the existence of diverse religious, ethnic, and cultural traditions. Religious pluralism can be used interchangeably with diversity (Meister, 2009). However, for Silk (2007) religious pluralism is beyond religious diversity. It indicates the acceptance and increasing recognition of religious diversity by government and citizens. In this context, Silk (2007: 64) defines religious pluralism as follows:

A social norm and not merely a synonym for religious diversity, which denotes a country made up of people of different faiths to exist without sectarian warfare or the persecution of religious minorities. It is achieved by putting all religions on an equal footing vis-a-vis the state, or at least by formally protecting a range of religious attachments and commitments. But in practice, it is more than a set of legal prescriptions. It is understood differently in different times and places, it is a cultural construct that embodies some shared conception of how a country's various religious commitments relate to each other and to the larger national whole.

Globalization is a social process which possesses a rich diversity of religious practices and beliefs in the contemporary world (Bruce, 2010). This diversity further creates varying forms of interreligious relationships manifested through interreligious conflict and/or

coexistence/tolerance (Meister, 2009). Exploring the challenges of religious pluralism relating to the dynamics of interreligious relations, Meister (2009) indicates that concepts such as religious changes, diversity/pluralism, and tolerance emerged with the 18th century enlightenments. He pointed out six general philosophical approaches of religious pluralism relevant to understanding and justifying the necessity of religious tolerance in diversity. These include: first, Atheism, which claims the idea that all religions are false and there is no religion with true claims. Second, agnosticism which refers to a belief that there is no way to determine which, if any, of the religions is most likely to be true, and thus the best response is to remain agnostic on the claims of religion. Third, religious relativism views that there are no objective criteria to speak of religious truths. The fourth is religious pluralism, which represents the view that all world religions are correctly offering different paths to salvation. Fifth, religious inclusivism denote a view that only one world religion is correct while others reveal the partial truth of the correct religion. Finally, religious exclusivism believes that only one religion is correct while all others are mistaken. For these reasons, Meister maintains that both inclusivists and exclusivists agree on the idea that there is an objective reality on which truth is claimed. Hence, the philosophical approaches towards religious relativism and exclusivism are two extreme points which pose threats to the contemporary dynamism of religious diversity and interreligious relations.

2.1.3. Religious tolerance

Religious tolerance is conceptualized differently by various scholars. Interreligious tolerance comes from the Latin word tolerance, which means flexibility, openness, broad-mindedness, and volunteering towards others (Abdulrahman and Khambali, 2013). It involves recognition of the existence of diverse world with people of diverse cultural and religious traditions; acceptance of others' rights and interests. Abdulrahman and Khambali (2013) identified two main models of tolerance: firstly, passive tolerance, which means accepting differences as factual, and secondly, active tolerance, which means being involved with others in the midst of differences and variations. The outcome of these two forms of tolerance is living side by side peacefully by accepting variations which generally represent interreligious coexistence.

Meister (2009) and Putnam and Campbell (2010) laid conceptual and empirical foundation for the contemporary understanding of tolerance in the religiously diverse environs. Particularly, Putnam and Campbell (2010: 531) clearly employed Thomas Jefferson's work, who is considered as the prominent founder of religious liberty in America,

indicating the inevitability of religious diversity necessitating religious tolerance, which says, “It does mean no injury for my neighbor to say there are twenty gods, or no God. It neither picks my pocket nor breaks my leg.” However, the conception of interreligious tolerance sometimes becomes questionable where strong religious identities persist and revive mainly in many African countries.

Likewise, Triandafyllidou (2011: 29) defines tolerance as the condition when someone “refrains from objecting to something with which one does not agree.” This definition agrees with Putnam and Campbell’s (2010: 531) definition of tolerance as, “You let me worship as I will do the same for you.” Accordingly, tolerance denotes prohibition of discrimination and respect for one another. Triandafyllidou (p. 29) also believes that tolerance is “[...] acceptance of recognition. It involves not only acceptance and recognition of cultural and religious diversity, but also combating negative attitudes towards others.”

Similarly, Wagner and Bhatai (2009: 2) used UNESCO’s declaration to present the meaning of tolerance as:

A 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 possible, contributes to the replacement of the culture of war by a culture of peace.

Thus, interreligious tolerance is generally defined as the state of understanding, appreciation of the right of others to differ in beliefs, faiths, religious and cultural norms and values. Contrary to this, religious intolerance is understood as the state of misunderstanding and failure to respect the rights of the followers of other religions to practice their own religious beliefs and practices.

Dereje (2011: 8) employed two Amharic terms to indicate the danger of using the term tolerance: ‘*Mechal* and *Mechachal*’. The first refers to contested interreligious tolerance or coexistence due to some external impositions and forced tolerance, which is not considered as real interreligious tolerance. The second refers to the acceptance and recognition of one another’s religious beliefs and practices willingly. Thus, it is the second term, *mechachal*, which is the real tolerance, and was generally defined as the state of understanding, and appreciation of the right of others to differ in beliefs, faiths, religious and cultural norms and values. This study considered interreligious respect as better represents deep-rooted peaceful interreligious relations in Ethiopia. Hence, it was believed that terms such as trust and respectful relationship, its Amharic terms ‘*መከባከር*’ or ‘*Mekebaber*’ rather than tolerance or

'mechachal' and *'mechal'* which more represents peaceful interreligious coexistence in the country. Adopting these definitions, this study chooses to use 'interreligious respect' than interreligious tolerance.

2.1.4. Interreligious relations

Interreligious relation between followers of different religious groups is dynamic consisting of the two contradicting forms of interaction: tolerance and tensions. Cheetam, Pratt and Thomas (2013) assert that interreligious relation is conceptualized as the diverse and dynamic interaction between different faiths in specific circumstances. Accordingly, interreligious relation takes varying forms, which include interreligious conversion, interreligious dialogue, interreligious majority-minority relations, fundamentalism, and exclusivism, interreligious engagement in the public sphere, interreligious conflict, and peaceful interreligious coexistence. Here, interreligious dialogue is used interchangeably with religious coexistence and interreligious engagement and cooperation. However, unequal majority-minority relations, interreligious conflict, intolerance, religious exclusivism, and fundamentalism are presented as the various challenges of peaceful interreligious relations.

These varying forms of interreligious relations are determined by actors' rational realization of their religious identity. Existing socio-political and economic context at the top of societal structure created religious diversity, enabling competitive environment for different religious groups to revive. At mid-level of social structure, varying forms of socio-cultural institutions shape the role of religion and interreligious relations. As an alternative means of interaction among people at local and mid-levels, there are cultural and social networks, which create ties between different religious groups acting as a means of peaceful interreligious relations. On the other side, at the same level, people manipulate religion to sustain their own lives, creating interreligious tensions as another form of interreligious interaction.

2.1.5. State- religious institutions interaction

One of the fascinating features of religion in the contemporary world affairs is the study of its relationship with the state. Although many countries consider themselves 'secular',³ state and religion interactions remain continuously dynamic. In practice, there

³According to Davie (2010), secularism is a functional differentiation, where sectors of society which historically shaped by religious authorities gradually separated and become autonomous. It is a differentiation of the secular spheres from religious institutions and norms and marginalization of religion to privatized sphere. According to Hamilton (2001), it involves increasing process of autonomization, which refers to the process by which social institutions become autonomous and free of the influence of religion, resulting in an increasing privatization of religion.

were some forms of relations between the two in different countries considerably influencing interreligious interactions. Contrary to the classical view of secularism, religion is no more a matter of private and public concerns (Fox, 2008; Michel, 1997). This suggests that religion is strongly attached to other spheres of life such as politics.

State-religious institutions interaction refers to a general form of relationships between the two institutions ranging from complete separatism to coupled relationships. Practically, the relationship between the state and religion is dynamic involving many aspects. Theoretically, in conceptualizing the state-religious institutions relations some scholars used private-public distinctions viewing religion as private and state as public concerns. In this circumstance, Turner (2010: 652) used 'political and social secularization' model to explore the distinction between the two. Accordingly, "political secularization refers to public institutions and political arrangements distinct from religion, which include the historical separation of church and state, while social secularization involves values, culture, and attitudes different from religious ideologies."

The theory of secularization forms one of the dominant perspectives as far as the study of state-religious institutions relationship is concerned. The issue of state-religion interaction at least dates back to the 18th century enlightenment movements, questioning the influence of metaphysical religious and traditional dogmas (Davie, 2010). Thus, the study of religion and its relation to other social institutions was part of the study of sociological founders. For instance, the idea of state-religion relation lies in Comte's study of *Laws of the Three Stages*, Durkheim's *Division of Labor and Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, Weber's study of the *Protestant Ethic and Spirit of Capitalism*, Merton's *Functional and Dysfunctional Analysis of Religion*, and Marx's *religion as opium of people* (Ritzer, 2008).

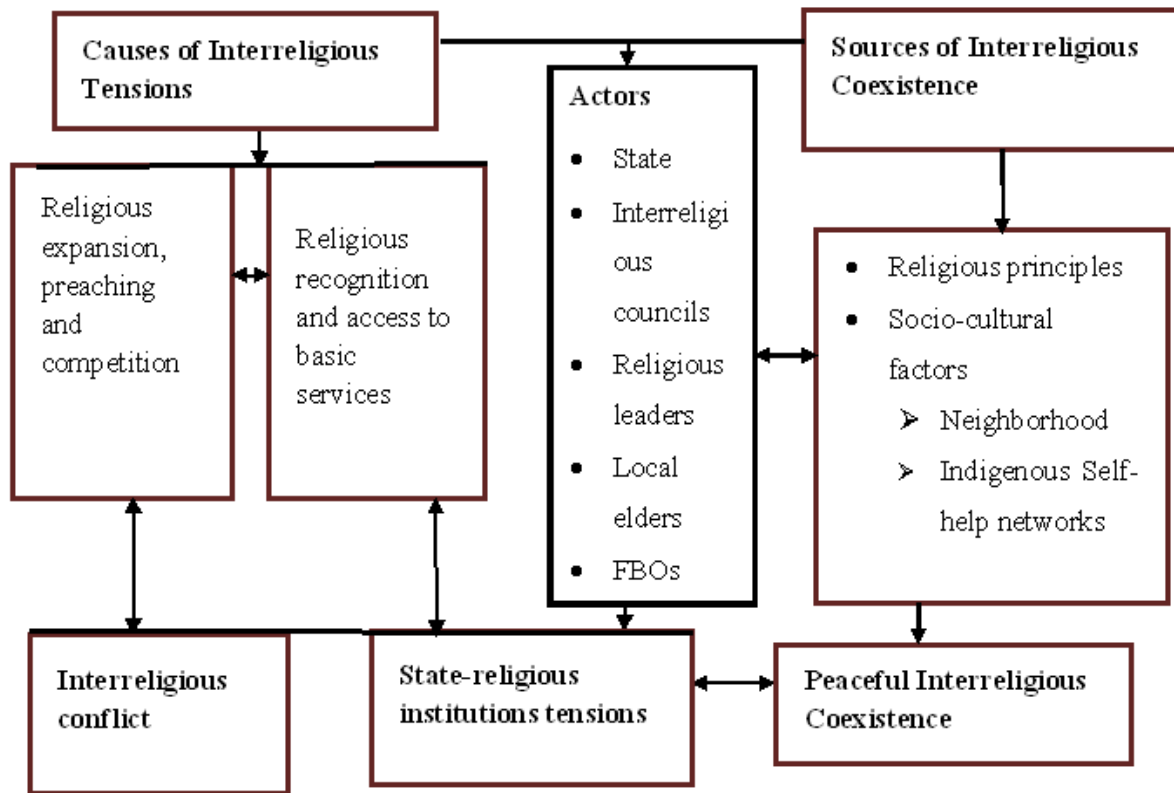
Although these classical sociological founders explained the role of religion differently (some describe its integrative power while others emphasize its disruptive role), there was a consensus that processes within modernity cause the power of religion to decline in influencing peoples' lives (Fox, 2008). Based on these classical views, secularization theory became one of the conventional theoretical perspectives, which was widely applied to the study of the influencing power of religion in general and the relationship between religion and politics in particular. Hence, the theory was mainly rooted in the conventional sociological view that the role of religion is declining as a result of modernity.

Contrary to the 19th and 20th century thoughts, however, the modern world witnessed the resurgence of the power of religion influencing world politics and peoples' lives by blurring religion-state relationships. Although the secularization theory generally believes that the contemporary world is secularized, a lot of events have been questioning this general assumption that categorized under the perspective of religious revivalism (Fox, 2008). Accordingly, many modern and post-modern theories explain the resurgence of religion in contemporary society. The notion of post-secularism was first employed by Jürgen Habermas to enlighten an unexpected rebirth and resurgence of religion in contemporary society (Mozumder, 2011).

Questioning the generalization of the classical secularization and modernization theories, Davie (2010), Bruce (2010) and Gorski (2003) argue that religion retains its significance in the course of modernization process and it has a potential to revive and adjust to specific social contexts since people always need it. Again, Davie (2010) employed the notion of resacralization to describe the enduring resurgence of religion in individual and public spheres in many parts of the world. Berger's (2007) concept of de-secularization similarly denotes the continuous transformations of religion in society within the context of modernity. Unlike classical secularization theorists, Berger contends that modernity does not necessarily lead to a decline in the role of religion rather it leads to a more religious pluralism, due to global processes of modern developments such as mass migration and travel, urbanization, literacy, and the new technology of communication. Overall, this study understood state and religious institutions' relationship as a continuum. It considered the effect of government's interference in religious issues in the name of religious management.

In general, two contradicting ideas shape this study. On one hand, people committed to their common cultural and religious traditions potentially promoting interreligious harmony, and at the same time increasing assertiveness of religious identity dividing people by threatening interreligious concord. Based on this general conceptual framework, this research mainly focuses on the study of the different factors affecting peaceful interreligious relations at different tiers of societal structure on one hand and issues of interreligious conflict on the other hand as the two major forms of interreligious relations. As such, the following figure seems a helpful conceptual framework enabling to explore varying forms of interreligious interaction and its influencing factors.

Figure. 2.1. Forms of interreligious interactions and influencing factors



Adopted from: Sianipar (2011)

The above figure represents the conceptual framework of the study. It portrays two different forms of interreligious interactions and their causes. On one hand, various sources of interreligious tensions, which include manipulation of religion for political ends, interreligious preaching, religious extremism and government involvement in religious affairs were presented. In this regard, the study understood that religion currently has become an area of contestation between different actors. This made religion to act as a tool by which political and religious elites endeavor to secure political and/or economic ends.

Specific forms of interreligious competition include limitless practices of interreligious preaching which involve a negative attitude towards one another that further triggered interreligious conflict. The extreme form of this practice includes ‘Christianizing’ and ‘Islamizing’ practices, which involve coercive interreligious conversion. The various methods employed by different religious groups to promote their own religion were the main issue which adversely affected peaceful interreligious interactions. Although it is a contested concept, religious radicalism/extremism/fundamentalism was another factor which challenges peaceful interreligious encounters in a religiously diverse area.

State-religious institutions' interaction was also another concept employed in the conceptual model above. The context and extent of the state and religion relation was contentious. State's involvement in religious issues was reported as the major initiating factor for the emerging interreligious and religious institutions-state tensions in many parts of the country. It was found that the role of the state in shaping interreligious relations was strong through its religious policies, interreligious conflict intervention strategies and maintaining interreligious encounters. State-religious institutions' interaction was full of tensions influencing religious freedom, equality and recognition. Meanwhile, there were different other actors which affect interreligious relations either positively or negatively. These actors include religious leaders, local elders, faith-based organizations and other civil society organizations.

On the other side of the model, socio-cultural institutions become a viable option for creating peaceful interreligious encounters. There were different neighborhood networks, which bind people of different religious backgrounds together. Cultural, local networks and ethnic-based identities become alternative options to calm interreligious tensions. In this regard, local self-help networks, which were organized on the basis of vicinity, neighborhood, cultural and religious values were significant in linking people regardless of religious differences.

2.2. Theoretical Frameworks for Understanding Consensus and Conflict in Religiously Plural Societies

This sub-section enlightens the meaning and the place of religion and interreligious interaction both from functionalism and conflict perspectives. An attempt was also made to integrate the two perspectives based on the assumption that consensus and conflict are the two faces of the same society and hence, studying interreligious encounters either from peaceful coexistence or conflict alone does not provide a complete picture (Dahrendorf, 1959; Soares, 2006). Theory of religious pluralism, rational choice, and social identity theory helped to comprehend the revival of religious identity, interreligious competition, different sources of interreligious harmony, and the effect of government interference in religious issues in religiously diverse setting.

2.2.1. Functionalist theory

Functionalist theory deals with the study of the roots of consensus between different social groups, one of which is religion and its constituents (Ritzer, 2008). The place of

religion in private and public affairs fascinated the attention of classical and modern sociological studies. Early founders of sociology such as August Comte, Emile Durkheim, Karl Marx, and Max Weber have critically analyzed the various conditions that contributed to the social crisis of the 19th century and related consequences including religion. During the period, religion was reported as one of the major social forces that contributed to the development of sociology (Ritzer, 2008; Segal, 2006). For instance, William Coleman (2007) described that the origin of sociology can be attributed to the efforts of the nineteenth century European intellectuals to come to grips with the crisis of faith that shocked western society during the revolutionary upheavals of industrial transformation, as a specific issue of religion.

Sociology of religion is as old as the discipline of sociology because almost without exception, the founders of sociology focused on the role that religion and religious constituents played during the era of rapid and radical social change in the 19th and early 20th century in western countries (Ebaugh, 2006). Classical sociological theories of religion, therefore, have laid foundation for the study and understanding of social phenomena in general and of religion in particular. Their theoretical and methodological experiences are relevant and applicable to the contemporary world although some argue that the writing of the classics are out dated (O'Toole 2003). O'Toole (P. 145) argues, "The influence of the classics on the contemporary sociology of religion is not rhetoric, but a reality, a fact which most cursory examination of textbooks, journals, and professional publications can confirm."

Auguste Comte, as a forerunner of the origin of sociology in general, has directly contributed to the origin and development of sociology of religion. For instance, as stated in Ritzer (2008), Comte was greatly disturbed by the anarchy and the crisis of his time that occurred in most of European society and was critical of those thinkers who had spawned both the Enlightenment and the French Revolution. Comte developed his scientific view, 'positivism' or 'positive philosophy' to combat and reverse the negativities and destructions by social crises, anarchies, and philosophy of the Enlightenment that even disturbed the Catholics due to the changes caused by industrialization, urbanization and enlightenment movements (Ritzer, 2008).

Emile Durkheim founded sociology as an independent academic field of study and particularly credited for the foundation of scientific study of religion. Like other classical founders of sociology, he was impressed by the dynamic condition of the 19th century, such as political, economic, religious, and cultural changes as a result of industrialization and urbanization. As one of the basic questions about these changes, Durkheim deals with the

basic questions of social order in the changing world where he depicted the integrative role of religion (Durkheim, 1912/1995).

Durkheim (1893/1947), in his study of the division of labor in society, identified various sources of social solidarity in society in which religion is one of them. He identifies sources of social cement: collective consciousness, which manifested as a result of religious and cultural identities. Religion in this sense integrates people with one another in less complex societies while division of labor in modern society creates interdependence and order in modern societies.

In his *Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (1912/1995:44), he provided a precise definition of religion which indicates its general function in society:

A religion is a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden—beliefs and practices which unite into one single moral community called a Church, all those who adhere to them.

In the definition, three major components were identified. The first is the distinction of the sacred from the profane. He (P. 34) said, “All religions, whether simple or complex, have a common feature of the division of the world into these two domains: the sacred are objects (plants/animals) which are set apart from everyday life and which have superiority in dignity and power to profane things”. The second component he identified is a church, which provides a place for people gathering, contributing to integration, and binding people together. Giddens (1971:207) puts Durkheim’s conceptualization of church as “the existence of a regularized ceremonial organization pertaining to a definite group of worshippers.” This implies that people gather at churches to worship thereby becoming familiar to each other. Third, religion also comprises some beliefs and practices. Beliefs according to Durkheim refer to rules and sentiments attached to specific actions while practices include rites and ceremonies. Giddens (2006:538) again indicated a Durkheim’s view of the role of these ceremonies and rituals saying that they help group solidarity to be heightened. Again in his *Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (P. 111), Durkheim maintained that “Totem [religion] is not only a name that represents a clan or tribe, but also it is an emblem, a true coat of arms, and is the badge of the group.” In this case, religion in such societies is a common identity for a group of people.

Following this perspective, Talcott Parsons indicated the integrative power of each social institution in a society. He claimed that the economy provides the function of adaptation; politics the function of goal attainment; law the function of integration; family and religion the function of pattern maintenance through socialization and social control

(Wallace and Wolf, 1995). Consequently, religion is a cement of society through which harmony is maintained.

A more refined Durkheimian tradition was presented by a prominent sociologist Robert Merton. Although Merton (1957:25) agreed with some of the basic assumptions of Durkheim and Parsons, he argued that “Durkheimian analysis of religion singled out only the positive function of religion by ignoring some of its dysfunctional consequences. For example, different religious groups co-exist in the same society while conflict can occur between differing religious groups.” According to Merton, early functionalists assume that religion is a source of integration because it serves as a source of common identity in society. However, unity and integration among people who have no religion in common is observed. Merton noted that this fact falsifies the early functionalists’ principle of functional/institutional indispensability. Therefore, unity and integration is not only a product of religion, but also of race, ethnicity, nationalism, and multiplicities of identities. Thus, Merton noticed that during functional analysis, specification has to be made for which social unit and time period that religion is functional or dysfunctional.

Therefore, the function of religion in a society (whether it provides integrative or disintegrative function) depends on specific social and political context. This informs a consideration of socio-economic, cultural and political context in the study of interreligious interaction. Furthermore, within the same particularity, Merton (1957) also identified different functions of religion, arguing that the positive or negative consequence of different religious institutions is uncontrolled and indirect. Elaborating this perspective, Johnson (2008) identified manifest function of religion as a source of salvation, answers to complex question and peace of mind. Latently, religious rituals contribute to fulfill the latent pattern-maintenance functions and enhance social solidarity.

In general, these theoretical analyses give a broad clue to understand the function of religion and its ingredients in specific socio-economic and political context. For instance, it helps as a perspective to see the contribution of religious capitals to inter-group harmony. More specifically, these theorists informed that the role of religious actors and religious principles need to be considered particularly in the area of promoting interreligious concord using religious and socio-cultural elements.

2.2.2. Conflict theory

Conflict theory deals with competition and disagreement between different social groups, specifically between people along religious lines. Unlike the Durkheimian tradition,

Marxian perspectives viewed religion as disruptive, though they agree that it has a pervasive power in shaping the lives of people. While the former viewed religion positively emphasizing its integrative role, the latter perspective conceived it as a source of disharmony. Marxian perspective argued that religious beliefs and ideologies maintain an existing system, which is oppressive and exploitative (Marx, 1843/1970). For Marx, religion is one of the major aspects of dominant ideologies and superstructure, which include politics, law, morality, and other powers by which certain groups manipulate others. In this regard, religion is considered as opium of people, keeping people in suffrage, enslavement, inequality, exploitation, and poverty. Moreover, it is a process by which people create another world of hope, heaven, as reparation for the existing and real suffering from oppressions. In line with this outlook, Giddens (2006:537) wrote that “religion provides justification for the inequalities of wealth and power found in society.” Therefore, for Marx, religion affects society from two main perspectives. As an ideology, it preserves existing exploitation of the mass by the few capitalists and alienates people from their own real potential (Marx, 1843/1970).

As Durkheim built a foundation for varieties of functionalist theory to emerge, Marx put the basis for varieties of conflict theoretical perspectives to evolve. More precisely, conflict theory is mainly rooted in the works of Karl Marx and Max Weber. Both theorists agreed that it is coercion than consensus that characterizes societies (Farganis 1996). While Marx views society as exclusively divided into two antagonistic categories causing continuous tension due to unequal distribution of material resources, Weber, however, understood conflict from multi-dimensional points viewing it is a consequence of economic, political, and social relations than material distribution alone. In addition, he contended that social groups such as ethnic and religious groups locate themselves in terms of differential access to wealth, power, and social rewards in their social life, which could be major sources of conflict (Dahrendorf, 1959).

Conventionally, conflict theory was considered as an alternative to functionalist theory to the understanding of the basic features of society. Early functionalists viewed that societies and their parts depend on one another to create stability and order while early conflict theorists saw society as an arena in which groups fight to get control over basic resources such as power and other material and non-material resources (Wallace and Wolf, 1995). Wallace and Wolf also identified basic principles of conflict theories as opposed to the principles of functionalism. First, conflict theorists assume that people have basic interests

that are needed to be satisfied by the people themselves. Second, power is a basic resource for which people are competing to have control of it and is a major source of conflict in society; and thirdly, values and ideas are used by people as a tool to control others.

For most of conflict traditions, religion is considered as an ideological weapon by which one group dominates others in order to satisfy their own interests. Therefore, this perspective enables researchers to see the role of religion, focusing on various causes of interreligious conflict from multidimensional perspectives. In the contemporary Ethiopian reality, two dimensions of religious conflicts with their multiple causes could be explored using this theory: interreligious conflicts caused by religious and non-religious factors as well as state-religious institutions' tension.

2.2.3. Integrating functionalism and conflict theory to the study of religion

Understanding interreligious relations simultaneously from multiple perspectives, namely, peaceful coexistence and conflict is the dominant perspective in the contemporary studies of religion (Bannett, 2008; Furseth and Repstad, 2006; Hamilton, 2001; Merton, 1957; Soares, 2006; Wijssen, 2007). It is a reality that consensus and conflict are considered to be the two contrasting but coexisting features of the same society (Dahrendorf, 1959; Merton, 1957). Most contemporary sociological theorists argue that order and conflict are not mutually distinctive features of society. It is hardly generalized that society is entirely characterized either as a conflict or orderly (Dahrendorf 1959; Johnson, 2008). Merton (1957) in his discussion of the concept of function and dysfunction explored the possibility that the existing social institutions have positive or negative consequences that are also different across time interval and levels of society. In view, it is noticeable that there are both peaceful coexistence and tensions in the same society.

In a similar perspective, Johnson (2008) understood that modern society is characterized by pervasive presence of conflict and competition at all levels of the social world. From the micro world of family to the macro world of politics and societal relations, everyday life seems filled with tensions, disagreements, and conflicts. On the other hand, stability, order and cooperation between people of different social background are widely exhibited.

Adjusting conventional conflict theories and admitting some of the arguments of Marx and Weber, Dahrendorf's sociological analysis of society shows that society is characterized by both consensus and conflict (1959). He identified two types of conflicts which are the basic feature of all societies, namely, "exogenous (conflict between two

different groups) and endogenous (intra group conflict). Endogenous conflict in a society is exemplified by the competitive and antagonistic relationship between “slaves versus freemen, Negroes versus whites, Protestants versus Catholics, conservatives versus liberals, unions versus employers in many countries” (P.129). Accordingly, there are conflicts between religious and non-religious institutions like state; and between different religious groups. These issues mainly occurred in institutionally diversified societies. Dahrendorf again argued that early functionalist theorists ignored the disrupting consequence of different social institutions including religion. However, he acknowledged that it is Robert Merton’s dysfunctional analysis that provided a vantage point for the development of modern conflict theory. Therefore, this perspective cautioned that sociologists should equally deal with an analysis of society both from integration and conflict point of view by explaining the prognostic processes of both models at the same time, rather than dealing exclusively and independently with one model alone.

As a result of the duality of social interaction, the sociological study of religion using either functionalist or conflict theory is still contentious. Functionalist and conflict theorists tried to address debatable questions of religion, which include how it creates an integration among its members and non-members; how it creates stability; how religion and state is related to one another; and how it is considered as a cause of conflict. The former believes that, since it is a marker of collective identity, it creates cohesion (Durkheim, 1912/1995) while the latter argues that it is a tool for maintaining a system of inequality, domination, and subordination (Marx, 1843/1970). However, Merton and Dahrendorf in their attempt to study society and particularly religion from multiple perspectives and even developed theoretical insights bridging functionalism and conflict theories divide, providing another option for a complete understanding of social interaction in a particular locality.

For Merton (1957) and Dahrendorf (1959), religion is both a source of integration as well as conflict. Both theorists agree that integration or coercion model alone does not provide an adequate understanding of society if treated separately. Based on this assumption that Merton and Dahrendorf employed ‘functional and dysfunction analysis’ and ‘consensus and coercion’ model in their theoretical analysis. Substantiating this perspective, Furseth and Repstad (2006) also assert that religion is both a source of unity as well as conflict. They contend that religion is a source of cohesion, an element of unifying nationalism, source of peace, and represent common identity at the same time creating competition and conflict

between groups of people and is considered as a social identity which overlaps with other social identities such as race, ethnicity, and gender that contribute to tension and conflict.

Similarly, in the contemporary study of societies in the Middle East and European countries Bennett (2008) employed the same perspective viewing that religion is both the cause of conflict as well as the seeds of peace making process. He indicated that the role of religion is different across societies. In some instances, it is the prime cause of conflict raising religious, political, and economic questions while it creates peace in others. Dahrendorf (1959) again found that any cause of conflict, including intra-religious, inter-religious, and religion and state conflict is rooted in power distribution in society. He maintained that in a society, there are “imperatively coordinated associations”, which are divided into those who have power/authority and who are subjected; and conflict is due to this antagonistic relationship. He also noted that the intensity of conflict, however, depends on the extent to which conflicting group is structured, conscious, organized, communicated, and technologically advanced.

Therefore, these contemporary theorists insist to employ both perspectives in a single study to have a complete understanding. To fully understand Christians’ and Muslims’ interaction in a particular setting, an attempt should involve an analysis of both peaceful coexistence and conflict. Indicating the inevitability of seeing interreligious tensions and coexistence to get a complete picture of the general forms of interreligious relations, Soares (2006) persuasively contends that focusing exclusively on either conflict or peaceful coexistence would be erroneous. Hence, this research employed both functionalism and conflict perspectives in combination to address the contemporary issues of interreligious relations in the study setting.

2.2.4. Theory of religious pluralism

Religious pluralism refers to a condition where a society is characterized by the existence of diverse religious institutions, beliefs, and practices (Meister, 2009). It indicates the acceptance and increasing recognition of religious diversity by the state and the followers of different religious groups. Religious pluralism becomes one of the emerging theoretical perspectives that helps to shed light on the dynamics of interreligious interaction in a religiously diverse landscape (Banchoff, 2007; Meister, 2009; Sianipar, 2011; Wijzen, 2007). Religious pluralism as a theory is defined by Fuad (2007: 99),

As a body of knowledge, it was developed by the Protestant liberal thinker, John Hick that views all religions as variant conception and perception of, and response to the Divine reality. It is a concept that attempts to provide a basis in Christian theology for

tolerance of non-Christian religions. In this idea, all religions are regarded equally valid as ways to God. Religious pluralism here is described by Hick as a doctrine of salvation, which contrasts with the two other Christian views, termed by Hick as 'exclusivism' and 'inclusivism'.

The theory deals with the interaction between different religious groups in a society and politics (Banchoff, 2007). In addition to serving as a perspective of understanding the nature of interreligious interaction and its influences, the theory also helps to elucidate the forms of state-religious institutions' interaction in religiously plural societies. The proponents of this theory understood religion broadly to include not only people and shared beliefs, but also socio-cultural practices and institutions that determine social interaction in general (Banchoff, 2007; Sianipar, 2011). Thus, for these scholars, religious pluralism has a cultural as well as a demographic dynamics. Similarly, Norris and Inglehart (2007) view religious pluralism, borrowing ideas from rational choice theories and religious economy model, both as diversity of beliefs, values, and practices between communities of different faiths, as well as patterns of competition between religious organizations for attracting adherents, which highly implicate the nature of interreligious interactions.

Norris and Inglehart (2007) and Banchoff (2007) applied this theory to see the effect of religious pluralism on individual belief and shared practices such as religiosity and its impact on religion and state relations. Similarly, Wijzen (2007) elaborated the need for applying this theory to the study of religion in the African context, arguing that religion in this continent is intertwined with cultural systems, specifically contending as: "It is impossible to distinguish between religion and culture in Africa". This informs that religion is not the sole identity of people; rather there are multiplicities of social identities (Castells, 2010; Korostelina, 2007). Accordingly, there are multiple religious and cultural values and beliefs influencing interreligious interactions. Hence, the theory insists to consider these diverse contexts in the study of interreligious interactions.

Wijzen (2007) and Meister (2009) again identified various views of intercultural and interreligious relations such as mono-cultural/mono-religious and multi-cultural/multi-religious which assumes that societies and their cultures are essentially different. Meister (2009) thoroughly discussed the perspective using different terminologies like cultural/religious exclusivism, cultural/religious inclusivism, and cultural/religious pluralism. For Wijzen (2007), the inclusivist model, which is equivalent to the mono-cultural and ethnocentric model views that one's own religion is the only right religion and superior to others. The pluralist model, however, differs from the intercultural model. It can be seen as

another expression of the multicultural model that views all religions as variant ways to the ultimate. Meister (2009) elaborated religious pluralism as best model of building interreligious harmony identifying its core assumptions. He said that religious pluralism believes in the existence of a plurality of paths to salvation, and each of the great world religions offers such a path.

Applying the broader conception of religious pluralism, some scholars choose to use 'multiculturalism', because "it is usually impossible to distinguish between religion and culture in Africa; African cultures tend to be religious cultures" (Wijsen, 2007: 44). In this context, religious pluralism is considered to be a specific form of multiculturalism. Here, issues of interreligious coexistence, interreligious cooperation, and interreligious dialogue could be understood by applying this theory.

Sianipar (2011) applied multiculturalism, the broader conception of religious pluralism, to the study of interreligious interaction in relation to existing socio-cultural belief systems. Sianipar further contends that societies are divided into diverse religious, ethnic, and cultural lines. In this circumstance, cultural priority becomes an alternative source of interreligious harmony when there are religious divisions; and religious identity is also a viable option of peace when there are ethnic antagonisms. Thus, this theory enlightens the inevitability of interreligious harmony as well as conflict in the diverse religious landscape. Using this theoretical guide, multiple sources of peaceful interreligious coexistence were explored, some rooted in socio-cultural and others in religious aspects. The theory can illuminate the overlap of ethnic and religious identities and their consensus and contest, because this theory recognizes the existence of sub-cultures within a culture, shed light on the reality of the study area whereby people of the same ethnic group (Oromo) are divided along religious life.

2.2.5. Social identity theory

A prominent sociologist Manuel Castells (2010) broadly presents the building blocks of multiplicities of social identities. In his conception of the term social identity and how it is subjectively constructed, he rightly argues that, "The construction of identities uses building materials from history, geography, biology, productive and reproductive institutions, collective memory and personal fantasies, power apparatuses and religious revelations" (P. 7). Similarly, Korostelina (2007: 15) defines social identity as a "feeling of belonging to a social group, as a strong connection with social category, and as an important part of our mind that affects our social perceptions and behaviors." In this view, based on varied criteria,

people develop and belong to different forms of identities which include ethnicity, religion, family, nation, politics, class, and profession.

Three general approaches were popularly used to identify sources of social cohesion and boundaries (Wan and Vanderwerf, 2009). The primordial approach views identity as a people's sense of belonging and attachment to specific social groups on the basis of fixed primordial factors. Instrumentalist approach, on the other hand, emphasizes people's capacity to shape and reshape their belonging for their own personal or political goals. Constructionist theories, on the other hand conceptualize identity in terms of people's subjective constructs of attachment and belonging.

Rogobete (2009: 565) presents a more contextual construction of religious identity in relation to ethnic identity. According to Rogobete, "religion often constitutes the fabric of ethnic identity and in many contexts, there is a two-way causal relationship between religion and ethnicity" (P. 565). This indicates that religion could be sources of peace when ethnic conflict is erupting and ethnic identity could also be sources of peace and integration in the case of interreligious conflicts and tensions. Furthermore, studies by Castells (2010), Korostelina (2007) and Wan and Vanderwerf (2009) uncover that religion is a defining feature of identity. Thus, ethnic identity is probably possible sources of peaceful interreligious coexistence.

However, these studies noticed that the salience of different forms of social identities is changing across time and place. Korostelina (2007) undertook a survey on the changing attitude of people towards the importance and priorities of these social identities in Russia. She found that some identities are more important than others in specific ethnic groups while not prioritized among other ethnic groups. Castells again argued, "Africa is also a continent of religion, based on the juxtaposition of Christianity, Islam and animism. Yet, identity politics in sub-Saharan Africa is mainly constructed around ethnicity and territoriality rather than religion" (2010: xx). However, this view overlooked the fabrics of religion and culture and the resurgence of contemporary religious identities in different parts of the continent (Wijsen, 2007).

This analysis enlightens that the study of interreligious interaction and specifically its influencing factors are partly understood from the religious identity perspective. Social identity theory in this regard is understood as being a member of a group, and developing a positive outlook towards in-group members while negative towards others. The basic premise of social identity theory, therefore, is that individuals strive to achieve or maintain a

satisfactory image about themselves or their belonging (Takacs, 2002). Takacs holds that social identity is primarily relational and comparative in nature and views that individuals invest their emotional energy to develop their own social identity and that might be the basis of their behavioral decision to interact with their members and non-members.

Realizing that people are consciously striving to maximize the image of their own religious identity, a discussion and analysis of the driving factor is appropriate. This theory addresses the dynamics of intergroup interaction, including its nature and influencing factors, by employing ideas from diverse perspectives. Studies of interethnic and interreligious interaction from the social identity perspective use three general and interrelated perspectives: Primordial, instrumental, and integrative theories.

Panggabean (2004) and Wan and Vanderwerf (2009) described that Primordialist perspective looks into religious and ethnic identities as rigid and acquired through ascribed means. According to Panggabean, ethnic and religious identities are inevitable facets that people acquire them through natural processes. These primordial affinities or sentiments are considered deeply-rooted and attached to historical ties or memories. Elaborating this scenario, Panggabean argues that interreligious conflict is rooted in various religious belongings:

Cultural differences such as language, religion, cultural traditions, and ethnicity, automatically lead to conflict because they assume that culturally defined groups are by nature exclusionary and are dominated by parochial values that outweigh universalistic norms. According to primordial account, parochial norms attributed to cultural groups are believed to isolate them and lead to extremism. Extremism raises the odds of violence. (P. 52).

Variation or similarity in social identities is not the only sources of harmony or conflict; rather some groups manipulate these identities for political and economic ends and become a threat to social cohesion. Akanji (2011: 62) illustrates this view as:

Clan, religious, racial or ethnic groups are the principal actors in social, political and economic lives. In the course of inter-primordial relation there will be both hegemonic and subordinate groups who may form alliances to pursue political ambition. Such alliances are usually in the favor of the hegemonic group. If the hegemonic group excludes the subordinate group from political or economic privileges, then a primordially based conflict may occur. The primordial theory, therefore, is concerned about the various conflicts caused by ethnic diversity.

Considering the danger of instrumentalist perspective in social relations, Takacs (2002) asserts that economic incentives are emphasized in intergroup relations. Ethnic and religious groups may mobilize themselves on the basis of their ethnic and religious lines to

extract material benefits from others or to defend possessions which will be the source of ethnic/religious competition and violence. According to the instrumentalist view, people use ethnic and religious identity in order to obtain political and economic ends (Panggabean, 2004; Wan & Vanderwerf, 2009). Hence, ethnicity and religion mobilize members towards supporting and justifying conflict. The main cause of the conflict here is related to political, power, economy, and other material and non-material entities.

Nowadays, integrating the assumptions of primordial and instrumental perspectives provides a wider outlook with regard to the influencing factors of inter-group relationships, particularly interreligious interactions (Akanji, 2011; Panggabean, 2004). In justifying the relevance of applying multiple perspectives, Panggabean (2004: 49) said, "Pluralism has been an historical and empirical fact of contemporary societies; religion and ethnicity play an important role in shaping and maintaining the culture, and religious and ethnic pluralism constitutes a significant part of the plurality of culture." Sianipar (2011) also asserted that as there are multiple sources of conflict (primordial or instrumental) there are also multiple sources of interreligious harmony. Therefore, this theory clarifies the persistence of identity-based sources of interreligious harmony and disharmony. It relates contemporary incidents of interreligious conflict to differences in religious identity and competition over economic, socio-historical and political dominance. It acknowledges the place of interreligious competitions as the main sources of interreligious conflict. On the other hand, the theory also sheds light on the fact that multiple sources of identity can cultivate interreligious harmony demonstrating cultural sources of peaceful encounters, to see the case where ethnic mutual understanding undermines religious divides and calm tensions.

2.2.6. Rational choice theory of religion

Many sociologists of religion employed rational choice theory to the study of religious diversity and interreligious interaction (Banchhoff, 2007; Davie, 2007; Gorski, 2003; Hechter and Kanazawa, 1997). This theory is one of the dominant perspectives in sociology developed in the 1960s by George Homans and Peter Blau (Ritzer, 2008; Wallace and Wolf, 1995). It generally believes that people are naturally religious and will activate their religious choices, just like other choices, in order to maximize gain and minimize loss. The theory asserts that, individuals act purposefully and rationally looking for, among other things, religious satisfaction, and existence of religious market (religious plurality) from which individuals freely choose. Therefore, the nature and change in religion across time and societies is subjected to and explained in relation to these assumptions (Davie, 2010).

However, although rational choice theory became popular in social science to the study of social processes from the multi-level point of view and made considerable advances, its application to the study of social issues such as the dynamic place of religion in society is limited (Hechter and Kanazawa, 1997).

Lehmann (2010) precisely described that the development of contemporary rational choice theory in sociology and its application to the study of religion dates back to 1980s and 1990s. He showed the possibility of studying religion borrowing concepts and models from classical economics such as ‘rational choice’, ‘supply side’, ‘religious market’, and ‘economics of religion’. Using this model, Lehmann claimed that religious pluralism is a natural phenomenon of religious economies within which there is natural competition and consensus.

Although some scholars criticized rational choice theory, based on misunderstanding and misinterpretation, as if it is methodologically individualistic and ignoring macro social issues, “sociological rational choice is an inherently multilevel enterprise that seeks to account for social outcomes on the basis of both social context and individual action” (Hechter and Kanazawa, 1997:208). Rational choice theory has applicability in the study of different social issues including religion. Hechter and Kanazawa identified many different disciplines in sociology in which rational choice theory can be applicable, including Political Sociology, sociology of health, sociology of race and ethnicity, sociology of religion, and sociology of family and marriage.

Deriving concepts from rational choice theory, Hechter and Kanazawa (1997) employed the analogy of religious economy to explain the place of religion in society. For them, religious economy is consisting of religious firms and religious consumers. Religious firms compete against one another to offer religious products and services to consumers, who choose between the firms. Therefore, this analogy has contemporary relevance in the study of interreligious relations within the context of religious diversity. Norris and Inglehart (2007) also employed this theory to study the relationship between religious denominations (religious supply) and religious participation. Using the same theory they also stated the implication of state intervention in the religious market. Similarly, Banchoff (2007) studied the implication of religious pluralism on the political landscape and individual behavior. Currently, the theory helps to understand religious pluralism and interreligious interactions by considering actors’ rational consideration of things. The theory holds that the more pluralistic a religious economy is, the higher the level of religious mobilization. To the extent that there

are many religious firms competing against each other, they will tend to specialize in catering to the particular needs of some segments of religious consumers. This specialization and catering in turn increase the number of religious consumers actively engaged in the religious economy. Thus, this theory enables us to deal with religious conflicts and intolerance, which could be explained in terms of individuals or groups' striving for optimization of their religious interest.

The theory also addresses the interactions between state and religious institutions and their socio-political implications. Hechter and Kanazawa (1997:198) in this regard hold that, "Just as the state regulation makes for inefficient business firms, the state regulation of religion also makes for inefficient religious firms and dampens the mobilization of religious consumers." Therefore, rational choice theory has contemporary relevance in the study of religious issues, particularly to understand the interplay between religious diversity, competition, cooperation and separation of religion and state. In sum, the following diagram summarized how the theoretical perspectives linked to and address the dynamism of interreligious and state-religious institutions' interaction in religiously plural areas.

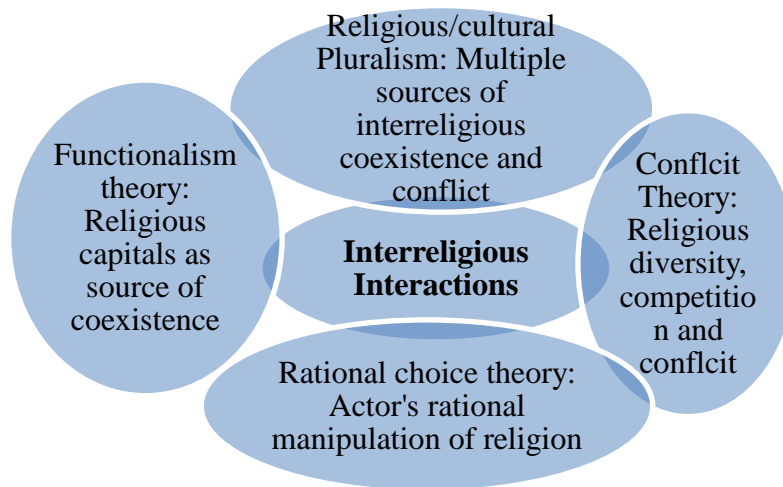


Fig.2.2. Theoretical guide, researcher's own construct.

2.3. Review of Empirical Literature

Since the inception of sociology in the 19th century, a number of contributions have been made on the place of religion in society using various approaches. It is important to address in more detail the debate in the previous studies about the role of religion and dynamic interreligious relations. On one hand, scholars such as Durkheim, Merton (1957), Parson (1937), Hamilton (2001), Johnson (2008) and Furseth and Repstad (2006) have

written extensively on the positive contribution of religion to society acting as social cement. On the other hand, classical and modern theorists such as Dahrendorf (1959), Weber (1920/1963), Marx (1843/1970), and Giddens (2006) wrote on the disruptive and integrative role of religion. Both groups of scholars exhibited useful insights, particularly concerning the place of religion and its dynamism in people's lives. These works have made readers to send mixed reactions on contemporary studies.

2.3.1. Studies on interreligious peaceful coexistence

Studies by Wijssen (2007), Heck (2009), Sarbah (2010), and Sianipar (2011) demonstrated the persistence of peaceful interaction between Christians and Muslims in Africa by relating it to local and global contexts. They revealed that Muslims and Christians have been interacting peacefully with one another for centuries although there were some incidents of occasional conflict. Using a similar approach, Heck (2009) illustrated the sources of peaceful Christian and Muslim coexistence rooted in socio-cultural values. He explored that there were socio-cultural factors which encouraged peaceful interreligious relations viewing that, "When religious communities live side by side, they often share common cultural values. Christians living amidst a Muslim majority often take on various aspects of the Islamic heritage, and the same is true of Muslims living amidst a Christian majority" (P. 2). Beyond these cultural values, he acknowledged the existence of common religious principles, creating mutual understanding and tolerance between Muslims and Christians in Africa.

A study undertaken by Sianipar (2011) on Christian-Muslim relationships in Indonesia revealed similar finding. The study credited indigenous social networks such as kinship and community ties, which made immense contribution in building peaceful interreligious coexistence. It investigated varieties of people's belonging, which include ethnic and kinship, acting as sources of interreligious harmony. Another study by Sarbah (2010) using the same model shows that Christians' and Muslims' interaction in the continent is characterized by peace and tolerance although occasional tensions and conflicts were repeatedly reported. These peaceful interactions were rooted in socio-cultural values. Specifically, he observed indigenous cultural norms and values, which welcomed an inner nature of openness and facilitated the warm embrace of Christianity and Islam into its socio-religious life.

Martin (2003), Turner (2006), and Castells (2010) described the role of neighborhood and its networks although not in the context of interreligious relationships. According to

Martin (2003), a neighborhood is a particular type of locale where human activity is centered upon social reproduction or daily household activities and engagement with political and economic structures. These studies in general found that neighborhood networks become inevitable part of society providing functions such as provision of services, human care, mutual aid, trust, cohesion, and social security regardless of religious difference (Castells, 2010; Martin, 2003). Neighborhood network as a concept emerged in Emile Durkheim's works related to his idea of social solidarity. In his *Division of Labor in Society*, Durkheim found that resemblance through communal interests and identities such as religion, residence, historical origin, and cultural values play a prominent role in binding people together. He further described the factor of division of labor (functional differentiation and interdependence) in modern societies as a factor of inter-group bridge (Durkheim, 1893/1947). Applying Durkheim's theory to the study of interethnic relations in Ethiopia, Levine (1974) elaborated that there were social (religious, ethnic, marriage, social movements, and cultural values and symbols), economic (local and regional markets), and political forces of inter-ethnic ties.

Neighborhood creates ties among people living in a particular locality (Turner, 2006). As one of these socio-cultural networks of inter-group linkage, scholars such as Guest, Cover, Kubrin, and Matsueda (2006) and Castells (2010) suggest that neighborhood act as a common identity in a socially diverse setting. Castells (2010: 63) rightly expounds,

People socialize and interact in their local environment, be it in the village, in the city, or in the suburb, and they build social networks among their neighbors. On the other hand, locally based identities intersect with other sources of meaning and social recognition.

Contrary to the view that social interaction in cities and modern societies is superficial and disorganized, studies show that societies both in the urban and rural areas have alternative means of maintaining their networks and ties among their members. Castells (2010: 63) suggests that "locally based identities intersect with other sources of meaning and social recognition, in a highly diversified pattern that allows for alternative interpretations." Martin (2003) also argued that neighborhood has varieties of overlapping social networks, one of which is religious related ties. Accordingly, every society has varieties of neighborhood ties although their nature and functions are different. It provides varieties of functions on which people rely on each other for their daily requirements. It is the main source of friendship, trust, association, and situations where people spend a great deal of their lives with one another.

The value of neighborhood networks and their power in shaping inter-personal and inter-group relations is still functioning in the globalized and urbanized world. Castells (2010) emphasized this argument as follows:

People identify themselves primarily with their locality. Territorial identity is a fundamental anchor of belonging that is not even lost in the rapid process of generalized urbanization we are now experiencing. The village is not left behind; it is transported with its communal ties. (Castells, 2010: XXIV).

Neighborhood and its constituent is exemplified as social capital. Researchers in rural and urban social life indicate the persistence of social institutions to maintain social cohesions in a certain locality regardless of the religious divide, using a concept of ‘social capital’. Berger-Schmitt (2000) and Smidt (2003) describe the existence of social capitals, which tend to strengthen social relations, feeling of identity and belonging, and trust. Wijzen (2007: 139) mentioned the contribution of these indigenous institutions to peaceful interethnic and interreligious relations. Mains (2004), uniquely, brought this context into Ethiopia and described peaceful coexistence between Muslims and Christians due to indigenous institutions. He acknowledged the role of *iddirs* and *ikubs* in linking Muslims and Christians together, although he considered these institutions as excluding some religious groups, particularly Protestants while the previous studies understood them as inclusive and open institutions.

Dejene (1993:28) used Mauri’s best definition of *iddir* which states, “An association made up by a group of persons united by ties of family and friendship, by living in the same district, by jobs, or by belonging to the same ethnic group, and has an objective of providing mutual aid to one another.” *Iddir* is highly valued in the Ethiopian culture. It provides varied functions including personal security, a sense of belongingness, enhancing trusting interpersonal relationship, and a system with which they can identify themselves. It represents viable sources of neighborhood solidarity and act as an alternative and trusting means of creating social cohesion than that of formal social structures (Solomon, 2009).

Beyond meeting the needs of their individual members, *iddir* nowadays has developed relations with local governments involving in widespread development programs. Leonard (2013) also presented the active role of *iddir* in politics. Currently, *iddir* is considered as a mechanism of enhancing political participation. Leonard further advanced that through *iddir*, people realized their financial and social mobilizing power, and since the imperial regime, governments in Ethiopia have the interest to participate *iddir* in development and politics.

Referring to the work of Pankhurst (2000), Leonard specifically mentioned that during the military regime, government started to involve *iddirs* in community issues such as crime prevention, sanitation, and other security issues which were evidenced by the formation of 395 *iddir* confederations in Addis Ababa in 1972. Beyond serving these specified objectives, the intention of the government's involvement of *iddir* was to use them as an instrument of maintaining the status quo. Realizing the community mobilizing power of *iddir* and its implication for effective realization of specific political ideologies, Dejene (1993) argued that *iddir* is considered an excellent vehicle for the state to gain direct access to the population.

Following the fall of the *Derg* regime in 1991, a new political environment created allowing many private, communal, and religious associations to revive. Like in the military government, in the new government, state and many NGOs have started to closely work with *iddir* realizing their potential for socio-economic development (Leonard, 2003). Under the present government, *iddirs* are actively participating in health-care activities specifically in anti-HIV/AIDS campaigns, community developments, and welfare programs (Ministry of capacity building, 2004).

Beyond humanitarian services and participation in development programs, *iddir* has made immense contribution in maintaining peaceful interreligious interactions. As far as the relationship between *iddir* and religion is concerned, Mains (2004: 352) describes that *iddir* has an enormous role in forming peaceful interreligious relations in Ethiopia. Specifically, he mentioned,

Like many of other African countries, local institutions such as funerals, *iddir*, and *ekub* in Jimma play an extremely important role in creating social networks. Based on this, Muslims and Orthodox Christians have social obligations to attend the funeral of their neighbor regardless of religious difference. Theoretically and practically *iddirs* in Ethiopia, in general are organized by neighborhoods and include all willing participants regardless of religious, ethnic, and class differences.

Likewise, a study by Solomon (2009) reveals that in all urban and rural areas *iddirs* are mostly heterogeneous in their religious and ethnic composition. Therefore, such types of social networks could be inevitably become one viable option to create peaceful interreligious relationships both in urban and rural areas.

Iddirs vary in nature, size, and functions. Dejene (1993), identified four types of *iddir* namely: Community or territorial based where people living in the same vicinity form the association; work-place or occupational which is an *iddir* of people working in the same

organization; Friends' *iddir*, an *iddir* of people with special relationship; and, Family *iddir*, an *iddir* of blood relatives or very close friends.

Studies by Afework (2009) and Ministry of Federal Affairs of Ethiopia (2012) were few studies that emphasized interreligious peaceful coexistence by considering these local networks that connect Muslims and Christians in the country exhibiting trusting relationships, although this approach was criticized as 'one-sided', glorifying interreligious tolerance alone.

The advocates of this model also describe the contribution of religious principles in maintaining interreligious peace. Many studies have traced peaceful interreligious relations to religious principles declared in Holy Books or sacred religious books such as the Bible or the Quran, asserting that religious principles guide interreligious outlook. For instance, Sianipar (2011) summarized three different areas in which interreligious relations operate and are shaped by religious principles. The first is a practical aspect wherein different religious groups develop common interests. Secondly, the religious depth that portrays people's attempt to understand religious ideologies while the third aspect, emphasizes cognitive, which represents people's attempt to understand the truth. This informs that the socio-cultural and psychological view of religious groups towards one another is partly guided by their own knowledge of religious principles. It also highlights the fact that Christians' view of Muslims and vice versa is influenced by varying and subjective understanding of holy books (Oommen, 2003).

Given this perspective, religious experts believed that Christians and Muslims share the importance of the holy books and their messages based on the outlook that their creator speaks through the holy books. The Bible is "important to understand the self-disclosure of God and the relationship of the divinity with humans, as the Quran to the Muslims, it is the collection of the literal words of God revealed to Muhammad and preserved in a fixed written form" (Oommen, 2003: 9). Thus, for both Christians and Muslims, the Bible and Quran are the way of communicating with the creator and a pathway to salvation. Signifying the centrality of holy books in the social life of people, Bouta et al. (2005: 12) highlighted words from the Quran and the Bible in support of the religious origin of interreligious peaceful coexistence. Accordingly, in the Quran, expressions such as *Salam* (peace) means peace with oneself and with fellow human beings regardless of religious difference, and with nature; *Tawhid* (the principle of unity of God and all human beings) which urges Muslims to recognize connectedness with all human beings; *Rahmah* (compassion) and *rahim* (mercy) which invoke Muslims to be merciful and compassionate to all human beings; *Fitrah*

represents individual's responsibility to uphold peace; justice and forgiveness are at the core of Muslim teachings. Similarly, scholars situated biblical sources of interreligious peace using phrases such as *Shalom* (peace), *agape* (unconditional love of God and people), being created in the image of God, and reconciliation and forgiveness.

Many scholars of religion and religious leaders also believe that all human beings belong to the same source (Adam and Eve). The proponents of this view make references to Monotheism, Abraham, Joseph, Moses, David, Jesus, and the Virgin Mary as similarity between Christians and Muslims. To indicate common sources of Christians and Muslims, it is referred in the Bible as the two sons of Abraham: Isaac and Ishmael procreated and spread out to the world which all human beings today belong to (Oommen, 2003). Supporting this idea, Heck (2009: 17) pointed out,

Muhammad's main task was to convey the Qur'an, the final and decisive version of God's message to humanity. The purpose of his mission was not to establish a new religion but to restore the religion of Abraham that had been conveyed to previous communities, Jews, and Christians, but that their leaders had distorted for the sake of their own interests.

Arguments in the above excerpt encourage peaceful interaction between Christians and Muslims stressing that religious categorization (Christian or Muslim) is a social construct, and both Christians and Muslims are the children of Abraham, who worship the same God that is known by different names.

This view was widely cited by theological studies of interreligious encounters. Toprakyan (2010: 20), for instance, employed phrases in the Quran, "The children of Adam 17/70", and verse 2/62, which states: "Those who believe – the Jews, the Christians, and the Sabaeans – whosoever believe in God and the last day and do good works, they shall have their reward from their Lord and shall have nothing to fear, nor shall they come to grief". He added that Prophet Muhammad considers Islam as the continuation of the previous Abrahamic religions, not as a distinct religious category. This reveals that the Quran recognizes the existence of other religions (people of the Book) and Prophet Mohammed considered that all religions have a common purpose: worship God and do well; and consider followers of other religions as brothers and sisters.

This perspective goes with Gulevich's (2004: 47) presentation of Quranic sources of interreligious peaceful coexistence where religious pluralism is acknowledged as an inevitable fact as:

Islam shares certain basic beliefs with Christianity and Judaism. Followers of all three religions profess belief in one God, life after death, and accountability before God for one's actions on earth. Each faith claims to have been granted a special covenant, or relationship, with God: the Jews through Moses, the Christians through Jesus, and the Muslims through Muhammad. ...Muslims acknowledge a relationship between Islam and the biblical faiths. In fact, the Quran refers to Christians and Jews as "the people of the Book" and grants the validity of their scriptures.

However, the studies of interreligious relations in Ethiopia either from consensus or conflict model (Afework, 2009; Ministry of Federal Affairs of Ethiopia, 2012; Desplat, 2005; Hussien, 2006; Ostebo, 2007; Dereje, 2011; Abbink, 2014) overlooked the fact that religious principles are the core factor of peaceful interreligious relations. Therefore, a review of these studies depicting religious capitals provided a vantage point to see interreligious interaction both from religious or non-religious and consensus and conflict point of view.

Based on a perspective that society is a product of human agency, previous studies also explored how various organs influence interreligious relations (Davis, 1994). Appleby (2008), Little (2007), Panggabean (2004), Trijono (2004) and Wijzen (2007) described religious leaders, local elders, state, and faith-based organizations as determining actors of interreligious relations. This allows the research at hand to consider influencing actors beyond simple description of different forms of interreligious relations.

There are also studies that showed the role of religious organs in community and resource mobilization towards development and conflict prevention. For instance, Panggabean (2004) argues that religious leaders and institutions can convene community dialogue, workshops, and training on conflict resolution. During violence, religious organizations can provide safe-havens for victims of violence, refugees, and internally displaced people. Similarly, a study by Appleby (2008: 27) also shows that religious leaders are uniquely positioned to foster conflict resolution mechanisms. Many studies conducted on religious and ethnic conflict in Ethiopia also credited the role of religious leaders in tackling problems. Little (2007) emphasized the effectiveness of religious leadership in inter and intra-state levels. Haileyesus (2012) also highlighted that religious leaders successfully win the attitudes of their followers in times of interreligious disagreement and manage to achieve interreligious peace.

Despite its contribution to interreligious peaceful coexistence was less credited by the many previous studies, the place of eldership in shaping community life was also magnified by a few recent studies. For instance, Wijzen (2007: 204) said, "Elders are liberators,

reconcilers, guardians, leaders, rulers and stabilizers.” Little (2007) acknowledged eldership in Ethiopia and considered it as more effective than formal procedures. A study by Little (2007) and Karbo (2014) also considered the potential of many religious organizations and positively viewed the role of the interreligious council in particular. Little (P. 267-69) again summarized the immense place of interreligious councils in transforming interreligious conflict, as an opportunity for linking religion with other actors. Other studies such as Panggabean (2004), Haynes (2007), Vinjamuri and Boesenecker (2008), and (Smordal, 2012) described the positive contribution of faith-based organizations in shaping interreligious relations.

Although the role of religious NGOs was neglected theoretically and overshadowed by their contribution to relief and development than to maintain interreligious peace, Tomalin (2007) and Vinjamuri and Boesenecker (2008) exhibited that religious institutions have been at the forefront to promote truth, reconciliation, and forgiveness in conflict situations. The studies credited the potential of religious organs in shaping interreligious encounters. These studies, however, only presented a fact that religious organs can shape interreligious relations by promoting peaceful interreligious peace. The influence of the existing legal environment and the intra-religious dynamics have received little emphasis. In general, these studies helped to consider the influence of prominent individual and institutional actors for the dynamism of interreligious interactions in the present study.

2.3.2. Studies on interreligious tensions

Another approach very crucial to this study is the emerging challenges of religious diversity and interreligious frictions. Contrary to considering interreligious encounters as peaceful, many studies employ interreligious intolerance as a model and focus on exploring its causes. A study by Abbink (2014), Cheetam (2013), Davie (2010), Michel (1997), Muzzafar (2005), Ostebo (2010), and Yamin (2008) reviewed various causes of interreligious conflict. These studies generally classify sources of interreligious conflicts into religious and non-religious factors. Cheetam et al. (2013) for example, argue that interreligious conflicts come in many forms as theological, cultural, political, militant and historical. Similarly, Yamin (2008) summarized a variety of non-religious causes, which include political and psychological overtones; deprivation of basic human needs; competition for scarce resources, including territory; extreme levels of insecurity and fear; historical grievances; and a psychology of victimization. In describing political causes, Michel (1997) argues preference

of some religions over others by states and the government's involvement in religious affairs as the main factors.

On the one hand, the influence of political system was thoroughly described as causal factors of interreligious cooperation and/or conflict. Muzaffar (2005) contends instances of manipulation of religion for political ends, causing interreligious and religion-state disharmony. Studies such as Desplat (2005), Hussien (2006), Ostebo (2007) and Dereje (2011) in Ethiopia relate contemporary interreligious frictions to the government's hard-handed mechanism of managing religious diversity. They depict Ethiopia's religious past as oppressive and one-sided, favoring Orthodox Christianity over others. The intimate relationship between Orthodox Christianity and the state for centuries, the perceived view of Ethiopia as an 'Island of Christianity', viewing other religious groups as 'alien' misrepresent peaceful interreligious relations in the country. On the other, Medhane (2004) and Soares (2006) describe economic issues as causes of interreligious conflicts. Soares (2006) employed 'religious economy' model to describe tensions between Christians and Muslims and found that conflict was instigated by political and economic issues than religious matters. Likewise, the study by Medhane (2004) and Muzaffar (2005) relate economic stagnation, uneven regional development, immigrants and their interaction with a native population over economic resources and displacement as major economic causes of interreligious tensions. Wijzen (2007: 124-126) also generalized religious confrontations in many African countries as "a cloak for economic and political grievances... not primarily the result of religious and cultural differences, rather aggravated by competition for fertile land, clean water and control over natural resources such as oil, gas, gold, diamonds and tropical hardwood."

Besides, studies by Nwaomah (2011), Fredericks (2011), Sampson (2012), Abbink (2011), Tadesse (1976), and Chessworth (2006) relate religious conflicts to religious evangelization and its methods. To mention a few, Chessworth (2006) asserts that "preachers that preach against other religions among Christians and Muslims affect interreligious peace." Tadesse (1976) also explored the danger of extreme forms of interreligious preaching, using a phrase 'evangelizing the evangelized'. Similarly, Abbink (2011) rightly described religious debates and polemics as the major feature of religious dynamism in Ethiopia. Other studies understood interreligious tensions from the revival of religious identities and radicalism (Herriot, 2009; Sianipar, 2011). Sianipar considered religious radicalism as a threat to peaceful interreligious encounters by dividing societies along specific religious ideologies.

Other studies presented interreligious relations as a function of the revival of religious identity and its interplay with ethnic identity. Historical and sociological studies indicate that people's belonging and identity development in general and religious identity, in particular, implies the dynamics of interreligious interactions (Abbink, 2013; Desplat, 2005; Erlich, 2013). Castells (2010) asserts that varieties of social identities originated from the dominant social institutions which potentially include religious institutions that people subjectively socialized in and internalized it. Indicating the potential of socialization and socializing agents, Veverka (2002: 2) also noted that every society teaches its members to have "roots and wings" that is, there are cultural values that enforce people to internalize sets of belonging. Thus, religious and ethnic identities represent alternative means of roots and wings of people in different societies. Studies also indicate that the importance and ranking of multiple identities are different across societies and time (Castells, 2010; Korostelina, 2007). Castells specifically maintained that ethnic identity becomes strong and represents people's belonging in many African countries than religious identity. Korostelina (2007), likewise, found that people rank ethnic identity first than religious, racial, and gender in Russia.

However, these findings overlooked the subjectivity of religious identity construction and reconstruction considering the influence of the socio-political and economic contexts (Hynes, 2007). Hynes presented the effect of some social processes such as globalization and urbanization on the changing dynamics of religious identities. He suggests that the resurgence of religious identities has become part of a response to the destructive force of modernization, industrialization, and colonization of the western countries. It is clear that people feel offended when their religious identities and traditions are under attack by western development policies which instigate them to promote their religious identities. Similarly, in his discussion of the theory of Islamic revival, Carvalho (2009) employed 'cultural defense' model to indicate the proliferation of strong religious identities. He maintained that "people tend to strengthen traditional values when they feel that their culture, especially their system of moral values, is under attack" (P. 10).

In a similar vein, indicating the positive effect of globalization on the emergence of strong religious identities, Castells (2010: XXIV) argued that "as the world become globalized, the more people feel local." Similarly, showing the instigating factors of the revival of Islamic identities, he further contends that "Islamic identity expanded in a variety of social and institutional contexts, related to the dynamics of social exclusion, social segregation, discrimination, and unemployment" (P. 22). In addition, Carvalho (2009) related

the proliferation of religious identities to poverty. In this regard, people use religion as a means of survival, cooperation, security and pension. He generalized that the lack of basic necessities and poverty are often cited as a cause of religious appeal and militancy.

Binzel and Carvalho (2013) also presented the revival of religious identities particularly Islamic identities, exemplified by increasing religiosity, religious observance, mosque attendance, prayer, fasting, and widespread Islamic teachings using videos and cassettes. Accordingly, this change was due to an increase in world's connectedness, widespread communication technologies, improved literacy, and the inevitability of social mobility. These rapid social changes modified existing socio-cultural identities to which people belong. Hence, people create a strong feeling of religious identities as alternative means of belonging to their degrading cultural identities (Carvalho, 2009). This was indicated by the political influence of religion; spontaneous public expression of religious identities; use of religious greetings, terms, and wearing; religious schools, books, journals, and religious teachings recorded on cassette and in public places.

Ethnic and religious identities are salient forms of multiple belonging in Ethiopia. Studies by Wondwosen and Jerusalem (2010) asserted that ethnic consciousness is stronger than religious identities arguing that "people in Ethiopia usually identify themselves with their ethnic origin and nationality than with their religion." In the same vein, Gnamo (2002) depicted the immense value of *Oromumma*, a strong consciousness of Oromo ethnic identity, in maintaining unity among members of the ethnic group than Islam or Christianity. Moreover, a study by Erlich (2006), in discussing why Ethiopia enjoyed a long history of interreligious tolerance, contends that religious identities both in Muslims and Christians would not be prioritized over ethnic and linguistic identities.

However, recently, religious identities became stronger attracting scholarly attentions. They dominate socio-political agenda in the country (Abbink 2013; Desplat, 2005; Ostebo, 2007). Against the conventional secularization theorists who contend that the power of religion is dissolute and Castells who argued that Africans are organized along ethnic lines than religious, for many African Muslims, their religious identity is more important than their national identity (Voll, 2006). In 1991, a new political environment was created marking the revival of different religious organizations in Ethiopia (Desplat, 2005; Ostebo, 2007). The 1995 constitution, which primarily aimed at accommodating ethnic diversity also enhanced the articulation of religious identities. However, an increasing consciousness of religious identities further intensified the demarcation of religious boundaries. This was also an

addition to the increasing intra-religious diversity that also marked multiplicities of intra-religious identities (Desplat, 2005; Ostebo, 2007).

Many cases of interreligious conflict in the country in the present regime were reportedly caused by competition over land. For instance, the conflict that arose in 2009 in Dessie town was caused by disagreement over a plot of land for the construction of a church. Orthodox Christians' construction of a church on a plot traditionally owned by Muslims as a burial place in the vicinity was an immediate point of discord between Orthodox Christians and Muslims (Birhane, 2009). A conflict between Orthodox Christians and Muslims in Gondar in 2008 was again another conflict over the allocation of land for Muslims to construct a Mosque nearby an Orthodox Church's place of observance of epiphany (Haileyesus, 2012). Another conflict between Orthodox Christians and Muslims in Buno Bedele zone Dembi woreda in 2008 was caused by Orthodox Christians' celebration of *meskel* (found of true cross) nearby a mosque, a conflict that resulted in the deaths of people; churches and many houses were burned displacing dozens of people (Zelalem, 2010). These studies inform that religious competition over land for the purpose of religious expansion and preaching was the main instigating factor of interreligious conflict.

2.3.3. Studies on religion-state interactions

Another aspect of the debate that has gained currency in academic circles was the relationships between state and religious institutions and how it influences interreligious interactions. In discussing the relevance of state-religion relations in the study of interreligious interaction, Michel (1997: 53) argued that "Christian-Muslim relations do not exist in a vacuum anywhere in the world. Political issues impinge on the interactions", which provide a vantage point to consider the political dynamics in the study of interreligious interactions.

There are many studies in the country about the dynamics of state-religion interactions. The major works include: Abbibk (1998, 2011, and 2014), Alemseged (2004), Hussien (2006), Fox (2008), Ostebo (2007, 2010), Dereje (2011), and Tsega-ab (2015). These studies explored varieties of state-religion relations. Particularly, Fox (2008) developed a variety of state-religion interaction based on a survey of data sets related to the identity-based variables, perception based variables, government/institutions and groups-based variables in combination with a measure of religious freedom. Pangabebean (2004: 69) chooses to employ more general categories in a discussion of inter-group relations and particularly state-religion interactions that include 'homogenization', 'separate development', and 'co-existence or

pluralism'. Homogenization approach aims at creating a unified nation in terms of religion, language, and other social identities. In the same perspective, Alemseged (2004) used the term 'assimilation' to indicate the remarkable marriage between states and religion, and its adverse impact on peaceful interaction from the inception of religion in the country in the 20th century. A separate development perspective emphasizes the minimal involvement of government where a state promotes separation rather than contact or at least unconcerned if different communities with their own religion develop independently. Also, a pluralistic perspective involves, as distinct from the separate developmental perspective, the creation of conducive legal and political environment which allow interreligious dialogue, recognition of religious pluralism and harmony (Panggabean, 2004). These studies point out that many African countries involve in religious issues and considered as the main cause of religious tensions.

While state-religion attachments have declined in many parts of the world, there was state and religion marriage for centuries in Ethiopia (Abbibk, 1998; Hussien 2006; Markakis, 1974). A review of historical literature regarding state-religion interaction in the country shows that religion has been strongly coupled with state and influenced other spheres of life, such as politics, economy, education, health, and daily lives of people. The studies in this regard indicate that the political influence of religion and its vice versa is still strong in the country (Hussien, 2006; Ostebo, 2007). With this perspective, some studies attribute religious related tensions in Ethiopia to the lack of religious freedom, recognition, and government involvement in religious affairs. Studies by Fox (2008) and Ostebo (2010) hold that state-religious institutions' interaction is full of tension since religions are claiming freedom, equality, and recognition in many countries across the globe. For instance, Fox (2008) described interference of government in religious matters by appointing church leaders, banning some religious groups, and restricting some religious practices. Accordingly, modes of state-religious institutions' relationships determine the forms of interreligious encounters. These studies shed light on the fact that interreligious relation is greatly influenced by the mode of the relationship between religion and politics. Thus, it helped to consider the influence of the political context for the dynamism and revival of religious tensions in the country.

Generally, most of the previous studies in the country have only seen Christian-Muslim relationship either as peaceful coexistence or conflict. A few studies have touched on the fact that interreligious relation has multiple faces with dynamic factors. In analyzing each

face of the interaction, limited attempts have been made to depict the root of peaceful coexistence, conflict, or other factors. This dissertation seeks to address the dynamism of Christian-Muslim interaction by identifying the forces of conflict and peaceful coexistence in Jimma area by relating the factors to the socio-cultural and political contexts.

2.4. Chapter Summary

This chapter discussed conceptual and theoretical issues that would serve as a framework of this study. First, it explained basic concepts that underpin the study. In this respect, the concept of interreligious interaction and religious diversity were defined. As the specific forms of interreligious encounters, interreligious peaceful coexistence and tensions, and state-religious institutions' relations were conceptualized. Here, interreligious interaction comprises interreligious harmony on one hand and interreligious conflict on the other. Besides, the roots of interreligious peaceful coexistence and factors of interreligious conflict were explored as conceptual guides.

Second, as a tool of understanding interreligious interactions, some social theories were identified and discussed. To this end, the works of Emile Durkheim and Robert Merton were emphasized exploring the role of religion and its constituents in society. The ideas of Merton were used to examine the place of religion from multiple perspectives. In addition, conflict theory of Ralf Dahrendorf was also employed to understand the multiple faces of interreligious relation specifically using his 'two faces of society: consensus and conflict.' In light of this model, interreligious encounter involves both peaceful coexistence and tensions caused by religious and non-religious factors.

Rational choice theory was also discussed to shed light on the fact that inevitably, people are living in a rational world, where religious pluralism prevails with multiple rational actors. Applying a market principle, a competition between people with differing religious identity could create interreligious tensions. Hence, the theory enables to see the effect of economic and political factors triggering interreligious conflicts. Likewise, the model also justified how the interference of government in religious affairs initiates interreligious tensions. Moreover, the perspective of religious pluralism was elaborated to show the fact of religious pluralism and to rationalize the persistence of multiple interreligious encounters as a result of multiple socio-cultural and religious factors. Finally, social identity theory was also discussed exploring the revival of religious-based identities instigating interreligious conflicts. Finally, the chapter reviewed related studies conducted so far in the area of interreligious and state-religious institutions' interaction.

Chapter Three

Origin of Christianity and Islam in Ethiopia: Historical Overview

Introduction

This chapter presents the historical overview of religion in the study area. It elucidates the introduction of religions in Ethiopia: the origin of Christianity and Islam and their interaction in the country and subsequently in Jimma. It portrays when Christianity and Islam were introduced in Jimma, identifying factors that led to the expansion of the two religions to this area. Lastly, it highlights Christian-Muslims' interaction and their relation to the states during successive governments.

3.1. Origin of Christianity in Ethiopia

The inception of Christianity in Ethiopia dates back to Axumite Empire in the 4th century (Levine, 1974; Tadesse, 1972; Tibebe, 2009). Axum became a Christian state by the early fourth century. During this period, Ethiopia's strong political and economic relations with other countries such as Greece, Rome, India, and Arabia are believed to facilitate the introduction of Christianity in the country. These historical accounts show that initially Christianity was introduced to Ethiopia in the 4th century, followed by Islam in the 7th century and both started to expand after the 9th century, marked by different forms of interactions.

Christianity was first introduced through two Syrian monks, namely, Adesius and Frumetius, a bishop appointed by the Alexandrian Church of Egypt (Wondewosen and Jerusalem, 2010). The monks stayed in Ethiopia cultivating fertile ground for the inception of the religion; and upon the king of Axum accepting Christianity, the two missionaries went back to Alexandria to bring more missionaries to the kingdom. The church in Alexandria appointed Frementius as the Bishop, locally termed *abuna*, and sent him back to Ethiopia (Markakis, 1974; Tadesse, 1972). Nine Syria monks also came and established many monasteries, translated the Bible into Geez, introduced Alexandrian liturgy and music, and built churches (Markakis, 1974).

However, the Axumite Empire was weakened around the 9th century, creating an environment for the proliferation of Islam despite the successive government assistance to expand Christianity to different parts of the country (Markakis, 1974). After Axumite Empire ended, Orthodox Christianity became deep-rooted and expanded to different parts of

the country becoming the dominant cultural phenomenon of the people which is unique in Africa (Markakis, 1974).

Until the Zagwe dynasty was overthrown in 1270, Christianity was the dominant religion, particularly in the Northern highlands of the country. However, following the succession of the Solomonic dynasty, a series of conflicts erupted between Christians and Muslims, the latter having dominance in the southern parts (Markakis, 1974). This marked the beginning of a shift in Christian-Muslim relations, from peaceful and tolerant to antagonism.

In the meanwhile, during the reign of Susenyos who ruled Ethiopia between 1607-1632, the interest of the government changed from Orthodox Christianity to Catholicism to gain political legitimacy. In favor of Catholicism, Susenyos forcefully converted people to the Catholicism (Markakis, 1974). However, the successor of Susenyos, Fasilidas eliminated Catholicism from the country and once again promoted Orthodox Christianity. In addition to the conflict over political succession and the worsening of relations between Christians and Muslims, other socio-political unrest transpired during this time including lack of permanent capital for successive governments, and territorial expansion based on emerging powerful ethnicity (Markakis, 1974).

In Ethiopia, the peaceful coexistence of Orthodox Christianity and Islam has always been a unique aspect. Since the 7th century onwards, Ethiopian Christians were viewed by Muslims as generous, friendly, humane, and legitimate neighbors (Abbink, 1998; Erlich, 2013). A vast literature in this regard underscored Ethiopia as a model where universal humanity and grace is realized. Evidently, the Prophet Mohammed ordered his followers to live peacefully under the benevolent Christian king of Ethiopia. This mutual understanding and respect provided one of the important religious traditions that Islam and Christianity share a basic repertoire of respect for humanity (Voll, 2006).

Another critical issue of the origin and development of Orthodox Christianity is its unique relation to the state. Hussien (2006: 6) states the nature of the relationship between religion and the state, describing the dominance of Orthodox Christianity over other religions as follows:

Throughout the early and late medieval times, (thirteenth to the sixteenth century) a number of Ethiopian kings, although not anti-Muslim, were nonetheless hostile towards Islam, a hostility aggravated by commercial rivalry that led to armed conflicts between the expanding Christian kingdom and the Muslim principalities of southern and eastern Ethiopia.

The state's favor of Orthodox Christianity over other religions was dominant during the rule of *Yohannis IV* (1872-89) and *Minilik II* (1889-1913). During the two regimes, Muslims, Catholics, and other religions were persecuted (Markakis, 1974; Caulk, 1972). This religious persecution was evidenced by the regime's need for building a more unified state through religious homogenization (Caulk, 1972). This religious homogenization policy dictated all non-Christians to convert their religion to Christianity; otherwise they had to leave their homeland, official position, land and property. They also had to forcefully build churches, and or pay tribute for the Christian clergy of the time (Caulk, 1972; Markakis, 1974). Particularly, Caulk (1972) described this as "choosing between exile and baptism" (P.26).

Orthodox Christianity persisted to be the state's religion in *Haileselassie's* regime (1930-1974) until it was overthrown by the military government, *Derg*, in 1974 (Abbink, 1998; Hussien, 2006). The state's support of the Orthodox Church, since its inception to the downfall of *Haileselassie* regime in 1974, deepened spiritual, cultural, social and economic base of the religion, which maintained its dominance over other religions in the country. In this regard, Abbink (1998) said, "The emperor of Ethiopia always 'had to be a Christian' and was the 'Protector' of the Church, while the head of the Church officiated the crowning ceremony of the emperors. The Church was also the largest land-owner in the country until 1974" (P. 115).

The Military government, *Derg*, took power in 1974, with its hostile approach to all religions (Abbink, 1998). The regime, being a socialist party, generally viewed religion as western ideology, anti-development, and false ideology. Thus, due to this policy perspective, Orthodox Christianity lost all its dominant and hegemonic status although survived due to the already established strong political and socio-cultural bases across centuries. Therefore, after 1974 until the present government took power in 1991, Orthodox Christianity was reduced to equal status with all other religious identities in the country. In the present government, in principle religious diversity has been recognized putting Orthodox Christianity and others on equal footing.

3.2. Origin of Islam in Ethiopia

Islam was first introduced in Ethiopia in 615 A.D by Muslim refugees who came to seek asylum under the Ethiopian Axumite King, escaping religious persecution by the dominant Quraysh groups in Mecca, Saudi Arabia (Abbink, 1998; Hussien, 2006). It was stated that these persecuted Muslim groups were counseled by Prophet Muhammad to escape

persecution in Mecca and travel to Ethiopia, which at the time was being ruled by a pious Christian king (Abbink, 1998, Levine 1974). These authors stated that the Axumite king peacefully welcomed these Muslim refugees, an incident that led many to consider Ethiopia as ‘a land of tolerance’; and this became the dominant perspective of interreligious interactions in the country as peaceful (Abbink, 1998; Hussien, 2006; MoFA, 2012).

Beginning from 11th and early 12th century, Islam gradually expanded to the lowlands of the country, the areas where Christianity was not dominant. During this period, the Axum dynasty was on a decline primarily due to its growing isolation from its Christian allies in Egypt and Byzantium. As a result, Muslims started to dominate the pastoral and semi-pastoral south eastern parts of the country. Moreover, the official seat of the Christian kingdom was changed to the southern parts along the Abyssinian plateau, which markedly created internal instability creating opportunity for the Muslims to strengthen their base and expansion (Abbink, 1998; Hussien, 2006).

From the thirteenth century onwards, prolonged conflicts and antagonistic relationship between the Christians who dominated northern highlands and the Muslims who dominated southern and southeastern parts of the country including Harar erupted (Hussien, 2006). Although there is no consensus on the causes of this phenomenon, some argue that it was caused primarily by economic and political reasons while others consider it from a purely religious expansion point of view (Abbink, 1998; Desplat, 2005; Hussien, 2006). However, these scholars underscored the role of trade in linking people across highland and lowlands, north to south and west to east.

The relationship dynamics shifted starting from the 13th century, changing the image of Christians-Muslims relationships in Ethiopia from the ‘land of tolerance and righteousness to intolerance (Hussien, 2006; Erlich, 2013). The most notable Christian-Muslim discord transpired in the 15th century. Ahmad Bin Ibrahim, commonly known as Ahmad Gragh established the city of Harar as his base by uniting the Muslim sultanates against Ethiopian Christian highlands. He successfully incorporated into his territory the eastern Somali and Afar areas and converted the people to Islam by destroying a great number of churches and monasteries (Abbink, 1998).

Conversely, in the 17th century, Emperor Tewodros II (1855-1867) took harsh measures in an attempt to eliminate Islam from his empire. Similarly, his successor Emperor Yohannes IV forcefully converting Muslims to Christianity, or otherwise be killed (Markakis, 1974). Emperor Minilik II aimed at expanding the political borders. As a result of the

territorial expansion, a number of Muslim centers and followers of indigenous religions were incorporated. In general, historical records show that almost all the Ethiopian kings were hostile towards Islam until the military government took power in 1974 (Hussien, 2006; Abbink, 1998; Markakis, 1974).

During the *Derg* regime (1974 – 1991), Islam was discouraged equally to other religious groups as a political ideology. The persecution of many religions united people towards the overthrowing of the military government in 1991 (Hussien, 2006). However, in the present government, the 1995 constitution guaranteed all religious groups' freedom of religion, equality, and recognition. This liberal policy enabled different religious identities to revive including Islam; however, this also created new forms of interactions. The government of Ethiopia declared religious freedom and equality on one hand but considers widespread revival of religious groups as a threat and a means of political activism on the other. Such opposing view created tension between government and religious institutions (Desplat, 2005; Ostebo, 2010).

3.3. Origin of Christianity and Islam in Jimma

In Jimma, a town in Oromia Regional State, Islam was the first religion introduced during Abba Jifar I's rule (1830 – 1855) and it precedes other religions except Oromo indigenous religion (Guluma, 1993; Yonas, 2002). The existing political conditions were a conducive environment for the expansion of Islam. Guluma depicted that one of the major factors that facilitated the expansion of Islam in Jimma was the positive relationship between Islam and the existing political conditions. Accordingly, in the Gibe region, the kingdoms were busy fighting each other and their neighbors to extend their political control. Apparently, for this reason, the rulers were attracted to Islam realizing that it satisfied the political and economic aspirations of the elite and social and spiritual needs of the masses. By embracing Islam the rulers consolidated both their political power internally and economic ties with long distance merchants (Guluma, 1993).

One of the prominent scholars of religion in East Africa, Trimmingham (1952) similarly stated that during the second half of the 18th century and the beginning of the 19th century, five monarchies emerged, widely termed as the five Gibe states: Jimma, Gera, Gomma, Limmu, and Guma. It was stated that this form of governments was unique to the Oromo political system (Gadaa system) (Guluma, 1993; Trimmingham, 1952). As far as the introduction of Islam to each of these states was concerned, Trimmingham (P. 203) clearly put:

Between 1840 to 1870 these kingdoms adopted Islam: Gomma (around today's Agaro) which was the first to embrace Islam, Limmu (present areas of Didessa and Seka) converted next, Guma on the third step, Gera (present day west of Jimma) also embraced Islam in 1866, and lastly Jimma embraced Islam by maintaining the autonomy of the town because Aba Jifar peacefully submitted to Minilik II invasion and he maintained his position which helped him to establish many Islamic centers.

According to Trimingham (1952) and Guluma (1993), the origin and expansion of Islam in Jimma was facilitated by merchants linking the area with Muslim societies internally to central and northern parts of the country and externally to the Middle East. In addition, there was a conscious conversion and manipulation of religion for political end, which further facilitated the expansion of Islam to the area. The political authorities of Jimma used Islam as a means of mobilizing political power. Consequently, the majority of the population of Jimma belong to Islam, more than 85 percent and increasing according to the 2007 Ethiopian population and housing census.

On the other hand, Christianity was introduced and expanded in Jimma after Minilik II's territorial expansion (1889-1913) (Guluma, 1993; Yonas, 2002) which led to the gradual influx of Orthodox Christians to the town from different parts of the country. It is believed that there were few followers of Orthodox Christianity before the early 1930s. There had been no churches in the town until the first church was built in the town in 1925 by a person called Nagadras Yegilu and then onwards Christianity was expanded in rural and urban areas of Jimma (Yonas, 2002). Following Jimma's incorporation into Ethiopia through *Minilik II's* territorial expansion project, however, a gradual influx of Orthodox Christians to the town from different parts of the country was reported.

Protestantism was introduced to Jimma area during 1920s by a missionary from Pennsylvania (United States) led by a medical doctor Thomas A. Lambie. He was aided by the Sudan Interior Mission team leader Bongham (Yonas, 2002). The first Protestant fellowship was established by this missionary group where the present day Kalehiwot church is located. The religion was expanded in Jimma and its surroundings through a cradle of ups and downs. Resistance and suspicion of the local people and administration were reported as the main obstacle for its expansion. However, their mission was successful through the expansion of modern education, health care and other development activities. Although the expansion of all religions during the military regime was officially denied, change of the

government in 1991 led to the rapid advance of this religion in urban and rural parts of the area (Mains, 2004; Yonas, 2002).

Historically, the Muslim Oromo people in the area peacefully welcomed Orthodox Christianity and Protestantism (Trimingham, 1952; Guluma, 1993; Yonas, 2002; Mains, 2004). There was a general belief that Jimma was the oldest Islamic center due to the effect of the Middle East. The area was originally Islamic Centre-Gomma Muslim. Later, the population diversity took over due to the prevalence of trade in the area. Jimma was surrounded by different ethnic groups such as Guraghe, Kaffa, and Dawaro. As it is a center of commerce, people from the west, north, and east started to influx to the area. However, social relation was mainly maintained along ethnic than religious lines among Mecha and Tulama Oromo particularly in southern and western Oromia (Gnamo, 2002; Lewis, 2001). Historically, deep-rooted peaceful interreligious coexistence in the area was a result of overriding social identities such as ethnic and neighborhood networks. Although there was an influx of people of different religions to the area from different parts of the country, the area was able to embrace diversity due to its cultural values and socio-economic connectedness.

3.4. A Glimpse on State-Religious Institutions' Interaction

Eurocentric theories of secularization contend that the power of religion becomes weakened and limited to private spheres, which was evidenced by two general trends across the world (Fox, 2008). First, during the 18th century, the Enlightenment movements enabled separation of religion from other social institutions to further enhance freedom of people from the influence of religion. Second, the decline in the beliefs and practices of some religious groups were realized. More specifically, this could be indicated by the declining trend of church attendance and weakening of Orthodox-Christians beliefs and practices in the late 19th century in western parts of the world (Gorski, 2003).

Despite the effort of secularization theorists, the contemporary sociological theorists witnessed the persistence of religious revivalism, influencing all spheres of lives (Turner, 2010). Jurgen Habermas's post-secularism and 'the rebirth of religion' (Fox, 2008; Mozumder, 2011), as well as Davie's (2010) concept of 'resacralization' justified the persistence of the power of religion in the contemporary world. Contrary to the tremendous decline in religiosity in the west, the power of religion is active and alive in the African continent (Soares, 2006; Wijsen, 2007). Wijsen highlights that many African societies have their own indigenous religions that represent their unique life; and religious practices

represent not only spiritual life but also social and cultural identities. These scholars stated that Islam and Christianity in Africa remain dominant and impacts the lives of its people.

3.4.1. Early Contacts and State-Religious Institutions Interaction

In Ethiopia, religion is intermingled with every aspect of life of the people including politics. It is assumed that the country is a unique place where the three categories of religions (Christianity, Islam, and indigenous religions) first met and peacefully coexisted with one another despite some occasional confrontations (Abbink, 1998; Hussien, 2006; Tsega-ab, 2015). Since the inception of religion in the country, state and religion were closely intertwined for centuries (Abbink, 1998; Hussien 2006; Markakis, 1974) and reviewed literature indicate that religion has been coupled with state to influence politics, economy, education, health, and other social life in general. It was also noted that the political influence of religion and vice versa is still strong in the country (Hussien, 2006; Ostebo, 2007).

Three different forms of state-religious institutions' interaction in the country were widely described (Abbink, 1998; Hussien, 2006; Tsega-ab, 2015). Before 1974 period, the relation between the states and religions was characterized as 'state-religion', a cooperative relationship between a specific religion and the state. Before the military regime, the *Derg*, there was the state religion; governments favored Orthodox Christianity over others. The relation between other religions and the state was not peaceful. During the period, there was no religious freedom and equality, which distorted the historical view of the tolerant relationship between the state and religion. Although historically the interaction between Christians and Muslims in their inception was peaceful, the state's favor of Orthodox Christianity over Islam created some level of hostility between the two religious establishments. Even though state-religion relation in the earlier period was peaceful, religious differences and disagreements came in the later periods. Religious oppressions, inequality and mistreatments were reportedly exhibited during Yohannis IV, Hailesilassie I, and *Derg* regimes.

Different terminologies were employed to describe the dominant interaction between religion and the states before 1974 period Ethiopia. Wondwosen and Jerusalem (2010) used the term a 'cooperative relationship' model and stated that "Orthodox Christianity in Ethiopia was a state religion, closely affiliated with the monarchy and the court; the monarchy used the church, to legitimize its rule and the church employed the power and influence of the monarchy to spread Christianity" (P.4). Also, Alemseged (2004) employed

assimilation/homogenization approach of state policy in the pre-1974 Ethiopia where the successive governments favored Ethiopian Orthodox church and Semitic groups over others, which negatively affected peaceful interethnic and interreligious encounters. Generally, in the pre-1974 period, the state religion was the dominant mode of interactions. Emperor Tewodros II, Yohannes IV, Minilik II, and HaileSELLASSIE I all had state religion (Orthodox Christianity) (Abbink, 1998; Markakis, 1974).

Despite the state's general lack of tolerance for religious pluralism, Jimma had historically demonstrated tolerance. One of the key informants, a religious expert and historian working for Family for Children Organization Project Office, described that in the Five Gibe States, no religious persecution and forced religious conversion was reported. He stipulated:

In the history of Gibe states, there was no persecution of religion. In Jimma, Islam was introduced in 1830 by Sheik Abdul Hakim from Gondar. It was during Abba Boka in 1860s that Islam was expanded in the area. During the period, the approach of expansion was peaceful. They drink and eat together and live peacefully with other indigenous religions. Although Islam was declared a religion of Gomma state, there were no people detained and persecuted due to their religious difference. Even, Jimma was a center of asylum for those who were persecuted elsewhere specially during Yohannes IV in northern and central parts of the country. (Interviewed on April 19/2016, Jimma).

3.4.2. Jimma Aba Jifar and Minilik II Peace Treaty

Trade and religion were one of the main contestation between the Five Gibe States, particularly Jimma Aba Jifar and Minilik territorial expansion. Maintaining a religious identity and autonomy while being the center of economy and developing peaceful relationship with the central government were reported as the main concern of Jimma Abba Jifar rule (Gulumma, 1993).

During the 1880s, Minilik II started his territorial expansion campaigns to the west and south west parts of the country to subjugate the peoples of the region mainly Wallaga and the Gibe States (Trimingham, 1952). Accordingly, by realizing Minilik II's military power and his forceful marsh of his rule over Jimma, Abba Jifar chose to follow a smooth and peaceful strategy than engaging in direct resistance and war. Hence, an agreement was made between king Abba Jifar II and Minilik II where Abba Jifar II submitted without resistance and was granted full in maintaining internal religious and economic autonomy. Since he

submitted to Minilik II peacefully, it was allowed full local autonomy and successfully maintained Jimma as a commercial and Islamic center in the western region of Ethiopia.

3.4.3. State-Religion Interaction in the Imperial Regime

Emperor Haileselassie's attitude towards religions in Ethiopia was not different from his predecessors, favoring Orthodox Christianity over other religions (Abbink 2014; Hussien, 2006). In Jimma, the state used the same approach promoting Orthodox Christianity over the predominant Islam (Ali, 2015). In the area, while all the Muslim-Oromo states in the Gibe region were destroyed, Abba Jifar maintained its religious autonomy by paying tribute to Minilik II. However, in the Haileselassie regime, this tribute was increased so that Abba Jobir, the successor of Aba Jifar II, was unable to pay it. As a result, Haileselassie abolished the kingdom and with that the century long history of Jimma came to an end, which marked a hostile relationship between Islam and the state (Ali, 2015).

3.4.4. State-Religion Interaction after the Military Regime

The state and religious institutions' interaction in the military regime (1974-1991) was popularly perceived as a hostile relationship. Despite the separation of religion and the state was incepted for the first time,⁴ the regime's approach to religion was oppressive. Even though some believe that equality of religion was first introduced by the *Derg*, all religious institutions were not recognized and freedom of religion was restricted. For instance, an Orthodox Christian respondent working in the Social Affairs Office understood that "in the regime, religion was considered as anti-government and its practices were viewed as against development. The regime did not consider equality and recognition of religion." It was suggested that the hostile religious policy of the *Derg* had sowed interreligious misconception and friction in the society. The priest in the Revealed Word of God International Church described the negative view against Protestantism during the regime:

There was persecution of followers of different religions at national level. During the regime, there was no cemetery and open worship was not allowed. Many were mistreated, insecure, and imprisoned due to their religion. For instance, I was persecuted and excluded from my family for eight years. This was due to the negative attitude towards the religion and lack of legal recognition. The government and the majority

⁴ The Ethiopian 1987 constitution article 46 dictates religious freedom, theoretically as, "Ethiopians are guaranteed freedom of conscience and religion. The exercise of freedom of religion may not be in a manner contrary to the interest of the state and the revolution, public morality or the freedom of other citizens. State and religion are separate. The legal status of religious institutions shall be determined by law."

who were following other religions were against them. (Interviewed on April 18/2016, Jimma).

As well, due to the political change in 1991, a new form of relations between state and religious institutions was exhibited. Contrary to the hostile religious policy in the pre-1991 period, the incumbent government recognized freedom of religion, at least in principle. Freedom of association, religious beliefs, and practices, promotion of one's own religion were unrestricted. This approach to religion was described as accommodative or tolerant. The Protestant officer in IRCE in this regard spoke that this government is considered tolerant since it accommodates and recognizes diversity. The new constitution recognized all religions –opening up a new environment in which different religious institutions freely exercise their beliefs.

Currently, the role of the state power in interreligious relations is heightened in Ethiopia taking many forms. The state shapes interreligious relations through its policies and programs and its implementations at federal, regional and district levels. Beyond devising institutional mechanisms, the role of the state in interreligious conflict management was not negligible. It was understood that in conflict transformation processes, the state has many roles to play including constitutional, legislative and policy measures to manage the incidents of religious conflict and violence. The state was also involved in the promotion of interfaith cooperation and dialogue by establishing interreligious councils for which organization of the interreligious council of Ethiopia is an example; and establishment of ad-hoc committees responsible for investigating the root causes of interreligious conflicts. It was also reported that the state sometimes uses religious leaders and local elders as the best mechanism in conflict resolution processes. The state also intervened in interreligious conflict resolution applying military forces, existing local government structures, and by creating new structures such as *tokko shane* (forming five in one group) and use of existing indigenous institutions like *iddir* as a mechanism of guarding religious movements at local levels, particularly at Zones and Woredas.

Managing religious diversity and ensuring interreligious harmony while maintaining a secular state was viewed as a challenge for the current government. The creation of open space resulted in increasing trend of religious diversity in the country to the extent of challenging the socio-political order. This apprehension seemingly forced the present government, which was viewed as tolerant and accommodative, to strictly follow religious expansions. This approach was reported as one of the major areas of religious institutions and

the state frictions. In a nutshell, an Orthodox Christian respondent working in MoFA considered that on one hand, in principle the government is secular, does not interfere in religious affairs, and on the other hand, there is a limited capacity of managing religious diversity suspecting that it affects the existing political order. Hence, the relationship between the government and religious institutions in the study area was understood as full of tensions.

3.5. Chapter Summary

Ethiopia is a multi-religious country and it embraced religious differences since the 7th century when Christians and Muslims first met. Since then, followers of the two religions experienced mixed forms of interactions. On one hand, there were cooperation and consensus both among ordinary citizens and as institutions at least at the inception of the two religions in the country. At a later time, however, antagonistic and competitive relationships emerged in the interest of expansion and control of trade. This form of relationship prolonged until the 1974 revolution. The pre-1974 period the states' officially relating themselves to Orthodox Christianity, viewing others as alien exacerbated the antagonistic relationships between the two religions. In the *Derg* regime, the interaction was characterized as 'hostile relationship', where the state was against all religions. In the present regime, the state's 'accommodative' policy allowed religious expansion and practices more freedom, which again initiated the fluidity of the interaction and new forms of interaction with the state. In principle, the government committed to the principle of separation of religion and politics, but in practice the lack of implementing the constitutional principles was the main cause of the tension between religious institutions and the state.

Jimma, one of the ancient Muslim centers since the second half of 19th century welcomed Orthodox Christianity and Protestantism in 1920s and 1930s. The introduction and expansion of Orthodox Christianity was aided by Minilik II's territorial expansion and incorporation of Jimma to the Ethiopian central state. The area being the center of commerce that connected Jimma to other parts of the country which further facilitated the expansion of both Islam and Christianity. Protestantism was first introduced to the area by U.S missionaries in 1920s. Through the provision of social and humanitarian services, the religion peacefully approached the people and gradually expanded to urban and rural areas of Jimma.

Chapter Four

Sources of Interreligious Peaceful Coexistence

Introduction

It was widely reported that in Ethiopia people embrace religious differences and as a result the country was viewed as a land of interreligious tolerance, able to live together peacefully despite religious differences. In this view, this chapter reviews the roots of interreligious peaceful coexistence in the area of Jimma giving emphasis to religious and socio-cultural factors connecting Christians and Muslims.

4.1. Religious Principles Underlying Peaceful Interreligious Coexistence

Interreligious relations are believed to be influenced by religious principles, which constitute one of religious capitals⁵. Irrespective of ideological differences, Islam and Christianity both advocate peace and tolerance for various religious groups. Residents and religious experts who participated in this study described the key principles that promote peaceful coexistence with people of different faiths. They attributed the cultivation of interreligious harmony to religious constituents such as religious values, principles, leaders, and institutions.

There was a general consensus among the study participants that promoting peace is the basic principle common to all religions. An Orthodox Christian and Islamic religious teacher in Jimma both elaborated that religion promotes harmony and emphasized that to love one's relatives and neighbors as oneself underscores this principle. A Muslim respondent, who previously served as a Social Affairs Officer in Jimma town, also noted that the commitment of Ethiopians to their faith cultivate interreligious harmony. A pastor at the Mekane Yesus Church in Kito kebele believed that the source of tolerance and unity among Christians and Muslims is the common belief of a higher being – God or Allah. Thus, a critical understanding of religious principles pertaining to interreligious relations is an essential component of building interreligious harmony.

The United Church of Canada (2004) pointed out that both Christians and Muslims believe in and worship the same God or Allah, although variations may exist in the teachings of Jesus and Prophet Mohammed. Christians worship God and Muslims Allah, the Arabic name for God. Although Christians and Muslims use different concepts and ways of

⁵ Smidt (2003) defined religious capital as aspects of religion such as religious behavior, worship places or congregational life, church affiliation, and religious doctrines, which provide support, social network, and generally shape one's associational life.

speaking to God, “it does not negate the common orientations to the one God known by many names; Christians and Muslims worship the same God, the God of Abraham, Sarah and Isaac, Hagar and Ishmael” (P. 5).

In the study area, knowledge of these common religious principles is considered as the foundation to peace and tolerance, averting emerging threats to religious divide. Religious organs use this common ideology to promote tolerance and interreligious dialogue. A Protestant resident in Jimma Ginjo Guduru kebele highlighted belief in a common root, Adam and Eve and stated that knowledge of the holy books helps people understand uniting factors, a key ingredient to peace and tolerance.

An Islamic religious teacher elaborated that both the Bible and the Quran describe love and the concept of neighborhood and these two common terms reinforce what Christians’ view of Muslims and vice versa should be. The theologian at Mekane Yesus Church averred that “in the Bible (Rome 13:10 and 1 Corinthians 13), Christians ought to love their neighbors and in this context a neighbor is one with whom we have contact with regardless of religious affiliations.” The Muslim religious teacher in Jimma supported this thought reiterating that the Quran dictates three values: love of fellow religious members, neighbor, and the creator. Accordingly, the Bible and the Quran promote to love and live in peace with others who are living in close vicinity regardless of religious affiliations. Therefore, these common values are considered as the seeds of interreligious peaceful coexistence.

The theologian key informant reiterated that “even though there are interreligious mistreatment and discrimination, we should not repeat the same mistake; the Bible does not endorse revenge and we are instilling values and interreligious respect.” Moreover, the informant used another verse from the Bible to elaborate peace among religions, referring to John 3:15-16:

In this verse who is brother/sister? It is all human beings- Muslims or Christians. The Ten Commandments also dictate that we have to love our creator and our neighbor. So, we have to love our neighbors regardless of their religion. Hence, the main thing is being human. There should be love with no religious based discrimination. The Bible dictates not to discriminate others due to their religious identity. (Interviewed on Jan. 25/2015, Jimma).

In addition, the Muslim resident who was the Social Affairs Officer of the town explained interreligious peaceful coexistence from the same perspective:

Our religious principles dictate that you have to live in peace with those who give you peace and respect. [It is like reciprocal relationship]; you have to cooperate, help, and ask in time of difficulty; because it is expected that they may do the same for you at another time. As a true Muslim you are expected to cooperate, respect, and help your fellow religious members, relatives, and neighbors. You are required to help others regardless of the religious difference since we are all children of Adam. Thus, this is our religious duty which dictates living together, cultivate peace and love. (Interviewed on Jan. 24/2015, Jimma).

The holy books also encourage forgiveness of past injustices and religious treatments and the Protestant key informant from Interreligious Council of Ethiopia asserted this. He stated that “although the state’s management of religion in the past regimes was not tolerant and often favoring one religion over the other, interactions between followers of different religions at societal level was tolerant.” He highlighted that peace, love, and respect have been practiced by both the followers of Christianity and Islam in the area. The key informant further described that the reasons for the tolerance and interreligious peaceful coexistence in the diverse religious setting in the area was entrenched in these religious principles.

Furthermore, there was a consensus among the respondents that religious diversity is not a threat to peaceful interreligious coexistence due to the ubiquitous belief in this common religious dictum. The theologian in Mekane Yesus church believed that the Bible recognizes religious pluralism and added that respecting others’ religious rights is a religious duty. The Muslim religious teacher also informed that the Quran acknowledges the existence of other religions and dictate peace and coexistence between neighbors of different religion. Supporting this argument, a Muslim key informant working in a local NGO (Family for Children Project Office) emphasized that “Islam means peace and respecting others.” To further illustrate the basic Quranic source of peaceful interreligious coexistence, he added, “Our Prophet ordered us to preach to others; not to enforce our beliefs on them.” He believed that historically Muslims were viewed as tolerant, humble, and respectful of others’ religion, employing smooth approach to expand their religion.

These religious principles were the main tools used to address religious cleavages. The Muslim informant mentioned in the preceding paragraphs understood the basic meaning of religion from tolerant perspective saying, “Religion is believing in the creator of all things.” He mentioned a natural lake as an example to illustrate how diverse religious institutions in the country are peacefully leaving together as:

The lake represents the world in which we are living in and the organisms represent the people. The lake provides basic things for all the organisms. It is the common property of all. Even though they [organisms] live in the same area (lake), they do have their own adaptation strategies and unique features. Although they compete with one another, they tolerate each other. In this context, we (human beings) all have religion of our own. All religions dictate not to discriminate and negatively affect others. Religion is a natural process. You have to adhere to this nature and its governing rules. All religious teachings, as I think, encourage peace and respecting others. Thus, this is the roots of interreligious tolerance and mutual understanding all across the globe. (Interviewed on Jan. 25/2015, Jimma).

It can be concluded, therefore, that religious diversity and interreligious competitions were understood as natural and inevitable aspects of social interactions. However, the social and religious values promote interreligious unity and people's commitment to common principles are the main sources of peace and tolerance despite the recently emerging trends in religious divide. The theologian key informant in Mekane Yesus Church underscored the unique place of religious education and stated that he teaches a course *Christians-Muslims relations* as a means to instill deeper knowledge, a course which he is teaching at the Mekane Yesus Church Theological College. He ensured that the main motto of the course is teaching their students about the core principles shared by the holy books.

A key challenge in the study area is the limited awareness of residents on the common principles and values described above. A Protestant religious teacher in Omonada town described that due to the lack of knowledge, some Muslims consider others as *kafir* or non-believers. The predominantly Muslim population have limited exposure to people of diverse religions which contributed to the low level of awareness; and increasing religious diversity threatened interreligious peaceful coexistence. As described in detail, both the Bible and the Quran encourage peaceful interreligious coexistence, but interreligious competitions, mainly non-religious factors, resulted in negative perception of one another thereby instigating interreligious conflicts.

The Protestant religious father in Mekane Yesus church of Kito area stated that tensions among people of different faiths are mostly due to personal, political and economic interests rather than religious. The Muslim religious teacher also agreed that interreligious relation is threatened by competition over basic resources, economic and political contestations. Meanwhile, the lack of interreligious understanding and coercive approach of expanding one's own religion amidst government's interference in its attempt to manage religious diversity were reported as another worrying aspect of religious conflict.

It was generally understood that the recent interreligious frictions are results of emerging [mis]re-interpretation of messages in the holy books. The Protestant religious expert in Omonada town described the proliferation of ideologies using aggressive approaches emphasizing that religious and doctrinal differences were not the real cause of interreligious conflict in the study area. Likewise, to explain the insignificance of religious differences, a Muslim informant working in Oromia Regional State Justice Bureau state:

Although socio-cultural and religious values strongly influence peaceful interaction, nowadays there are politically motivated conflicts related with religion. Its causes were non-religious. Historically, there was no Jihad in the country. For instance, interreligious conflict during Ahmed Gagn was not religious rather inspired by territorial expansion and economic motives. It was to control trade routes; to mobilize military forces using religion as strategy and thereby to promote their own religion. (Interviewed on May 7/2015, Addis Ababa).

Similarly, studies in other countries reveal that many cases of conflicts were attributed to non-religious factors. According to United Church of Canada (2004) and Devan (2014), the peoples' understanding and practice of their own religion. On one hand, there are people who are considered inclusivists, the broad-minded, humble, sophisticated, liberal, peaceful, and inclusive promoters of all religions as equivalently beautiful, valid, or benign at their best. Conversely there are people with exclusive ideologies, "narrow-minded, arrogant, ignorant, literalist, conservative, militant, exclusive haters incapable of countenancing legitimacy to opinions, cultures, or experiences other than their own" (Devan, 2014: 3). Correspondingly, elaborating the problem of subjective interpretation of religious texts among Muslims relating to the interpretations of their own political and economic ends and its impact on interreligious interaction, Gulevich (2004: 100) asserts:

Islam is a diverse religion that encompasses a wide range of believers, some of whom are narrow in their interpretation and strict in their observance and others of whom are more flexible... some of these people describe themselves as 'cultural,' 'secular,' or 'moderate' Muslims.

In addition to the challenge of increasing intra-religious diversity, differences and subjective understanding of religious practices were one of the major influencing factors affecting peaceful interreligious interaction. Toprakyaran (2010: 20) asserts that "it is not the main Islamic source, the Quran, which has changed over the centuries, but the many interpretations of its texts. And the interpretations are always dependent on the historical, political, and social contexts." Hence, in a world of religious diversity, people interpret and internalize their own religious realities differently. Thus, differences in the level of

interreligious understanding that created interreligious tensions than spiritual or doctrinal variations.

To sum up, the deep-rooted peaceful coexistence between Christians and Muslims in the area traced back to peoples' fear and respect of their religious dictations. In both the Christian and Islam holy books, the ubiquitous presence of messages promote peace and interreligious tolerance. But, recently, there is a proliferation of many intra-religious and interreligious differences with new ideologies and forms of expansion dividing people along religious lines. Hence, the many common values and principles of religions ought to be continuously promoted to increase awareness, tolerance and peaceful co-existence.

4.2. Neighborhood Networks and Interreligious Relations

This section describes the significance of neighborhood networks in creating peaceful interreligious interactions. Neighborhood, as a physical and social setting, link people of different religions and enable them to coexist with one another. Hence, emphasis has been given to the socio-cultural values of a neighborhood and its networks which bind people regardless of religious differences.

4.2.1. Types of neighborhood networks

Neighborhood⁶ is a sociological concept representing a social and physical place where people form an interaction (Martin, 2003; Turner, 2006). It is a place where people with different social backgrounds such as race, ethnicity, religion, language, family, and social class live. A sociological definition of the concept is provided by Martin (2003: 365) as follows:

Neighborhood is a site where people interact in their daily life. It is a particular type of locale where human activity is centered upon social reproduction or daily household activities, social interaction, and engagement with political and economic structures. We can examine them as places, as locale (site of daily life), as location (a site with connections and relations to broader social, political, and economic processes at varying scales), and as a sense of place (affective feelings) which captures the many facets of a neighborhood.

⁶ Turner (2006: 413) provided a broader definition of neighbourhood as, "Locales based on residential proximity ... enabling people to form associations based on kinship, or religious, ethnic, political, or other interests which become the basis of local networks and subcultures. Recently, it has been linked to the concept of social capital, which refers to the neighborhood's potential as a site of integrative social networks and solidarity which often related to factors such as stability, integration, trust, solidarity, and tolerance.

Neighborhood in this context underlines the relationship between people, more importantly between households on the basis of vicinity. In the study locale, people who participated in in-depth and key informant interview listed a number of associations formed in the community. These include *Iddir*, *Ikub*, *Dabo*, and other means of informal daily interactions among neighbors. This study considered the various forms of interactions between followers of different religions living in close vicinity with one another. It examined the roots of peaceful coexistence among neighbors irrespective of religious differences.

4.2.2. Contribution of neighborhood to interreligious coexistence

The relationship between interreligious coexistence and neighborhood networks is one of the key focuses of this study. It was generally argued that being a neighbor, in Oromo term *Ollumma*, is positively correlated to peaceful interreligious coexistence. Most of the interview participants shared proverbs that signify the value of neighborhood. In the community, people often use proverbs to express values and local elders employ these proverbs to maintain peace and social order at individual, family and village level.

The Oromo culture places a unique value to neighborhood and as stated above there are proverbs highlighting this important aspect. For instance, the key informant working for Family for Children Project Office used a proverb, “*Ollaa fi dugdaan lafaa ka’u*” which means ‘*it is by help of a neighbor and backbone that one gets up*’. This entails the necessity and positive contribution of a neighbor in daily lives, both during a crises or happy times. A woman in Qujo kebele in Agaro described a proverb,

Ollaa moo mukti sitti haajigu jennaan, mukti natti haajigu jedhe Oromoon. It means that it is better if a tree falls on you than your neighbor being against you, says Oromo. Because, if a tree falls on you people around you, most probably your neighbors save you. But if your neighbor is against you, no one will save you. So, neighbor is important in every aspects of living. They are immediate supporter of one’s life. (Interviewed on Feb 1/2016, Agaro).

The survey respondents were asked to rate the extent to which they were interacting with followers of other religions in their neighborhood in the form of interval scale provided for them. It was found that about 67 percent of Muslims, 51 percent of Orthodox Christians, and 30 percent of Protestants said that they were greatly interacting with their neighbor regardless of religious difference. However, 7.6 percent of Muslims, 12 percent of Orthodox Christians, and 11 percent of Protestants had less interactions with their neighbors. Generally, most of the survey respondents (58 percent) had strong interactions with their neighbors

while 31 percent of them were moderately interacting. This is an indication that religious differences did not constrain them from maintaining regular interactions with one another.

Table 4.1. *Extent of respondents' interaction with their neighbors*

Religious Affiliation	Greatly	Moderately	Less	Not at all	Total
Muslim	158 (67%)	57 (24%)	18 (7.6%)	3 (1.3%)	236
Orthodox	35 (51%)	24 (35%)	8 (12%)	2 (3%)	69
Protestant	14 (30%)	26 (55%)	5 (11%)	2 (4%)	47
Catholic	0	2 (100%)	0	0	2
Wakefata	0	1 (100%)	0	0	1
Missing Value					29
Total	207 (58%)	110 (31%)	31 (9%)	7 (2%)	355

Source: Sample survey, February 2015

An aspect of the survey was also to explore the existence of interreligious respect among neighbors. Table 4.2 shows that about 80 percent of Muslims, 93 percent of Orthodox Christians, and all of the Protestant respondents recognized the rights of others to practice their religious beliefs and practices. Based on the principle that social relation is reciprocal, they stated their expectations that followers of other religion respect their religious rights, beliefs, and practices.

Table 4.2. *Interreligious respect among neighbors*

Religious category	Yes		No		Total
	Count	%	Count	%	
Muslim	182	80	45	20	227
Orthodox	63	93	4	7	68
Protestant	47	100	0	0	47
Catholic	2	100	0	0	2
Wakefata	1	100	0	0	1
Missing					39
Total	295	77	49	13	384

Source: Sample survey, February 2015

The survey also attempted to understand the level of trust among neighbors of different religious affiliations and it showed that, most respondents have trusting relationships

with their neighbors irrespective of religious difference. Generally, 58 percent of the survey respondents believed that they have trusting relations with their neighbors. However, as indicated in table 4.2, there was statistically significant difference between the religious categories in terms of their level of trust, as determined by Chi-Square test ($X(12)=33.103$, $p=0.001$). In spite of the difference in the extent of the relationship between followers of different religions, about 58% of the survey and qualitative data showed that there was trust and strong ties among neighbors.

Table 4.3. *Extent of trust between neighbors*

Religious category	Response category								Total
	Greatly		Moderately		Less		Not at all		
	frequen cy	%	frequenc y	%	frequ ency	%	freque ncy	%	
Muslims	158	66	59	25	18	8	3	1	238
Orthodox Christians	35	50	25	36	8	11	2	3	70
Protestants	14	30	26	55	5	11	2	4	47
Missing									29
Total	207	58	110	31	31	9	7	2	384

Source: Sample survey, February 2015

Neighborhood by itself has a power of binding people and act as an irreversible option of restoring peace in time of escalating conflict. For example, an old-aged Orthodox Christian shoe shiner in Asandabo kebele, Omonada Woreda shared his experience during the 2011 interreligious conflict. He elaborated the situation as, “The two parties [Muslims and Christians] were in conflict and many churches were burnt resulting in the loss of human lives. At the same time, however, they were peacefully interacting with their neighbor, which could be evidenced by their drinking coffee together normally regardless of religious difference.”

Neighborhood, locally termed ‘*Ollumma*’ has strong social and economic value. There were mottos of cooperation among neighborhood. The survey method in this regard found that there was a cooperative attitude among respondents regardless of religious difference. About 77.6 percent of Muslims, 87 percent of Orthodox Christians, and 86.7 percent of Protestants cooperate with their neighbor. In this regard, there was statistically significant association between religious categories and cooperation in terms of their view of

helping their neighbor regardless of religious difference as determined by Chi-Square test ($X(4)=9.667$, $p= 0.046$) (see annex 3). In addition, most of the survey respondents (80.4 percent) had cooperative relationship with their neighbor regardless of religious difference. This cooperation include support on occasions such as farming activities, wedding, birth and funeral ceremonies, and generally in time of plenty and crises. In addition, there were material, non-material and financial exchanges among neighbors.

Table 4.4. *Cooperative attitudes among neighbors*

Religious category	Response category				Total
	Yes	%	No	%	
Muslim	177	77.6	51	22.4	228
Orthodox	62	87	9	13	71
Protestant	39	86.7	6	13.3	45
Catholic	1	50	1	50	2
Wakefata	0	0	1	100	1
Missing					37
Total	279	80.4	68	19.6	384

Source: Sample survey, February 2015

Data obtained through interview showed similar findings. For instance, a Protestant resident in Agaro 05 kebele said that “interreligious cooperation at neighborhood level is a nature of humanity. No one could live alone. You have to participate in others’ matters as they do the same for you. It is a cultural necessity”. It entails that humanity and commitment to one’s cultural values enable them to cooperate with one another. This suggests that adherence to cultural values was a necessity to live. A society has certain enforcement mechanisms in order to ensure social cohesion. One can understand from the above quote that everybody is willing to cooperate with his/her neighbor otherwise he/she will be excluded by the masses in the area. The Muslim informant working for a local NGO (Family for Children Project Office) also described a proverb related to the necessity of cooperation among neighbors. He states, “Waliigalan alaa galan”, to indicate a fact that one’s family will be at peace if they peacefully live with their neighbor. This goes with an Orthodox Christian representative of Selam *iddir* association’s daily experience. Daily, he prays both for himself and for his neighbor every time he wakes up in the morning. Because he realized that peace is a common value and concerns of all neighbors. It necessitates neighbors to equally promote

and preserve peaceful relations regardless of religious differences. This could also be illustrated by using a perspective of a prominent scholar of African religion, John S. Mbiti's (2002: 83), which says, "A person who eats alone dies alone".

Neighbors are equally important as relatives. The Muslim elder in Agaro 05 kebele used a proverb, "*Fira fagoorra olla hamaa wayya*" meaning, *a bad neighbor is better than distant relatives* to depict the necessity and cooperative attitude among neighbors. It suggests that a neighbor is usually considered as an immediate source of cooperation, security, and social pension even beyond family members. Thus, shaped by religious and cultural values, the respondents' view of neighbor was positive irrespective of religious variations.

An aspect of a bond among neighbors was created through ethnic ties as well. Neighborhood with homogenous ethnic profile shares a feeling of belonging and identity to a particular group. Some respondents spoke of ethnicity that binds neighbors and followers of different religions in a particular locality. The study respondents considered the ethnic homogeneity of the area as an opportunity for peaceful interreligious encounters. Overriding religious identity, about 87.6 percent of the population of the area belongs to Oromo ethnic group, followed by Amhara (4 percent) and Kaficho (1 percent). The Muslim trader who worked as social affairs expert in the town described that everybody in the community has a cultural duty to respect his/her neighbor due to shared feeling of ethnic identity. He articulated:

Previously, interreligious relation was peaceful, which was manifested through strong and trusting relations between us at neighborhood level. Neighborhood and ethnic based ties were strong in linking people of different religions together. It allows to the extent of interreligious marriage. For instance, there were many cases of interreligious marriage. Two of my brothers were married to Muslims and changed their religion to Islam. Religion was not the main criteria in selecting a partner. Social class and ethnic criteria were strong. (Interviewed on Jan 24/2015).

One can learn from the above excerpt that interethnic marriages were tolerated due to neighborhood and ethnic bonds. He further spoke of mutual understanding and sharing of *Oromumma*⁷ as a common emblem, which was considered in selecting a partner. Hence, in addition to neighborhood ties, ethnic networks bind people of different religion. Moreover, the existence of interreligious marriages is considered an indication of the binding power of ethnic and neighborhood ties. It suggests that due to the persistence of common socio-cultural values that bind people of different religion together, interreligious marriages were tolerable.

⁷ Oromumma is an Afan Oromo term used to represent a notion of a belief in Oromo identity.

Accordingly, sense of belonging to a particular locality and its networks were strong in selecting a partner. Reemphasizing the integrative power of ethnic bond, the Muslim in Social Affairs Office in Jimma succinctly illustrated as follows:

Being Oromo itself has a positive role to maintain peaceful interreligious interaction. In Oromia region the majority of the residents are Oromo. Although they differ in terms of their religion, they have the same root. Being a member of different religious group doesn't take away your ethnic identity. There are a lot of cultural identities that unify us. Thus, for me, ethnicity is the first source of solidarity than religion. (Interviewed on Jan 24/2015).

As a result of the widespread existence of neighborhood-based networks, it is common to see married couples with different religions in the area amidst the widespread report of deteriorating relations among the followers of the two religions. Specifically, a Christian woman who married to a Muslim living in Agaro 05 kebele described:

I was married in 2000. He is a Muslim and Oromo. We met at work place. For both of us religion was not the criteria. Although there was resistance from our family I decided to make *nikah* (contract). After our marriage, we freely practice our own religion. But through time our families understood the decision and respected our marriage. After six years I was seriously sick and went to *tebel* (holy water) that he was not willing to accept the practice. This issue created disagreement. Later we resolved it through eldership of our friends. Now, we have three children and peacefully living together. I know other people living together while they have different religions. I know many couples who switched their religion to sustain their marriage. But I personally decided not to change my religion. So, personally I have realized that religious difference didn't bring problem. (Interviewed on Feb 2/2016, Agaro town).

Neighborhood has also important religious value. Respondents in their locality respect religion of their neighbors due to religious dictations. For instance, the Muslim religious teacher in Jimma described that interreligious respect and cooperation is embedded in religious and cultural values:

Our prophet said, as a Muslim you are required to do three things: love and help your relative, neighbor, and creator. You are required to share food with friends, neighbors and you have to adhere to your religious principle which is the source of peaceful coexistence. (Interviewed on Jan. 25/2015).

Tekletsadik (2014: 1) examined the importance of religion in the interreligious respect among neighbors using a proverb by Abba Anthony, "Our life and death is with our neighbor." This means that "if we gain our brother, we have gained God, but if we scandalize

our brother, we have sinned against Christ.” In view of this, love of neighbor regardless of their religious differences has multiple social and religious functions.

In short, in the localities, there were certain cultural values which necessitate peaceful interreligious coexistence. Accordingly, indigenous Oromo culture highly acknowledges neighbor in every aspects of life. In addition, from religious point of view, neighborhood has important place both in Islam and Christianity. Hence, neighborhood and its networks successfully act as an irreversible source of interreligious coexistence.

4.2.3. Social value of drinking coffee together among neighbors

As one of the indication of intimate social relation among neighbors particularly in rural parts of the study area, there was a cohesive tradition of drinking coffee together. In all of the study areas, preparing coffee ceremony and inviting every neighbor on turn basis was generally understood as a social duty. Neighbors were locally viewed as *ollaa bunaa*, which means a *neighbor of coffee* and it is formed regardless of religious affiliations. An *Olla buna* usually comprised of 2-5 families formed on the basis of vicinity. In all of the study areas, preparing coffee ceremony and inviting neighbors is a tradition and widespread practice, although the level varies from rural to urban areas. The Muslim woman teaching in Qujo elementary school described the tradition as such:

People are drinking coffee together in this area. In most cases people who are staying home, usually women, participate in such occasions. We drink regularly coffee together twice or three times a day by taking turn to prepare coffee. Others prepare such ceremony during weekends. We formed this group with 3 households based on proximity. There are no other criteria. Two of us are Muslims while one is Orthodox Christian. ... on the occasion, we play and talk for long hours. We share information. We tell one another that someone is ill, died, or faced a problem and inform each other that we have to go and ask together. It also enhances our interaction. We exchange and tell one another our personal skills and knowledge. We talk our personal and socio-cultural backgrounds. It also resolves conflict. (Interviewed on Feb 2/2016, Agaro).

Drinking coffee together among neighbors has multiple functions. The Muslim respondent working for the Family for Children Organization Office succinctly put the functions and popularity of drinking coffee among neighbors as follows:

Drinking coffee together has many social values as coffee brings people together. Coffee has value in marriage; you offer coffee when you ask to marry. Coffee is peace; you prepare coffee to settle a conflict. You visit your neighbor through a coffee ceremony. You discuss everything with your neighbor and friends on coffee ceremony. (Interviewed on April 19/2016, Jimma).

Coffee ceremony is a place where people meet, enjoy, and discuss about farming, religion, politics, and business, share ideas, and experiences. They trust one another and have strong ties among themselves. The survey found that about 63 percent of Muslims, 77 percent of Orthodox Christians, and 73 percent of Protestants have coffee ceremony program with their neighbor irrespective of religious differences which suggests that this widespread tradition strongly links neighbors together.

Table 4.5. *Coffee drinking tradition among neighbors*

religious category	Yes		No		Total
	fr	%	fr	%	
Muslim	210	77	64	23	274
Orthodox	36	77	11	23	47
Protestant	27	73	10	27	37
Catholic	1	50	1	50	2
Wakefata	1	100	0	0	1
Missing					23
Total	375	67	86	33	384

Source: Sample survey, February 2015

Thus, drinking coffee together with neighbors acts as one of the socio-cultural factors of interreligious connection. An interview with the Muslim government official in the Social Affairs Office in Jimma showed the importance of the custom of coffee ceremony in bringing different religious groups together at neighborhood level:

Coffee ceremony is important for the daily life of the people. It is a means of enhancing a trusting relationship. On the occasion, they discuss common ideas including interreligious peace, their children’s education, business, saving, and about harmful traditional practices. (Interviewed on April 22/2016, Jimma).

The Protestant respondent in Agaro kebele 05 also stated that on coffee ceremony, people freely talk about everything. Through this free interaction, they tolerate their differences and develop common understanding. This implies that coffee ceremony enables people to understand one another by cultivating trusting relationships among neighbors. In line with this idea, the Muslim elder in Agaro kebele 05 described that “half of my neighbors are Christians. We drink coffee together. We invite each other during holidays and we are together in happiness and sorrow.” The elder further described the existence of trust and

interdependence among his neighbors using a proverb, *fira fagoorra olla dhiyoo wayya*, which means that, “Neighbor is more than far relatives.”

Coffee ceremony is also used as a forum of settling conflict between neighbors. The Muslim woman teaching in Qujo elementary school said that “senior people prepare coffee ceremony and call the party in conflict together. During a disagreement, people do not invite or participate in coffee ceremony. In this case, a neighbor acts as a third party to settle conflicts among people.” Usually, local elders are called for coffee ceremony to settle conflict among neighbors, families, and friends. The Muslim elder in Agaro kebele 05 said:

Drinking coffee together prevents hate and hostility. In the case of disagreement, the two parties called up on the coffee occasion; discuss their point of disagreement and settle it through the participation of other members. This occasion by itself has the power of settling conflict. Drinking coffee together means you settled the disagreement and bring back peace. (Interviewed on Jan. 28/2015, Agaro).

According to this informant, peace restoration is realized through drinking coffee together and hostility and disagreement get settled during this time. Because the occasion is prepared based on vicinity, usually comprising two or more families than religious or ethnic based.

Drinking coffee together among neighbors on a regular basis was more exhibited in the rural area. Data obtained through the survey show that in Omonada, which is predominantly rural, the majority of the survey respondents (79 percent) have a tradition of drinking coffee together with their neighbors while 21 percent of them did not drink on regular basis. In Agaro, a small town surrounded by rural kebeles, tradition of drinking coffee together with their neighbors (84.6 percent) widely persists. However, in Jimma, which is predominantly urban, a few among the respondents (26.6 percent) drink coffee regularly with their neighbor while the majority (73 percent) of them drink only with their family members. Hence, there was a difference in a custom of drinking coffee among neighbors across rural and urban areas.

Table 4.6. *Tradition of drinking coffee in rural and urban settings*

Study area	Yes (in percent)	No (in percent)	Total
Omonada	79	21	253
Jimma	26.6	73	30
Agaro	84.6	15	78

Source: Sample survey, February 2015

Generally, it was found that the local communities have diverse social and cultural values, one of which is *ollaa bunaa*, through which interreligious harmony was maintained and the threats of religious divisions was prevented. These social ties are alternative sources of cohesion among neighbors with different religions acting as defensive reactions against the impositions of religious cleavages. Moreover, beyond maintaining interreligious tolerance, these networks also act as a response to socio-economic difficulties manifested in their course of life.

4.3. Community's Self-help Institutions as Alternative Sources of Interreligious Ties

This section describes the role of indigenous social and economic institutions in creating peaceful interreligious coexistence. Specifically, it aimed at exploring the community institutions like *iddir*, *ikub*, and *dabo* in maintaining peaceful interreligious encounters. Based on the assumption that these associations are established irrespective of religious criteria, they act as cohesive factor among members of a society beyond humanitarian and developmental services.

4.3.1. Types of self-help institutions in Ethiopia

Societies have a number of alternative institutions and strategies to maintain their social cohesion and this includes faith-based organizations, kin networks, neighborhood ties, work-based relations, and membership in voluntary organizations (Shannon, 1983; Smidt, 2003). These institutions have immense contributions in social, cultural, economic, and psychological lives of people. Such kinds of networks exemplify Durkheim's concept of social solidarity, which include networks acting as cement of society. Berger-Schmitt (2000) also described that these networks tend to strengthen social relations, feeling of identity and belonging, trust, and act against inequality and discrimination.

These social networks in Ethiopia are generally understood as community-based organizations, which are found both in urban and rural areas and contribute to the daily lives

of people. Most of these types of organizations in the country are considered as informal or non-registered organizations and include *iddir*, *ekub*, and *dabo* (Dessaiegn, 2002).

The indigenous institutions naturally evolved through the processes and practices of people striving to meet the necessities of life (Leonard, 2013; Solomon, 2009). People establish such institutions when they face some environmental, socio-economic, and political crisis. The studies also relate the origin of these institutions to as a means to respond to poverty-related challenges such as residential and development problems, housing improvement, utilities, environmental qualities and lack of social services. It is generally stated that a variety of community based associations such as *iddir* and *ekub* originated in Ethiopia as a response to problems related to urbanizations and other social disturbances (Solomon, 2009).

4.3.2. Iddir

Iddir represents one of the varieties of neighborhood institutions widely practiced in the study areas. It is an indigenous community-based association established on the basis of proximity for the purpose of providing mutual help among people living in a certain locality. It is generally understood that as compared to other institutions such as *ekub* and *dabo*, *iddir* is ubiquitous throughout the area. The link between *iddir* and interreligious relations is of contentious and unreported story in the study of interreligious relations. This study found that *iddir* particularly the village-based type is one of the connecting points of Muslims and Christians in the study area. The establishment, its basic functions and its criteria of membership were considered as the main points of analysis.

The main criteria used to establish an *iddir* is willingness, residence in a defined locality, and some amount of financial contribution. In the study area, five different types of *iddir* associations exist namely: village based, ethnic based, gender based, religious based, and work-place based *Iddirs*. All of the study respondents agreed that village based *iddir* was widely practiced in the area as compared to other types. They held that these indigenous forms of associations were highly valued in the community. Consequently, *iddir* represents the symbol of social cohesion and mutual support and trust among the members. It has a potential of mobilizing the community, provide effective services, and is participatory in nature in which both sex, all ethnic and religious groups are allowed to participate.

According to a representative of Selam *iddir* association, *iddir* is a community association organized with the aim of addressing personal and community needs. He conceptualized the basic function of *iddir* as:

It is an association in which people participate regardless of religious, ethnic, place of origin and sex differences. It is an institution by which people help one another in time of plenty and crisis. It also links the community with the government by participating in development gaps. They participate in development activities whichever and whenever the government fails to address them. (Interviewed on Jan 29/2015, Jimma).

Iddir has multiple social functions beyond the material benefits, financial support, and its participation in large-scale development works. The Selam *iddir* leader held that *iddir* is a permanent social asset. He asserts that Selam *iddir* comprises 600 people of varying economic status. The poor participate expecting material and financial assistance while the rich needs social inclusion and protection. Money is valueless without social attachment. The *iddir* comprises people from the four religious groups, namely Muslims, Orthodox Christians, Protestants and *Wakefata*.

Iddir contributes to maintaining peaceful interreligious encounters and an Orthodox Christian respondent working for the Ministry of Federal Affairs highlighted that:

Historically, the interaction between different religious institutions was mainly based on different socio-cultural interactions. In our country, there are deep-rooted socio-cultural institutions which are formed locally regardless of ethnic and religious differences. Due to these institutions, interreligious interaction in Ethiopia since the inception of religions is peaceful. This situation is unique to the country. The predominance of cultural factor overweighs religious identities. These institutions which are unique to Ethiopia include *iddir* and *ekub* that brought people of different religions together. This unique feature made Ethiopia to be viewed as a 'land of tolerance'. In these institutions everybody can participate as they are open for all; no boundary and no divisions. They create intimacy and sense of unity. (Interviewed on Dec. 10/2015, Addis Ababa).

As indicated, such multi-religious and multi-ethnic institutions including diversity of social class, ethnicity and religion enable interreligious cohesion and peaceful coexistence amidst emerging religious overtones. Beyond their socio-economic functions, their potential in creating interreligious peaceful coexistence lies in their openness to followers of all religions. It was also underscored that cultural-based identities were hoped to regulate emerging dynamics of interreligious tensions. More specifically, the respondent stated in the above paragraph held that these local associations were widely applied to settle interreligious conflicts.

In most recent times, *iddir* is seen as an institution established not only for the purpose of giving funeral services but are also involved in large-scale humanitarian and

community development programs. For instance, *Selam iddir* was one of 104 registered *iddir* associations in Jimma town. Currently, the *iddir* has constructed a kindergarten and provided material support for 160 poor families and orphan children. Like NGOs, *iddir* is not-for-profit organization aimed at providing basic services and humanitarian assistance collecting money from its members.

Practically, *iddir* represents a point where people with diverse religions met with common objectives. It brings Muslims and Christians together. Some *iddirs* use a name standing for all religions, usually the name of places. Example, *Selam Iddir*, meaning an association of peace motivated to promote interreligious unity and equal service for all. Uniquely, even *iddirs* which are named after Muslim or Christian names were inclusive and village-based. For instance, ‘*Abune Aregawi Iddir*’, an *iddir* named after an Orthodox church located in Kito kebele of Jimma, was residence-based in which both Muslims and Christians participate.

Due to the ubiquitous presence and inclusiveness of these institutions, religious diversity was not a threat to interreligious peaceful coexistence. The Muslim respondent working in MoFA believed that Ethiopia is historically multi-religious and multi-ethnic. Accordingly, there are people of different religious background living side by side as a result of common socio-cultural elements linking them together and one of which is local *iddir*. He particularly explored the inclusiveness of an *iddir* as:

In *iddir*, Orthodox Christians, Protestants, and Muslims as well as Wakefata equally participate. Its principle is not religious. People living in the same locality, who speak the same language, with common agenda in time of difficulty or pleasure come together and form self-help agreement. (Interviewed on Dec. 10/2015, Addis Ababa).

Unlike the village-based *iddirs*, friendship, ethnic, and religious-based *iddirs* were minimal in number and discouraged in some of the study areas. There was an assertion that personal, ethnic, and religious criteria led to social exclusion, which is against the open access criteria. The participants of the study also assumed that the local government discourages religious and friendship *iddirs* suspecting that they may involve in politics. An interview with the retired Protestant elder in Jimma shared his thought as:

I initiated to establish a friendship *iddir* called Lalistu 25 years ago. It was friendship *iddir* linked through business, education, and locality. However, we faced many problems because the government suspected us viewing that we have political mission linking our *iddir* with OLF [a political party labeled as terrorist]. Due to the suspicion, we couldn't get some services from the local government such as land for the

construction of office. Some of our members were tortured and imprisoned. (Interviewed on Jan 27/2015, Jimma).

Although associations like Lalistu *iddir*, one of the few ethnic and friendship *iddir* officially registered in the town, was criticized and labeled by the local government as political activists and for using closed criteria, the elder described that they used the constitutionally guaranteed rights of association using wide and open principles. He elucidated that although language and acquaintances were the main criteria, it was open to all people regardless of place of origin and religion. There were Muslims, Christians, and Wakefata members. However, it was understood that due to government's suspicion, people choose to establish and join village-based *iddir* than friendship, ethnic, and religious-based *iddir*.

Iddir is one of the basic necessities of life enforcing participation of everybody. The study respondents held that everybody participates in any of the varieties of the associations regardless of differences in religion and place of origin. With respect to participation in *iddirs*, the survey showed that about 70.6 percent of the respondents were members in an *iddir* while only 26 percent of them were not members due to some personal matters such as age and interest than membership criteria and religious difference. They also prioritized the different types of *iddirs* they participate in according to their importance for their life. About 61.5 percent of them mainly rely on and preferred village-based *iddir* than any other types; while 11.2 percent of them value village and religious-based *iddir* equally. Further, the table below depicts that people sometimes participate in more than one *iddir*. For instance, about 24 percent of the survey respondents admitted that they participate in more than an *iddir*. Among this, about 11 percent of them were active members of village and ethnic-based *iddirs*.

Table 4.7. Respondents' participation in various types of *iddir* associations

Types of <i>Iddir</i>	Frequency	Percent
village based	236	61.5
ethnic based	12	3.1
religious based	16	4.2
gender based	2	.5
other	2	.5
Village and ethnic	10	2.6
Village and religious	43	11.2
Village and gender	17	4.4
Ethnic and religious	4	1.0
Religious and gender	1	.3
Village/ethnic/religious	6	1.6
Village/religious/gender	8	2.1
All types	4	.8
Total	362	94.3
Missing	22	5.7
Over all Total	384	100.0

Source: Sample survey, February 2015

An analysis of formally registered *iddir* associations in the study sites shows that *iddirs* were established based on vicinity than ethnic, sex, and religious affiliation. Among the 61 formally registered *iddir* associations in Agaro, 45 (73.7 percent) of them were village-based, 12 (19.6 percent) gender-based, while 4 (6.5 percent) of them were ethnic-based. In addition, in Omonada Woreda, 39 formally registered *iddir* associations were village-based with insignificant number of religious and ethnic based *iddirs*. Thus, like any other local cooperative networks, *iddirs* were established on the basis of locality and place of work regardless of religious differences creating opportunities for interreligious harmony in the study area. Therefore, against the perception that Muslims and Christians have different *iddirs*, the inclusive village-based *iddirs* are more dominant than religion, ethnic, gender, and kin-based associations.

4.3.3. *Dabo*

Dabo is a form of local self-help institution in which people give labor services for one another on a turn basis. It is more widespread in rural than urban culture. The study subjects maintained that *dabo* is mainly applied to agricultural works in which people work on each other's plot by taking turns. In a discussion of neighborhood ties, most of the study respondents admit that there is an obligation for neighbors to cooperate with one another on works such as clearing land, cultivation, harvesting *teff*, and building houses.

Dabo was mainly acknowledged for its economic functions. The Protestant elder in Jimma Kito kebele rightly described the application of *dabo* in agricultural works in a rural area depending on the size of plots they own. People who own large plots of land (usually more than a hectare) mostly work on the basis of *dabo*. In this context, *dabo* is used as a synergistic strategy of dealing with time. Working in a *dabo* is occasional and applied to a particular activity. It was believed that working in *dabo* save time and energy. It helps to accomplish a specific task which needs to be done in a shorter period of time to avoid risk of destruction of their harvest due to climatic changes. Expressing *dabo* as a custom of the rural community, Selam *iddir* leader viewed that “an ox cannot cultivate alone.” It is to mean that *dabo* is a means of pooling labor so as to accomplish a work within a short period of time.

The survey method also asked whether or not they participate in such self-help networks and the basis of its formation. About 67.6 percent of them responded that they are actively participating in such local cooperative networks in rural areas. Although it is not formally established as a *dabo*, 66.8 percent of respondents in urban area replied that culturally they have an obligation to help their neighbor during a wedding, death, birth and other ceremonies.

Dabo is established on the basis of vicinity than kin or religious criteria. About 64.8 percent of the respondents agreed that it is formed on the basis of vicinity, while 14.7 percent of them responded that it is jointly established on the basis of both locality/vicinity and kinship relations. Only insignificant number of respondents (4.2 percent) believed that it was formed based on religious belonging.

Dabo was considered as a source of interreligious cohesion beyond its economic function. An in-depth interview with the Muslim respondent living Agaro 05 shows that like *iddir*, *dabo* has also a potential of linking people of different religion:

It is established by people living in the same locality. The main criteria to establish a *dabo* is sharing a common interest, which is labor exchange. People of similar age come together and establish such a cooperative relationship. It is age, vicinity, interest, ability to work which are the main criteria. Religion is not a factor. It brings people with similar capacity and interest together. (Interviewed on Jan. 28/2015, Agaro).

According to the quote above, since the main purpose of *dabo* is cooperation and labor exchange, people do not consider their religious difference. It suggests that members of a *dabo* respect religion of one another. The Muslim elder in Agaro added that during the work, food and drinks were prepared according to religious preferences of the participants.

Beyond its economic and social functions, *dabo* is used as a means of social control. Preparing a *dabo* is determined by one's integration and connection with community members. According to some respondents, people do not attend a *dabo* prepared by unethical and misbehaved individuals. The respondent working in Jimma Zone Finance and Economic Development Office said:

Dabo is important in influencing the behavior of their members. If someone misbehaves, leaders of the institution give advice. If he/she fails to accept the advice they decide to exclude the person. They don't participate in his/her death ceremony, wedding and any other cooperation works. Due to this the person can't survive and has to leave the area. (Interviewed on Jan 26/2015, Jimma).

In general, *dabo* is among the indigenous institutions providing multiple social and economic functions. It was viewed as an institution formed on the basis of neighbourhood, irrespective of religious difference. Hence, it was described as indigenous network binding Muslims and Christians at the local levels.

4.3.4. *Ikub*

*Ikub*⁸ is organized by people of similar social and economic status with trusting relations. Trust was considered as a basic principle for establishing an *ekub*. A Muslim respondent working in EthioTelecom in Jimma described that *ikub* is established by people or colleagues living in the same area. He underlined that being a person of faith is an important criteria for membership. In this regard, people who are committed to their faith are more preferred as they are considered more trust-worthy get respect among *ikub* members. Two types of *ikubs* were identified in the study area. The first is like a revolving fund and people pool specific amount of money (in cash) and members get access to this fund, alternatively. The second type of *ikub* however involves in-kind contribution. The former is often practiced by middle and high-income people while the latter by low-income women in rural areas. It was pointed out that *ikub* is used for running a business and build a house.

Like *iddir* and *dabo*, *ikub* has multiple functions. Besides its economic value, it strengthens social ties and relations. The Protestant respondent in Agaro 02 kebele stated that "People who have good interactions establish an *ikub* and use it for their personal matters. It is a base for modern saving. It encourages people to save and use money efficiently." A

⁸ According to Dejene (1993), *Ikub* is defined as an informal traditional saving institution in which people contribute some amount of money weekly or monthly to receive a large sum at some point in a cycle. It is an institution bringing friends, colleagues, professional groups, and neighbors together.

Protestant woman in Qujo kebele in Agaro uniquely considered *Ikub* as a means of women's economic empowerment:

We have women ikub of 20 members. It is formed on the basis of residence. We formed this group by bringing together people living in this locality who have willingness and able to contribute 20 birr a month. We use the sum amount collected on turn basis to buy household furniture and equipment. We also use it for our social affairs such as visiting relatives, transportation, and personal consumption. Usually, the unemployed and house-wives use it to establish income generation activities. (Interviewed on Feb 1/2016, Agaro).

Similarly, the Muslim respondent working in EthioTelecom added that “its members view each other as ‘*ikubtegnna*’, to mean people of the same *ikub*. We have feast ceremony on the date of receiving the collected amount of money.” This suggests that *ikub* was viewed as a means of maintaining solidarity among friends and colleagues. Since the main criteria identified were work-place, proximity, and equal financial status, it was suggested as indigenous sources of peaceful interreligious coexistence.

4.4. Chapter Summary

The aim of this chapter was to investigate the sources of the deep-rooted peaceful interreligious coexistence in the study area. It aimed to analyze common religious principles shared by people of different faiths and the various types of neighborhood networks and its impact or contribution to the peaceful coexistence between followers of different religions particularly between Muslims and Christians. The main themes emerged from the analysis were the discussion of the relationship between religious capitals, specifically religious principles with regard to the way one views the religions of other people, neighborhood networks and peaceful coexistence between Muslims and Christians.

The analysis showed a positive relationship between the two religions primarily due to the vital role socio-cultural and religious capitals or principles play in promoting interreligious harmony. In light of functionalist and cultural/religious pluralism (Merton, 1968; Banchoff, 2007; Wijssen, 2007; Sianipar, 2011), varieties of cultural and religious elements contributing to peaceful interreligious coexistence were explored in the study areas. As some of the socio-cultural capitals, *iddir*, *ekub*, *dabo*, and neighborhood feeling were found to be indispensable elements of local social networks bridging religious divides. These institutions bring together Muslims, Christians, and Wakefata to live and work together which fostered continuous and cooperative interactions, irrespective of religious affiliations.

Another promising feature of these diverse institutions was their widespread existence and inclusiveness. Local associations such as *iddir* and *dabo* were widespread both in urban and rural areas. Neighborhood-based *iddirs* were dominant and promising in linking religions than ethnic and religious-based *iddirs*. Generally, indigenous socio-cultural neighborhood networks were inclusive and cultivate trust and friendship and thereby act as a unique model of minimizing interreligious frictions. The study at hand magnifies the role of village-based *iddirs* and at odds with the previous study which generalized that Muslims and Christians have their own *iddir*. Despite the existence of common religious and non-religious factors binding Muslims and Christians, these elements were not previously well analyzed.

Crediting Durkheim's view of shared cultural values as a source of social cement one of the themes analyzed was the concept of *Ollumma*. *Ollumma* was strongly valued and socially, culturally, and religiously dictated in the study area. *Oromumma* was another factor that binds Muslims and Christians. It was suggested that beyond ethnic bondage, Oromo culture dictates love and respect of *Ollaa* (neighbor) regardless of religious differences, specifically exemplified by cooperation and respect among neighbors. Accordingly, trusting relationships, cohesive, and peaceful relations among neighbors were mainly rooted in these cultural necessities, which further resulted in peaceful interreligious coexistence. Such networks were valued not only as mechanisms of cultural and ethnic bondages, as Castells (2010) and Korostelina (2007) argued, but also due to religious principles and the necessity in their day-to-day lives.

Another theme emerged from the analysis was religious principles. This finding emphasized religious doctrines as a key factor behind peaceful coexistence. As participants of the study described, both Islam and Christianity have common principles – love and living in peace with neighbors – which facilitated peaceful interreligious coexistence. It encourages loving and living in peace with others who are in close vicinity regardless of religious belonging, which was viewed as the core values of Islam and Christianity. However, these religious values and indigenous socio-cultural fabrics are under-pressure due to emerging dynamics in religions which is thoroughly discussed in the following chapters. Hence, it is suggestive evidence that any attempt in dealing with interreligious interaction should give a place for these religious and neighborhood ingredients.

Chapter Five

Interreligious Conflicts

Introduction

This chapter intends to investigate key issues that contribute to interreligious conflicts between Muslims and Christians in Jimma area. First, the nature of social conflict and interreligious conflict, in particular, was reviewed. Then, institutional and interpersonal causes of interreligious conflict in the study area were explored. Economic and political settings, emerging dynamics of religious identity and competing religious expansion, interreligious knowledge, and intra-religious differences were discussed as the major factors.

5.1. An Overview of Interreligious Conflict

Social conflict refers to social unrest, discontent, and a desire for change (Chittock, 2011). It denotes “situations in which actors use conflict behavior against each other to attain incompatible goals and/or to express their hostility” (Bartos and Wehr, 2002: 13). James S. Coleman (1957) as cited in Chittock (2011: 19) described the various areas of life in which conflict occurs as being “economic, power or authority, and cultural values or beliefs.” According to Chittock, conflict may be expressed through, for example, social institutions such as mass media, or exercised through physical violence which includes warfare or riots and contest over legitimacy, and these may also target religions.

Various studies contend that conflict is an inevitable aspect of social life. For instance, Dahrendorf (1959) described human relations as the history of both consensus and conflict. For many of the classical and contemporary sociological theorists, order and conflict are not mutually distinctive features of society; a society cannot be entirely characterized either by conflict or consensus (Dahrendorf, 1959). Likewise, Merton (1957) in his study of function and dysfunctions of the different social institutions including the role of religion in a society showing its integrative or disintegrative power – indicating the likely existence of both positive and negative consequences of religion. Moreover, Johnson (2008) argued that despite the persistence of order and stability, contemporary society is characterized by the pervasive presence of conflict and competition at all levels of the social world. From the micro world of a family to the macro level of politics and societal relations, social interactions seem to be filled with tension, disagreement, and conflict.

Religious conflicts take place between groups that differ ideologically along religious lines within a pluralistic setting as each strives to achieve some religious and political ends

(Nwaomah, 2011). Globally, religion related tensions have been resurgent and widespread, particularly between Islam and Christianity. Few examples may include many religious groups, such as al-Qaeda, ISIS, Al-Shebab, and Boko Haram, whose terrorist actions have become topical news of international mass media. Hence, a clash between different religions is inevitable and understood as parts of a broader pattern of interactions over centuries (Voll, 2006).

Globalization enabled interconnections between people of different religious backgrounds, among others. In such interconnected settings, conflict including that of religion, is typical and prevalent phenomena. Rational choice theory of religion, as explained by Hetcher and Kanazawa (1997), shows that in the process of interaction, people naturally want to maximize their own interest and strive to exercise their own religious rights: the right to live, worship, dress, educate, and speak (Chittock, 2011). Thus, it was such kinds of competitive interactions that made interreligious conflict more intense.

Interreligious conflicts become a social and political concern across the globe in the contemporary period. To illustrate the increasing threat of interreligious conflict all over the world, Wijzen (2007: 15) considered the ‘Huntington’s clash of civilization’, which views:

Since September 11, 2001, the clash of civilization argues that the world is facing cultural differentiation than homogenization. This theory assumed that conflicts are no longer about political or economic ideologies but have become struggles for cultural/or religious hegemony. Three superpowers are going to determine the future course of human history: Christian culture in the West, Islamic culture in the Near East, and Confucian-Asian culture. Five other cultural Zones will switch sides periodically in tune with developments in the aforementioned three: Japanese culture, Hindu Indian culture, Orthodox culture in Russia, Latin American culture and African culture.

The causes of interreligious conflicts are complex and dynamic. Studies generally classify sources of interreligious conflicts into two: religious and non-religious factors. Cheetam et al. (2013) for instance, maintain that interreligious conflicts come in many forms: theological, cultural, political, militant and historical overtones. Similarly, Yamin (2008) summarized a variety of interreligious conflicts and its non-religious causes which include political and psychological overtones, deprivation of basic human needs, and competition over scarce resources including territory, extreme levels of insecurity and fear, historical grievances, and a psychology of victimization.

Like other parts of the world, the issue of religious conflict has become a social and political agenda in Ethiopia, particularly in Jimma area. Despite the historical peaceful

coexistence of religions in the country and the study area in particular, interreligious conflicts were on the rise. As stated earlier, many religious and non-religious issues trigger interreligious tensions; and this study identified the causes to be related to political, economic, majority-minority issues, revival of religious identities, religious expansion, and government involvement in religious matters. Each of these issues will be discussed below.

5.2. Religious Diversity and Interreligious Preaching

This sub-section deals with the effect of competitive interreligious preaching and misunderstanding in a religiously diverse setting. Competing religious expansions and interreligious misconception influence peaceful interreligious interactions. In this contending circumstance, the place of various approaches employed in religious propagation was thoroughly discussed.

5.2.1. Competing religious expansion

Religious diversity and the mode of interreligious relation have become contentious issues in Ethiopia. In the study area, emerging religious diversity and competition over religious expansion were among the main triggering factors of interreligious frictions. Religious expansion was conceptualized as physical like the construction of churches, mosques, cemetery, and offices, as well as social, which mainly include religious preaching and competition to win over religious converts. Different religious groups such as Orthodox Christians, Muslims and varieties of Protestants exist in urban and rural parts of Jimma, each striving to further expand their own religion. In this competing circumstance, some respondents related the recently emerging interreligious tensions in the area to the dramatic expansion of Protestantism and a reaction against them. For instance, the Mekane Yesus church evangelist interviewed in Omonada pointed out:

Before the 1990s, the area was dominated by Muslims. There were also few Orthodox Christians. However, recently, Protestants were dramatically expanding in the area. The 2011 interreligious tension was partly related to the introduction of Protestantism in addition to the expanding Muslim groups. Protestantism was new for the area and this made the interaction sensitive. (Interviewed on Jan. 25/2015, Jimma).

This excerpt tells us that in relation to Islam and Orthodox Christianity, Protestantism was viewed as a new religion on the course of expansion. Islam was perceived as a native religion comprising the majority of the residents. Increasing population movement due to trade and job opportunities was reported as the main issue which facilitated the expansion of various religions to the area. The excerpt also tells that the sharp expansion of Protestantism

after the 1990s was related to the change in government in 1991. It was widely accepted that governments prior to 1974 favored Orthodox Christianity over Islam and Protestantism. The military government, which ruled until 1991, was hostile to all religions. However, the present government was viewed as tolerant allowing people to freely exercise their religion without state interference.

An accommodative religious view was enacted in the 1995 constitution creating an open space for religious expansion. For example, the Muslim elder in Agaro 05 kebele described the change in the political context as the main cause for the expansion of Protestantism to the area. He described that the new government promoted religious freedom and democracy contrary to the past religious persecution. This tolerant political environment created fertile ground for the emergence of diverse religious groups in the area with a different approach of religious expansion, which activated interreligious competitions and frictions. More evidently, followers of the three major religions, namely the Muslims, the Orthodox, and the Protestants competitively embarked on the construction of Mosque and Church in all urban and rural centers. Data from Omonada Woreda Social Affairs Office indicate that there are about 556 mosques, 6 Orthodox churches and 37 protestant churches in Omonada alone. It was reported that all Protestant churches in the woreda were instituted after 1991, during the present regime.

Moreover, the priest in the Revealed Word of God International Church in Jimma argued that the expansion of Protestantism in the zone was more dramatic than of other religious groups mainly by using the strategy of growth through fragmentation and opening branches. Data from Agaro Town Administration Social Affairs Office show that there were only three Protestant churches before 1991 whereas now there are twelve. The Muslims also showed a dramatic expansion during this regime, one before 1991 and ten in the present time. Whereas, the Orthodox Christian churches showed slow rate of expansion – three before 1991 and four in the present government. The figure compiled from Ethiopian housing and population survey of 1994 and 2007 revealed that in Jimma zone the number of Orthodox Christians showed a dramatic increase than Muslims followed by Protestants. From the total of Jimma population, followers of Orthodox Christians rose from 2 percent to 11.2 percent. Protestants increased from 1.5 percent to 3 percent while Muslims remained the same in ten years. This confirms increasing concern of Muslims over expansion of various religious groups at a dramatic rate, mainly Protestants and Orthodox Christians.

Data obtained through the survey method similarly showed that for about half of the survey respondents (as indicated in table 5.1), fear of religious expansion was viewed as a threat to the socio-political order in the area. About 32 percent of Muslim respondents strongly consider that increasing religious diversity in their area threatened their own religious identity. In addition, 16 percent of Orthodox Christians and 9 percent of Protestant respondents strongly agree with the concern. Besides, 12 Percent of Muslims, 21 percent of Orthodox Christians, and 16 percent of Protestant respondents also moderately agree with the statement. However, 6 percent of Muslims, 5 percent of Orthodox Christians, and 20 percent of Protestant respondents strongly disagree that religious diversity is an issue. The statistical analysis revealed that there was an association between the view of religious diversity and expansion and religious category as determined by Chi-Square test ($X(12)= 49.037, p=000$) (see appendix 3). That is, Muslims and Christians view increasing religious expansion differently. The qualitative data show that Muslims in the study area were more concerned about increasing religious diversity and expansion in the area than Orthodox Christians and Protestants. As a result of such view, the expansion of Protestantism and Orthodox Christianity resulted in interreligious tensions.

Table 5.1. *Respondents' view of religious expansion*

Increasing religious diversity is a threat to your religious identity											
Religious Category	Strongly agree		Agree		Neither agree nor disagree		Disagree		Strongly disagree		Total
	fr	%	fr	%	fr	%	fr	%	fr	%	
Muslims	78	32	30	12	36	16	89	36	14	6	247
Orthodox Christians	12	16	16	21	18	23	27	35	4	5	77
Protestants	4	9	7	16	15	34	9	20	9	20	44
Catholics	0	0	2	100	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Missing											14
Total	94	25	55	15	69	19	125	34	27	7	384

Source: Sample survey, February 2015

To name a particular incident, interreligious tension escalated in 2011 in Omonada Woreda over the construction of a Pentecostal church; and in this area Muslims are predominant. The evangelist in Omonada when explaining the incident stated that,

In Omonada, the issue was due to a piece of Quran found in a toilet around a Kalehiwot church under construction. In the area, there was a group organizing itself against expansion of other religions. About 57 churches were burnt in Omonada and Tiro Afeta. The perception was also related to fear of expansion. (Interviewed on March 11/2015, Nadda town).

The issue, which was symbolized as a desecration of the holy Quran and Islam, rapidly circulated among Muslims in the area which provoked violence against Christians. It was understood that the Muslim groups who allegedly stood against the rapid expansion of Protestantism put the piece of Quran in Christians' toilet to activate conflict against them by mobilizing Muslims across the region. The conflict resulted in the loss of lives, churches were burnt and there was destruction of Christians' property. The main reason behind this, as explained by the pastor in Omonada, was the fear of the rapid expansion of Protestantism.

Interreligious friction was caused by the active expansion of Wahhabi Islamic group in the study area. The Pastor in Omonada also described the new style of teaching, Wahhabism⁹, as the contributing factor. He further illustrated:

The conflict was related to teaching of Wahabism and new publications. Their teaching distanced friends and neighbors from one another creating a suspicious relationship among them. Previously, there was no distinction between people in terms of their religion. ... after 1980s there were Protestants who came from Shewa in search of fertile and vacant places for farming. The people and their religion were new for the area. The native residents started to question the people and asking them from where they came. The introduction of the new Muslim sects exacerbated the gap. (Interviewed on March 11/2015, Nadda town).

5.2.2. Religious preaching

In a multi-religious setting, approaches and methods of religious propagation impacts coexistence. Religious proliferation has two components: interreligious conception and the

⁹Gulevic defined Wahhabism as a school of thought which was named after its founder Muhammad Ibn Abd al-Wahhab (1703-1791) and is considered as a radical branch of Islam since it advocates a strict acceptance and practice of Islam, and applies an aggressive campaign against all other branches of Islam labeling them as unbelievers. In this particular study, Salafism is synonymous with Wahhabism, which emerged in the Arabian Peninsula under the intellectual influence of Muhammad ibn 'Abd al Wahhab. His followers were jointly called Salafiya and Wahhabiya (Gulevic, 2004).

methods employed to disseminate one's religion (Sampson, 2011). Interreligious preaching was negative when it uses provocative methods. In a religiously diverse setting of other African countries, interreligious preaching and practices reportedly influence peaceful interreligious relations. However, if a religious propaganda is based on exclusivism or preaching the correctness of one's religion over the other, then it is bound to have adverse impact. In this regard, Frederiks (2011) stated that in Sub-Saharan Africa, the emergence of Muslim fundamentalists with their exclusivist ideology and pentecostalization of Christianity with the aim of evangelizing and converting others affected the harmonious relations between Christians and Muslims. Nwaomah (2011: 96) also highlighted how attempts to convert affects interreligious interactions and has become sources of interreligious conflict in Nigeria. He says:

One significant element driving conflicts of this type is the attitude of superiority that religious persuasions as a sociological fact often adopt in their dealings or assessment of others. This attitude tends to exclude others, classifies them as ignorant and doomed, and invariably, creates an atmosphere of hostility. This atmosphere of hostility tends to intensify where opposing religious persuasions see their numerical strengths as political advantage. In such a situation, the leaders think that new religions are threats to the hegemonies enjoyed.

An interview with the theologian in Mekane Yesus church in Jimma showed that emotional and aggressive methods of religious preaching, in an effort to expand one's own faith, was one of the root cause of the interreligious conflict in 2011. Then Muslims perceived themselves as if they were considered as 'pagan and unsaved' and under threat by newly emerging religions.

The majority of the survey participants viewed aggressive approach of religious propagation as a danger to peaceful interreligious coexistence. About 57 percent of Muslims strongly believe that the methods of preaching being used by followers of other religions intensified interreligious conflict. In general, about 72 percent of Muslims were not comfortable with Christians' methods of preaching. Hence, it was understood that interreligious conflict was not simply attributed to religious diversity; but rather related to a widespread and active religious propagation.

Table 5.2. Respondents' view of methods of interreligious preaching

Religious category	Does the method of preaching intensify interreligious conflict?										Total
	Strongly agree		Agree		Neither agree nor disagree		Disagree		Strongly disagree		
	fr	%	fr	%	fr	%	fr	%	fr	%	
Muslim	136	57	36	15	14	6	40	17	11	5	237
Orthodox	31	41	25	33	4	5	15	20	1	1	76
Protestant	20	43	18	39	4	9	3	7	1	2	46
Catholic	0	0	0	0	1	50	1	50	0	0	2
Wakefata	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	100	1
Missing											22
Total	187	52	79	22	23	6	59	16	14	4	384

Source: Sample survey, February 2015

The Muslim merchant who was working in the Social Affairs Office in Jimma described an issue of preaching among acquaintances as a source of frictions. He described that all religious groups have their own *cadres* to propagate their religion. He stated that “when you preach it should be soft and smooth because you are preaching to your neighbors, friends, and who are your acquaintances. It is not logical to preach to who you know very well.” This suggests that aggressive and emotional approach of preaching among neighbors, friends, and colleagues may activate inter-group and interpersonal dissatisfaction and discords.

The data obtained through the survey also showed that some followers of all religious categories (46 percent of Muslims, 34 percent of Orthodox Christians, and 55 percent of Protestants) preach to followers of other religions in their areas. About half of the survey respondents (45%) consider some methods of religious preaching such as preaching on street and home to home as causes of interreligious discord. In this regard, more than half of the Protestant respondents were more active in preaching to others than Muslims and Orthodox Christians.

Table 5.3. *Persistence of interreligious preaching*

Religious Category	Yes	%	No	%	Total
Muslims	111	46	132	54	243
Orthodox Christians	25	34	48	66	73
Protestants	26	55	21	45	47
Catholics	2	100	0	0	2
Wakefatas	0		1	100	1
Missing					18
Total	164	45	202	55	384

Source: Sample survey, February 2015

The figure above reveals that Muslims and Christians preach and try to convert one another. In discussing the rationale, it is due to the thinking that if one is not a believer of that religion, then he or she is perceived as a non-believer. This view was considered dangerous to peaceful interreligious encounters. It was also believed that the conventional rationale behind evangelization lies in their view of one another. This view was best elucidated by an Orthodox Christian religious officer working in MoFA who considered interreligious preaching and its risk as follows:

In the process of interreligious preaching, there is a view that my religion is better and superior to yours. Some religious groups preach that their religion is the only right while others are mistaken. In a time of preaching new religion against the existing one, there is a tendency to devalue the previously existing ones. (Interviewed on May 9/2016, Addis Ababa).

To understand respondents' view of different religions, a question regarding ways of salvation was asked. As indicated in table 5.4, about 51 percent of Muslims, 63 percent of Orthodox Christians, and 70 percent of Protestants believed that their own religion is the only way leading to salvation putting them in an exclusive orientation. The figure also shows that religious identity was strong among all followers of every religion (as thoroughly discussed in section 5.3).

Table 5.4. Respondents' view of their own religion

Religious category	Is your religion the only way to salvation?				Total
	Yes	%	No	%	
Muslims	117	50.5	115	49.5	232
Orthodox Christians	44	63	26	37	70
Protestants	32	70	14	30	46
Catholics	1	50	1	50	2
Wakefatas	1	100	0	0	1
Missing					33
Total	194	56	156	44	384

Source: Sample survey, February 2015

It was understood that exclusivism and forceful approaches were utilized due to lack of knowledge on approaches of preaching and the constitutional rights of religion. The Mekane Yesus Church theologian informant in Jimma maintained that:

Many preachers were not professionals. They do not know how, when, and to whom to preach. On the other hand, there were many radical Muslim sects that were emerging. They were exclusivists, negative towards other Muslims and Christians. They use force to convert others. It was this contradicting condition that created problems in many parts of Jimma Zone. (Interviewed on Jan. 25/2015, Jimma).

It can be deduced that preaching based on superiority, exclusiveness, and coercive approach instigate interreligious conflict. The informant further said that public places and residential areas were not free of religious preaching. In addition, the Protestant priest in the Revealed Word of God International Church asserted that there were no separate places designed for religious services. He described that preachers use loud speakers disturbing the tranquility of their neighbors. Another interview with a Muslim respondent in Jimma Kito kebele argued that many residents especially Muslims were not comfortable with Protestants' home to home and neighborhood level fellowship programs. He clearly asserted:

At neighborhood level, there is tolerance and respect. But some religious groups have fellowship programs three or more times in a week. These programs take place during the night from 8:00-11:00. Since there are followers of different religions in their neighborhood it may cause disturbance to them. On the program, they use loud

speakers. I think, this program should be held only in church. (Interviewed on Jan 26/2015, Jimma).

In the study areas, competition between diverse religious groups over religious expansion was manifested through public meeting and preaching in the streets and neighborhood. It was found that diverse groups of Muslims, Orthodox Christians, and Protestants were arranging religious conferences in places such as stadiums and meeting halls and most of them are located in inner cities and residential centers. However, some respondents argued that such widespread campaign of religious expansion and public preaching disturb the normal state of interreligious relations. For instance, the Muslim respondent working for the Ministry of Federal Affairs perceives that government offices, transport, and other social services were not secular. It usually happens due to the lack of knowledge regarding the ethics of using these places while respecting the rights of others. Another Muslim elder in Agaro 05 kebele similarly noticed that there was preaching everywhere using cars in public places with loud speakers. More specifically, the Protestant priest in the Revealed Word of God International Church in Jimma spoke of preaching on street as the main cause of interreligious conflict in Jimma area. He mentioned a case where a Protestant preacher was killed by Muslims in March 2007 while preaching on street around the main mosque in Merkato Street of Jimma town.

As a result of the active religious propagation, one can notice the existence of religious switchers and its negative view among the popular followers. In this case, religious conversions can be a sensitive issue and is one of the triggering factors of interreligious conflict. The informants of the study admitted that some religious groups particularly Protestants are active in preaching and attracting many followers from Muslims and Orthodox Christian members. The priest in the Revealed Word of God International Church spoke that all Protestant churches have fellowship, better theological education, and evangelism program where they recruit youngsters to involve in disseminating the words of God. The programs were mainly aimed at recruiting members. He described that they recruit members and use their ordinary young missionaries to effectively spread the word of God and reaching more people than Muslims and Orthodox Christians.

A reaction towards converts from the Muslims side was reported as harsh. A resident in Jimma Kitto kebele who converted his religion from Islam to Protestantism spoke the existence of religious conversion and the challenges he faced from his Muslim relatives and friends. He illustrated:

I changed my religion to Protestantism in 2005. For this I was persecuted by my family and friends. I was born and raised in Harar, a Muslim dominant area. There was no freedom of religion [you can't freely choose a religion of your own due to social pressure]. Due to change of my religion they discriminated me and I was dismissed from a work place. To escape the discrimination, I moved to Jimma. Here also my Muslim friends are excluding me and even not communicating with me since I changed my religion. I am not married. But now the interaction is normal. Although they don't like my new religion they normally tolerated it. Now, Protestantism is recognized. They know that *Pente*¹⁰ is true religion. Previously, it was considered that people follow this religion to get money and is considered as an imported religion. But now there is no such perception... There are also internal switchers among the sects that aggravated the divisions like switchers among Christians between Orthodox, Catholic, Geova, and Protestants. (Interviewed on April 19/2016, Jimma).

Converting from one religion to another, in this example from Islam to Christianity, was a point of discord between Muslims and Protestants. As a defense mechanism, exclusion and dismissal of converts from family and the community are used. At institutional level, labeling Protestantism as “imported religion” are some of the tactics used to discredit them.

Historically, forced religious conversion was one of the major sources of hostile relationship between Muslims and Christians in the country. Abbink (2011) and Hussien (2006) noted that the 19th century mass conversion of Muslims to Orthodox Christianity as a major feature of religious polemics, which spoiled interreligious relations in the country.

Controversies over public places were similarly reported in other African countries. For instance, Sampson (2012) investigated the notorious Christian tradition, particularly, emerging Protestant groups, organizing mass crusades and revivals on public highways or properties adjoining the high ways,

Most of these crusades and revivals have the disrepute of obstructing vehicles and human movement for long periods of time in absolute disregard to tortuous and criminal liabilities. Many road users of other faiths – and even those of the same faith – see this practice as an affront to their legal rights to the use of public roads as well as a demonstration of religious arrogance and insensitivity. ... both churches and mosques have a tradition of erecting large and extremely noisy loud-speakers within and outside their worship places. This sound-magnifying equipment generates serious noise pollution to the annoyance of neighbors. In most cases, the worshippers engage the use of these instruments throughout the nights, Muslim worshippers also engage the use of these instruments every morning between the hours of 4 and 5 am, thereby constituting nuisance to neighbors. The erection of worship places in public offices

¹⁰ The word *Pente* used to represent Pentecostal groups who were active in evangelization in different parts of the country. Obviously, it denotes a person who belongs to any of the Protestant churches.

has also served the purpose of politicizing religion in work places, as both religious groups often compete for public spaces for worship purposes. (P. 119).

The emergence of free press and modern information technologies aggravated competition over religious preaching and propagation. Abbink (2011) rightly notes the effect of free press and theological debates, which activated the conflict between Muslim sultanates lead by Ahmed Gragh and the dominant Christian highlands in the 16th century. He shows that the 1995 constitution instituted religious freedom and equality. However, competition between different religions adjoined with freedom of press radically changed the interreligious landscape and its interaction. Correspondingly, a prominent scholar of religion, Hackett, mentioned the role of the electronic media and its application to religious preaching, causing conflict, and violence between Christians and Muslims in Africa (Soares, 2006).

Some respondents described the problem of church/mosque construction around residential areas. It was noted that there were no strict rules of land use zoning, that is, delineating residential and social services in the urban areas. Mosques and churches were built in inner cities and around residential areas which may disturb their lives. The Orthodox Christian respondent working in the Social Affairs Office in Jimma described that in some towns particularly in Jimma and Agaro, there was no land use and social services planning. For instance, there was no plan delineating areas for construction of churches and Mosques.

Interreligious misconception and attitude towards one another were other factors of interreligious contentions exacerbated by active interreligious preaching. In addition to active process of expansion of Protestantism, some respondents viewed that historically there was a negative attitude towards some religions. A Protestant pastor in the Revealed Word of God International Church held:

The main thing was the persistence of negative perception than interreligious preaching. Protestants were considered as anti-Mary and against the tradition of the society. There were aggressive attitudes and hostility towards Protestantism. They were not considered as human. Although the change in government brought equality and freedom, still there is influence of the past attitude. (Interviewed on Jan. 25/2015, Jimma).

Similarly, the Protestant priest in Omonada also added that some people consider preaching as devaluing and conceiving one's religion as wrong. As stated, this perception was one of the major driving factors in the 2011 conflict. This goes with the two extreme philosophical orientations: exclusivism (the view that only one religion is correct while all others are mistaken) and religious pluralism (the view that only one world religion is correct

but others also partially reveal some of the truths of the correct religion) (Meister, 2009). In this regard, in religiously diverse regions, viewing others as ‘unsaved’ generates hostility towards one another leading to interreligious conflict.

Some negative words such as *mete*, ‘imported religion’, and *akirari* were used expressing negative connotation between Muslims and Christians. An elder in Agaro 02 kebele described that “Khawarijites and Wahhabiyas were labeled as *akirari*”, a word which creates marginalization and interreligious frictions. There was also mis-connotation against Protestants. For instance, the Orthodox Christian respondent at the Ministry of Federal Affairs divulged that Protestantism was viewed as a religion which expands modern and western cultures, viewing it as against the existing religious traditions. The respondent in the Revealed word of international church also described that Protestants were labeled as “anti-Mary and against the cultural tradition of the society”. This suggests that there was a negative attitude and labeling of Muslims and Orthodox Christians against Protestants and some Muslim groups mainly due to their active preaching and expansion.

In the context of other parts of the country, Tibebe (2009:5) also discusses the danger of stereotyping and evangelization practices in interreligious relations. He asserted that other religions’ negative conceptualization of Protestants as ‘*mete haymanot*’ meaning, ‘religion of alien import’ was considered as roots of antagonistic interreligious relations in the country. Similarly, Protestants’ view of Islam as ‘*Sheik menfes*’, ‘spirit of Sheik, Orthodox Christian as ‘*yedebteramenfes*’ and Oromo indigenous religion-Wakefanna as ‘*yekalichamenfes*’ affected peaceful interreligious encounters. Orthodox Christians on the other hand again viewed Protestantism as ‘anti-Mary, outlandish, and therefore, anti-culture and anti-nationalism’. Therefore, it was such misconceptions and labeling that distorted peaceful interreligious relations in the country enabling interreligious conflict to arise.

Due to this widespread mis-conception, preaching against other religions was observed and considered as another cause of interreligious friction. The Muslim resident in Jimma Kito kebele again observed that some preachers use offensive words which affect the dignity and rights of other religions. They use some negative words such as ‘people with head scarp with evil spirit’ and ‘those living in dark.’ This mis-conception and labeling of one another instigated interreligious disharmony. This issue was also widely reported as the main causes of interreligious conflict in other African countries. For instance, Sampson (2012) argued that some religious sects between Christians and Muslims usually employ forced

conversion and it became one of the immediate causes of intense interreligious conflict in Nigeria. He (P. 121) stated that,

In 1987 religious violence in Nigeria was allegedly caused by a Christian preacher, who allegedly used verses from the Qur'an to delegitimize Islam, while justifying the exclusive existence of salvation within the ambience of Christianity. Although [the Bible and the Quran] deprecate the use of threat and coercion as a means of proselytizing, their approaches to preaching have remained mentally and sometimes physically coercive. Unfortunately, the most visible approach to Islamic conversion campaigns is that of Jihad. Muslim fundamentalists view adherents of other faiths, and sometimes moderate Muslims, as corrupted stock worthy of Islamic conversion or regeneration.

5.3. Revival of Religious Identities

Religious identity became resurgent than other forms of social belonging in the study setting. The Muslim trader in Jimma explained the vitality of religious identity asserting, "No one can live without religion," which suggests that religious identity became increasingly salient and sensitive although multiple sources of social identification persist.

Religious identity was more salient than other forms of identities in the study area. For instance, a question item in the survey method asked about the perception of religious and ethnic identity. About 60 percent of Muslims, 78 percent of Orthodox Christians, and 74 percent of Protestants prioritized religious identity over ethnic identity. In general, for 66 percent of the respondents, religious identity was more salient than ethnic identity. There was statistically significant association between religious category and view of ethnic or religious identity as determined by Chi-Square ($\chi^2(4)=10.984$, $p= 0.027$) (see appendix 3), the frequency distribution in each group showed that both Muslims and Christians consider their religious identity more than ethnic identity in the study setting.

Table 5.5. *Respondents' view of religious and ethnic identity*

Religious category	Religious		Ethnic		Total
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	
Muslims	150	60	99	40	249
Orthodox Christians	59	77.6	17	22	76
Protestants	36	73.5	13	26.5	49
Catholics	2	100	0	0	2
Wakefata	1	0	0	0	1
Missing					7
Total	248	66	129	34	384

Source: Sample survey, February 2015

Findings from the qualitative method corroborate the survey result. For instance, an interview with the Muslim businessman in Jimma clearly illustrates the increasing trend of religious identities. He expounded that previously most people do not consider their religious identity seriously. Cultural and ethnic identities were more salient. Decades ago, the issue of religion has become important in this area. However, for some respondents, especially elders, cultural and ethnic bonds are still more important than religious identities. The Muslim elder in Agaro kebele 05 illustrated that “we all are one in ethnic and cultural identities; our religion should not divide us. Hence, identity is your choice.”

A high school Protestant English teacher in Omonada stated that people in the area are aware and conscious of their religious backgrounds than ethnic. He described a condition where many residents wrongly equate Muslim with Oromo due to the lack of information on Oromo’s religious diversity:

In this area I am observing the problem of awareness and lack of knowledge about our identity. Many people are not aware of our diversity in religion and ethnicity. For instance, there is a condition where people consider you as Amhara or other ethnic group (non-Oromo) if you are not Muslim. Due to the lack of deep knowledge, people of the same ethnic group were against one another since their religion is different. (Interviewed on March 10/2015, Asandabo kebele).

Respondents were further asked to explore factors behind the revival of religious identities. According to the Muslim merchant described above, increasing trend of population movement has created religious diversity. As a consequence, people are over cautious to defend their culture and religion against growing trend of international connectedness. In

addition, peoples' knowledge of their own religion was increasing because of exposure to different technology and mass media enabling them to be aware of themselves and their history.

With reviving trend of religious identities, competition over basic resources and religious expansion instigate interreligious frictions. Applying social identity theory, as Hynes (2007: 84) argues, "Individuals may feel personally injured when they perceive that others whom they believe share their identity is being ill-treated. This resulted in identity clashes involving self-identified, often polarized, groups, within or between countries." This further intensifies state-religious institutions' tensions when different religious groups feel that the government interferes in religious affairs and their religious rights are violated by the government.

There are different religious identities in Ethiopia and at least four were active in the study area: Muslim, Orthodox Christian, Protestant, and *Wakefata*. Of these four, the first three were actively dominating the political and academic discourse while the latter one was underrepresented in the political and academic discourse and in the study of interreligious landscape. It was also found that the various interreligious conflicts in the area reportedly occurred between these religious identities particularly Muslims and Orthodox Christians as well as between Muslims and Protestants.

Moreover, there were identity differences between Christians (between Orthodox Christians and Protestants, which thoroughly discussed in chapter seven), mainly based on doctrinal differences, and there was also the revival of internal divisions and identities among Muslims. For instance, Muslims in the area belong to different sects including Sufi, Wahhabiya, and Khawarij. Lines of sectarian differences in the area also intensified intra-religious tensions. They compete to promote their own identities, which resulted in intra and interreligious frictions.

Realizing emerging threat of religious identities in the country, seemingly there was a shift in the political attention from ethnic towards religious issues. As indicated above, the 1995 constitution of the country primarily aimed at enhancing ethnic identity through the system of federalism. The Ministry of Federal Affairs was established with the aim of promoting harmonious relations between regional states and strengthening the system of federalism. However, recently, addressing religious issues became the major duties and responsibilities of the ministry. Due to the religious resurgence, the major duties of the Ministry of Federal Affairs were redefined in 2010 and the relationship between the ministry

and religious institutions was also refined. Interreligious council of Ethiopia was initiated and established by the government in 2010 and bodies which look after religion and religious issues under the Bureau of Security and Justice of regional states in the country at regional, zonal and Woreda level were instituted in 2015. Therefore, in contrast to studies of Erlich (2006), Wondwosen and Jerusalem (2010), and Castells (2010), currently, religious identities have become more important and prioritized over ethnic identities in the study area. Increasing revival of religious identities was one of the pressing political concerns. Strong religious identity creates distance among people and viewed as one of the major instigating factors of interreligious tensions in the area.

5.4. Majority-Minority Nexus

The proportion of followers of a particular religion in the study setting was one of the socio-demographic determinants of interreligious relations. Interreligious interaction is influenced by an encounter between predominant and newly expanding religions in terms of their proportion in the society in the area. Ethiopia has diverse religious traditions. The 2007 Ethiopian Population and Housing Survey states that Orthodox Christians constitute 43.5 percent of the total population; Muslims constitute 33.9 percent; Protestants comprise 18.6 percent while Catholics, Wakefata, Jehovah, and the 7th day Adventists comprise the remaining percentage of the total population (OPHCCE, 2007). Jimma Zone is ethnically and religiously diverse due to a large number of settlers in the area due to job opportunities and the town's trade link with other parts of the country (Yonas, 2002).

Different religious groups were disproportionately represented and have varying relations with one another due to their proportion in their area. The massive population movement and introduction of different religions to the area initiated competition between native residents and new settlers which strive to establish their own strong economic and religious bases. In Jimma area, Muslims were considered as the majority while others were viewed as minority.

Although the constitution guaranteed freedom of religious practices, there were some impositions on numerically minor religious groups at the local level due to their proportion in the society. Despite the constitution unrestrictedly call on all religions to express their beliefs and practices, some religious groups with few adherents were mistreated and disfavored by the majority religions and local governments. The respondents of this study described majority-minority tensions due to two major factors. First, there was a tension between the

majority group and the newly expanding religious groups over resources and religious expansion. Second, due to their minority status, there was a lack of equality and recognition by the local government. The Orthodox Christian respondent from the Social Affairs Office in Jimma responded that in some localities where Muslims dominate there was a tendency that the local government favors Muslims over Orthodox Christians or Protestants. He added that there were Protestant groups who claim that religious equality is only on paper but not realized or enforced. Religious minorities hardly access place of worship and cemetery. Accordingly, Islam was viewed as a religion exerting social and political influence due to its larger proportion in the total population. It is a predominant religion comprising many followers in the area than Orthodox Christianity and Protestantism.

In principle, majority-minority contention was caused by internal and international dynamics. Ellingson (2010), for instance, describes the multiplication of new religions into areas previously dominated by natives' religion and international migration as the major factor for ethnic and religious diversities, which further create inter-ethnic and inter-religious tensions. Controversy over the majority and minority status was viewed as one of the topical issues of interreligious relations in western countries such as America and Europe (Ellingson, 2010). Hence, in religiously diversified world, due to internal as well as external factors such as population movement and religious conversion, a claim for majority status and competition over hegemony become one of the root causes of interreligious conflict across the globe (Ellingson, 2010; Esposito, 2007; Michel, 1997). Michel (1997: 55) uniquely views a "factor that complicates Christian-Muslim relations around the world is the fact that almost everywhere the two communities live in relationships characterized by imbalances in their status as majority or minority, access to power, and perceptions of self-sufficiency or vulnerability".

Furseth and Rapsadt (2006) and Esposito (2007) argue that conflicts between religious groups which can take place at different levels, within a continent or a region, within a nation, or a local community are directly related to heterogeneity created due to international and internal migration. They described a more recent conflict that has emerged in Europe and the Western world, namely the conflict between a rapidly growing Muslim minority and the Christian majority as a result of migration from the Middle East, Asia, and Africa to the West as an example of the majority-minority contentions.

However, internal movements such as rural to urban and inter-regional flow of people of different ethnic, religious and language background determine interethnic and

interreligious interaction in the place of destination in the study area. Unlike the influence of international migration, the majority-minority disharmony was recently manifested due to increasing competitive attitude over religious expansion and resource sharing between Muslim majority and Christian minority in the localities. For instance, the Muslim key informant working in Oromia Justice Bureau described that sometimes minority groups are mistreated because of their number. They are legally equal but practically mistreated by the local government and the majority group. But recently many Protestant groups were flourishing with a motive of expanding their own religion, claiming equal status despite their low proportion in the area.

The attitude of the government towards the predominant and minor religions has a particular importance. It was understood that the attitude of the local governments to a particular religion was influenced by the locality's religious proportion. Some respondents held that the local government sided with the outnumbered groups in service provisions allowing them to realize their beliefs and practices in public places. Conversely, the Protestant priest in Mekane Yesus church stated that the local administrations were against minor religious groups due to their number. The religious father in the Revealed Word of God International Church also stated that recently Protestants were not allowed public observances due to the assertion that they cause noise pollution in neighborhoods while Muslims and Orthodox Christians, who claimed majority, were allowed. The act was understood among the Protestants as the persistence of religious inequality due to their low numerical status in the community. The Protestant Priest in Mekane Yesus church and zonal interreligious council member also described that the then zonal administrator sided with the predominant Muslim group in the 2011 interreligious conflict in the area due to their higher proportion.

The proportion of different religious groups in a certain locality also influences the distribution of political power. In the study area, there was increasing claim that Muslims dominate political positions and public sector offices due to their higher proportion in the area. For example, the Muslim elder in Agaro explained that the conflict in Bashasha was related to competition over political dominance. Muslims were perceived as the majority in the area and the question was to take political power since they are dominant in number. The respondent reflected the public's perception that the Muslims were under-represented in political leadership and public service offices in the area. Despite the constitution equally recognizes the majority and minority groups, some residents and government officials viewed

religious diversity as a threat to peaceful interreligious coexistence. There was a notion among the officials and residents interviewed that religion becomes a political and public concern beyond private issue. Although the constitution dictates freedom of association including religion, belief, and expression, the proliferation of different religious groups was perceived as a challenge. Uniquely, the Protestant pastor described above stated that the prohibition of religious recognition in the recent past was due to fear of religious diversity and its management. He depicted local government structures and long procedures of registration as means of guarding religious diversity. Accordingly, as part of these processes, most recently, there were constraints and denials of free expression of religious practices mainly targeting the new and minor religious groups in the area.

5.5. Economic Factors

Economic issues were regarded as another cause of interreligious tensions in the study area which include dispute over land, internal population movement, and competition over resources. A controversy over equal access to land between religious groups in the urban and rural areas of the study locale was a cause of interreligious frictions. The survey method in this regard showed that interreligious conflicts were related to competition over getting spaces such as access to agricultural land, residence, space for construction of church/mosque, cemetery, and offices. For instance, about 28 percent of Muslim respondents strongly consider that the chance of getting these opportunities have declined due to the presence of other religious groups as indicated in table 5.6 below. About 9 percent of Orthodox Christians and 7 percent of Protestant respondents also strongly agree that the chance of getting land is deteriorating due to the presence of other religions. However, for about 34 percent of Muslims, 35 percent of Orthodox Christians, and 27 percent of Protestants the competition over space was declining not due to the persistence of diverse religious groups. As the figure shows, for the majority of the respondents, land for the construction of church/mosque and cemetery are declining not only due to the presence of other religions but other factors such as a view of local government towards various religions.

Table 5.6. *Interreligious competition over access to spaces*

religious category	Is the chance of getting land declining due to the presence of other religions?					Total
	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	
Muslim	69 (28%)	22 (9%)	44 (17.9%)	84 (34%)	27 (11%)	246
Orthodox Christians	7 (9.5%)	12 (16%)	23 (31%)	26 (35%)	6 (8%)	74
Protestant	7 (16%)	2 (4.5%)	17 (38.6%)	12 (27%)	6 (13.6%)	44
Catholic	0	0	1 (50%)	1 (50%)	0	2
Wakefata	0	0	0	1 (100%)	0	1
Missing						17
Total	83 (22%)	36 (10%)	85 (23%)	124 (34%)	39 (11%)	384

Source: Sample survey, February 2015

A competition between settlers and the native population over rural land was another source of conflict. According to the Protestant key informant working in IRCE, there was a contention between the native residents where the majority of them were Muslims with a few Christian settlers in some areas of Jimma Zone, particularly Omonada, Asandabo kebele. Most of the settlers came from central and northern parts of the country (mainly northern and central parts of Oromia region) were followers of Orthodox Christianity. There was a general assertion that the settlers (mostly Christians coming from central and northern part of the country) were economically better off. This condition created a perceived economic gap and uneven distribution of resources, especially cultivable and fertile land, led to hostility between the natives (majority Muslims) and the settlers (minority Christians). The Muslim woman teaching in Qujo elementary school in Agaro described that it was misinformation circulated in the area that Christians and people from other parts of the country are dominating the area in terms of economy, farming land, working in civil service, and political positions, which created a disharmonious relationship between Muslims and Christians. As a result, native Muslims became angry and felt that they are marginalized in the economic spheres.

At a macro level, historical studies described competition over territorial expansion as a source of interreligious dispute in the country (Birhane, 2009; Hussien, 2006). Historically, the general interreligious relation was explained in terms of socio-economic relations (Abbink, 1998; Markakis, 1974). In their initial stage of proliferation, both Orthodox Christians and Muslims lived together and cooperated with each other. It was after centuries

that phases of violence, antagonism and confrontation erupted (Abbink, 1998). After the thirteenth century, prolonged conflicts between the highland Christian kingdom and the low land Muslims erupted mainly due to economic and political rather than purely religious factors, which resulted in antagonistic relations between the two religious groups (Hussien, 2006). Thus, in most cases, although religious missions were not neglected, the basic causes of conflict between Muslim lowland and Orthodox Christian highland in the 14th and 15th centuries was to control both internal and external trade routes (Samuel, 2008). Likewise, Medhane (2004) related interreligious conflicts and religion-state tensions to the problem of poverty in Ethiopia. In relation to this, movement of people across regions (nationally and internationally) has aggravated competition over basic resources, which negatively affect peaceful interreligious relations. First, it creates tension between the settlers and natives; and second, tensions and conflicts may further arise along ethnic and religious lines. Hence, interreligious interaction is partly influenced by its economic setting.

In describing experiences of other countries, Muzaffar (2005) states that certain internal socio-demographic trend has exacerbated inter-religious tie. For instance, in many parts of Asian countries where the migration of large numbers of people of a particular religious affiliation to another region within the same country populated by another religious community can give rise to communal tensions over scarce resources such as land, especially if the immigrant community proves to be economically more successful than the settled community within a short period of time. This unbalanced development creates mistrust between religious groups and state where religious violence and riots are more likely to happen. Generally, interreligious tensions in many countries of the world are a response to socio-economic and political injustices and underdevelopment. Haynes (1998: 10) clearly states that “social upheaval and economic dislocation connected to the processes of modernization have sent people back to religion in the Third World. ... In the 1990s, a period of social, economic, and political transition in many countries led to religious tensions.” Wijzen (2007: 124) also maintained that religious confrontations in many African countries are “just a cloak for economic and political grievances”.

5.6. Interreligious Knowledge

Interreligious knowledge refers to the extent to which people know the fact of religious diversity and factual information about others’ religion including the basic beliefs and practices of others in their neighbor (Ayantayo, 2008; Sianipar, 2011). In a religiously diverse area, the level of knowledge of others’ religion is one of the influencing factors of

interreligious understanding and peaceful coexistence. Although there are religious and socio-cultural elements binding Muslims and Christians in the study area, knowledge of these aspects was minimal.

To understand the respondents' level of interreligious knowledge, the survey asked how much the respondents know the basic principles and practices of other religions. This item was intended to know the level of knowledge of the fundamental religious beliefs and practices in Christianity and Islam. The choice of 'great deal' indicated much knowledge of the beliefs and practices of Christianity/Islam; 'some' indicate very minimal knowledge, while the 'not at all' choice indicates lack of basic information about Christianity/Islam. With statistically insignificant association between religious category and participation in one another's religious practices as determined by Chi-Square test ($\chi^2(8)=4.97$, $p=0.76$) (see appendix 3), it was found that about 53 percent of Muslims, 49 percent of Orthodox Christians, and 54 percent of Protestants do not participate at all in others' religious practices. More than half of Muslim and Christian respondents (53%) were not willing to know the basic religious beliefs and practices of others' religions.

Table 5.7. *Respondents' participation in others' religious beliefs and practices*

Religious Category	Sometimes		Rarely		Not at all		
	frequency	%	frequency	%	frequency	%	
Muslim	28	12	81	35	124	53	233
Orthodox	8	11	28	40	34	49	70
Protestant	9	20	12	26	25	54	46
Catholic	0	0	1	50	1	50	2
Wakefata	0	0	0	0	1	100	1
Missing							32
Total	45	13	122	35	185	53	384

Source: Sample survey, February 2015

Low level of interreligious knowledge and participation was mainly related to lack of interest and knowledge of common religious and socio-cultural elements. Specifically, high level of illiteracy and low exposure to modern information technologies were raised as major factors. Contrary to this finding, studies in other African countries described factors related to the dominance of culture over religion. Ayantayo (2008), for example, described that

interreligious knowledge is peculiarly related to the history of religion in Africa. According to Ayantayo, historically Africans were dependent on their indigenous religion and cultural practices. Many of them later converted to either Islam or Christianity. Consequently, some of them have little knowledge of their new religion, either Christianity or Islam. Binzel and Carvalho (2013) on the other hand, relate interreligious knowledge to the level of inter-societal interaction. Advancement in information technologies and increasing level of population movement exposed people to know different cultural and religious traditions. In sum, limited level of interreligious knowledge significantly influences peaceful interreligious encounter.

5.7. Chapter Summary

This chapter investigated the causes of interreligious tensions in Jimma Zone. More recently, religious overtones were widely reported in Ethiopia, once perceived as land of interreligious tolerance with accommodative religious policy. Interreligious tensions in the study area reflect changes in political, economic and religious dynamics. In a religiously plural setting like Ethiopia, occasional interreligious and intra-religious conflicts were emerging. At the macro level, the political change in 1991 created a revival of different religious groups in the country. It resulted in the proliferation and competitions between religions. Recently, many religious institutions and followers dramatically increased in number and have religious propagation campaigns which heightened the conflict between them and the government (the latter discussed in chapter seven). In spite of the fact that ethnic identity and related issues were a social and political priority in Ethiopia/Africa (Castells, 2010; Erlich, 2006; Gnamo, 2002; Korostelina, 2007; Wondwosen and Jerusalem, 2010), religious identity was found more salient than other forms of social belonging in the area. This was intensified by the change in the state policies, socio-demographic changes, international connectedness, and world political context. This shift was a factor contributing to the dynamism of interreligious relations. Accordingly, the inhabitants in the area were divided along religious lines with dynamic form of interaction.

The friction between competing religious groups was also aggravated by economic factors. First, intra and inter-regional movement of people created competition over basic resources, which initiated tensions between settlers and native population in the name of religion. The issue was aggravated by the conflict between newly expanding Protestants and numerically predominant Muslims. In the process of religious expansion, competition over access to basic services such as land for construction of church/mosque, cemetery, and

offices were the instigating factors. There was also a contention over political and economic dominance due to their proportion in the society. This finding is consistent with studies of Michel (1997), Medhane (2004), Wijzen (2007) and Muzzafar (2005) who generalized that interreligious tensions are a cliché of economic problems. It is suggested that unemployment, lack of basic services, and inequality in resource sharing are the main driving force of tensions between religious groups and the state institutions. In the wave of this competition, interreligious preaching was another conflict triggering factor. Competition to win over religious converts and reaction against switchers and religious expansion through mosque/church construction and a response against it by the government and other religions were the major influencing factors.

Chapter Six

Bridging Religions through Actors and Institutions

Introduction

Social relation, particularly interreligious interaction is a product of multiple organs (Davis, 1994). Consensus and conflict as the dominant forms of human interactions are inevitable aspects which human beings create (Dahrendorf, 1959; Merton, 1968). Based on specific social, political, and economic contexts all people have varying forms of social interaction, which include harmony on one hand and disharmony on the other end. Interreligious interaction, as specific forms of social relations, therefore, is a product of human actions. This chapter explores the dynamics of religious and non-religious actors shaping interreligious relations in the study area. In the light of this, the place of multiple organs including religious leaders, faith-based organizations, local elders, and interreligious councils will be discussed. Specific emphasis was made to explore the positive contribution of these actors by promoting and deepening peaceful interreligious coexistence in the study area.

6.1. Religious Leaders

Despite the fact that interreligious conflict is creating problem across the globe, religious capital constitutes the basis of interreligious harmony. Multiple religious organs were recognized as playing the role of inter-mediatory to promote interreligious conflict resolution and peace building. Religious leaders¹¹ were counted as part of religious capitals with ability to mobilize their members towards peaceful interreligious interactions.

The participants of this study held that religious leaders are prominent and authoritative figures in their respective institutions, both over religious and non-religious matters. There was a consensus among the respondents that religious leaders shape the actions and interaction of their followers. For instance, the Muslim merchant in Jimma articulated that “no one could be out of the reach and the control of religious leaders.”

Religious leaders, most trusted in the communities, play multiple roles in conflict resolution, both at individual and community level by maintaining interreligious and interethnic peace. Their effectiveness and trustworthiness rest on their negotiation skill and

¹¹ Religious leaders are prominent figures in a community with a formal affiliation to a religious institution by occupying a leadership position. For example, priests, pastors, imams, theologians, ustaz, and *Aba Gadaa*.

their grace comes from religious, cultural, psychological, historical, and personal traits that make them more effective and reliable than formal institutions. Moreover, the Protestant elder in Jimma Kito kebele described their effectiveness in shaping interreligious interaction since they use religious principles and committed to their faith. The Muslim merchant, during an interview, echoed this as well:

Religious leaders use words from the Bible/Quran to guide their members. From the religious point of view, there is no religious principle which allows dominance of one religion over the other. All doctrines order their members to respect others' religion. There is no religion which allows harming human being. It treats every human being equally as far as I know. It is this basic principle by which religious leaders maintain religious reconciliation and peace. (Interviewed on Jan 24/2015, Jimma).

Religious leadership has also credible socio-cultural value. It was stated that religious elders bridge families and neighbors together in addition to settling religious cleavages. For instance, the officer working in Jimma Zone Finance and Economic Development Office spoke of cultural and historical values making religious leadership and eldership more valuable. Succinctly putting his idea as follows:

They communicate on how families, neighbors, and all residents should live together. They are respected in the community than in other organs like government bodies. It was their contribution that calmed the previous interreligious conflicts. They mediate religion with other organs particularly with the government in addition to interreligious bridging. They give advice by using historical contexts as a means of convincing people. (Interviewed on Jan 26/2015, Jimma).

The above extract shows that beyond mediating conflicting parties, religious leaders bind religious groups with other formal institutions. It suggests that religious leaders reduce tensions between the state and religious institutions. Moreover, they act as an entry point for the government and non-state actors to intervene and resolve interreligious and religion-state tensions. An in-depth interview with the Muslim elder in Agaro 05 kebele corroborates that the government uses socio-cultural institutions and prominent individuals to maintain peace. Local elders, *iddir* associations, religious leaders and other indigenous structures were used to re-establish peace. Accordingly, religious leaders act as a third party linking the community with the government, mediate in case of disagreement, advocate for the voiceless, and play an active role in interreligious conflict resolution. Similarly, Karbo (2014: 50) also highly credited the role of religious organs in Ethiopia, where religious cleavages are getting hot. He states:

Taking religious leaders and other religious actors to create social cohesion is crucial in transforming previously divided societies. Religious entities and their leaders have resonance within communities (both at the federal and local levels) to provide a political and social voice for the voiceless and can become powerful symbols to militate against violent or divisive behavior, promote conflict management, develop a socially cohesive society and rebuild social relations through reconciliation.

In line with Karbo's idea, there is a general notion that most Ethiopians are religious and their identities to the most part are tied to their faith. Therefore, the role of religious leaders is critical in mobilizing people towards peace at times of conflict, and creates an opportunity to interreligious peace amidst emerging religious diversity. Hence, religious eldership was considered as effective in bridging religious divides. It was considering this context that the Muslim merchant spoke of religious leaders as mobilizing agents:

Because everyone is a member in one of different religious institutions, no one could be out of the reach and control of religious leaders. Because these people are respected; they know their religion seriously; they are trusted; and thus, everybody hears them, which enable them to have the power to convince people. (Interviewed on Jan 24/2015, Jimma)

To ensure representation, religious leaders are nominated by members from all religious institutions using criteria such as experience in mediating role, acceptance by their members, knowledge of their own religious principles, self-initiation, commitment, maturity, and deep knowledge of their own cultural traditions. Given their experience, religious leaders played an important role in initiating interreligious dialogue, resolved issues of religious divides, and were able to mobilize their members towards peace as well as linked communities or religious institutions with the state.

However, it was noticed that not all religious leaders are trusted and able to contribute to interreligious harmony. Some respondents cautioned that there were some religious leaders who use their role to promote their own personal and political agenda or interest. Thus, rather than promoting harmony, they mobilize their members towards interreligious conflict. They use to their advantage of people's sense of religious identity, the low level of literacy and limited interreligious knowledge to breed seeds that arise to interreligious conflict. The Muslim trader added that not all people adhere to and are convinced by religious leaders. The Mekane Yesus church priest in Kito congregation similarly stated that "there are religious leaders with a motive to attain religious and political ends. They should represent and reflect the interest of the people they represent without siding and unfairly treating their members in favor of government's interest." According to this respondent, the co-option of religious

leaders with the government was widely observed in the area. While some religious leaders mobilize religious communities for opposing government ideologies, others allied with the government to work towards maintaining existing political ideologies.

Other studies of religious and ethnic conflict in Ethiopia similarly magnified the role of an indigenous system of conflict resolution where religious leaders play a credible role. For instance, Little (2007) emphasized the effectiveness of eldership and religious leadership in inter and intra-state conflicts including interreligious disharmony. He further depicts that religious leaders in Ethiopia can successfully mobilize communities towards interreligious peace and resolve conflict, and using this method is effective due to the fact that they are respected among the community in general and among their members in particular. Haileyesus (2012) in his study of Christian-Muslim conflict highlighted that religious leaders have a typical potential to win the attitudes of their followers in times of interreligious disagreement towards interreligious peace. Compared to politicians, he stated that religious leaders have the power and potential to be heard and accepted.

The role of the prominent religious figures was also widely recognized in other African countries. As part of these socio-cultural traditions, Wijisen (2007), Hamilton (2001), and Smidt (2003) posited that there are religious social capitals on which people depend for their survival. In this regard, religious social capital comprises the potential of religious-based organizations, religious leaders, and interreligious councils contributing to the betterment of society in general and maintaining interreligious peace in particular. Similarly, Panggabean (P. 57) acknowledges:

Religious leaders and organizations play a preventive role by convening community dialogue, problem-solving workshops, and training in conflict resolution skills. During violence, religious organizations can provide safe-havens for victims of violence, refugees and internally displaced people. [They organize] dialogue and training programs to combat ethno-religious hatred in addition to serving as conflict prevention function, as well as more direct involvement in conflict situation such as mediation and good offices. Hence, the place of religious leaders and organizations in this context is enormous.

According to the above quote, religious leaders play a preventive and conflict resolving role where religious diversity is immense. In addition to their contribution to immediate conflict settling processes, they were acknowledged for their potential in maintaining inter-ethnic and interreligious harmony. Similarly, Appleby (2008: 27) rightly states the potential of religious leadership rooted in religious and socio-cultural traditions. He clearly stipulated:

Religious leaders are uniquely positioned to foster non-violent conflict transformation through building of constructive, collaborative relationships within and across ethnic and religious groups for the common good of the entire population of a region. In many conflict settings around the world, that is, the social location and cultural power of religious leaders make them potentially critical players in any effort to build a sustainable peace.

Browne (2014: 6) underscores that “religious actors often have a long-term commitment to their communities; and their social position as cultural insiders gives them credibility and authority.” In the same perspective, Little (2007) described the effectiveness and potential of religious leaders arising from the rich experience of conflict resolution, their knowledge and use of ideas and principles from holy books, leadership in the community, and in general their ability to mobilize people of different faith towards peace, reconciliation, and interreligious coexistence.

6. 2. Local Elders

Like religious leaders, local elders¹² have multiple roles to play in society. Local elders are respected, experienced, and prominent figures in communities. They also play significant role of contributing towards maintaining order at individual, interethnic and interreligious levels. There was consensus among the study respondents that eldership is culturally accepted and used in the country. The Muslim informant working for Jimma Zone Finance and Economic Development Office viewed that “eldership widely used and are culturally respected. Elders are popular figures and their contribution is highly valued. They are nominated not only for their age maturity but also based on their capacity to settle disputes.” According to the Protestant elder in Kito kebele, eldership has a unique place in Oromo culture. Culturally, people believe in elders’ advice, blessings, and curse. It was noted that among the Oromo, it is believed that creator hears elders’ blessing or curse and it is usually believed that disrespecting elders’ blessing and advice brings wrath of creator on people. According to elder interviewed, “elders settle cases of disagreements between couples, interethnic, and interreligious conflicts. They settled cases which formal institutions were unable to settle. They also resolve conflicts among neighbors. They bridge people of different religions together.”

¹² While religious leaders are prominent individuals nominated from a community representing a particular religious institution, elders are key figures culturally representing a community or village; not a particular religious group.

One of the various ways through which elders shape social relations in general and interreligious encounters in particular is the socialization process. Through socialization, they shape actions and interaction of their community members. The Muslim elder in Agaro kebele 05 states that “the main role of elders in their community giving advice. They played a crucial role in teaching about respecting one another. They talk the same language. Their counseling is highly respected and valued. They work with different organs, with government and others. They are involved in different issues including religious conflicts.”

It was also noted that interethnic and interreligious conflict resolution processes in Ethiopia using elders was more effective than other formal methods of intervention through courts and the state. The interview with the two elders in Jimma and Agaro clarifies that elders not only resolve conflicts directly, but even courts, governments, and non-governmental organizations use elders and local networks to settle issues, including interreligious conflicts.

The power and popularity of eldership is embedded in socio-cultural values beyond religion. According to the Muslim informant in Agaro 05 kebele, elders teach peaceful interaction based on culture and thus, they have a unique potential to mobilize and convince people towards making peace. They do not commit a mistake rather they safeguard against mistaken people. Local elders were motivated by themselves, came together from all religious groups, able to mobilize the community to make peace, and engage other main actors including the state, religious leaders, and other NGOs. Therefore, it was believed that the persistence and involvement of these local networks in peace making process is initiated by the local residents, particularly religious and local elders who successfully reduce tension and promote peaceful interreligious coexistence.

However, the manipulation and co-option of elders by the local governments were key factors that challenged the use and trustworthiness of eldership in the conflict resolution process in the area. For instance, local governments nominate and manipulate local elders to legitimize and promote their political ideologies and administration. These types of elders also preach their religion and encourage local community to mobilize the whole community towards government support.

The use of eldership for political purpose is not unique to Ethiopia. Wijzen (2007) summarized the role of elders in many African countries, which include mediation, facilitation of interfaith discussions, advocacy, teaching, advising, judging, and diplomacy to bridge differences. Similarly, Trijono (2004) identifies three forms of conflict resolution

mechanisms in which eldership is inevitable: conflict management, conflict resolution, and conflict transformation. The first mechanism is to handle ethnic and interreligious conflicts to reduce its negative consequences using indigenous mechanisms such as local eldership as well as forceful measures by police, law, and sanctions which are usually employed by the state. The second mechanism is to solve the conflict through conflict resolution which involves identification of problems in which both conflicting parties present their case where elders mediate. The third mechanism is to transform the conflict through reconciliation and conflict transformation again in which elders use various subtle, sustainable, and convincing mechanisms. Trijomo further states that in this conflict transformation processes, there are different individuals and institutions playing a prominent role, which include business associations, professional organizations, local women and youth associations, NGOs, trade unions, and political parties. In the process, informal local networks such as families, neighbors, friends, schools, and churches play a role. These diverse actors are pooled together through local elders to discuss and maintain inter-group solidarity.

In any type of conflict transformation processes, Little (2007) explored the inevitability of eldership based on the experiences of a prominent elder of Ethiopia, Professor Ephraim Isaac and says:

One of Dr. Ephraim Isaac's most effective peacemaking methods in Ethiopia has been to call upon one of the country's indigenous resources: the social system of elders. In a culture in which elders are viewed as the traditional leaders and are deeply respected, Ephraim frequently organizes and leads community elders to collaborate in efforts to stop violence and facilitate peacemaking processes. Through his own experience as an elder and community leader, Ephraim has concluded that Ethiopia's tradition of eldership can bring communities to peace in a way that politicians or professionals – with their frequent lack of understanding of key local traditions – never can. (Little, 2007: 12).

Little (2007) further states that eldership in Ethiopia is more effective than formal diplomacy and court system or intervention by government and police because eldership is part of socio-cultural traditions deeply internalized by everybody in local communities. Presenting Professor Ephraim Isaac's idea, Little says that elders use gentle persuasion, high ethical standards, and a spiritual approach, which is more salubrious and more effective because it encourages the parties to work through their grievances in their own way. Exploring similar experience, Fayemi (2009) illustrated multiple roles of elders acting as arbitrators and agents of conflict resolution.

6.3. Interreligious Councils

6.3.1. Establishment and objectives

Interreligious Council of Ethiopia (IRCE), established in 2010, is an institution which encompasses religious organizations from Christians, Muslims, and Catholics with an aim to promote interreligious harmony, religious freedom and equality in the country. Beyond promoting interreligious harmony, the council aims to support religious institutions to realize their potential to strengthen their socio-economic conditions (IRCE, 2014).

To nurture the values of interreligious peace, the council is a lead agency responsible for bringing together, in a collective manner, all faiths to address issues of social inclusion and development in the country. The establishment of the council was directly related to the emergence of interreligious conflicts in the country. In this regard, interreligious conflict transformation was one of the major missions of the council. It was stated that the organization embraces religious institutions, which comprise over 97 percent of the total population of the country (Muslims and varieties of Christians). In the council, the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, the Supreme Council of Islamic Affairs, the Ethiopian Evangelical Churches Fellowship, the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus, the Ethiopian Catholic Church and the Ethiopian Adventist Church were registered members (IRCE, 2014). Hence, this institution has a great potential, resources and the network to bring together people of different faiths for dialogue and to promote interreligious harmony.

According to an interview with the officer at IRCE at national level, one of the most promising activities of the IRCE was its role in bringing members of different religious groups together to discuss on each other's issues, which enhances interreligious knowledge and further promotes awareness of the fact of religious diversity in the country. It also links members of religious groups with the state, which enhance religious freedom, recognition, and equality to be realized. In addition, IRCE has been playing advocacy and mediation role. Moreover, it initiates interreligious dialogues and training on which all religious groups reflect their views and understand the realities of others (IRCE, 2014). Karbo (2014: 50) in this regard acknowledged the role by stating the following:

[It is an opportunity] to develop interpersonal relationships among the various leaders of members of faiths with the primary goal of learning about the cultural, ideological and religious views of each faith. Experiences in these dialogue sessions reveal that members of various faiths have been able to enrich, deepen and broaden their own religious life through a mutual understanding of one another's convictions and witness.

As stated, the council convened a forum for interreligious dialogue with two essential functions: enhancing interreligious understanding and cultivating interreligious peace. Through dialogue, people develop an opportunity to understand the fact of religious diversity, develop common understanding by identifying common cultural and religious values in order to enhance peaceful interreligious coexistence.

Interreligious Council of Ethiopia functions under the umbrella of the Ministry of Federal Affairs. To this end, a collaborative forum between the ministry and the council was formally enacted with an aim to manage religious diversity. This collaboration with a political unit, however, created suspicion among members of faith-based organizations. The Orthodox Christian respondent working in Ministry of Federal Affairs described as,

IRCE and Ministry of Federal Affairs of Ethiopia are working together to bring peace between religions and to mobilize the potential of religion in development agenda. They have a common plan: development and peace. Hence, IRCE and the Ministry of Federal Affairs relation is purely a non-political mission. (Interviewed on Dec. 10/2015, Addis Ababa).

The Protestant respondent working in IRCE also explained the linkage between IRCE and MoFA and stated that:

In the previous proclamations, since the religious issue was not as such sensitive, the role of the government [and its relation with other religious actors] was not clear. The current proclamation clarifies how and when the government should intervene in religious issues. The new proclamation indicates that the Ministry of Federal Affairs shall work in collaboration with religious institution to settle religious related problems. IRCE and other religious institutions also shall work with different government organizations to facilitate socio-economic betterment of citizens. The proclamation also requires all religious institutions to be registered. Accordingly, about 950 religious groups were registered at the Ministry of Justice and 1334 religious organizations were registered at the MoFA. Hence, religious institutions and IRCE are directly governed and followed up by the MoFA. (Interviewed on Dec 12/2015, Addis Ababa).

As indicated, the establishment of IRCE within the domains of the Ministry of Federal Affairs was aimed at collaboratively manage interethnic and interreligious conflicts, supporting regional integration, and promoting developing regions in the country. IRCE in 2015 established branch offices in regional states and zones to enable immediate response to emerging threats of religious tensions. Ensuring neutrality was an issue that was debated over during the establishment. The Orthodox Christian respondent in the Federal Affairs Office

noted that IRCE was established by building on the experiences acquired during interreligious conflict settling processes in Jimma. He added that:

To settle the conflict, residents, especially religious leaders took the initiative to discuss the issue. Through the process they formed a council in which all religions in the area participated. They successfully settled the conflict. Based on this experience, the council was officially established at national level. At the local level these people were religious leaders and who were trusted among their members. They also got support from the government. Their trust among the community and government support help them easily to convince their members towards peace restoration. (Interviewed on May 9/2016, Addis Ababa).

In principle, the establishment of IRCE both at national and zonal level was initiated by the local community and it also suggests that the council was established and trusted by people although the collaboration and its co-option with the state was contentious in practice. The informant working at IRCE described its representativeness and neutrality since the council members come from all religious organizations.

6.3.2. Controversy of the representation of interreligious council

The question of representation, neutrality, and relationship with the government were the main issues of the discord. The respondents questioned the establishment's neutrality and representation of the council, particularly at zonal level, claiming that intra-religious divisions and government interventions challenged the normal functioning of the council. According to the Protestant priest in Mekane Yesus and a member of the council in Jimma, there was disagreement between newly emerging Muslim sects who claimed that they were not represented in the council due to government's motive of influencing inclusion of pro-government religious sects. He specifically described as:

The representative of the Protestants was elected by vote. We have common fellowship [Evangelical Fellowship] which has its own committee nominated by formal election...In the case of Orthodox Christians, the office directly sent a representative by letter mainly a person who is serving permanently in the office. But in the case of Muslims there are internal divisions. Due to this the government usually through the zonal administration office directly contacts Muslim religious leaders to elect a representative who is willing to cooperatively work with the government and other religions and who doesn't raise challenging questions. The Muslims are internally divided: Wahabiyya, Sufi and Khawarij. It was only Sufis who are allowed to participate. Others are not allowed but they are legal and operating in society; they have their own mosque; I personally have seen a Wahabiyya representative dismissed from the meeting by the government that convened the meeting. (Interviewed on April 18/2016, Jimma).

This suggests that while different Protestant churches have a Fellowship Council, which directly brings different churches together, internal divisions between Islamic religious groups made their representation in the council a point of dispute. Wahhabiya has no representation in IRCE. The government and the council did not recognize them as a religious entity.

Some respondents also described the co-option between the council and government arguing that the government sponsored, initiated, and supported its establishment for political ends. Due to government interference, the Muslim respondent working in Finance and Economic Development Office of Jimma Zone questioned the fair representation of the council:

The government initiated and supported us to establish a forum in which many religious groups participate and discuss about peace. It invited all religious community to be a member of the forum through their representatives. Accordingly, all religious organizations nominated their members but no one knows whether they represent their religious community or not. The council is working on religious issues although we suspect government interference. They call meetings but no one is willing to participate. Initially, it was established by the initiation of the government. But it doesn't officially provide them budget and other resources for operation. Their representation is also questionable. They call meetings only when there is conflict and the government wants them to meet. They don't have permanent source of budget. But they are arranging conferences and operate their work normally. I don't know the source of budget; it is not clear. I think they may have some hidden agreement with the government. (Interviewed on Jan 26/2015, Jimma).

The respondent added that only religious leaders with a positive view of the existing political ideology were invited to the council meetings. It was also alleged that the government funds the council for the purpose of guarding political stability. The council also faced yet another challenge – membership to the council was voluntary and although the majority of religious groups are members, others were reluctant to be part of it.

Despite these challenges, there was a consensus among all respondents that the council significantly contributed to build peaceful interreligious coexistence. An interview with the priest in Mekane Yesus who was a member of the council at zonal level highlighted how important was the council in promoting interreligious understanding and its contribution to maintain interreligious ties and peaceful coexistence. He stated that, “so far we have arranged training on peace, leadership, and good governance in religious organizations. The council has the power of influencing its members, contributing to interreligious understanding and tolerance.” In view of this, the council uniquely bridges religious divides and is able to mobilize people towards interreligious harmony. As a third-party actor, they are

well positioned to facilitate dialogue and mediate in cases of conflicts, using both religious and non-religious principles, in an effort to bring interreligious peace and harmony.

6.4. Faith-Based NGOs

In sub-section that follows, the role of FBOs in cultivating peaceful interreligious encounters is explored. Initially, its notion, features, and lastly, the origin and development of FBOs, its regulatory environment, and its operation in regard to interreligious bridging will be discussed.

6.4.1. Types of FBOs

Faith-based Organizations (FBOs) are civil society organizations (CSOs) functioning as non-profit and non-government organizations. FBOs include religious and religion-based organizations, networks, and communities with affiliation to a particular religious institution. They are specialized institutions and religious social service agencies as registered or unregistered non-profit institutions that have a religious character or mission (Barkley center for religion and world affair, 2007).

International and national-based FBOs play a credible role in maintaining peaceful interreligious coexistence, resolving religious related conflicts beyond humanitarian and developmental interventions. The US Institute of Peace special report (2003) recognized the positive contribution of FBOs in sustaining inter-group peace. The report categorized FBOs into two groups: the first are organizations which are purely religious aimed at giving spiritual/religious services for its members alone; and the second type is faith based NGOs motivated by religious values but performing non-discriminatory humanitarian and developmental services. The latter wing engages in a range of activities, including promoting interfaith encounters, providing immediate humanitarian aid and teaching interreligious peace and tolerance where religious diversity prevails.

FBOs share many characteristics with the secular civil society organizations.¹³ But FBOs are motivated by their faith. They are unique players within the broader international humanitarian community, are rooted in their local community, and their large constituencies enables them to play a powerful role in advocacy. These types of institutions are also called faith-based NGOs, which are non-state actors that central religious or faith is core to their

¹³Ethiopian Ministry of Capacity Building (2004) defined civil society organizations as those formal and informal that is either membership serving or third party serving. Accordingly, the notion of civil society includes NGOs, CBOs, FBOs, advocacy groups, professional associations, cooperatives and trade unions; but it excludes political parties, media, and the private sector.

philosophy, membership, or programmatic approach although they are not simply missionaries (U.S institute of peace special report, 2003).

6.4.2. Emergence and regulatory environment of FBOs in Ethiopia

The emergence of FBOs in Ethiopia is not a recent phenomenon although their role in building interethnic and interreligious encounters had not received much attention. Realizing the potential of these FBOs in modernization process in general and expanding education in particular in the country, emperor Haileselassie I, formalized their operation starting 1944 (Smordal, 2012). During this regime, although the number of civil society organizations was limited, the operational policy or framework was flexible. However, during the military (*Derg*) regime, the number of NGOs and specifically FBOs were dramatically decreased based on an assumption that they were promoting western capitalist ideologies. It was not until after the current government assumed power in 1991 that NGOs flourished and became involved in different development programs (Smordal, 2012).

Since then, many FBOs have supported the socio-economic development of the country including promotion of interreligious peace and harmony, without which development would have been unattainable. Smordal (2012) stated that FBOs are highly valued for their wide structured networks and the advantage of using these networks to communicate the message of peace and development. The Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church (EOTC), various Protestant churches, and Islamic organizations constitute large share of FBOs and operate in different parts of the country. Few of these institutions include Ethiopian Evangelical church Mekane Yesus, Ethiopian Full Gospel Church, Kalehiwot Church, Orthodox Church, Catholic Church, Ethiopian Muslim Relief and Development Associations, World Vision Ethiopia, and Norwegian Church Aid.

According to the Ethiopian Ministry of Capacity Building (2004), there were about 368 NGOs as of 2000. Among these 122 (33.2 percent) of them were international and 246 (66.8 percent) of them national. As of 2012, this figure increased to 1,119 (141 of them were international while 978 were local (Smordal, 2012). Although the figures fluctuate, the 2014 data showed more than 3000 officially registered NGOs operating in the country (MoFA, 2014).

The state determines the operation of religious and FBOs through its legal and policy frameworks. The state has a responsibility to create harmonious relations among various groups in the country. In discussing the importance of religious policy, Fuad (2007) argued that religious harmony is instrumental for the maintenance of the unity of the pluralistic

nation. As a result of the state policies, there were two contradictory events which occurred consecutively and accounted for the proliferation and decimating number of FBOs and NGOs in Ethiopia. First, as previously stated, the present government, as compared to the previous regimes, created an enabling environment for many religious institutions and NGOs to revive. However, a proclamation was issued in 2009 (proc. 621/2009) restricting NGOs and FBOs on the sources of funding that can be used and on what issues that can or cannot engage in. Furthermore, it mandated all NGO and FBOs to be registered with the Ministry of Justice to be recognized as a legal entity and renew their license every three years. It also required all NGOs and FBOs to adhere to 70/30 cost proportion (30 percent for administration and 70 for Program).

This regulatory framework was perceived by many as the government's way of limiting NGOs including FBOs' operations on issues related to political and human rights activities. As stated in the Ministry of Federal Affairs' training manual (2014: 32), the government suspects that some NGOs are serving as a channel of human and financial flow aimed at expanding and propagating religious fundamentalism. The document added, "A legal framework was devised to regulate their participation in development and human rights works." This revealed that the 2009 charities and civil society proclamation and institutional arrangements for their registration were devised as a guard against the operation of all civil society organizations including FBOs. This finding is in agreement with Ostebo (2010) who argued that, citing the idea of Tronvoll (2009) the NGOs' registration requirements negatively affected the contribution of religion to the socio-economic development of the nation. Similarly, Smordal (2012) also describes this phenomenon as follows:

The new law has received critique from the international media and a wide range of organizations with regard to its regulation and restrictions on international NGO's operating in Ethiopia ... The practical application of the legislation limits the space for the civil society in specific areas such as human and democratic rights, gender equality, rights of disabled and children, conflict resolution, and justice ... The legislation has put the engagement of organizations such as Norwegian Church Aid (NCA) in a state of uncertainty to work on some thematic prohibited areas. (P. 12).

A suspicious relationship between FBOs and the government in the country caused their number to decline. This resulted in limited number of actors involved in inter-ethnic and interreligious peace building in the area. In the study area, many FBOs were engaged in mobilizing communities, provide emergency relief during and aftermath of interreligious conflict and in general contribute to humanitarian work. However, due to the restriction

imposed, almost all FBOs have withdrawn from religious issues. The study respondents thought that the proclamation was purposely intended to constrain their involvement in promoting interreligious peace. The Muslim respondent in the Finance and Economic Development Office of Jimma, in this regard, considered that “there was interreligious dialogue and training once or twice annually which contributed to active engagement and awareness of the various faiths. However, these programs are absent these days due to the proclamation.” Another Muslim merchant in Jimma added, “Although there are legally registered FBOs, the government follows-up on their activities and restrict their operation on religious issues.” This suggests that in spite of the existence of FBOs, their potential in shaping interreligious relations has been hampered.

6.4.3. FBOs and interreligious relations

Conventionally, FBOs have emerged and gravitated towards programs that materially improve the lives of individuals. Most church organizations were widely appreciated by poor communities for their assistance to meet urgent material as well as spiritual needs (Narayan and Petesch, 2002). Currently, they often become involved in long-term development efforts mainly supporting economic development and empowerment activities which include efforts to help future generations. In this regard, World Faith Development Dialogue (2004) identified five ways through which FBOs contribute to service provision in partnership with state agencies which further contribute to socio-economic and political betterments. They include influencing and participating in policy making; directing provision of basic services; monitoring services provided by the state; lobbying policy makers; empowering the poor to participate in various development processes, and mobilizing the community towards peace management and conflict resolutions.

Haynes (2007), for example, summarized the decisive contribution of FBOs into four main areas: emotional and spiritual support to conflict-affected communities; effective mobilization of their communities and others for peace; mediation between conflicting parties; and a conduit in pursuit of reconciliation, dialogue and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration. Tomalin (2007) described that research by NGOs and civil society neglected to capture the significance of Faith Based NGOs despite the role they play thus may have contributed to the untapped potential of FBOs. The importance of FBOs in building interreligious harmony beyond providing developmental and humanitarian assistance is crucial and Vinjamuri and Boesenecker (2008: 155) described in nutshell as:

Networks of non-state actors, secular and religious, have been at the forefront of a range of efforts to promote truth, advance reconciliation, and prosecute alleged war criminals in conflict situations. And yet, the work of many religious organizations has been overshadowed by the highly visible work of secular human rights organizations prominent in shaping international public policy debates concerning the role of accountability in ongoing and post conflict situations. Indeed, scholarship on the role of religious organizations engaged in transitional justice is also comparatively limited.

These studies magnified the finding that FBOs have been involved in religious, social, and economic development in many developing countries. It suggests that they potentially contribute to eradication of deep-rooted poverty, restore peace, and mobilize resources on which poor people rely on.

In the study area, FBOs have been playing a notable role in building interreligious peace and promoting dialogue. They are involved in religious conflict prevention, management, and resolution although their role varies depending on the perspectives or approaches. For instance, an Orthodox Christian respondent at the Social Affairs Office in Jimma said that previously there were many FBOs involved in conflict resolution processes. They were involved in initiating and cultivating interreligious dialogue through which interreligious conflict was resolved and peace restored.

FBOs were also believed to be effective in mobilizing various stakeholder as well as resources towards sustainable and peaceful interreligious encounters. There were some FBOs effectively mobilizing financial and material resources in the 2011. Their effort to resolve the 2011 conflict in Jimma was a notable example. The Muslim respondent in the Finance and Economic Development Office of Jimma stated that they mobilized resources from America and Europe, especially for advocacy and empowerment issues. They also collaborated with other stakeholders for experience sharing, exchange of lessons and best practices. The respondent spoke that IRCE worked with FBOs as a means to scale up and enhance interreligious dialogue in the study area as well as in many part of the country.

6.4.4. FBOs and interreligious engagement: A case study in the study area

Some of the key international and national faith-based NGOs operating in the study area include Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus, World Vision Ethiopia, Islamic Relief and Development Associations, and Kalehiwot Church Development Programs (Jimma zone Office of Finance and Economic Development, 2014). These organizations have a number of development programs and only few of them have programs focusing on

interreligious related activities. However, many faith-based organizations like Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus were discouraged to work on religious issues and as a result have withdrawn from interfaith programs despite the positive contributions made to promote interreligious dialogues and harmony.

Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus (EECMY) is a Lutheran Church founded by Hermannsburg Mission of Germany and the Church of Sweden in 1950s. EECMY has developmental wing participating in various socio-economic related service provisions including in interreligious conflict management and peace building in the surrounding Woredas of Jimma. Although there were many other Christian and Islamic-based NGOs, this organization played a proactive role in mobilizing religious and non-religious institutions towards peace restoration during the 2008 and 2011 interreligious conflicts in the area.

The contribution of EECMY could be summarized into three main areas: humanitarian support for those affected by the interreligious conflicts in different parts of Jimma and Ilu Ababora Zones, strengthen collaboration with government and other religious institutions in the area, and organizing interreligious dialogues (EECMY-DASC Jimma district office, 2014). The theologian in Mekane Yesus Church in Jimma summarized the church's intervention during the intense interreligious conflict and thereafter:

Mekane Yesus church has a strategy regarding how to live in coexistence with other religions. Our motto is holistic ministry (serving human being as a whole; giving spiritual and developmental services for all humans regardless of religious differences); serving the hungry, and HIV/AIDS patients. We provided assistance for all without forcing them to convert their religion. In addition to this, we also arranged forums to increase peoples' interreligious understandings. (Interviewed on Jan. 25/2015, Jimma).

The informant further expounded that the church especially its developmental wing played a crucial role in educating and bringing people together towards conflict transformation. The church mobilized multiple religious actors who preached tolerance. Consequently, many interreligious forums were convened where many religious organizations participated. Therefore, beyond giving spiritual and developmental services, many FBOs like EECMY contributed towards maintaining interreligious peace. The church initiated many interreligious dialogues at local and zonal levels which further enhance interreligious knowledge and directly promote interreligious harmony.

Further, the theology education run by EECMY was reported to have a positive contribution to peaceful interreligious coexistence. According to the theologian at EECMY, students are also benefiting from, the courses given on Christian-Muslim Relations. The program also invited people from various religious institutions to engage students in religious dialogue.

However, as a consequence of the 2009 civil society and charity proclamation, many faith-based organizations working on religious issues including EECMY's interfaith programs were closed. The Muslim respondent in the Finance and Economic Development Office in Jimma, described that previously there was an organization called interfaith initiative and Mekane Yesus Church was working on interreligious peace. The program was closed due to government's prohibition of NGOs working on political issues. A Protestant key informant working for Mekane Yesus Church Compassion Program in Agaro specifically stated as follows:

More recently, there was government rule [the 2009 Ethiopian charities and civil society proclamation] proclaiming that NGOs should not intervene in security, political and religious issues. International and national NGOs are not allowed to intervene in these issues. I think many NGOs rely on funds from international organizations and donors. Due to the proclamation many NGOs are not willing to work on [building interreligious peace]. (Interviewed on Feb 1/2016, Agaro town).

As understood from the above quote, many faith-based organizations like Mekane Yesus Church development program were discouraged to work on interreligious peace by mobilizing external funds. As a consequence of the proclamation, no organization was allowed to work on religious issues. EECMY has withdrawn itself from the interfaith support programs although it registered remarkable changes in bridging multiple faiths together in the past decades.

In general, faith-based organizations can serve as mediators and educators, linking religiously divided groups to facilitate dialogue and interreligious harmony. In spite of this, however, government's restrictive policy has limited organizations' engagement in humanitarian, advocacy, and development programs. Consequently, although the existence of multiple religious and indigenous organs was recognized, their role in cultivating peaceful interreligious encounters has been restricted.

6.5. Chapter Summary

This chapter illustrated how prominent elites and religious-based institutions potentially shape interreligious interactions. Amidst the recently deteriorating relationship between Muslims and Christians in Ethiopia, civil society, community elders and FBOs have made considerable effort to promote interreligious dialogue, peace and harmony. Religious leaders and local elders, highly respected and accepted in communities, have also contributed towards peace building processes at times of interreligious conflicts, at family and community levels. As compared to other formal institutions, using elders as mediators is a preferred strategy due to the trust and respect communities have of them and most importantly their ability to successfully influence and bridge religious divides. Religious leaders were also active in educating, mobilizing, and enforcing interreligious harmony.

Regarding the role of formal institutions, interreligious council have recently emerged for managing religious diversity in the country. The council was expected to take a leading role in initiating interreligious dialogue, and promoting interreligious peace and understanding. However, its role in the study area was controversial due to its relationship with government which made its neutrality and representativeness questionable. It was observed that the government, unlike the enabling environment of the past, put restrictive policies to limit FBOs from engaging in advocacy and right-based approach including interreligious peace restoration. Consequently, a number of organizations withdrew thus their potential could not fully be utilized towards interreligious dialogue and harmony.

Chapter Seven

Religious Institutions and State Interaction: Co-option and Resistance

Introduction

Interreligious interactions are highly influenced by political settings. Particularly, “Christian-Muslim relations do not exist in a vacuum anywhere in the world; political issues impinge on their interactions” (Michel, 1997: 53). A Protestant religious father in Mekane Yesus church Kito kebele in Jimma articulated that “religion is a political agenda than private issue alone. We are living in political environs.” With this perspective, this section deals with the interactions between state and religious institutions, and the impact on the general interreligious relations. To this end, issues of religious freedom, government interference in religious affairs, religious equality and recognition as influencing factors of interreligious interactions were discussed.

7.1. Policy Framework

The issues of religious freedom and equality are imperative and clearly stated in the Ethiopian constitution. The first Ethiopian constitution that was formulated by Emperor Haileselassie in 1931 guaranteed the emperor an absolute power and authority in any matters regarding the land and the people including religion. This constitution did not recognize religious diversity, equality, legal recognition and freedom. The constitution was later amended in 1955 on the occasion of 25th anniversary of Emperor Haileselassie's coronation. The amended constitution was the first in defining the relationship of state and religion in the country. It stated that there was state-supported religion and the emperor has always worshiped, protected and passed on this same religion to generations to come (MoFA, 2012).¹⁴ It was clearly stipulated in Article 21 and 23 of the constitution that imposed the emperor or his follower to take the oath that profess and defend the Orthodox Church. It stated that the Ethiopian Orthodox church, founded in the fourth century, was the established church of the empire and is as such, supported by the state. Moreover, article 127 indicates that the church has no right to make decisions without the approval of the Emperor or the state. These statements coincide with Jonathan Fox's (2008) type of state-religion relations. In this category, there was state's support of religion; religion exists for the service of state's

¹⁴ Article 126 of the 1955 Ethiopian constitution states, “The Ethiopian Orthodox Church, founded in the fourth century, on the doctrines of St. Mark, is the established Church of the Empire and is, as such, supported by the State. The Emperor shall always profess the Ethiopian Orthodox Faith. The name of the Emperor shall be mentioned in all religious services.”

mission and legitimizes state authorities; the state uses the properties of church and vice versa; and the state appoints church leaders. Hence, there was no freedom of religion at individual and institutional level.

The constitution of the country was revised once again during the military regime in 1987. The government came to power in 1974 with a socialist and anti-religion ideology. Its political and ideological motive was derived from Marxist philosophies, which view religion as a tool of oppression and obstacle to revolution and change. Under article 46 of the constitution, there were articles indicating *freedom of conscience and religion, the exercise of freedom of religion may not be in a manner contrary to the interest of the state and the revolution, public morality or the freedom of other citizens, and state and religion are separate*. However, in practice, the military government was against all religious ideologies. Followers of many religious institutions were prosecuted; especially Protestants were labeled by the government as promoters of western capitalist ideologies (Tibebe, 2009). All properties of Orthodox Christian church were confiscated and all religious training institutes were shut down and converted into party schools (Abbink, 1998; Hussien, 2006; MoFA, 2012). This religiously oppressive and hostile practice led followers of different religions to unite against the regime. In addition to religious oppressions, political and economic grievances overthrew the system and a new government took power in 1991 and is also currently in power. The current government gave more emphasis to ethnic and religious equality and diversity which was reflected in the 1995 constitution.

In the 1995 constitution, at least three articles are directly related to religious issues (article 11, 25 and 27). Article 11 of the constitution states that religion and state are separated. It states that there shall be no state religion and the state shall not interfere in religious matters and religion shall not interfere in state affairs. Article 21 further clarifies that prisoners have the right to meet religious bodies for counseling and encouragements.

Furthermore, Article 25 states that all persons are equal before the law and are entitled, without any discrimination, to the equal protection of the law regardless of sex, ethnic, geography, language, political affiliation, economic status and religion. Article 27 declares one's right to follow a religion of his/her choice individually or as a group, exercise religious practices and beliefs in private and public spheres, right to convene for worship and teachings. It also asserts that no one shall be subjected to convert through a coercive manner. However, this right is subjected to some limitation to protect public safety, peace, health, education, public morality or the fundamental rights and freedoms of others, and to ensure the

independence of the state from religion. Article 90 states that public places such as education should be free from the influence of religion.

In sum, in the pre-1974 period, the states' manipulation of religion for political interest, lack of legal recognition, and unequal treatment of religions distorted the relationship between the state and religious institutions. With the coming of the new government in 1991, some conducive legal environment was created in principle, which paved the way for many religious groups to revive. This led to the proliferation of many religious groups all claiming recognition, freedom, equality and rights. However, the limited capacity or lack of government's willingness to accommodate the interests and rights of these groups eventually created tension between the state and religious institutions.

7.2. Religious Freedom as a Cause of State-Religious Institutions Dispute

Religious freedom refers to the ability of people of all faiths to form religious associations and exercise their religious beliefs and practices. The constitution urges the government to recognize these religious rights, however, in practice there were limitations. Tension between the State and religious institutions in Ethiopia was reportedly attributed to lack of true religious freedom and recognition (Fox, 2008; Ostebo, 2010). In this sense, the state-religious institutions interaction is peaceful only as far as religious freedom, equality, and recognition are actualized.

A series of questions were employed in the study area to determine if lack of religious freedom was the triggering factor leading to religion-state tensions. The questions include a general self-defined view of level of religious freedom, whether or not the constitution limits freedom of religion, whether the government (both at federal and local levels) favors one religion over the other, and interferes in religious affairs, for instance, by appointing religious leaders and restricting religious groups or not.

Accordingly, religious freedom was measured using likert scale. The survey respondents were asked to evaluate the degree to which they freely exercise their religious beliefs and practices without external impositions. In view of this, about 75.3 percent of Muslims, 71.8 percent of Orthodox Christians, and 52.1 percent of Protestants responded that they were very free to practice their religious beliefs and practices. Similarly, 19.4 percent of Muslims, 24.4 percent of Orthodox Christians and 41.6 percent of Protestants believe that they were somewhat free to practice their religious duties. There were minimal external impositions impeding them to realize their own religious practices and beliefs. Contrary to this argument, about 3.2 percent of Muslims, 2.6 percent of Orthodox Christians, and 6.3

percent of Protestants believe that there was no freedom of religion at all in their area. There was statistically significant association between religious categories and religious freedom as measured by Chi-Square test ($\chi^2(12)=29.603$, $p= 0.03$) (see appendix 3). This informs that one's religious freedom is determined by his/her religious denomination in the study area. The frequency distribution in table 7.1 shows that as compared to Muslims and Orthodox Christians, Protestants were less free to realize their religious practices and beliefs in the area.

Table 7.1. Respondents' perception of extent of religious freedom

Religious Category	Very free		Somewhat free		Not free at all		DK	Total
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	
Muslim	190	75.3	49	19.4	8	3.2	5	252
Orthodox	56	71.8	19	24.4	2	2.6	1	78
Protestant	25	52	20	80	3	6.3	0	48
Catholic	1	50	0	0	1	50	0	2
Missing							4	4
Total	272	70.8	89	23.2	14	3.6	10	384

Source: Sample survey, February 2015

The survey respondents were further asked if the constitution limited their right to express their religious practice and beliefs. Irrespective of religious differences, about 84.2 percent of Muslims, 87.2 percent of Orthodox Christians, and 89.8 percent of Protestants believed that the present constitution does not limit freedom of religion.

Table 7.2. Respondents' perception of the present constitution

Religious Category	Does constitution limit freedom of religion?				Total
	Yes	%	No	%	
Muslims	40	15.8	213	84.2	253
Orthodox Christians	10	12.8	68	87.2	78
Protestants	5	10.2	44	89.8	49
Catholics	1	50	1	50	2
Wakefatas	0	0	1	100	1
Missing					1
Total	56		327		384

Source: Sample survey, February 2015

In addition, the survey respondents were asked whether or not the federal government favors one religion over the other. About 80 percent of Muslims, 94 percent of Orthodox Christians, and 97 percent of Protestants do not believe that the federal government officially favors a specific religious group. Regardless of religious differences, the majority of the respondents (83%) believe that the constitution guarantees equality of religion and the federal government treats all religious groups equally.

Table 7.3. Respondents' Perception of State's religious preference

religious category	Does the state favor one religion over the other?				Total
	Yes	%	No	%	
Muslim	51	20.4	199	80	250
Orthodox	5	6.5	72	94	77
Protestant	2	4.1	47	96	49
Catholic	1	50	1	50	2
Wakefata	0	0	1	100	1
Missing					5
Total	59	15	320	83	384

Source: Sample survey, February 2015

Although the constitution does not limit freedom of religion, however, the interviewed participants described that some religious groups were mistreated by the local government by favoring one religion over the other. For instance, the Protestant key informant in Mekane Yesus Church's Compassion Program stated that "at the local level, government bodies have no commitment and knowledge of the fact of religious diversity. Some of the [local officials] are part of the radical religious groups and there is exclusion at work place due to religious differences." Similarly, the religious teacher in the Revealed Word of God International Church stated:

Our problem is not with the existing constitution and federal government. [Lack of religious freedom] is mainly violated by officials working at the local level. Most local officials usually favor their own religion, [Islam]. Generally, there are mistreatments at the local level [although the constitution guarantees equality and freedom of religion at all levels]. (Interviewed on April 18 2016, Jimma).

One can understand from the above quote that limited realization of the constitutional principles at the local levels was reported as the core factor of religious institutions and the state tensions. The pastor further mentioned that "the legal gaps, [between the constitutional principles at the top and its realization at the local level] were the main concern. Although the constitution allows religious propagation, the local government prohibits it; the reaction against it was negative. There was no security for your preaching." Accordingly, the rights of religious equality, expansion, and propagation were constrained by the local government and it was reported as the main cause of government-religion tensions in the study area. More specifically, the use of public places for religious events was a point of dispute between Protestants and the local government. Some respondents admitted that the government prohibited the use of public places for preaching and celebrating holidays due to fear of interreligious conflict. For instance, the Mekane Yesus church priest in Kito kebele stated that the regional government particularly prohibited Protestants from conducting religious conferences in stadiums while Muslims and Orthodox Christians were allowed. This indicates that there is discrimination, lack of religious equality or freedom in the true sense.

Furthermore, at the local level most public spheres such as work place and at places of service providers were not secular and became a point of interreligious dispute. For the public safety and order, the local government prohibited public preaching and observances particularly by Protestants, an act which was viewed as religious restriction. Few participants in the survey method also support this finding. About 16.7 percent of Muslims and 5.7 percent of Orthodox Christians believed that the local government favors one religion over

the other. Among these, 82.5 percent of Muslims, 75 percent of Orthodox Christians, and all of the Protestants said that the local government in the study area favors Islam over Christianity.

Table 7.4. Respondents' perception of local government's treatment of religions

religious category	Does the local government favor one religion over others?				Total	Which religion local government favors?			
	Yes	%	No	%		Islam	Orthodox	Protestant	total
Muslim	40	17	199	83	239	33	6	0	40
Orthodox Christians	4	6	66	94	70	3	1	0	4
Protestant	2	4	46	96	48	1	0	1	2
Catholic	0	0	2	100	2	0	0	0	0
Wakefata	0								
Missing					25				
Total	46	12	313	82	384	37	7	1	46

Source: Sample survey, February 2015

Discrimination around provisions of government services was reported as an indication of religious inequality in the study area. For example, according to the interviews, land acquisition for the purpose of constructing mosque or church and cemetery was reportedly the main discord. Data obtained through the qualitative method showed that unequal provision of land for all religions was a source of friction between some religions and local governments. The founder of the Revealed Word of God International Church highlighted that “the city administration does not want to provide us land due to fear of diversity. In the urban and rural area, it is unthinkable to get land for construction of church and cemetery.” The respondent added, “Due to lack of appropriate acquisition of land, we usually use informal procedures such as buying land from individuals and construct church around residential areas, which may create discomfort and disturbance to residents of other religions.” Generally, different religious groups were differently treated by the local government.

Tensions between religious institutions and the government were also partly due to worsening conditions of poverty including increasing economic inequality and high level of unemployment. Some respondents stated their perception that in areas of Bashaha and Yabu town some religious groups were marginalized from socio-economic and political

development based on religion. According to a Protestant resident in Agaro 02 kebele, in Yabu, a town located 20 km North of Jimma, some Muslims allegedly gave money to unemployed youth to convert them to Islam and to mobilize power against the government. The Orthodox Christian informant in MoFA added that low level of education and interreligious knowledge open rooms for political manipulation using religion as the means. As an outlet to express grievances, people resort to conflict and in this case religious tensions may arise.

Importantly, uneven development and increasing trend of unemployment resulted in a suspicious relationship between government and religion. Some respondents considered that there was a perception in some religious groups that they were marginalized from socio-economic and political development due to their religious difference. This case was reported in some areas of Bashaha and Yabu. According to a Protestant resident in Agaro 02 kebele, in Yabu, a town located 20 km North of Jimma, some Muslims allegedly gave money to unemployed youth to convert them to Islam and to mobilize power against the government. In addition, according to the Orthodox Christian informant working in MoFA, the government officials suspect that political elites mainly opposition groups may use unemployment and low level of living as a fertile opportunity to mobilize the communities against the government. This seemingly suggests that it was this suspicious relation which resulted in the friction between some religious groups such as Khawarij and Wahhabiya and the government in 2011 in Agaro and Bashasha.

Regarding government's involvement in religious affairs, the survey method found that about 87 percent of Muslims, 88.5 percent of Orthodox Christians and 92 percent of Protestants do not believe that the federal government interferes in religious matters. This indicates that the state's involvement in religious affairs at federal level was minimal although it became a point of the state-religious institutions tensions in the country.

Table 7.5. Respondents' perception of federal government's involvement in religious affairs

religious category	Do you think that there is government involvement in religious matters?				Total
	Yes	%	No	%	
Muslim	32	13	217	87	249
Orthodox	9	11.5	69	88.5	78
Protestant	4	8	44	92	48
Catholic	2	100	0	0	2
Wakefata			1	100	1
Missing					6
Total	47	12	331	88	384

Source: Sample survey, February 2015

Moreover, those respondents who believed that the government interferes in religious affairs also replied that the government restricts some religious sects to operate in the country. About 57.9 percent of Muslims and 42.9 percent of Orthodox Christians said that the government was involved in limiting some religious organizations. Respondents stated that the government was indirectly involved in appointing religious leaders (both Muslims and Christians). Informal discussions with some key informants show that there were grievances and dissatisfaction among Muslim and Christian members at the local level, as they perceived their leaders as pro-government, and argued that the government manipulates religion for its political ends.

Among the respondents who said that the government interferes in religious issues, 77.5 percent of Muslims and 28.6 percent of Orthodox Christians believe that the government interferes in appointing religious leaders while 22.5 percent Muslims and 74.4 percent of Orthodox Christians do not agree with the assertion. Thus, as understood from these figures compared to Christians, there was a suspicious relationship between Muslims and the government assuming that it may involve in appointing religious leaders. Generally, it was understood that the government's pursuit of religious activities was a point of religion-government dispute in the study locale.

Table 7.6. Respondents' view of government involvement in appointing religious leaders

religious category	Does government involve in appointing religious leaders?				Total
	Yes	%	No	%	
Muslim	31	77.5	9	22.5	40
Orthodox	2	28.6	5	71.4	7
Protestant	1	100	0	0	1
Catholic	1	50	1	50	2
Wakefata	0		1	100	1
Total	35		16		51

Source: Sample survey, February 2015

Lack of religious recognition was another controversial issue of the state-religious institutions' tension in the area. It was reported that some Islamic groups such as Wahhabists were not officially recognized by the government. The government uses long procedures, delay or denial of supporting letters at the local administrative level as means of discouraging recognition for the newly expanding religious groups. For instance, the Mekane Yesus church representative of Jimma Zone Interreligious Council observed that Wahhabists were not allowed to participate in the council meeting since they were not recognized by the government as a religious denomination. In addition, the Muslim woman teaching in Qujo elementary school in Agaro argued that although Sufiyya and Wahhabiyyas are dominant in the area and equally recognized by the Muslims, the government does not recognize Wahhabism.

The religious teacher in Jimma Revealed Word of God International church also described that currently, getting a legal recognition for new religious establishment was internally prohibited by the regional government, being the central point of the discord. He clearly presented as:

We have faced many problems to get legal recognition. The government uses a long procedure to discourage religious expansion. To be legal, it needs a recommendation from kebele administration. You have to get signature of at least 50 members and get a recommendation letter for each of them. It took me 3 months. They were not willing to recognize me. It was like cultivating the sky. After 2 years I applied to the Ministry of Federal Affairs. I told them that I was unable to get recommendation letter from kebele. After reconsidering other documents such as residential identity card they gave me letter of recognition. (Interviewed on April 18 2016, Jimma).

As can be understood from the above excerpt, long procedures, unclear duties and responsibilities among the government organs at different tiers made the process challenging and unrealistic. In addition, a political fear of religious diversity and the lack of knowledge of the constitutional rights of religions were other contributing factors to the tension between religious groups and the government in the area.

7.3. Labeling Religions as Cause of the Tension between Religious Institutions and the State

Religious radicalism¹⁵ and government's labeling some as extremists were widely reported as the cause of the tension between interreligious and religious institutions and the state. This sub-section describes the controversy and perception, persistence, causes, and implication of the government's labeling of some religious institutions as extremists or radicals.

7.3.1. Religious radicalism

Religious radicalism is defined as a social phenomenon in which religious people act strictly according to the norms, values, and beliefs of the group to which they belong to at the expense of others (Herriot, 2009; Weinberg and Pedahzur, 2004). In view of this, radicalism and strong religious identity involves people's belief and commitment to their own religious principles and strong adherence to the culture, norm and values. However, Weinberg and Pedahzur, and Herriot noted that religious radicalism is different from strong adherence to one's own religion in that the former involves an attitude and reaction against others. In other words, religious radicalism puts an extreme differentiation of the sacred from the secular with a belief that modernization is eroding religious traditions (Borgatta and Montgomery, 2000).

In the context of the study area, the qualitative method asked respondents the meaning, features, and impact of labeling religious radicalism. Two different Amharic terms

¹⁵ Weinberg and Pedahzur (2004) defined religious radicalism as "the degrees of intensity in commitment to ideologies and the willingness to make sacrifices and remain faithful to that which appears to be worthy of belief. It includes who are committed to the Islamisation (among Muslims) of the social and political system of their countries, ... it does not recognize the boundaries of the secular national states. ... it is the achievement of the goals and objectives in question, at the expense of other values. In this particular study, terms such as religious radicalism, extremism, and fundamentalism were synonymously used since the three terms carry negative connotations due to their exclusive ideology, violent action, politicizing religion, and re-interpreting and applying religious ideology to secular views.

were employed (*akirari* and *atibaki*) to distinguish radicalism from strict adherence to a particular religion. It was noted that the former (*akirari*) denotes a negative meaning and impacts peaceful interreligious and intra-religious interactions. The other (*atibaki*) refers to religiously pious people. The Muslim elder resident in Agaro 05 considered that religious radicalism assumes that one's own religion is superior to others and that *atibaki* is not synonymous with radicalism.

Some religious groups were misunderstood as radicals and violent due to their strict adherence to their own religious principles. A Muslim woman teaching in Qujo elementary school described that some physical characters were used to distinguish radical groups in a society. This woman stated that shortened trousers, long beard, and hijab were wrongly applied to radicalism/extremism when in fact they are indications of one's religious duty. However, non-Muslims consider it as religious extremism. What made the issue more blurring was government's decree banning wearing of religious symbols in schools. The 2008 directive outlined codes of conduct regulating worships in educational institutions. One example is the restriction of display of religious symbols and worship in public schools. This condition heightened the generalized perception that wearing religious symbols are an indication of religious radicalism.

Government's labeling was also seen as a major point of state-religious institutions discord and reported as government interference in religious affairs. In this case, the Muslim elder in Agaro 05 kebele and the Orthodox Christian working in MoFA considered that the government sometimes labels some religious groups as extremists suspecting that they have a political mission beyond religious duties. This labeling and suspicion resulted in a tension between some religious sects and the government, and that led to the eruption of violence against the government in 2011 in Agaro and Bashasha (Jimma Zone).

The government uses constitutional principles to label religious radicalism. The religious affairs Muslim officer in the Ministry of Federal Affairs made reference to the 1995 constitution, which stipulates religious equality and freedom. For this officer, religious radicalism is against religious equality and the constitution particularly article 11 and 27. Accordingly, religious radicals do not allow people of different religion to live together. The respondent working in the Social Affairs Office of Jimma Zone understood that religious radicalism is an ideology which views that one's own religion is better. The proponents of this ideology want to forcefully impose their belief on others.

The existence of religious radicalism and its effect was another debatable issue in the country. There was a consensus among participants of the study and previous researchers such as Medhane (2004), Abbink (2014), Birhane (2009), and Ostebo (2010) wrote on the persistence of religious radicalism in the country. To date, religious radicalism is of topical political and security concerns. Medhane (2004) described that religious fundamentalism concerns all regardless of religious difference since it threatens peaceful interreligious coexistence. He described it as the major threat to religious tolerance and peace in most of the countries in the East Africa.

The survey asked whether religious radicalism exists or not and to what extent it is a socio-political concern. Accordingly, 42 percent of the survey participants were highly concerned while 25 percent of them were somewhat concerned about the problem.

Table 7.7. *Respondents' concern of religious radicalism*

Response Category	Frequency	Percent
Very concerned	163	42.4
Somewhat concerned	96	25.0
Not concerned	77	20.1
Don't know	39	10.2
Total	375	97.7
Missing	9	2.3
Total	384	100.0

Source: Sample survey, February 2015

The survey respondents also pointed out some features of religious radicalism, which negatively affect interreligious interaction. As indicated in the table below, religious fundamentalism has exclusive ideology, a belief that only one religion is right and correct while others are mistaken. About 31.5 percent of respondents pointed out that the belief that only one religion is right and correct while others are mistaken was reflected in their area. About 23 percent of them also describe that there were people with this ideology which marginalize others and even led to conflict. About 20 percent of respondents also stated that religious radicals are also against government and thus instigate violence and conflict.

Table 7.8. *Respondents' view of features of religious radicalism*

Response category	Yes		No	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Exclusivist ideology	121	31.5	33	8.6
War on others	89	23.2	53	13.8
Marginalizing others	89	23.2	50	13.0
Violence against the government	78	20.3	47	12.2

Source: Sample survey, February 2015

7.3.2. Causes of religious radicalism

Theoretically, there were some socio-political and religious factors behind the emergence of perceived religious radicalism. Some scholars explain it in relation to the influence of external (global social processes) while others relate it to internal problems (Medhane, 2004; Michel 1997). Haar and Busuttil (2003: 231) elaborated that “the conditions which evoke a fundamentalist reaction may derive from internal or external developments, for example, pressure of modernization or globalization (real or perceived), security threats, scarcity of resources including employment, changing political power and demographic shifts”. Within the context of East Africa, Medhane (2004: 24) identified internal problems as aggravating factors as follows:

Islamic Fundamentalism flourishes and becomes particularly acute when there is a dictatorial, totalitarian, repressive political system... this could be added to widespread poverty, the failure of the state to provide basic social services and the bankruptcy of secular ideologies in providing hope and a model for the future.

According to Medhane, the period after 1991 created a more moderate religious environment that opened a room for different radical religious groups to revive in Ethiopia. The post-1991 period marked the beginning of well-organized Wahhabi movements in many parts of the country funded by Saudi Arabia.

Conversely, the emergence of various radical groups of Christianity and Islam were attributed to modernity and its effect on their own respective religious identities (Haar and Busuttil, 2003). Recently, many radical groups are emerging and mobilizing their power against the influence of western traditions. In general, radicals aspire towards demoralization of modernism, viewing it as a tool by which western countries try to weaken Islamic power in other parts of the world (Sianipar, 2011). Other studies such as Lane and Redissi (2009) explored that the reasons for the emergence of Islamic radical groups were related to a

response to the legacy of the historical relations between the west and other Muslim dominant countries.

The resurgence of religious radicalism was also related to increasing religious diversity and its management by governments. There were tendencies of labeling some specific religious groups as radicals. Misconception and labeling some religious groups as radical/extreme distort peaceful interreligious interaction as well as the relation between state and religions. Chesworth (2006: 159) explained the implication of labeling as follows:

In recent times it has been misapplied to Muslims when it would be better to call groups that simply wish to return to the ‘basics’ of their faith either Reformist or Revivalist. However, in both Christianity and Islam there are groups that could be termed Fanatics or Extremists and it is these groups that in common usage are termed fundamentalists.

In respect to the study area, the proliferation of religious radicalism was attributed to the influence of international context and development of modern information technologies. An interview with the Muslim informant working in Oromia Justice Bureau reveals that religious extremism was mainly inspired by external forces for religious and non-religious goals. He argued that explicitly, radicalism is aimed at expanding a conservative religious ideology focusing on re-establishing the basic values and norms of a religion which is under attack by modernity and its discontents. Implicitly, it involves imposing one’s own religious dominance in all spheres of life including political and economic. The informant further described religious radicalism as threatening interreligious and intra-religious harmony. He further articulated that “external funding usually related not only to religious expansion rather to personal and political benefits. There were personal-based donations directing at promoting specific religious ideologies causing intra-religious differences and interreligious tensions.” Accordingly, religious radicalism is a consequence of globalization. Globalization in this sense involves technological and economic connectedness between countries. Through free flow of information and finance, religious groups share ideas which enable them to strengthen their religious emblem by developing common characteristics. Thus, the informant believes that globalization has an impact not just in Ethiopia but in other African countries as well.

A lax religious policy was reported as another cause for the proliferation of religious radicalism. According to the participants of this study, the political change in 1991 created an opportunity for the emergence of people with radical religious ideologies. An interview with the Orthodox Christian respondent in the Ministry of Federal Affairs shows that the

emergence of these groups in the country mainly took place in the present regime. He described that there were large numbers of radical sects in different parts of the study area. Contrary to the previous popular notion of Ethiopia as ‘a nation of interreligious tolerance’, the emergence of interreligious and intra-religious tension recently was related to the proliferation of new religious ideologies.

Importantly, the emergence of religious radicalism was also related to the question of recognition, equality, motive for historical hegemony, and increasing consciousness of religious identity as a result of world connectedness. It was noticed that the relatively lax government approach to religion after the 1990s theoretically unrestricted many religious groups to further claim their freedom and recognition. Conversely, the government put political as well as bureaucratic procedure which limited the practical exercise of religious freedom. Such contradiction and violation of constitution’s provision led to hostile relationship between the government and some religious groups. The Orthodox Christian informant working at the Ministry of Federal Affairs relates increasing religious radicalism as a response to the lack of recognition and unequal treatment. He averred as:

While some were recognized enough, others were mistreated which raised tensions with the state especially between Protestants and Muslims. Moreover, due to the shortage of resources such as land, there were also delays in providing them immediate response. In some localities, these resources were not distributed fairly which raises complaint. Amidst this partiality in giving recognition and service provisions, some religious groups were dissatisfied and felt subordinate to others. (Interviewed on May 9/2016, Addis Ababa).

7.3.3. Policing religious radicalism

Countries’ response to religious radicalism depends on the institutional structure, socio-economic advancement, level of democracy, and generally on the nature of the society itself (Haar and Busuttil, 2003). According to Medhane (2004), weak institutions and socio-economic crisis specifically in East African countries, including Ethiopia gave opportunities for radical movements to strengthen themselves. Therefore, these scholars agree that a policy response against religious radicalism at least involves addressing basic issues of religion, which include religious equality, religious freedom, separation of religion and state, encouraging interreligious dialogue, respect for human rights, and avoiding religious stereotypes.

There was a consensus among the key informants that the key tool of dealing with religious radicalism was addressing religious issues. More specifically, religious policy should ensure religious freedom, rights, recognition, equality, and identity. In principle, the

constitution of Ethiopia stipulates that religion and state are separated. The state does not interfere in religious affairs likewise religion in the affairs of the state. Article 11 of the constitution specifies equality of religion by holding that all religious institutions are equal; no religion is favored by the government over the other, and there is no state religion. Article 27 also holds freedom of religion, stating that everybody is free to choose, to express, and to practice his/her own religion.

Despite an accommodative policy devised in the constitution as a response to emerging issues of religion, the constitution guarantees freedom and equality of all religious institutions without any precondition, religious freedom, equality and recognition were practically violated by some policy implementers, which was reported as a cause of religion-state tensions, aggravating the emergence of religious radicalism. Although there was a consensus among the respondents that there is freedom of religion in principle, some believe that there is government interference in practice. For instance, the Mekane Yesus church theologian believed that there was stereotyping and labeling some groups as radical, which made them more aggressive and radical followed by violent response as a strategy of discouraging them.

Some political and bureaucratic tools were employed to guard against religious radicalism. The Orthodox Christian respondent in the Social Affairs Office explained government's view of increasing religious diversity as a threat to political stability. As a response to this, the long procedure of giving recognition was used as a strategy of discouraging multiplications of religions. The respondent stated as follows:

There were some internal problems such as denying them to realize their rights. On one hand, the government is secular; does not interfere in religious affairs. And on the other hand, there is a limited capacity of managing religious diversity; fear of diversity suspecting that the diversity and free practice of religion affect the existing political stability. (Interviewed on April 22/2016, Jimma).

Beyond using legal institutions as a safeguard to religious radicalism, the government also devised formal and informal structures. As the formal structures, there was a department responsible for religious issues ranging from the Federal to Woreda levels. Recently, religious affairs directorate was established under the Ministry of Federal Affairs (MoFA). Explaining the main duties of the department, the Muslim informant in Ministry of Federal Affairs described that "the department's focus is to support religious institutions and building interreligious peace by focusing on behavioral change." Another Orthodox Christian working in the same office stated, "We found that religious radicalism is becoming a topical concern.

With this urgency, the ministry's main duty is to educate people and capacitate the potential of regional governments to act against the problem." To safeguard against religion related tensions, this structure was decentralized to the lower levels. In 2015, a department was established to deal with religious matters under regional and zonal bureau of justice and security. This formal structure was a means of guarding religious extremism in collaboration with community-based organizations. The Muslim informant from MoFA in this regard added another unit devised to guard radicalism at higher education institutions:

There are peace clubs in universities and schools initiated and established by the government. There is also a plan to establish peace commission at federal level, a formal organ responsible for peace building and peacekeeping in the country. In addition to initiating and establishing formal structures, the government is working with informal community-based networks such as youth and women associations. Local social networks such as *iddir*, *ikub*, and their leaders intended to be used for this purpose. The government's role here is to initiate dialogue, teaching, training, and organizing different organs. (Interviewed on May 9/2016, Addis Ababa).

Beyond manipulating indigenous social networks and formal institutions, other networks such as '*awuchachi*' and '*tokko shane*' were used to guard religious radicalism at the local levels. The former refers to a small group in a community in which members come together to discuss and identify members with 'radical religious ideology'. Originally, the term was applied to crime prevention at local level where they discuss and identify deviants or criminals. *Tokko shane* refers to a small group (of five members) formed as self-help group for social and economic purpose. A Muslim resident in Agaro kebele 02 said that this group was effective, beyond its normal function, in safeguarding religious radicalism. Another Muslim informant from kebele 05 explained that *tokko shane* is a local-based association formed on the basis of vicinity. He described that members of the group are required to working together as a *dabo*, share experiences, participate in government initiated meetings, and discuss community issues such as peace and development. Recently, these local networks are geared towards safeguarding community safety especially religious issues in collaboration with the government. It also suggests that the networks were politically oriented where, for instance, *tokko shane* was replacing *dabo*. Generally, the establishment of formal institutions and manipulations of local associations were used as a tool of guarding religious issues particularly the act of religious radicalism than resolving it through ensuring religious freedom and equality.

7.4. Intra-Religious Divisions and Dispute with the Government and Other Religions

This sub-section describes the influence of intra-religious divisions activating interreligious disharmony in a religiously diverse setting. It highlights the major factors contributing to intra-religious divisions and their controversial relation to the state. Emphasis has been given to the proliferation of different Islamic groups and their relation to other religions and the government.

7.4.1. Emerging threat of intra-religious divisions

Conflict between followers of different religious sects in the same religion was one of the causes of interreligious disharmony and state-religious institutions' tension in the study area. Intra-religious conflict emanates from many things, which are religious and non-religious including differences in interpretation of scriptures and their outlook of others, political orientations, and view of secularism (Casimir, Nwaoga, and Ogbozor, 2014; Sianipar, 2011).

According to previous studies, divisions among Muslims have been the major socio-political peril than differences among Christians. Gulevich (2004) presented intra-religious differences and its impact on peaceful intra and interreligious relations specifically referring to diversity in Islamic religious traditions. In view of that, although all Muslims share common beliefs, some differences are observed. The main divisions arose among Muslims of Sunni, Shia, Wahhabism, and Kharijites sects (Gulevich, 2004). Accordingly, the Sunnis represent about 85 percent of the world's Muslim population while the Shias constitute less than 15 percent.

Currently, the basic difference between Sunnis and Shias is related to their view of ritual practices (Gulevic, 2004). Shias have more open acceptance of veneration of saints and pilgrimages to the shrines of holy men, as well as by their distinctive prayer rituals. However, Sunnis disagree with this ideology fearing that these devotions and practices may be considered as shirk. Khawarijites, on the other hand, vary with both Sunni and Shia Muslims on the question of who was to rule the Muslim community after Muhammad's death. Wahhabism is also another Islamic sect rapidly expanding these days by applying aggressive and secluded doctrines (Gulevich, 2004).

In the wave of internal differentiation, there was increasing consciousness and fluidity of religious identity, inevitably facilitated by the processes of international connectedness as the main factor of interreligious and intra-religious tensions (Abbink, 2014; Casimir1 et al., 2014; Shinn, 2014). Casimir et al. (2014) pointed out that intra-religious conflict becomes

one of the top religious problems in Africa. These scholars identify two specific causes of this phenomenon. First, due to low level of development particularly in education, there is ignorance or little knowledge of the true teaching of the very religion both among Muslims and Christians. Second, the economic and political situations in most African countries aggravated inter and intra-religious tensions. They articulated that:

In spite of the fact that the [continent] is blessed with both human and natural resources, the gap between the haves and the have-nots is ever on the increase and this has led to frustration and disillusion among [its citizens] on the lower side of the economy. While many of them turn to outright criminal activities, many others turn to churches and mosques... with extreme tendencies. ... The vacuum created by the failure of governance and its institutions must have made [different religious sects] want to create an alternative Islamic state in the continent. (P. 61-62).

As can be understood from the excerpt above, many emerging Islamic groups in Africa such as Boko Haram justify their missions with existing deep-rooted poverty as caused by existing corrupt government, and thus aim to suppress it by using religious mobilization. As such, the contested secularism (defining the state as secular on one hand and suppressing religious freedom on the other hand) aggravates emergence of radical religious sects. Also, hierarchical social class and inequalities created ethnic strife or another type of conflicts on the basis of religious lines. As well, the international connectedness opens a room for different religious ideologies and teachings to enter African countries resulting in differences of ideologies, leading to intra-religious differences (Casimir et al., 2014).

In Ethiopia, there are many religious sects both in Christianity and Islam. Different Christian and Islamic groups were mushrooming in the country since 1990s as a result of the lax government policy. However, Islamic divisions were tense than other intra-religious differentiations in the country. Four Islamic sects were dominant and highly influenced the socio-political order in the country: Sunni, Wahhabism, Al-Abash and Khawarijism (Abbink, 2014; Shinn, 2014; Wondwosen and Jerusalem, 2010). Karbo (2014: 48) however, categorized these into two extreme groups based on their view of other religions and the state:

[The first category is] a flexible brand of Islam with a popular set of beliefs, traditions, and customs with the acceptance of Ethiopia and its legitimacy as a land led by a Christian establishment [while the second brand] is the fundamentalist and politically militant brand which is inspired by and imported from the Middle East. This brand of Islam calls for a boycott of Christian-led Ethiopia and to win Ethiopia for Islam. It is this brand of Islam that was at the forefront in the recent confrontations between the state and followers of Islam. This phenomenon is what [some scholars]

call “the politicization of religion”; where faith is transformed into political ideology that can mobilize constituencies.

Existing data in the country, however, fail to show the number of different Islamic sects. According to Shin (2014), Sunni Islamic tradition is the flexible and more popular in Ethiopia than any other sects and intermingled with the socio-cultural life of the country. The same study estimated that the Sunni Islam comprises 80 percent of the total population of the Ethiopian Muslims. However, there is no existing statistics that indicate the distribution of different sects in the country. Notwithstanding, there is common understanding that the number of Wahhabists and Khawarijites are sharply proliferating than other sects particularly in western and south western parts of the country.

Like interreligious conflict, intra-religious conflict in Ethiopia is widespread (Abbink, 2014; Erlich and Kabha, 2006; Ostebo, 2010). Ostebo (2010: 46) identified two main lines of intra-religious tensions between “Puritan Salafis and Sufis who are seeking to defend their status quo.” He summarized the causes of tensions between the two, which include “questions of accepted religious practice, such as the pilgrimages to shrines, veneration of Muslim saints and the celebration of *Mawlid al-Nabi* (the Prophet’s birthday) and enforcing a modest dress code and targeting acts perceived as vices; dancing, drinking and watching TV.”

Intra-religious conflicts in Ethiopia date back to 1990s (Abbink, 2014). It was believed that the conflict between the Sunni and Wahhabists during the period resulted in many injuries and destruction of properties (mosques burnt), marking the beginning of intra-religious conflict in the country. It was reported that the conflict was caused by differences in their political orientation: Sunnis’ pro-government and the Wahhabists’ anti-government (Abbink, 2014; Wondwosen and Jerusalem, 2010). It was also described that the government involvement to suppress the conflict further aggravated the conflict initiating the suspicious relationship between the Salafists and the government. As a result, many incidents of religious demonstrations questioned secularism in Ethiopia, suspecting that the government was discouraging some religious sects (Wahhabism and Khawarijism) while encouraging others (Sunni and Al-Abash) (Abbink, 2014; Shinn, 2014; Wondwosen and Jerusalem, 2010).

Intra-religious tensions, particularly among Muslims in Ethiopia, involve ideological contradiction between newly expanding Wahhabists and deeply established Sufi traditions. Kabha and Erlich (2006: 535) clearly elaborated the two contentions as follows:

The Muslims in today's Ethiopia are divided in coping with their own new momentum. The majority continue to conceive themselves as Ethiopians first. They aspire to an Ethiopia of open dialogue on equal footing. Their minority, strong enough to be a rising factor, consider the land of the Najashi an integral part of the land of Islam. The more activist cells, popularly known as Wahhabiyya, aspire and work toward an Islamic victory... thus, the confrontation between the Al-Abash and the Wahhabiyya is arguably harsher than the clash between Muslims and non-Muslims.

Intra-religious divisions and tensions were one of the emerging concerns of religion in the study area. The survey method found that for about half of the respondents (47 percent), the tensions between different sects was one of the major social problems. As indicated in table 7.9 below, about 49 percent of Muslims, 37 percent of Orthodox Christians, and 48 percent of Protestants were concerned about intra-religious conflict.

Table 7.9. Respondents' view of intra-religious divisions

religious category	To what extent intra-religious conflict is a serious problem in this area?							
	Very serious		Sometimes		Not a problem		Don't know	
	fr	%	fr	%	fr	%	fr	
Muslim	66	32	36	17	105	51	24	231
Orthodox	5	7	20	30	42	63	9	76
Protestant	8	18	13	30	23	52	3	47
Catholic	1	50	0		1	50		2
Missing								28
Total	80	25	69	22	171	53	36	384

Source: Sample survey, February 2015

7.4.2. Difference in their relation to the state

One of the factors intensifying the division between different groups within the same religion was their contentious relations to the state. It was described that most of the interreligious conflicts occurred in different parts of the study area because of intra-religious variations. The qualitative method found that the emerging division among Muslims was viewed as a threat to social and political order in the area. For instance, the Orthodox Christian in the Social Affairs Office of Jimma briefly explained a case of intra-religious tensions, which occurred in 2011/12 in Addis Ababa, Dessie, and Jimma exacerbated by their differences in their view of the state. He described the episode as follows:

In 2012 there were incidents of intra-religious tensions, between Sufi and Wahhabi Islamic groups. The disagreement was on leadership positions and power transfer. On one hand, Wahhabists opposed the existing Mejlis (council) arguing that it does not represent them and has no religious knowledge ... on the other hand, other Muslims support the existing leadership and want to maintain the system. Meanwhile, to solve the disagreement, Ulama committee (election committee) was established to undertake free and fair election. The election again created another disagreement on where the election should take place. To make the election free of external involvement some groups wanted the election to be held in Mosque while other groups including government imposed the election to be held in Kebele assuming that election in Mosque does not ensure equal participation and order Lastly, the election was held out of mosque that resulted in differences led to question the fairness of the election which further created intra-religious disagreements and violence against the government due to its alleged interference in religious affairs. (Interviewed on May 9/2016, Jimma).

As can be understood from the above excerpt, a suspicious relationship between different intra-religious groups' over relation to the state was reported as one of the main causes of intra-religious divisions, particularly between Sufism and Salafism. The main discord was between protesters, labeled radical Wahhabists and Mejlis, over government's effort to exclude Wahhabists from leadership positions during the time of election. On the other hand, *Mejlis* and leaders were perceived as pro-government thus many Muslims particularly Wahhabists viewed this as the government's interference in religious affairs. There was a suspicion that the Sufis allegedly serve government interest as a channel of guarding Muslim groups who were labeled as radicals. Importantly, the issue was an ideological discord between Wahhabists and Sufis. Finally, the election took place in kebele resulting in lack of mutual trust between Wahhabists and their leaders.

The Muslim respondent from the Ministry of Federal Affairs described the tension between Wahhabists and Sufi or Al-Abash based on their relation to the government. He expounded that there was speculation that the government encouraged Al-Abash to expand in the country in order to discourage Wahhabists who were labeled as radical and anti-government. The Orthodox Christian respondent working in the Social Affairs Office in Jimma admitted the disagreement between the two sects based on their view of the state as:

Religion has no boundary. Different religious sects follow religious teaching and ideologies held in different countries. Accordingly, the Islamic council brought religious experts to the country to teach the mass. They also sent some of their members to other countries to study and comeback to teach their members. In 2012 the council brought some scholars, who were originally Ethiopian (Harar) named Al-Abash, from Lebanon to the country to expand the basic Islam. This condition created a conflict. Wahhabists considered that the new group was not the right Islam.

They assumed that the government brought them to discourage Wahhabism. (Interviewed on May 9/2016, Jimma).

One can understand from the quotation above that the Mejlis co-opted with the government to introduce a new Islamic sect, which is generally perceived as modest in their political ideology. The cooperation between the government, the Sufi religious teachers and the Mejlis dichotomized the Muslim community into two extreme categories, putting government-Wahhabists in a bitter tension.

In describing the relationship between Wahhabists and Sufi in other parts of the country, Erlich and Kabha (2006: 534) depict that the Al-Abash and the Sufi have modest relationship with state guided by the principle of “obey whoever is put in authority over you.” They believed in the principle that they have to obey and be ruled under the state whether it is Muslim or Christian, an ideology which most Wahhabists do not accept. Erlich and Kabha (P. 534) further state that due to their modest relations with state, the Al-Abash was considered as “collaborators with non-Muslims. The Wahhabi doctrine, on the other hand, recognizes no separation of religion and state; [opting to establish religious state].” Thus, a suspicious relation between the state and Wahhabism was created due to legal and political power claims since the government suspects that Wahhabism conflicts with religious and political missions. Thus, it was this blurring relationship between religious sects, and Wahhabists and government that marked intra-religious and religion-state conflicts of the past decade in the study area.

The spread of Wahhabism in the study area was related to the expansion of religious education and the country’s exposure to the world context. As a result of political change in the post-1990, there was free movement of Muslims to Middle East countries for religious education and job opportunities. The movement escalated the spread of the ideology through settlers and returnees. More specifically, the Muslim informant working in Oromia Justice Bureau described that the political influence of religion was channeled through these returnees. He argued that external funds and extreme ideologies were injected to the country through this channel. Accordingly, the government favored Sufi Muslims to safeguard against the spread of Wahhabism in the country and thereby deepened the discord between the two religious groups.

Khawarijism was the third influential sect in the study area although its followers were minimal as compared to Wahhabism and Sufism. Although the difference between Sufis and Wahhabists was over the view of Islamic traditions and purity, Khawarijites historically

emerged due to leadership crises following the death of Prophet Mohamed (Ali, 2015). It was understood that Khawarijites are groups propagating political and militant Islam with exclusivist ideologies. For instance, a Muslim respondent living in Agaro 02 kebele described them as, “anti-government, viewing them as *kafir* opting to institute a religious state. They do not want to pay tax since they believe that land and power belong to Allah.” This quote indicates that Khawarijites have a negative attitude towards Christians and other Islamic groups. What made them peculiar was their extreme ideology against the government, which made their relation more hostile. Another Orthodox Christian key informant working in MoFA stated that the influence of Khawarijism was minimal. Their number was small, estimated to be 11,000 in Jimma Zone. The government labeled them as an extreme group responsible for initiating violent conflict in Jimma particularly around Agaro. They were labeled as extremists in the sense that they have an ideological stance against the government and other religious groups.

7.4.3. Differences among Muslim sects in their view of other religions

Importantly, there were internal differences between the religious groups based on their view of other religions. It was generally reported that although the majority Sufi groups advocate peaceful coexistence with followers of other religions and culture, the Wahhabists and Khawarijites advocate exclusion in the name of ‘purity’. More specifically, the Muslim elder in Agaro 05 described that Wahhabism is a recently emerging ideology aiming at expanding ‘true Islam’. It was viewed as a radical group aggressively acting to reinstitute true Islamic identity splitting it from traditional values. He observed that this group was mainly dominated by the educated and the youths. Similarly, according to the Muslim religious teacher in Jimma, advocates of this sect perceive themselves as ‘puritan’ and superior to other groups. He described the causes of the tension between different sects relating to personal factors saying that “there are things which divide us: flesh, Satan, and selfishness.” He succinctly argued, “Our prophet said that Islam is divided into seventy three. All of them are not right and will disappear except one. There are groups that consider themselves as puritans. They are against other religious groups and consider themselves superior.”

Intra-religious divisions were also manifested on their view of socio-cultural values connecting Muslims and Christians. In this regard, due to their flexible interpretation of Islam and their deep-rooted internalization of Ethiopian culture, the Sufis were considered by Wahhabists as an illegitimate branch of Islam. For instance, a Muslim resident who switched from Muslim to Protestant in Jimma kito kebele succinctly put his view of the difference

between Sufi and Wahhabi as the former is intermingled with worldly life and traditions such as chewing Khat while the later consider themselves as true Islam. The Muslims officer in the Social Affairs Office in Omonada also noted that Sufis are part of Ethiopian tradition while Wahhabists are against these traditional values. He added that Wahhabists consider non-Muslims and the existing government as *kafirs*. Another Orthodox Christian respondent working at the Ministry of Federal Affairs described that Wahhabists have a negative attitude towards the state, Christians, and other Islamic groups.

Another root cause of intra-religious tensions between Wahhabists and other Islamic groups was variations in their approach of Islamization. Kabha and Erlich (2006: 58) clearly stipulated that “regarding the methods and how to work for Islamic unity using soft words, by middle-way wisdom, by gentle preaching, and by cooperation and openness.... the message to Muslims, not surprisingly, is harsher.” As interreligious conversion and preaching created interreligious tensions, inter-sectarian teaching and divisions involve harsher methods which resulted in intra-religious conflicts. In addition to increasing tensions between different Islamic sects, the use of force in creating Islamic unity was reportedly devastating the normal intra-religious relations. For instance, the Muslim respondent from Family for Children Project Office stated that “on one hand, there were internal divisions exacerbated by government’s labeling and on the other hand, internally the use of force than using smooth approaches in bringing unity was a big concern.”

In particular, the emergence of interreligious tensions in the study area was attributed to the introduction and spread of Wahhabism. It was viewed that this group introduced a secluded ideology, which sowed hostile relationship between Christians and Muslims. For example, the Protestant priest in Omonada described that “before the coming of new religions such as Wahhabism, you hardly distinguish between Christians and Muslims. The new sect injected new doctrines, mode of teachings and publications from abroad, which encourages divisions and hostility between followers of different religions.” Accordingly, the new sect introduced inter-societal divisions and seclusions based on strict religious educations with hostility towards other religious traditions. The use of modern technologies facilitated the spread of the new religious ideology.

However, it is erroneous to equate and generalize some variants of Muslims such as the Wahhabi as violent and exclusive, and others such as Sufi as tolerant. Despite the difference between varieties of Islamic religious groups over relations with the government, view of other religions and methods of preaching, most Muslims in the area shared some

distinctive features. For instance, according to the Muslim religious teacher interviewed as a key informant in Jimma, maintaining an Islamic identity through propagation of the words of Allah is at least a core element that every Muslim shared. There were common interests that both groups shared including maintenance of Islamic dominance through construction of Mosques in the study area. Hence, the Sufi-Wahhabi relationship may not be understood as a dichotomy.

7.5. Chapter Summary

The purpose of this chapter was to explore the relationship between the state and religious institutions in Ethiopia and its implication in the study area. Coupled relationship between religion and state is not a new phenomenon in the country. State and religious institutions intertwined in Ethiopia over a long period of time. The study participants narrate that prior to 1974, the relationship between the state and religious institutions in the country were generally understood as ‘state religion’. Beginning from the inception of religion in the country, the state officially relates itself to a specific religion, Orthodox Christianity, viewing others as alien. In the *Derg* regime, the interaction was characterized as ‘hostile relationship’, where the state was against all religions. However, the state-religious institutions’ interaction in the present regime was viewed as ‘accommodative’. In principle, the government committed to the principle of separation of religion and politics, a model which helps people to be recognized equally and freely practice their own religion and thereby enabled many religious identities to evolve in the country. However, in practice the lack of political will at the grassroots level to implement the constitutional principles was the main cause of the tension between religious institutions and the state.

The interaction between religious institutions and the state in the present regime is characterized either by co-opted relationship or resistance and struggle to win over one another. Increasing religious diversity and its political influence made the government to move towards religious restrictions. At the local level, there was mistreatment of followers of some religion, the local government prefers some religion over the other, and the lack of recognition and interference of government in religious matters initiated religion-state tensions. In congruent with a principle that the state should not interfere in market systems (Hechter and Kanazawa, 1997), the state regulation made religion-state relation tensor.

Some religious groups were labeled as ‘extremists’, and as a result marginalized from normal state of life. The government’s response to this movement was harsher. This circumstance heightened mistrusting relationship between many Islamic groups claiming

legal recognition and the government in the area, which further worsened intra-religious tensions. Hence, the state's secularism was contested and religious issues became one of the heated political agenda. Moreover, intra-religious divisions occurred based on the re-interpretation of scriptures and how religious groups and sects each defined their relationship to the state and other religions. This internal division further divided societies on different ideologies and became sources of intra-religious and interreligious frictions.

To sum up, two dimensions of religious conflicts as a result of internal divisions were described. On one hand, there was disagreement between Sufis and Wahhabists on their view of other religions and the state. In this regard, Wahhabists were viewed as negative towards others employing coercive approach of expanding their ideologies in maintaining internal unity. It was also viewed that their relation to the state was full of tensions since the government labeled them as radical and inhibit them a legal recognition. The tension was exacerbated by the government's support of Sufis to suppress the spread of Wahhabism. On the other hand, due to their exclusionary ideology, the major conflicts occurred was reportedly between Wahhabists and Christians mainly with the newly expanding Protestants in the area.

Chapter Eight

Summary of Findings, Conclusions and Implications of the Study

Introduction

The previous chapters addressed interreligious group interactions and the factors which play a role in Jimma Zone, south western Ethiopia. In this regard, the discussions made in the chapters covered issues like peaceful interreligious coexistence, interreligious tensions and their causes. In addition, the influence of various actors involving faith-based organizations, interreligious councils, religious leaders and elders were treated as part of the explanations under different sub-themes. Detailed accounts were also made on the dynamics of religious institutions and the state interaction and the contention of secularism. The chapter at hand sheds a light on the major findings of the study following the specific objectives and research questions as stated in the first chapter. Finally, the conclusions drawn and the implications forwarded constitute the core focuses of this chapter.

8.1. Summary of Major Findings

The study of interreligious interaction remained to be one of the contentious issues in religion across the globe. In the contemporary world, interreligious interaction has multiple faces and its socio-political influence has become resurgent. The study was aimed at investigating various factors affecting interreligious interaction in Jimma Zone, south western part of Ethiopia. Emphasis was given to the features of interreligious relations exploring the causes of deep-rooted peaceful interreligious coexistence. In the opinion of several authors this was what made Ethiopia the land of peaceful interreligious coexistence and tolerance. At the same time, recently interreligious conflicts were repeatedly reported in different parts of the country and hence, the study tried to investigate its real and multiple causes. Accordingly, five specific questions were stated along which the dissertation as a whole was structured. These include:

- What are the features of the interaction between Christians and Muslims in Jimma Zone?
- How religious and neighborhood networks promote interreligious peaceful coexistence in Jimma Zone,?
- What are the causes of interreligious tensions in Jimma Zone?
- How actors such as religious leaders, interreligious council, local elders, faith-based organizations and local institutions shape interreligious interactions in Jimma Zone?

- What is the form of state-religious institutions' interaction and its implication for interreligious interactions?

The methodological procedures were designed so as to address these specific questions. The study followed mixed research design, and its philosophical assumption foothold in pragmatism and methodological pluralism. Dominantly qualitative and in specific cases quantitative methods of data collection and analysis were used in combination in this context.

Consensus and conflict perspectives, the two contradicting views of inter-group interaction were deployed. Functionalist theorists such as Emile Durkheim's 1912/1995 view of religion as an emblem of a group and Robert Merton's theory of functional and dysfunctional view of religion (1957) were utilized to explore the integrative role of religion and its constituents in society. In this regard, it was understood that religion provides some positive political and social function, for instance, serving as uniting a group of people. However, the ideas of Merton were also used to see not only the function of religion but also its dysfunction, which include interreligious conflict and state-religious institutions' tensions. To view the other side of inter-group interaction, conflict theory of Ralf Dahrendorf (1959) who documented on the multiple faces of a society, i.e. consensus and conflict, which was applied to analyze the assumption that peaceful interreligious coexistence and tension occur in the same society being caused by religious and non-religious factors. This theory orients that the analysis of peaceful interreligious coexistence and conflict stands inseparable. It insists that the study of interreligious relation sounds incomplete unless it includes both peaceful interreligious coexistence and conflict.

Moreover, the rational choice theory of religion was also extracted to show the fact that religious pluralism and the effect of existing competitions between followers of different religions to promote their own religious identity results in interreligious conflict. Applying market principles, this theory helps to see the effect of economic and political factors triggering interreligious conflict. Following a market principle in the capitalist system, it was understood that the interference of government in religious affairs initiates interreligious tensions. The theory of religious pluralism helped to understand the existence of multiple opportunities in religiously diverse setting than simply conceiving it as a threat to interreligious peaceful coexistence. Using this approach, socio-cultural values as alternative sources of interreligious relations were explored. Finally, using insight from social identity

theory, the implications of revival of religious-based identities in instigating interreligious competitions were also discussed.

Regarding the forms of interreligious interaction in the study area, drawing on these theoretical insights, interreligious interaction in Jimma is characterized neither exclusively as peaceful coexistence nor purely as conflictual. In the previous studies, three dominant perspectives were identified. First, there are scholars who firmly considered interreligious interaction as conflictual focusing on its causes. There also others who perceived religious tensions as a myth and focused exclusively on peaceful co-existence. In general, seeing the role of religion and interreligious relations either from consensus or from conflict perspectives were a dominant approach across the globe and in Ethiopia. The study at hand applied multiple viewpoints (arguing that religious-based disagreements and tensions are embedded in peaceful interreligious interactions that required seeing peaceful coexistence and causes of conflict at the same time). This study argued that there were occasional conflicts between followers of different religions while there were widespread and deep-rooted peaceful interreligious coexistence in religious and socio-cultural traditions of the area. Hence, social interaction becomes fluid and determined by multiple factors.

Regarding the first research question (features of Muslims-Christians interaction in Jimma), the study revealed that both followers of Islam and Christianity interact peacefully with one another in their daily lives regardless of religious difference due to socio-cultural commonalties and religious principles. Although there was limited tolerant political environment, particularly during the imperial and military regimes, the interaction between the two communities was more peaceful and less conflict. The study subjects considered peaceful interreligious encounters as one of the dominant forms of interreligious interaction in the study area although religious radicalism has started threatening socio-political orders.

In addressing the second research question—interreligious peaceful coexistence amidst increasing religious expansion and identity—two sources of peaceful interreligious coexistence were identified: religious and socio-cultural factors. Religious experts who participated in the in-depth interviews uncovered that the basic source of peaceful interreligious coexistence falls in the values of religious principles. They witnessed that it encourages peaceful interaction among neighbors with different religions.

The study found out several neighborhood networks which act as a glue, holding people of different religions together. There was also strong and positive feeling towards neighborhood. A neighbor has social and religious value. It acts as a necessity of life

supported by indigenous cultural values, which strongly bond people together regardless of religious variations. Moreover, the survey results confirmed that people interact with their neighbors during birth, death, holidays, coffee ceremony and self-help activities regardless of religious differences. In addition, local self-help networks such as *iddir*, *dabo*, and *ikub* were formed on the basis of proximity in vicinity, which served as another source of peaceful interreligious interaction regardless of religious differences.

With regard to the question of the causes of the recently emerging interreligious tensions, the study related these occasional conflicts to oscillate with the political contexts. In the present regime, people have got freedom, which brought the revival of diverse religious identities influencing existing forms of interreligious relations. Evidently, many religious institutions that operate currently in Jimma zone were established after 1990s. It explored that the occasional interreligious conflicts occurred in the area where there was a cumulative effect of multiple factors including economic competitions, contention over minority and majority status, low level of interreligious and intra-religious knowledge, religious expansion and interreligious preaching, and government interference in religious affairs. The conflict of religious identity and religious extremism took part as among the factors putting inter and intra-religious as well as religion-state interactions under distortions. Viewing existing religious diversity and revival of different religious identities as a political threat, the government attempted to follow a guarding approach, labeling all religious revivals as extremism.

Chapter Six and Seven dealt with addressing the main individual and institutional actors influencing interreligious interactions. The findings showed that state-religious institutions' interaction before 1991 was oppressive and it was generally stated as a state religion. However, in the present regime, religious freedom, equality, and recognition have been realized in principle and policy. It was known that the constitution guarantees the rights of all religions although these constitutional principles faced challenges practically at grassroots' level. There was a tendency of marginalizing religious groups with fewer followers by the local government by favoring religion with many followers over the other. Religious groups with fewer followers and newly emerging religious groups were denied legal recognition, particularly at zonal and woreda levels than at national level. It was noted that the government labeled a claim of religious equality and recognition movements as a threat to political and public order.

Regarding the research question dealing with other actors that influence interreligious interaction, there were multiple religious and non-religious actors found to shape interreligious interactions. This was based on the assumption that interreligious and state-religious institutions' relation was not occurring in a vacuum rather it was a product of multiple actors. The state becomes a key actor in influencing interreligious interactions through policies and its implementation, ensuring strategies for the implementation of religious policies, and intervention strategies in interreligious conflicts. Following the role of the state, local elders significantly influence interreligious relations. They possess cultural and religious power in peace making and cultivating interreligious tolerance. The study showed that elders are uniquely respected in Oromo culture and this helped them to influence people towards interreligious peace. Religious leaders, as elders in the community, also possess the power to mobilize their members towards peace or conflict. Hence, elders and religious leaders play multiple functions in settling individual and group level disagreements. They linked up people of diverse religions together by abridging religion with formal institutions such as government. Interreligious council was a recent establishment bringing and bridging different faiths together. It was considered as the sole organ responsible for building interreligious understanding through dialogue. As a strategy of managing religious diversity, the government initiated the establishment of interreligious council as a religious organ primarily responsible for maintaining interreligious tolerance in the country. Although the council brought remarkable changes in bringing different religions together and linking religion with state, neutrality and representation of the council was questioned and became a point of dispute. It was viewed among the study participants that the council was pro-government and did not accommodate all religious groups.

The study also found that FBOs played a great role in shaping interreligious interactions towards peace before they have been prohibited by the government to work on religious and political issues since 2009. They involved directly in interreligious conflict resolutions, mobilizing financial and material resources rehabilitation of humanitarian crisis and interreligious peacemaking and maintaining the tradition of peaceful interreligious coexistence through interreligious dialogue.

8.2. Conclusion

The study draws conclusion on five core themes: forms of Christian-Muslim interaction, sources of peaceful interreligious coexistence and conflict, individual and institutional organs determining the interaction, and religious institutions and the state

relations. As one of the religious issues, the study of the interaction between followers of different religions is contentious in the contemporary social science. Ethiopia is religiously a diverse country having Christianity, Islam, Catholic, and indigenous religions. This diversity has enormous ramifications for inter-societal harmony.

Interreligious relations cannot be understood exclusively by itself, but characterized and defined by its multiple faces, and institutional or individual actors in its operation. It has been a common trend to see the peaceful interreligious coexistence while intra-religious and interreligious disagreements were prevailing. Both peaceful coexistence and occasional disagreements were the two extreme features of the interaction extensively occurring between Muslims and Christians in the study locale.

Peaceful interreligious coexistence was considered as the dominant form of interaction in the study districts of Jimma area. It was believed that although the political atmosphere was not tolerant of religious diversity, historically Muslims and Christians peacefully live side by side. From this, the study concluded that the area's land with interreligious respect come from socio-cultural and religious bonds than an alleged fruit of a tolerant religious policy during the present regime. There are social capitals in each religion and socio-cultural factors, integrating the followers of the two religious communities together. Contrary to the previous studies undertaken in the area such as Mains (2004), Gemeda (2012) and Zelalem (2010), this study highly acknowledged the integrative role of neighborhood networks, which treated all residents without any discriminatory lines. Consequently, the interaction between Muslims and Christians in Jimma was mainly understood more as peaceful. Despite the fairly ubiquitous presence of these common religious and non-religious factors binding Muslims and Christians together, however, these elements were not known and communicated well. As a result, the difference between the two religions was widened by interreligious competition, misconception, and narrow political spaces. More recently, due to the increasing religious expansion and feeling of identity, which mobilized the people along religious lines these ethnic and cultural-based belonging were under threat.

The link between neighborhood networks and interreligious relations has been of new insights in the study of interreligious interactions. This study found that culture and religion itself contribute to peaceful interreligious relations in Jimma area. As an alternative opportunity against emerging interreligious tensions, the values of socio-cultural and religious capitals in maintaining interreligious harmony was positive in promoting to create a

peaceful social and political order. In the study area, the interaction between Muslims and Christians take place at neighborhood level through self-help associations such as *iddirs*, *ekubs*, and *dabo*. In the local contexts, neighborhood comprises social ties where followers of different religions reside side by side. Theoretically, neighborhood associations have been formed regardless of religious differences. The tenets of dominant sociological theories such as functionalism and multiculturalism praised the power of indigenous institutions in creating inter-group harmony. Thus, neighborhood bonds as sources of strong values and also functions accordingly in the study area. In all the study localities, the social and religious value for a neighbor was positive which contradicts with the study conducted by Mains (2004) in Jimma who found that local associations such as *iddirs* exclude Protestants. This study found out that the interaction among neighbors in the area was inclusive, cohesive, and peaceful.

More evidently, various forms of self-help groups in a neighborhood were formed on the basis of proximity in vicinity than religious belongings. In this case, one can consider the village-based *iddirs* which were inflectional than ethnic and religious based *iddirs*, in which people participate regardless of religious denominations. Therefore, peaceful interreligious interaction in the study area was directly attributed to these religious and socio-cultural values. Thus, it was concluded that neighborhood networks serve as central elements in peaceful interreligious coexistence.

Importantly, Muslims and Christians in the area historically connected through ethnic ties. The place of *Oromumma* as a shared Oromo identity was strong. It was found that these shared feeling of belonging enabled the two religious communities to tolerate their religious differences. The existence of interreligious marriage was an evidence of the integrating power of ethnic commons.

Religious principle operates as a key factor for peaceful coexistence. Religious fathers who participated in the study cited writings that recognize peace in the holy books. Both Islam and Christianity recognize the existence of and respect for other religions. This could be evidenced by ‘love of neighbor and humanity, and people of the book’. The study in this regard concluded that plurality in religious denomination was not a threat to interreligious relations. All religions advocate seeds of peace being magnified by various religious actors. Hence, in most cases, the study area’s peaceful encounter between Muslims and Christians mainly rooted in high commitment to their religious dictations.

Despite the dominant form of peaceful coexistence of Muslims and Christians, conflicts broke out and recur in the area. It emanates from the disagreements between sub-religious groups. Normally, the causes of the conflicts were attributed to institutional, political and economic and personal factors, as conflict theorists such as Weber and Dahrendorf argued. In congruent with the previous studies such as Abbink (2014), Ostebo (2010), Zelalem (2010), and Gemedra (2012), this study explored factors related to political and economic issues such as contention over power and land as main triggering factors over which conflicts broke. Beyond these factors, the study found that interreligious tensions in the study area were mere reflections of changes in political, economic and dynamics within each religion, which include dramatic religious reproduction and expansions mainly in Muslims and Protestants denominations through preaching and opening branches. The tension was further exacerbated by low levels of interreligious knowledge, a revival of religious identities, controversy over the minority and majority status, and interference of government in religious affairs to try to control religious mobilization against existing political ideology and administration. In contrast to the few studies that have generalized and equated conflict to government interference and religious radicalism, this study underscored that religious tensions, as a newly emerging form of interreligious relation, emanated from the revival of new religious groups such as variants of Protestant and Muslim groups that dominated public affairs, witnessed by conferences organized in stadiums, street preaching, mosque and church construction at every corner of neighborhoods with intolerable loud speakers.

Sometimes the followers of a particular religious group invariably exert efforts to promote their own religion. Interreligious preaching, religious expansion, and the methods employed by them were limitless. As a result, the study respondents were not in support of the methods of preaching employed by Christians and Muslims. Public places were not secular and not as free from religious preaching. It was concluded that admitting the rational choice theory of religion, the adherents of each religion tend to be profit seekers, use limitless interreligious preaching to win over religious converts in a competitive religious expansion. Contrary to the previous studies such as Gnamo (2002), Castells (2010), and Wondwosen and Jerusalem (2010), residents in the study area prioritized religious identity than ethnic. This indicates the revival and socio-political resurgence of religion. The use of modern communication channels such as Facebook, internet, and publication tools instigated religious revivalism and inter-group discord. These new trends were found to be creating pressure on

interreligious coexistence, which was previously installed in the cultural and neighborhood networks.

There were also economic factors which instigated interreligious tensions. First, migration of people across regions created competition over basic resources which culminated in conflict in the community between settlers and natives groups along with religious cleavages. Consistent with the previous finding by Haustein and Ostebo (2011), the use of urban and rural land for the purpose of religious expansion and cemetery was another critical arena of interreligious and religious institutions and the local government disputes. Competition over access to scarce resources such as land for the purpose of religious expansion and personal use was triggering factors towards interreligious friction. Amidst this competition, there was unequal access to these resources and services between religions. However, this study uniquely found a claim over political power and economic dominance due to historical and numerical status as a factor of the friction between the two religious communities. This finding matches with the central arguments of conflict and social identity theories, which claim that people activate conflict when they felt that their group is losing in a certain political and economic context. It could be concluded in this regard that the Muslims who identified themselves as natives and the majority felt that they have been marginalized from the existing political and economic systems due to the expansions of Christian churches in the area. The Christians, who claimed minority, on the other hand, consider themselves marginalized due to their size and local government's support of Muslims.

Interreligious dynamism was highly influenced by the political context. State and religious institutions had been intertwined in Ethiopia over a long period of time either exhibiting co-opted relationship or resistance and struggle to win over one another. In agreement with the study of Abbink (2014) and Ostebo (2010) which attributed religious tensions in the country to government interference in religious matters, the change in the political climate in 1991 resulted in a new role of religion in the country. In the present regime, the constitution's guaranteeing freedom and equality of religion initiated the revival and rapid expansion of religious groups. Weak institutional arrangements for managing religious diversity and multiplication of religious institutions (lack of a body responsible for provision of registration, recognition, and basic services such as land and cemetery) that claim for their constitutional rights comprised the points of departure and contestation for interreligious interaction and religious institutions and the state as well. Considering religious diversity, and emergence and expansion of many revival groups such as

Protestantism and Wahhabism as a threat to the political order, the government did not distance itself from religious issues, which resulted in religious institutions and politics interaction in the country to be presented as a 'contested secularism'. In this regard, religious radicalism was a contested concept and a point of dispute for interreligious and religious institutions and the state. It was agreeable in principle that radicalism, by its violent ideology and action, is against pluralism and peaceful interreligious interaction. But violent actions were mainly provoked by the local administration's failure to address questions of religious bodies. Consequently, residents' and government's response against it was negative involving labeling and marginalizing religious groups with minor followers, which gradually resulted in interreligious and religious institutions and government tensions.

It was extensively accounted in the study that although theoretically the state-religious institutions' interaction in the present regime was depicted as "accommodative", yet its practices at the grassroots level were open for severe criticisms. As a specific form of this criticism which activated friction was government's labeling of claims of one's religious promotion as a political activism and its attempt to co-opt with religious leaders and moderate religious sects. In addition, religious groups with fewer followers were marginalized at the local levels. This finding aligned with the rational choice theory of religion, which argues that the state interference in religious affairs disturbs the normal state of religious life. Hence, at the state level, interreligious and religious institutions-state interaction was characterized by suspicion, suppression, and struggle.

As repeatedly pinpointed, the dynamism of interreligious interaction was also stirred by multiple organs. Civil society, community elders and FBOs have shown a positive response to promote peace in the study community along religious lines. The use of these institutions in peace building was a deep rooted tradition in the study localities. Historically, these institutions, particularly eldership, were intertwined in the culture of the area. Local elders were found to be the main trusted actors and effective players in interreligious peacemaking role. Importantly, religious leaders possess the potential to mobilize their members towards interreligious peace and can teach their members to increase knowledge of religious diversity and embrace their socio-cultural commonalties and religious differences. Thus, eldership through local elders and religious fathers make an effective means of interreligious bridging. However, some religious leaders and local elders were manipulated and coopted by the local governments. This circumstance divided the religious communities

instigating intra-religious tensions and also mounted to the government-religious institutions' tensions.

Faith-based organizations and interreligious councils have shown their integrative functions by bringing religious and non-religious actors together. In principle, these formal institutions were effective in resource mobilization towards interreligious peace building. They link interreligious and religious institutions with government. However, practically the contribution of FBOs in interreligious peace building was minimal due to the legal environment constraints. The main constraints included the case that religious issues were dictated by the government's civil society and charity organizations' law (which was promulgated in 2009) as a political concern in which civil society organizations were not allowed to intervene. Interreligious council, on the other hand, was expected as an organized institution working collectively towards addressing religious issues. However, the process of its establishment and co-opted relationship with the government put its neutrality and representation under question mark resulting in the potential of religious capitals untapped.

8.3. Recommendations and General Concluding Remarks

This sub-section provides the recommendations and areas for further actions. The recommendations were mainly emanating from the analysis carried out and the conclusions made in the preceding sub-parts.

8.3.1. Development and policy recommendations

The preceding chapters show that religion has dual functions. On one hand, it divides people and became a marker of social unrest and on the other hand it acts as a source of social cement. This sub-section recommends how religious and cultural values can be effectively used in maintaining peaceful interreligious relations. The proposed recommendations were based on the data directly collected from the study participants and theoretical frameworks. It situated some actors at the different levels as they can potentially promote interreligious harmony.

- The interplay between religious diversity and interreligious relations was discussed. It was found that religious principles, as stated in the holy books, acknowledged the persistence of religious diversity across the world. Peaceful interreligious coexistence, therefore, is a manifestation of religious values. However, there was limited knowledge of these principles. Although there were common religious elements between Muslims and Christians, these common values were underemphasized both

in practice and theoretical scenes. In this regard, a collective effort by religious and non-religious organs such as religious leaders and academics need to be directed at enhancing knowledge of religious roots on peaceful interreligious coexistence. More specifically, it was recommended that since all religious doctrines dictate their member to respect other religions, religious institutions in the area need to orient this fact to convince their members towards interreligious understanding. To this end, religious and academic institutions in Jimma can play a great role. For instance, Islamic teaching centers and Christians' theological colleges in the area need to promote interreligious understanding by including the issue in their curriculum and daily teaching.

- Historically, the area is described as a place where peaceful interreligious coexistence was evident although occasional interreligious conflicts were not negligible more recently. This deep-rooted peaceful coexistence was due to the persistence of socio-cultural values averting religious cleavages. There were such institutions in the study area binding people of different religious backgrounds. There were self-help networks which were formed on the basis of vicinity than religious criteria. These neighborhood networks such as *iddir*, *equb*, *dabo*, and neighbor have high religious and cultural values. However, there were weak institutional arrangements for using the potential of these values. Beyond multiple social and economic functions, they act as the cement of society binding people of multiple religions. It was also suggested that these socio-cultural values were weakly integrated into the already existing institutional arrangements. Accordingly, an organ responsible for supporting and preserving these traditions need to be created at zonal and local levels. For this, Culture and Tourism or Social Affairs Offices were suggested as appropriate organs responsible for documenting and promoting the institutions. Importantly, interreligious peace building efforts through formal institutions such as government and civil society organizations can make use of the potential of these indigenous institutions by integrating them with the formal procedures and institutions.
- Among the different actors influencing interreligious relations, the government was the key organ responsible for playing multiple roles. It was described that the interactions between religious institutions and the government were contentious and raised as the main factors of interreligious tensions. Although the constitution theoretically dictates secularism, in practice the scope of religious freedom was

limited. Government's guarding approach on religion resulted in unprecedented tensions. It was believed that religious freedom should be realized at all tiers of government structure. In this regard, the local and federal government has to treat religions equally and distance itself, and follow smooth approach.

- Religious expansion need not be constrained by the local governments if fruitful realization of interreligious and peaceful religion-government interactions is to be attained. Accordingly, the government needs to refrain from labeling and strictly policing religious expansions and promotion as political activism, and all religious groups at all tiers must be served equally, particularly registration of and provision of places of worship and cemetery. More specifically, addressing religious institutions' questions such as equality, recognition, and access to basic services was found to have more sound approach of preventing violent radicalism than using policing approach.
- Due to the lack of knowledge of religious rights and constitutional principles, limitless religious expansion and preaching were sources of contentions. In this regard, religious institutions (Churches and Mosques) were advised to train their preachers, mainly following formal procedures and within their respective institutions.
- Interreligious council was considered as a strategy of linking religion with development and peace. It was acting as a tool for cultivating interreligious peace and directing a way to use the potential of religion in development. However, the study suggested that the council, both at national and zonal levels, should be participatory and inclusive. To effectively use this council as a body of enhancing interreligious dialogue, the study participants suggested that it should represent and reflect the interest of the people they represent (inclusive of all religions and sects) and free from political interference. Furthermore, the establishment of the council needs to be promoted and decentralized to the smallest administrative unit, Woreda/sub-city level, to make it accessible to all members.
- Interreligious dialogue plays a crucial role in creating interreligious peace building. This program needs to be initiated from the bottom, particularly from religious organs and institutions themselves than by local governments and to be mainstreamed in the works of multiple organs in the area such as interreligious councils, universities, and faith-based organizations operating in the area.

- In principle, it was a popular notion that the government alone could not realize peace and development. There were other organs that collectively support in cultivating interreligious peace by realizing the potential of religious capitals. To mention a few, religious leaders, elders, and faith-based organizations were active in the area. However, legal constraints limit the participation of these multiple organs in realizing the principle that peaceful interreligious coexistence is a collective effort. For example, the 2009 civil society and charity organization, which defined the religious issue as politics in which NGOs were not allowed to participate, was viewed as a legal constraint. Thus, the study suggested in this regard that the law has to be redefined to support the use of the potential of CSOs. Hence, FBOs both of Muslims and Christians, local and international NGOs, theological colleges, and civic institutions have to be allowed to intervene in religious issues. In addition to the need for broadening space for the participation of third party organs in the issues of religion and peace, there should also be an institution and legal instruments linking local eldership and religious leadership institutions to formally established interreligious councils.
- It was also suggested that religious leaders and elders were responsible for managing all religious issues. For instance, it was recommended that a church/mosque should play a prime responsibility to manage emerging problem of religious radicalism. In this regard, religious leaders and local elders should teach peaceful and smooth methods of religious expansion and interreligious relations by distancing themselves from the government co-option.

8.3.2. Recommendations for further research

The finding of this study has research, development, and policy implications. At the macro level, it suggests the study of the relationship between religion and culture. Particularly, a holistic study of cultural views of religion and religious diversity needs further research. This study found that as part of cultural networks, ethnic and neighborhood bonds were considered as an opportunity for interreligious tolerance. This suggests a study of the interplay between ethnicity and religion. Particularly, the socio-political organization of Oromo, the dominant ethnic group of the study area and its implication for interreligious relations need to be researched. More specifically, the *Gada* system and issues of religious diversity and interreligious relation require further research.

The study of interreligious relation has multiple folds. On one hand, it comprises an interaction between the major world religions such as Islam and Christianity, which this particular study tried to address. On the other hand, the study of an interaction between indigenous religions and Islam or Christianity is equally important. For instance, the role of *Wakefanna* and its relation with other religions was of contentious issues demanding further research. The existence of Jimma University could be an opportunity in facilitating the establishment of centers and institutes for the study of interreligious peaceful coexistence and development.

The role of multiple organs in exploiting the potential of religion in development has received little attention. This study investigated some religious capitals which positively contribute to peaceful interreligious encounters and development in particular. Hence, exploring the link between religion, peace, and development is another area of research and policy directions.

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Appendix 1. Instruments of Data Collection

1. Questionnaire

**Addis Ababa University
College of Social Sciences
Department of Sociology**

This questionnaire is prepared to collect information for a PhD research entitled “The Dynamics of Interreligious Interactions: Religious Diversity, Coexistence and Tensions in Jimma Zone”.

Respondent code

Date of Interview

Name of Interviewer

Introduction

My name is Asebe Amenu Tufa. I am carrying a field work on “the dynamics of interreligious interactions in Jimma zone”, a research project for the partial fulfillment for the requirement for the degree of doctorate of philosophy in Sociology at Addis Ababa University. Hence, the study is purely for academic purpose. The information you provide on the various forms of interreligious interactions and its influencing factors is extremely paramount. You are randomly selected as a resident of this zone/woreda/kebele. The information you will give me is kept confidential. There is no material benefit for your giving me information rather this research in which you are participating by providing information may benefit our society in general. Your name and other personal identities will not be reported with the research findings. If you have any questions about the research, do not hesitate to contact me through phone number (251911817248) Or AAU sociology department (0111225948).

I thank you in advance for your genuine cooperation.

Instruction: Please write your answer in space provided in the last column.

S/N	Questions	Alternatives	response
I. Questions about the background of research participants			
1	sex	1=male, 2=female	
2	Age in years		-----
3	Level of educational attainment	0=no education 4=diploma 1=elementary 5=first degree 2=high school 6= 2 nd degree &above 3=Cirtificates (10+1, 10+2, 10+3)	-----
4	Ethnic category	1=Oromo 5= Kaficho 2=Amhara 6=Guraghe 3=Dawaro 7=Hadya 4=Tigre 8=other, please specify	-----
5	Length of stay in the area	1=less than 5 years 2= 5-10 years 3=more than 10 years 4= native dwellers	-----
6	Occupation	1= trade/merchant 4=student 2=civil servant 5=no job	

		3=farmer	6=other (specify)	-----
7	Marital status	1=never married		
		2= married		
		3= divorced		-----
		4=widowed		
8	Type of residence (urban/rural)	1=rural		
		2=urban		-----
9	Number of family	1=less than 4		
		2= 5-7		
		3=more than 8		
	Do you have access to the following services?			
10	Electricity	1=yes, 2=no		-----
	pure drinking water	1=yes, 2=no		-----
	transport	1=yes, 2=no		-----
	telephone	1=yes, 2=no		-----
	internet	1=yes, 2=no		-----
	school	1=yes, 2=no		-----
	radio/television	1=yes, 2=no		-----

II. Determinants of Interreligious Interaction

A. Religious identity

11	What is your religion?	1=Muslim		
		2=Orthodox Christian		
		3=Protestant		-----
		4=Catholic		
		5=Wakefata		
		6=other, please specify		
12	How often do you attend your place of worship?	1=daily		
		2= weekly		-----
		3=monthly		
		4=few cases/more than a month		
		5=DK		
13	How often do you pray per day?	1=5 times		
		2=3 times		
		3= once		-----
		4= do not pray daily		
		5=DK		
14	How often do you study the Bible/Quran?	1= Daily		
		2=sometimes		

		3=rarely	-----
		4= not at all	
		5=DK	
15	Do you consider yourself religious?	1=yes, 2=no	-----
16	What methods do you use to preach in order to promote your religion?		
17	Do you preach to all followers of other religions including Islam/Christianity/Wakefanna?	1=yes, 2=no	
18	Do you believe that religion is source of unity in ethnically diverse area?	1=yes, 2=no	-----
	If no why?		
19	If yes, how?		
20	Which identity is more important for you?	1=Religious 2=Ethnic	-----
	Do you think that your religion is the only way leading to eternal life?	1=yes, 2=no	-----
21	If yes how?		
	If no how?		

B. Religion and State Relations

22	To what extent are you free to practice your religious practices and beliefs without external imposition?	1= very free 2=somewhat free 3= not at all free 4=DK	-----
23	Does the constitution limits freedom of your religion?	1=yes, 2=no	-----
24	Does the government intervene in your religious matters?	1=yes, 2=no	-----
25	If yes to Q. 24, how does the government interference in religious affairs manifested?		-----
	• Appointing church leaders	1=yes, 2=no	-----
	• Restricting some religious practices	1=yes, 2=no	-----
	• Limiting some religious organizations	1=yes, 2=no	-----
	• Other, please specify	1=yes, 2=no	-----
26	Does the state favor one religion over another?	1=yes, 2=no	-----
27	If yes to Q. 26, which religion?	1=Islam 2=Orthodox Christianity 3=Protestantism 4=Other, please specify	-----
28	In your opinion why State favor that religion?		
29	Does the local government favors one religion? If no skip to	1=yes, 2=no	-----

Q.32

- 30 If yes to Q. 29, which religion? 1=Islam -----
2=Orthodox Christianity
3=Protestantism
4=Other

Please indicate the reasons for Q.30?

C. Perception of Religious Diversity and Interreligious Interaction

- 31 Are there people of different religious background in your neighborhood? 1=yes, 2=no -----

32 If yes followers of which religion?

- 33 How much do you know about other religion and its practices? 1=great deal, -----
2=some,
3= nothing at all
4=DK

- 34 How much comfortable are you of people from different religious group other than yours in most public spheres (work place, neighborhoods)? 1=very comfortable -----
2= moderately
3=less comfortable
4=not comfortable at all

If 3 or 4 to Q. 34, why?

- 35 How much comfortable are you of people from different religious group other than yours in most of your private spheres (family & friendships)? 1=very comfortable -----
2= moderately
3=less comfortable
4=not comfortable at all

If 3 or 4 to Q. 35, why?

- 36 How frequently are you interacting with people of different religious? 1=mostly -----
2=sometimes
3=not at all

- 37 How many of your close friends are followers of religion different from your own? 1=all of them, -----
2=most of them,
3=some of them,
4=DK

38 Are they kept away from you due to religious difference? 1=yes, 2=no -----

- 39 From what you know, do you think that your religion and other religion have a lot in common? 1=Have a lot in common, -----
2=Are different
3=DK

40 If your answer to Q 39 is 1, please specify the communalities?

- 41 Do you think that most of the followers of other religions are hostile to your religion? (if no skip to 49) 1=yes, 2=no -----

42 If yes to Q 41, followers of which religion?

43	If yes to Q.41 why?		
44	If no to Q. 41, People of other religions always treat you with respect?	1=yes, 2=no	-----
45	Do you recognize the rights of other religious groups to practice their religious beliefs?	1=yes, 2=no	-----
46	If no to Q 45, why?		
47	To what extent do you have trusting relationship with other religious groups in your village?	1=greatly 2=moderately 3=less extent 4=not at all	-----
48	Do you participate in some of religious practices of other religious groups?	1=always 2=sometimes 3=rarely 4=not at all	-----
	If your answer to Q.48 is 4/3, why?		
49	If your answer is 1 or 2 to Q 48 how/ in what occasion?		
	• Coffee ceremony	1=yes, 2=no	_____
	• Religious holidays	1=yes, 2=no	_____
	• Wedding	1=yes, 2=no	_____
	• Birth ceremony	1=yes, 2=no	_____
	• Burial ceremony	1=yes, 2=no	_____
50	Do you cooperate with your neighbor when they are in need of your help regardless of religious difference?	1=yes, 2=no	-----
51	If yes to Q 50, in what cases?		-----
52	If no to Q.50 why?		
53	Generally, you have strong social relations with your neighbors regardless of religious differences	1=strongly agree 2=agree 3=neither agree/disagree 4= disagree 5= strongly disagree	
54	Increasing religious diversity in this area is a threat to your religious identity	1=strongly agree 2=agree 3=neither agree/disagree 4= disagree 5= strongly disagree	-----
55	If 1 or 2 to Q 54 how?		
56	Migration of people of different religious groups to your locality is a threat to your own religious group	1=strongly agree 2=agree 3=neither agree/disagree	-----

		4= disagree	
		5= strongly disagree	
57	If 1 or 2 to Q 56 how?		
58	The chance of getting space in your village (land, house, & other services) will decline due to the presence of other religious groups	1=strongly agree 2=agree 3=neither agree/disagree 4= disagree 5= strongly disagree	-----
59	Religious violence in your neighborhood is due to the presence of other religious groups	1=strongly agree 2=agree 3=neither agree/disagree 4= disagree 5= strongly disagree	-----
60	Are you afraid that customs of your group will be lost due to the presence of other religious groups	1=strongly agree 2=agree 3=neither agree/disagree 4= disagree 5= strongly disagree	-----
61	Generally, increasing religious diversity erodes your religious hegemony	1=strongly agree 2=agree 3=neither agree/disagree 4= disagree 5= strongly disagree	-----

D. Interreligious Tensions

62	Do you think that inter-religious conflict is one of the serious problems in your area?	1=yes, 2=no	-----
63	If yes to Q.62 how?		
64	Which interreligious conflict has frequently occurred and more serious?		
	• Muslims-Orthodox Christians conflict	1=yes, 2=no	----
	• Muslims-protestants conflict	1=yes, 2=no	-----
	• Protestants-Orthodox Christians conflict	1=yes, 2=no	-----
65	If yes to any of Q. 64, what were the causes?		
66	As you think how big the problem, if at all is, intra religious tensions exist (between people who are very religious and who are not very religious in the same religion in this area? (if no skip to 69)	1=very serious 2=sometimes 3=not serious problem 4=DK	-----
67	If your answer to Q.66 is 1 or 2, please specify the groups who are in tensions?		
68	What were the causes of intra-religious tensions?		

69	Competition over land and land resources intensifies interreligious conflict	1=strongly agree 2=agree 3=neither agree/disagree 4= disagree 5= strongly disagree	-----
70	Religious methods of preaching intensifies interreligious conflict	1=strongly agree 2=agree 3=neither agree/disagree 4= disagree 5= strongly disagree	-----
71	Do you ever participate in inter-faith dialogue aimed at interreligious peace in the past 10 years?	1=yes, 2=no	-----
72	Is there sign of religious fundamentalism in your village these days?	1=yes, 2=no	-----
73	If yes to Q.72, how is it manifested in your community?		
	• Exclusivist ideology (spiritually)	1=yes, 2=no	-----
	• Open war on others	1=yes, 2=no	-----
	• Socially marginalizing others	1=yes, 2=no	-----
	• Violence against government	1=yes, 2=no	-----
	• Other, please specify	1=yes, 2=no	-----
74	How concerned, if at all, are you about religious extremist groups in your area these days?	1= very concerned, 2=somewhat concerned, 3= not concerned at all 4=DK	-----
75	Which religious extremist group usually concerns you? (you can choose more than one)	1= Muslim extremist groups 2= Orthodox Christian extremist groups 3= Protestants extremist group 4=other, please specify	-----
E. Local associations and Interreligious Interactions			
76	Which type of <i>iddir</i> associations are there in your village?		
	a) village based,		
	b) ethnic based,	1=yes 2=no	-----
	c) religious based,	1=yes 2=no	-----
	d) gender based,	1=yes 2=no	-----
	e) other, please specify	1=yes 2=no	-----
77	Which of the above types of <i>iddir</i> associations do you value more in your life?	1=village based, 2= ethnic based,	-----

	(you can choose more than one)	3= religious based, 4= gender based, 5= other	
78	Are you member in any of village based iddir association?	1=yes, 2=no	-----
79	If no to Q 82, please specify the reasons		
80	Anyone who is resident of the village can be a member regardless of religious difference?	1=yes, 2=no	-----
81	Any member can be benefit equally regardless of religious difference?	1=yes, 2=no	-----
82	Are there informal labor exchange services in which residents are working together such as <i>Debo</i> ?	1=yes, 2=no	-----
83	How Debo usually organized in your locality? (you can choose more than 1)	1=locality based 2=religious based 3=kin based	-----
84	Have you ever participated in the activities?	1=yes, 2=no	-----
85	If no to Q 84 is it due to religious difference? Please specify the reasons	1=yes, 2=no	-----
86	Can all religious groups (Muslims, Orthodox Christians, & Protestants) share each others' matters equally during occasions such as wedding or funerals?	1=yes, 2=no	-----
87	If no to Q. 86, which religious group more excluded?	1=Islam 2=Orthodox Christianity 3=Protestantism 4=Other	-----
88	Please specify the reasons for your answer to Q 87 above?		
89	Finally, is there any other issue you want to raise?		

This is the end; again I thank you for your cooperation!

2. In-depth Interview Guide

In-depth Interview guide (for **Interreligious Councils, leaders of religious institutions, and FBOs**) prepared to collect information on a PhD research entitled “The Dynamics of Interreligious Interactions: Religious Diversity, Coexistence and Tensions in Jimma Zone”.

Respondent code

Date of Interview

Name of Interviewer

Introduction

My name is Asebe Amenu Tufa. I am collecting data on “the dynamics of interreligious interactions in Jimma zone”, a research project for the partial fulfillment for the requirement for the degree of PhD in Sociology, Addis Ababa University. Hence, the study is purely for academic purpose. Your knowledge regarding various forms of interreligious interactions and its influencing factors is extremely paramount.

You are selected as a resident of this zone/woreda/kebele. Your giving me this information will not harm you and is kept confidential. There is no material benefit for your giving me information rather this research in which you are participating by providing information may benefit our society in general. Your name and other personal identities will not be reported with the research findings. If you have any questions and additional elaborations about the research you can contact me through phone number (251911817248) Or AAU sociology department (0111225948).

I thank you in advance for your genuine cooperation.

1) State of Interreligious Interactions

- How do you explain state of interreligious interaction (interaction among Muslims, Orthodox Christians, and Protestants) 10 years ago and now?
 - Muslims-Orthodox Christians relationships
 - Muslims-Protestants relationships
- Was it characterized as more of peaceful or conflictual?
- What is interreligious tolerance?
- Is there interreligious tolerance in this area?
- What the sources of peaceful interactions?- spiritual, economic, political, and socio-cultural bases?

2) Who are the various actors/institutions which influence state of interreligious interactions?

- How they influence positively/negatively?
- What are the roles of each actor?
 - Religious leaders
 - Local government

- Local elders
 - Civil society institutions, if any
 - others
- 3) How did you explain state of interreligious conflict which occurred 6/7 years ago in different parts of Jimma zone?
- What was the extent of the conflict?
 - What were the causes from economic, political, religious point of view?
 - Who were the actors assumed to be the initiators of the conflict?
 - How the conflict was resolved? What actors/institutions at local, regional and federal level involved?
 - What were the consequences of the conflict?
 - What should be done future peace management?
- 4) The role of interreligious council/religious leaders/FBOs in creating peaceful interreligious interactions?
- 5) Religious extremism/fundamentalism?
- What is it?
 - How is it manifested?
 - Who are extremists?
 - How is it distinguished from strong religious identity?
 - Its implication for peaceful interreligious interaction?
- 6) What is the place of ethnic identity in making peaceful interreligious interaction?
- 7) What are the roles of socio-cultural associations like iddir, ekub, and debo in building interreligious tolerance?

In-depth interview guide (theologians, professionals/experts, local elders) prepared to collect information on a PhD research entitled “The Dynamics of Interreligious Interactions: Religious Diversity, Coexistence and Tensions in Jimma Zone”.

Respondent code

Date of Interview

Name of Interviewer

Introduction

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- What are the sources of peaceful interactions?- spiritual, economic, political, and socio-cultural bases?
- What spoils state of peaceful interreligious interactions? - spiritual, economic, political, and socio-cultural bases?

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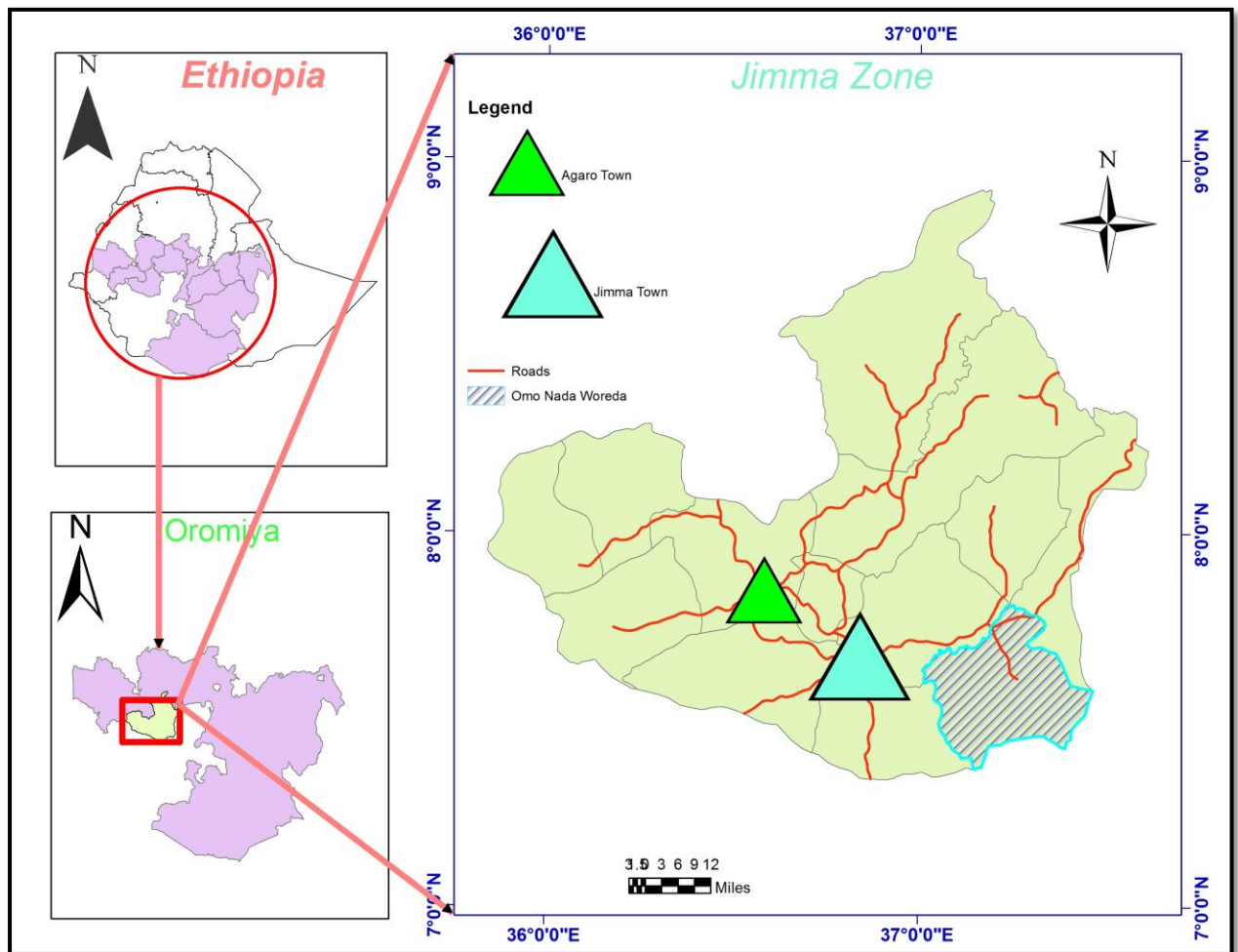
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4). How did you explain state of interreligious conflict which occurred 6/7 years ago in different parts of Jimma zone?

- What was the extent of the conflict?
- What were the causes from economic, political, religious point of view?
- Who were the actors assumed to the initiators of the conflict?

- How the conflict was resolved? What actors/institutions at local, regional and federal level involved?
 - What were the consequences of the conflict?
 - What should be done for future peace management?
- 8) International context and interreligious interaction
- Influence of media
 - World political context
- 9) In your opinion, is there freedom of religion in your area? To what extent people are free to practice their religious beliefs? Is there external imposition or government involvement in religious affairs?
- 10) Religious extremism/fundamentalism?
- What is it?
 - How is it manifested?
 - Who are extremists?
 - How is it distinguished from strong religious identity?
 - What is its implication for peaceful interreligious interaction?
- 11) What is the place of ethnic identity in making peaceful interreligious interaction?
- 12) What are the roles of socio-cultural associations like iddir, ekub, and debo in building interreligious tolerance?

Appendix 2: Study Area Map



Source: Adapted from Finance and Economic Development Bureau of Oromia, 2016