**JIMMA UNIVERSITY**

**COLLEGE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES**

**DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY**

THE ROLE OF RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS IN CONFLICT RESOLUTION: THE CASE OF GOMMA WOREDA OF JIMMA ZONE, OROMIA REGIONAL STATE

**BY**

**SOLOMON BENTI**

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO COLLEGE OF SOCIAL SCIENCE AND HUMANITIES DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY, IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS IN SOCIAL ANTHROPOLOGY.

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A Thesis submitted to College of Social Science and Humanities Department of Sociology, in partial fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in Social Anthropology.

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**Jimma, Ethiopia**

# DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis is my original work and it has not been presented for any degree in any organization. All materials used in this work are properly acknowledged.

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**Solomon Benti Etefa**

As thesis research advisor, we hereby certify that we have read and evaluated this thesis prepared, under our guidance, by Solomon Benti, entitled **"**The Role of Religious Institutions in Conflict Resolution: The Case of Gomma Woreda of Jimma Zone, Oromia National Regional State" we recommend that it can be submitted as fulfilling the thesis requirement.

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**Approved by the examining board**

As member of the board of examiners of the M.A. Thesis open defense examination, we certify that we have read, evaluated the thesis prepared by Solomon Benti Etefa as and examined the candidate .We recommended that the thesis can be accepted fulfilling the thesis requirement for the masters in Social Anthropology.

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Internal Examiner        ………………………     ……………………..

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External Examiner        …………………………     ………………………

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# GLOSSARY

| | |
|---|---|
| Al-ifsad | Corruption, mischief |
| Al-ikhtilaf | Different, disagreement |
| Al-islah | Reformation, conciliation |
| Al-jadal | Dialectic, debate, Argumentation |
| Al-shiqaq | Resistance, opposition, conflict |
| BuluCooma | This is to mean table to hat whenever they are not come to harmony they prolong    the time of re union to do a discussion. |
| Dhiifaama/Afootuu | Forgiveness |
| Haftuu | Unmarried |
| Holistic Ministry | Serving the Whole Person |
| Idir (Afooshaa) | Collaborative self-help association |
| Ifsad | Often juxtaposed against corruption and mischief. |
| Ikhtilaf | The Arabic term- indicates taking different position |
| Imama | The Muslim religious leader |
| Iman | The main motive of being just and a well-disciplined Muslim. |
| Islah | To make good, proper, or right, or to reconcile and settle |
| Jaarsa/ jaarsabiyya | Respected and selected elders were selected by the two bodies those who came with conflict case based on their agreement. |
| Jaarsummaa | Representative of the community |
| Jadal | Argument |
| Kehnät | Holy Orders |
| Kes | Reverend/Priest |
| Mätse'afä Kerestəna | Book of Christening for the removal of the remains of idol worship |
| Mamere | Religious Teacher |
| Meś'iratä Betäkerestyan | Mysteries of the Church |

| | |
|---|---|
| Meśe'irat | which is in accordance with the early Christian |
| Naqataa | Betrothal - type of marriage |
| Nese'a | Repentance |
| Qändil | Unction or Anointing of the Sick |
| Qeddus Qurban | Holy Eucharist |
| Qeerroo | Bachelor |
| Quran | The teachings of Islam we see insightful emphasis on the spiritual |
| Sabbatmarii | Literally means rolling or folding a sabbataa |
| Sabbatmarii | The second most frequently exercised type of marriage |
| Sayyuu | Wife of the girl's brother |
| Shikucha | Conspiracy |
| Shiqaq | Disagreement |
| Sulh | Conciliation or settlement |
| Täkəlil | Matrimony |
| Tazkiya | Purification |
| Temqat | Baptism |

# ACRONYMS

| | |
|---|---|
| **AIB** | Awash International Bank |
| **CBE** | Commercial Bank of Ethiopia |
| **CRDA** | Christian Relief and Development Association |
| **CSA** | Central Statistics Agency |
| **DASSC** | Development and Social Service Commotion |
| **ECFE** | Evangelical Churches Fellowship of Ethiopia |
| **EECMY** | Ethiopian Evangelical Church of Mekane Yesus |
| **EOC** | Ethiopian Orthodox Church |
| **FEDBGW** | Finance and Economic Development Bureau of Gomma Woreda |
| **FGD** | Focus Group Discussion |
| **IRC** | Inter-religious Council |
| **IRCE** | Inter-Religious Council of Ethiopia |
| **JRP** | Joint Relief Partnership |
| **LWF** | Lutheran World Federation |
| **NHP** | Nutrition and Hygiene program |
| **ONRS** | Oromia National Regional State |

# ABSTRACT

*The role of religion institution in conflict and peace building has all too often been depicted in binary terms: it is seen as a source either of violence or of reconciliation. This study is to explore the role and potentials of religious institutions and examine how effective conflict resolution mechanisms using and how it works in Gomma Woreda. The study design was descriptive qualitative approach fifty-four (54) informants were participated in the interview. These informants were selected by using purposive sampling technique. In-depth interview, key informant interviews, two FGDs (one with religious institution leaders and one with religious followers), observation and document analysis were utilized for data collection mechanism. Data for this study was collected from January to March 2017. The study found that various types of conflicts existed in the specific Woreda. Conflict types like, family, ethnic, Dynamics of interest, conflict among neighbors, individual`s conflict and Inter-Religious conflict are the main types. The study also found out that religious institutions and religious leaders in conflict resolution from each respective religious institution are well versed in their specific religion and cultural set up of the community. As a starting point for a more meaningful analysis, this research aims to find the cause , and type of conflicts resolved by religious institutions, and the role of religious institutions and responsibility of religious followers in conflict resolution. There are various conflict resolution mechanisms alternatives used to settle conflicts. Religious dispute settlement is one of such mechanisms. It is rather obvious that mainly religious leaders have had important role in conflict aversion. This research puts forward several recommendations for religious leaders to aware the followers about the cause of conflict, and conflict resolution.*

# CHAPTER ONE

# INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Background of the Study

Conflict is a situation where by individuals, groups, or countries are involved in disagreement over an issue. Conflict, as a state of disagreement may lead to crisis or violence Peters (2006:21). Conflicts are as old as human societies themselves. Commonly, individuals, social groups and societies have disputed and competed against one another over limited commodities and resources: land, money, political power, and ideology. They have even fought one another and resentfully sought the elimination and/or defeat of opposing groups in order to control these resources and commodities. But at the same time, human societies and groups have found their own ways and means for avoidance and/or resolving conflicts through cultural mechanisms prominently religious reconciliation than legal alternatives Shore (2009 :X).

Conflict will always exist in a society with its members having various mores, interests, and socio-economic conditions and needs. Thus, in any society, for a variety of reasons, perceptions may be conceived about a group or communal interests being harmed or relatively disadvantaged. If further, these may lead to expressions of discontent against the State or other social groups and communities as well as individuals. If such discontent is not attended to in the primary stages or agreement with in a manner which magnifies the already prevailing feeling of injustice done to the group or community, a major conflict situation may arise. Thus, different stages of conflict situations can be envisaged each caused by interventions Rue (2007:31).

The relationship between religion and conflict is an ambivalent one. Most government and conflict scholars considered the causal relationship between religion and conflict. However, the role of religion in conflict resolution has got currency by governments and organizations working in the area of conflict Shore (2009:1). In fact, religion is part of today's global society in many ways. It is not only part of traditional customs and thinking, but it is also a fundamental

part of contemporary change. It both contributes to the forces of globalization and provides a corrective response to such trends as the threatening peace and security. Some of the traditional values of religion including honesty, justice, fair play, tolerance and respect for others are necessary for the maintenance of any society, perhaps even more so for a globalized society that has no single cultural tradition. In a global culture, the shared values of different religious traditions can provide a collective sense of virtuous conduct in public life Megan (2009:5). Academic and policy oriented literature on religion and international affairs is rich in publications arguing that religion is a useful if not necessary instrument for achieving peace. More specifically, religious beliefs or values, religious leaders and faith-based organizations are thought to have huge potential in promoting peace in any society and/or in the international arena Silvestri and Mayall (2015:28).

In the current global situation, a period of greater cooperation and inter-dependence at all levels of society, a peaceful and sustainable conflict resolution process is very critical Okra (2003:10). The goals of conflict resolution may be classified as preventive or corrective. Preventive goal deals with convincing individuals and groups to choose to discuss rather than resort to dislike in all matters of disagreement; there by increasing the level of peaceful existence. Corrective goal, however, focuses on measures to resolve existing conflicts with less violence and more understanding of human nature Okra (2003:1).

Conflict resolution is a community process involving the identification of the root cause of the problem, and bringing all parties involved to address the underlying issues. This usually ends with the guilty accepting wrong doing, leading to reconciliation which may include compensation or just forgiveness Utne, (2001:8); Murthi (2006:9). The process of conflict resolution has to do with how religious principles and followers ensure action in bringing peace at the individual and community level relationships Kendie and Guri (2006:17).

The researcher argues the issue of conflict resolving from religious point of view and explore the role and potentials of religious institutions and examine how effective these mechanisms using and how it works in Gomma Woreda, Islam, Ortodox Christian and Protestant Christian.

## 1.2 Statement of the Problem

The recent World Order cannot be achieved without accounting for the role of religion and religious organizations. It is clear that the causes of religious wars and other religion related violence have not disappeared from the face of the earth. Some expect an increase of it. Efforts to make the world safe from religious conflicts should then also be high on the agenda. Religious actors are not only expected to abstain from any cultural and structural violence within their respective organizations but also handle inter-religious or denominational conflict in a non-violent and constructive way. On the other hand, without a change in the environments of public discourses within and between religious organizations, symbolic intolerance will succeed. Religious conflict often occurs among people because of various factors. In order to resolve the conflicts and to enable the community to have safe and stable living environment, it is of paramount importance to identify the roles which varieties of institutions can play. Different organizations can play various roles in overcoming the conflicts which usually arise among different religious sects. In accordance with this fact, religious institutions are also supposed to have their own roles which they play in conflict resolutions. Investigating the roles they can play in resolving conflict is vital in order to know what they have done so far and what they can contribute for the normal co-existence among the societies dwelling in diverse religions. In other words, to get a better grasp of what religions or religious organizations could do, to help to promote a constructive conflict dynamic; one could start by investigating systematically which positive or negative roles they play now.

Peters (2006:56) notes that conflict, at all levels, and may arise due to the desire for political, economic and social advantages, greed, ego-related problems, injustice, inequitable distribution of resources and plain mischief. Edossa, Awulachew, Namara, Babel and Das Gupta (2007:12); Grimble and Wellard (1997:23) indicate that conflicts may be categorized with respect to whether they occur at the micro-micro, micro-mezzo, mezzo-macro or micro-macro levels (among individuals, individuals and groups, groups and communities, and between community groups and government); or within private or civil society organizations. Jemila Adem (2014:76) Women and Indigenious Conflict Resolution Institutions Experience from Siinqee of the Wayyu Shanan Arsi Oromo in Adami Tullu Jiddu Kombolcha District of the Oromia National Regional

State and indicated that as an institution of conflict resolution, siinqee resolves conflict between different social groups, like between husband and wife, between mother and son, between the Oromo and different ethnic groups. Dejene (2007:82);Yewubneh (2016 :76) explored the indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms among "Waliso" Oromo of Eastern Mecha Oromos and among the "Oyda" People of Southern Ethiopia respectively.

Religious institutions are supposed to have their own roles which they play in conflict resolutions. However, the roles religious institutions play in resolving local conflicts have not been explored, well-understood and documented. So, this study is aimed at filling the gap on roles of religious institutions in conflict resolution and touched the dominion of role of religion in conflict resolution in South-West Ethiopia in general and Gomma Woreda in particular. An increasing number of conflict resolution experts argue that peace mediation cannot be effective if it doesn't take into account the underlying conditions that cause conflicts. Today, these conditions are often intertwined with religious and cultural factors.

Gomma is inhabited by population with diversified religion and ethnicity. This woreda has been experiencing various conflicts related to religion and other factors at different times. For this reason, the researcher is interested to conduct an investigation at this woreda. If the values of those diversified religions are promoted through scientific investigations, it could be an important and prominent tool in handling possible conflicts that arises in the woreda. In this case, there is a gap of scientific investigation and contribution in exploring the role and potentials of religious institutions in the woreda. To this end, the study was conducted with the aim of filling the abovementioned gap by investigating the role and potentials of religious institutions in conflict resolution in Gomma woreda,Jimma zone.

**1.3 Objectives of the Study**

This study has the following General Objective and Specific Objectives

**1.3.1 General Objective**

The general objective of this study is to explore the role and potentials of religious institutions in conflict resolution in Gomma woreda, Jimma zone.

**1.3.2 Specific Objectives**

Specifically, the study addresses the following objectives:

- To understand the role of religious institutions and responsibilities of religious followers in conflict resolution.
- To identify the cause and type of conflicts resolved by religious institutions.
- To explore the mechanisms used by religious institutions in resolving conflicts.
- To search for the existence of conflict resolution guideline in religious institutions.

**1.4 Research Questions**

The following questions are addressed in this research:

- What is the role (past and present) of Religious Institutions in conflict resolution in Gomma Woreda?
- What procedures do Religious Institutions follow in conflict resolution in Gomma Woreda?
- What kinds of conflicts are resolved by Religious Institutions?
- How are Religious Institutions represented in conflict resolution?

## 1.5 Significance of the Study

Ethiopia is a home for more than 80 ethnically varying society. All these have their own cultural background. In addition to this, Ethiopians in general and Gomma people in particular, are characterized by followers of multiple religions with high sense of religiosity. As conflict is apparent in such society, only legal option or customary law couldn't guaranty and sustain peaceful coexistence of society. So, the role of religious institutions should be promoted since significant sect of society stand by religion. This study has the following benefits: It can serve the policy makers in enhancing learning by adding value laden recommendations based on the research findings. The findings of this study can serve for advocacy, policy and legislation development, social mobilization and program design. It can be a starting point for future researchers that could benefit from conclusions and data from this work. Finally, it can serve as ground for further training and possible feedback in the implementation of the research findings at all levels of interventions to researchers and development actors and contributes to Social Anthropology literature as it employed different Anthropologist concepts and methods which are appropriate to investigate the role and potentials of religious institutions in conflict resolution.

## 1.6 Scope of the Study

The research only focused on Gomma woreda of Jimma zone in Oromina National Regional State. It focused on religious leaders and followers of Muslim, Orthodox Christians and Protestant Christians in the area. The occurrences of conflicts in GommaWoreda, Beshasha Kebele and its surroundings in Jimma zone were considered as notable moments in time when the changing status of inter- and intra-dynamism that has been contained by the major religions (Islam, Ortodox Christian and Protestant Christian) began to manifest in that area. Gomma Woreda hosts a multicultural society where different ethnic groups with different religions and languages live together.

In Gomma Woreda of Jimma zone, there were frequent religious conflicts among the community living in the area. When the conflicts took place, religious institutions and governmental institutions have played important roles to resolve the conflict and to bring the community back

to the normal and peaceful state of living. In this regard, it is critical to explore the roles played by the religious institutions in the area to resolve the conflict.

## 1.7 Limitation of the Study

Although several factors could be mentioned, the following are very relevant limitations. These include factors like shortage of time, budget constraints and lack of transportation during the field work. This anthropological issues are socially and psychologically very sensitive, acquiring extensive and comprehensive data collection, in some instances, are quite difficult and challenging during the data collection. The local elders who have the knowledge of the religion and its roles in conflict resolution are usually insecure about the confidentiality of the information they provide due to lack of trust, fear of being criminalized for engaging in informal activities that in some cases involve life threatening acts while treating people. Furthermore, the other limitation is insufficient published reference materials on the topic area in reference to Ethiopian context.

## 1.8 Organization of the Paper

The research paper was presented in six chapters. Chapter one dealt with background, the statement of the problem, research objectives and significance of the study. Chapter two presented a review of the previous studies on different aspects of Religious institutions and conflict resolutions. It also revealed the theoretical and conceptual framework that was used to guide the study. Chapter three background of the study area presented the details of the study design and Chapter four research methodology the specific methods used for data collection and analysis. Chapter five of this paper emphasized on discussing the results obtained after data was analyzed by using qualitative techniques. Finally, chapter six of this study deals conclusions, and recommendations sections.

# CHAPTER TWO

# LITERATURE REVIEW

## 2.1 Religion and Conflict

### 2.1.1 Religion Definitions

Terms such as 'religiosity', 'spirituality', 'faith', 'belief', 'transcendence', 'sacred', 'sense of belonging', 'culture', and 'identity' are all components in the idea of – and have sometimes been used synonymously with – religion, but in fact they all have distinct meanings. Like its supposed counterpart, secularism, the notion of religion is a relatively recent social and intellectual construction of the West, and in particular a product of the Reformation. Based on a theological construction of authority in reference to a book MacCulloch (2004), the idea of religion became a function of power relations Asad (1993); Thomas (2005); Philpott (2001); Shakman Hurd (2007), and according to Oxford historian Diarmaid MacCulloch (2004), a concept imposed on human behavior by Christianity and especially its Protestant variant. In fact, as he has highlighted, the Protestant concept of religion became an instrument of intellectual hegemony because of the spectacular reach and power of the British Empire and the United States (US). The religious appellative 'Hinduism', for example, is but an invention of the British Protestants administering India in the early nineteenth century as they were coming to terms with the rich variety of cultures, philosophies, spiritual practices and observances of the sub-continent. In reality, religion is not static, but is constantly being reconfigured Cavanaugh (2009); Woodhead (2011). Despite the absence of a universal definition, it is possible to identify some broad and common ways of understanding religion. The 'substantive' approach looks at the content of religion, that is, key scriptures, theologies, bodies of doctrine, and values and beliefs enshrined in these. Complementary to this is the 'functional' approach, which highlights what religion 'does' to people, such as providing them with sources of identity, morality, law and order, or by linking them together into communities. Rather than elaborating single cohesive notion of religion, though, each of these two approaches in turn points to a number of multifarious concepts. It is therefore not surprising that in the current debate in the humanities and social sciences about the

rediscovered vitality and significance of religion in contemporary societies, three important questions need to be raised. The first is whether we can reach an exhaustive definition of what is commonly called religion, faith, or sacred? If so, what would be its constituent elements? And third, what are the most appropriate concepts, objects, and methodological and interpretive parameters to use in the study of religion? These questions are even more important for those seeking to establish the role of religion in situations of conflict and peacemaking/peace building. This paper does not attempt to provide a new scholarly definition for religion. Rather, it aims to establish a practical understanding of what is commonly called 'religion' and what that entails, essential to any analysis of whether features of this phenomenon matter in triggering, averting, or mitigating conflict, and if so, which ones.

Most commonly, religion is understood to be a system of beliefs and values associated with particular organizational forms (e.g. ritual practices, institutions), and with a supra-natural deity embodying and emanating some absolute truths. However, such an understanding fails to capture those traditions (especially Asian) that do not revolve around a single God and tend to function as philosophies of life. In such contexts, religion is best defined as 'a conceptual and moral framework for understanding and ordering lives and communities' Skidmore (2007:4). Moreover, even when a divinity, beliefs, doctrine and institutions are clearly identifiable, focusing only on these elements will still not be enough to permit a deeper and sophisticated appreciation of the power of religion. This is because the 'substantive' approach to religion ought to be complemented by a 'functional' one, looking at how faith is articulated in practice, considering if and how it affects individual or groups' behavior, thoughts and choices. In analyzing religious fundamentalism, for instance, Ernest Gellner (1992:3) argues that what really matters is not doctrine but ritual, loyalty to procedural rules and celebration of community. Following various scholars, including Duffy (2004) ; Thomas (2005), we can conclude that the experiential level (i.e. experiencing shared values and commitment) is as important, or perhaps even more important than the intellectual and cognitive dimension of faith.

### 2.1.2 Conflict Definitions

Conflict is defined as a serious or protracted disagreement between individuals or groups. The source of conflict is usually an unmet need of one or more of the parties involved in the disagreement. Disagreements typically worsen when people identify a solution to the conflict that works for them but which doesn't take into consideration the needs of the opposing group. Often in conflict situations, opposing sides stick to their own solution or position because they don't fully understand the needs of the other group, because they don't trust the other group, or out of pride Jeffrey (2009 :42).

According to Amr Abdalla, Patricia Anton, Louai Haffa and Fatima Mirza(2002), conflict can be defined in two ways: literal meaning of conflict that is defined in the Western literature and Islamic perspective to conflict. In terms of Western definitions, have chosen three main definitions Amr Abdalla, and etal. (2002)
• Conflict is an expressed struggle between at least two independent parties who perceive incompatible goals, scarce resources and interference from the other party in achieving their goals.
• Conflict means perceived deviation of interests, or a belief that the parties' current aspirations cannot be achieved simultaneously.
• Conflict is any situation in which two or more social entities or parties perceive that they possess mutually incompatible goals.

In an Islamic context, some Islamic concepts such as, "*tazkiya, islah, ifsad, ikhtilaf, jadal and shiqaq*" which are very significant while discussing the issue of conflict will present. Conflict is a universal phenomenon. It is part of the universal law and it happens among human being regardless of their religion, ethnicity, culture, etc. Thus, conflict is part of our lives, as Muslims, and we need to recognize that fully in order to deal and cope with it in a proper manner. However, among the things that may distinguish Muslims in a state of conflict are their

worldview, roles and duties that affect their approach, attitudes, and behaviors in a conflict, and accordingly the outcome of a conflict. In this regard, it is important to clarify some standpoints that a Muslim considers and observes while living in this life. Vehapi, Flamur (2013)

### 2.1.2.1 The Role of Tazkiya (Purification)

In this regard, it is significant to mention the importance of tazkiya as a goal in itself and as a preventive measure in case of conflict. In the Quran and the teachings of Islam we see insightful emphasis on the spiritual and psychological aspects of the people's interactions, to the extent that some scholars regard the restraint resulting from iman as the main motive of being just and a well-disciplined Muslim. Empowering iman would be accomplished through tazkiya, which is one of the higher dominant values of Islam according to some scholars. (Flamur Vehapi, 2013:43) Dissertation

### 2.1.2.2 Al-Islah (Reformation, Conciliation) and Al-Ifsad (Corruption, Mischief)

On numerous occasions, the Quran commends sulh as the superior moral route of action to be taken by disputing parties. Sulh means conciliation or settlement; the active form is islah means to make good, proper, or right, or to reconcile and settle. In general, the Quran equates the word sulh, or one of its alternative forms, with the notion of an inherent good that is often juxtaposed against corruption and mischief (ifsad). (Amr Abdalla, and etal 2002)

### 2.1.2.3 Al-Ikhtilaf (Different, Disagreement), Al-Jadal (Dialectic, Debate, Argumentation), Al-Shiqaq (Resistance, Opposition, Conflict).

The Arabic term ikhtilaf indicates taking different position or way from that of another person either in opinion, word, or action. Differences between people may begin with a difference of opinion over an issue. However, the fixed attachment to one's own opinion or position, the attempt to defend this position, to succeed on others to accept it or to hold it against them these are all elements in jadal (argument). Sometimes a dispute may become severe and harsh with the

disputant's only concern being to get the better of his challenger. There is no concern for finding out the truth or for clarifying what is right. This prevented any form of mutual understanding or agreement. The term shiqaq (disagreement) may be applied to such a situation (Amr Abdalla, Patricia Anton, Louai Haffa and Fatima Mirza, 2002:14)

One may argue that religion cannot exist without bloodshed while violence may be credited for readily and intimately being available at the heart of religion. The question why religion openly permits or supports violence and destructions actually still confuses (Jeffrey 2009:47). However, the history invariably shows various narratives of genocides in the ancient world.

(Jeffrey 2009:53) notes that: "Religion can increase aggressiveness and the willingness to use violence. The very fact that most of the wars in the world have been instigated by religion, though they are impossible, they are inevitable. What is more important is to justify such causes and bring them to light. These factors may be seen in two angles; external forces and psychological confusion or what may be termed as "illusion of truth". On the other side, religion has also the invaluable values and principles that enable resolve any possible conflicts in any community.

## 2.2 The Role of Religion in Conflict Resolution and Peace-Building

Conflict resolution refers to strategies that eliminate the sources of the conflict and, optimally, that find the best outcome for all involved. Though religion is implicated in many conflicts, it has played a significant part in peace-building as well as resolving conflicts in different societies. One would imagine a world without religion, how more evil and violent it would be, or the world would have mislaid centuries ago (Bekaki 2015:5).

In this context however, religion includes a multiplex of positive activities that cannot be confined to one aspect of human knowledge and encounters. It is part of individual's life because it includes behavior, attitude, beliefs and culture. Simply to put it, religion is; love, compassion, reconciliation, rehabilitation, interconnectedness, and spirituality. In fact, religion has various

experiences and behavioral retrospective on humanity; it is of great vitality therefore, to underline its role in conflict resolution and peace-building (Bekaki 2015:6).

The mythic narratives and the ancillary strategies of religions shape the emotions and motivations of individuals in a way that allows them to overrule the innate intuitive morality of their biological heritage in favor of the culturally defined values encoded in the myths. Of course, this is premised upon the notion that religious myths actually do promote a morality that induces behavior leading to personal wholeness and social cohesion (Hubert. 2009:9).

Religion has effects on many aspects of our lives, including the personal, the social, the political, the economic, and even the artistic and the culinary. Religions can motivate people to undertake long fasts and to hold feasts and to abstain from ever having sex. Some religions encourage their believers to risk their lives traveling to other countries to preach their religion to nonbelievers. Religions can encourage people to lead better lives, and they can also inspire their followers to disobey laws, reject medical care to their own children, and even commit suicide and murder. Religions influence healing practices, define families, and shape political policies. They have provided the rationales for war and have given birth to international peace movements.

## 2.3 Religion in Primitive Culture (Edward Burnett Taylor)

The growth of religious ideas is environed with such intrinsic difficulties that it may never receive a perfectly satisfactory exposition. Religion deals so largely with the imaginative and emotional nature, and consequently with such uncertain elements of knowledge, that all primitive religions are grotesque, and to some extent unintelligible. Such was the opinion of Lewis Henry Morgan (1877:5) as cited by Guenther (1999: 58) a contemporary of Taylor's. Taylor (1832-1917) and Morgan are considered the leading figures of nineteenth-century evolutionary anthropology, and certainly among the very few who are still read today. Taylor's view of religion could not have departed further from Morgan's statement. Taylor's core definition of religion, "as the belief in Spiritual Beings" remains congenial to many contemporary thinkers and is indeed almost a part of western "common sense" on the subject. Taylor's main successor was Sir James Frazer, who developed a stronger contrast between magic, religion, and science as forms of reasoning (1890). It was Lucien Levy-Bruhl (1985, 1966) who provided the most direct

alternative to rationalism. He is associated with the view that "natives" lived in some mystical connection with the world that transcends or evades the rational. Nevertheless, there are kernels of thought here that subsequent anthropologists have found of interest. There has been a stream of self-conscious "Neo-Tyloreanism" notably Horton (1993) in response to an overly structure-functionalist approach to religion. The first requisite in a systematic study of the religions of the lower races is to lay down a rudimentary definition of religion. By requiring in this definition, the belief in a supreme deity or of judgment after death, the adoration of idols or the practice of sacrifice, or other partially-diffused doctrines or rites, no doubt many tribes may be excluded from the category of religious.

In our own day and country, the notion of souls of beasts is to be seen dying out. Animism, indeed, seems to be drawing in its outposts, and concentrating itself on its first and main position, the doctrine of the human soul. This doctrine has undergone extreme modification in the course of culture. It has outlived almost total loss of one great argument attached to it - the objective reality of apparitional souls or ghosts seen in dreams and visions. The soul has given up its ethereal substance, and become an immaterial entity, "the shadow of a shade." Its theory is becoming separated from the investigations of biology and mental science, which now discuss the phenomena of life and thought, the senses and the intellect, the emotions and the will, on groundwork of pure experience Michael Lambek (2000).

## 2.4 Toleration and Accommodation of Religious Belief and Practice

As European and American societies faced the growing plurality of religious beliefs, communities, and institutions in the early modern era, one of the paramount social problems was determining whether and to what extent they should be tolerated. One of the hallmark treatises on this topic remains John Locke's A Letter Concerning Toleration. A political exile himself at the time of its composition, Locke argues that it is futile to attempt to coerce belief because it does not fall to the will to accept or reject propositions, that it is wrong to restrict religious practice so long as it does not interfere with the rights of others, and that allowing a wide range of religious groups will likely prevent any one of them from becoming so powerful as to threaten the peace. Central to his arguments is a Protestant view of a religious body as a voluntary society

composed only of those people who choose to join it, a view that is in sharp contrast to the earlier medieval view of the church as having authority over all people within a particular geographic domain. It is perhaps unsurprising, then, that the limits of Locke's toleration are coextensive with Protestantism; atheists and Catholics cannot be trusted to take part in society peacefully because the former do not see themselves as bound by divine law and the latter are beholden to a foreign sovereign (the Pope). Still, Locke's Letter makes an important step forward towards a more tolerant and pluralistic world. In contrast to Locke, Thomas Hobbes sees religion and its divisiveness as a source of political instability, and so he argues that the sovereign has the right to determine which opinions may be publicly espoused and disseminated, a power necessary for maintaining civil peace Robert Audi, Nicholas Wolterstorff (2000).

## 2.5 The Continuing Importance of Religion

This part focus on the literature of the relationship between religious values and economic development. How can and does religion in the sense of a set of ideas or a worldview contribute to economic growth and poverty mitigation. This question implicitly assumes a causal relation from religion and religious values to economic performance; a view ascribed to Max Weber. Others with Karl Marx as an important representative argue in favor of the reverse causality from economic circumstances to values.

From the mid-1990s, development organizations are increasingly aware of the important role of culture and religion (as part of culture) may play for enhancing economic development. This awareness is noticeable in various reports by the World Bank and the activities of the World Faiths Development Dialogue. At the same time in social sciences and in particular in economics, the model of the rationally acting individual came under attack. Consequently, other ways of explaining economic phenomena obtained a growing attention, such as evolutionary economics, behavioral economics, new institutional economics, and economics and culture Eelke de Jong (2008).

Studies of religion and socio- economic can be segregated into three major lines of inquiry. The emphasis of the line of research that interprets religious behavior from a socio-economic

perspective, applying microeconomic theory and techniques to explain patterns of religious behavior among individuals, groups, and cultures. Psychologists, anthropologists, and sociologists have long viewed religion as a category of behavior largely immune to the rational calculus Eelke de Jong (2008).

For many nineteenth-century scholars including Marx, Freud, and Comte-intense religious commitment sprang from nothing less than outright irrationality. From this assumption it was but a small step to the so called "secularization thesis," which came to function as the principal paradigm for the social scientific study of religion Laurence R. Iannaccone (1998).

Religion and religious activities can influence society in two ways. First, religious activities, such as church attendance, are social activities and thus comparable to meetings of football clubs, tennis clubs, scouts, political parties, etc. These meetings can be instruments for establishing networks that could be of use for economic activities in the region and could also be helpful for establishing trading relations with partners from other countries who belong to the same religious group. Such networks can stimulate economic growth. Of course church attendance costs time, that cannot be spent on economic activities, so that a reduction of income could be the result.

A second channel by which religion influences society is by the values that are taught by the adherents or most important leaders of the religion concerned. It is assumed that these values will influence actual behavior and thus the functioning of society. According to this literature explanation on religion as a source of values belongs to the economics and culture view on economics, which studies the relation between values, economic institutions and economic performance. It originated in studies on less developed countries and international business. In both fields Western researchers are confronted with views on good and evil and with practices which differ quite a lot from those they are acquitted within their country of origin. During the last decade and a half those studying industrialized societies are also conscious of the importance of differences in values shaped by long-lasting historical processes for explaining differences in institutional structures between the modern economies Eelke de Jong (2008).

## 2.6 Economic Growth and Religion

Some studies of the level of income per capita consider the variable for different states of the USA. A good example is Heath et al. (1995), where income per capita in a state is explained by among others the percentage of the state's population that is respectively Jewish, Roman Catholic, fundamentalist Protestant, and non- fundamentalist Protestant. They find that a negative and significant influence of the percent Roman Catholics and the fundamentalist Protestants. The percent of Jewish people in the population has a positive influence in 1971 and 1980 and no influence in 1952. As writer said that, the authors ascribe this change in influence of the Jewish population to the influx of Eastern European Jewish during World War II. These immigrants arrived with little or no wealth but achieved economic prosperity after a few decades Eelke de Jong (2008).

## 2.6.1 The Economic Consequences of Religion

Over the past century as the writer said, scholars have made many claims about the economic consequences of religion, but none grander than those associated with Max Weber's The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism (1905,1958).Proponents of Weber's thesis argue that: the Protestant Reformation triggered a mental revolution which made possible the advent of modern capitalism. The worldview propagated by Protestantism broke with traditional psychological orientations through its emphasis on personal diligence, frugality, and thrift, on individual responsibility, and through the moral approval, it granted to risk taking and to financial self-improvement Jacques Delacroix (1992).

Still, there is more to the story of religion's effects than Weber's thesis. At the level of individuals and households, economic behavior and outcomes do correlate with religion. It is, for example, well known that American Jews average significantly higher wages and income than non-Jews, a difference largely attributable to their high levels of education Barry Chiswick (1983, 1985). More striking are the links between religiosity and a wide range of economically important social behavior, such as criminal activity, drug and alcohol consumption, physical and mental health, and marriage, fertility, and divorce cited in Laurence R. Iannaccone (1998).

**2.6.2. Phases of Economic Development in Religion**

Three phases of economic development can be distinguished Marini (2004). Each phase is characterized by a particular level of economic growth, of income per capita and set of dominant values. The first phase, which is labeled as the antiquity or the pre-industrial phase, is characterized by low levels of growth if any and low income per capita. During centuries technical progress is almost absent, stagnation is the norm, and possibilities for upward social mobility are slim. By far the majority of the population is farmer or is in another way directly dependent on agricultural production. Extended families and communities function as buffers against economic hardships caused by a lack of technical skills for dealing with climatically difficulties and by damage resulting from wars between local warlords. In such a situation of stagnation the dominant values refer to communitarians and collectivism; the group as protection against the outside world. The lack of sight on any progress leads to fatalism and an orientation on the past instead of the future.

The second phase, which is referred to as the modernization, industrialization or take-off phase, consists of high growth rates and a sharp increase in income per capita. Economic growth is stimulated by technical progress and relatively high savings rates. Success in economic terms is rewarded and depends on an individual's ability to see the potential of new technology to serve a market. The high levels of economic growth enable large groups to escape from the poverty trap. Achievement motivation, materialism and hard work are values associated with this phase of economic progress. With it goes an orientation on the future; on the possibilities to come.

The third phase often referred to as the post-modern or post-industrial phase is characterized by relatively modest levels of growth and high income per capita. The majority of the population grows up with the feeling that survival can be taken for granted. Material wealth can still fluctuate but down turns do not threaten the survival of the individual or his / her group. Consequently, one is quite secure of one's own survival. These changes in economic conditions are associated with changes in dominant values. Self-expression and quality of life are regarded as important, whereas economic and physical security is valued less. It should be stressed that this is be regarded as a change in priorities, not a reversal of polarities. These values are

emphasized "after people have attained material security and because they have attained material security" Inglehart, 1997: cited in Eelke de Jong (2008).

## 2.6.3 Education/Child and Youth Care Development

The EECMY-DASSC–CYCP has a rich experience in contributing towards holistic development of children who have been especially in difficult circumstances to attain self- reliance for them with through understanding of the society in which they live and level of development of their country. The neediest children whose life circumstances are very poor are considered for help. They have been given need-based support in hostels, and in day care centers that are located in different places in the country. The institutional-based child and youth care program has been functioning for more than 30 years. Due to an interest from the donor partners side a new program shift was designed, i.e. to change the institutional approach to some other support mechanisms like community-based child development, which has already been started at some new places.

Jimma Zone of the Oromia region child development project is functioning in particularly in Jimma and Agaro Town are being served by the project. Project components are Provision of educational materials and tutorial classes, Provision of school uniforms and educational materials and Provision of food items, Health service and personal sanitation.

## 2.7 Administration of the Sacraments

Besides the sacrament of Holy Eucharist (Qeddus Qurban), which is celebrated in Qeddase, the EOTC administers the sacraments of Baptism (Temqat), Holy Orders (Kehnät), Repentance (Nese'a), and Unction or Anointing of the Sick (Qändil). Collectively, these are called Meś'iratä Betäkerestyan (Mysteries of the Church). The sacramentary for baptism, Mätse'afä Kerestəna (Book of Christening/Baptism), is derived from the Ethiopian Church Order that contains the Apostolic Tradition.238 Also while those who are baptized in the EOTC are mostly infants, 239 the sacramentary has various prayers that beseech for the removal of the remains of idol worship and all the works of Satan from the hearts of the candidates for baptism. 240 This shows that the prayers were originally prepared for adult catechumens. Besides the reference to catechumens,

241 the antiquity of the Ethiopic Book of Baptism is reflected in the rubric it contains to "give milk without any mixture" Mebratu Kiros Gebru (2012: 59)

The Geez word for sacraments is Meśe'irat, which is in accordance with the early Christian writers' terms for liturgical rites, i.e. mysterion (Greek) and mysterium (Latin). Along with the intercessory prayers the sick are anointed with special oil called Qebe'a Qeddus (Holy Ointment). Mebratu Kiros Gebru (2012:59) Unpublished PhD dissertation

## 2.8 The Prophet and his ways of Resolving Conflict and Making Peace

Fourteen centuries ago, the Prophet Muhammad said to his followers, "Shall I inform you of a better act than fasting, alms and prayers? Make peace between one another: enmity and malice tear up heavenly rewards by roots" (as qtd in Alsuhrawardy, 2001:90). Today, almost anyone has an opinion about the Prophet and his nature; most of these opinions are unfortunately negative and rarely associate him with peace for reasons that were mentioned earlier. Most often this is the case because of people's ignorance about the life of the Prophet. Little do many know that Prophet Muhammad was a man of great character with a forgiving and merciful nature, always in pursuit of peace, which is why the Qur'an refers to him as "a mercy to the worlds" (21:107). In one case the Qur'an indicates that his character is most sublime (Qur'an, 68:4); and that is why it is said that anyone who met him once would long to meet with him again Hussain (2009: 29); Flamur Vehapi (2013:43)

## 2. 9 Theoretical Frame Work

## 2.9.1 Anthropological Approaches of Religion

Anthropology takes its lead from the dazzling diversity of religion, not judging whether any or all religions are true but treating them all as influential personal and social forces. This means, among other things, examining each in its social context and in its own terms. This further means attending to how religions are actually practiced and used by real people in their real socially structured lives Eller (2007:4).

Religion is a way of life for its followers but religious conflicts raise when one biased to its own understanding. Anthropology is unique because it looks at religion from both the outside and the inside, making it easier to understand the biases introduced by our own understanding Eller (2007:5). Because it examines many different societies, anthropology also affords a cross-cultural perspective that makes it possible to understand the universal features of all humans as well as the ways these are expressed in each individual and in every culture. In Anthropology, like anything else, religion can be viewed and interpreted only through some type of conceptual framework. Because it combines scientific, humanistic, and cross-cultural perspectives, anthropology offers a way past the cultural blinders that has affected many other attempts to understand religion Kreuzer (2002:21).

Most people regard their own ways of doing things as "better" and "more natural" than the ways that people in other cultures do things as it is easy to understand why. Because when people live closely, typically the way of life is learned from each other and culture diffuses through interactions with them and tends to reinforce our cultural worldview as being the best. Moreover, the things that we already know enable us to expect what will happen next and thus provide us with reassurance in an otherwise uncertain world. Consequently, it is entirely normal for us to interpret things from the perspectives of our own cultural knowledge and personal experiences. This tendency to view the world through the framework of our own culture is called "ethnocentrism". Ethnocentrism, which is normal for individuals and for cultures, causes us to prefer our own culture over another Kreuzer (2002:23). Consequently, ethnocentrism is an important force that promotes group cohesion. But, it can also cause us to misinterpret what other people think and do. Because religions express many of a society's core values, the way in which people look at other religions is particularly disposed to ethnocentrism. Over the course of Western history, feelings of cultural superiority have frequently colored the ways in which people have looked at and evaluated other societies and their religions Kreuzer (2002:24).

## 2.9.2 Symbolic and Interpretive Anthropology Theory

Basically, the researcher employed both symbolic and interpretive anthropology theory for the reason that symbolic and interpretive anthropology theory allow the researcher to dig out the

cultural symbols and how those symbols can be interpreted to better understand a particular society. Geertz (1973) argues in Symbolic and Interpretive Anthropology that "culture is not a model inside people's heads but rather is embodied in public symbols and actions". Thus, the researcher planned to utilize this theory to interpret how these symbolic elements are publically shared, learned and acknowledged by many and could be words, customs, or rituals. According to Geertz, man is in need of symbolic "sources of illumination" to orient himself/herself with respect to the system of meaning that is any particular culture (1973:45).

Symbols, in the very simplest construction, are things objects, images, sounds, actions, sign, statement and almost any other medium that "mean" something, that "have a meaning." The "meaning" is that which the symbol "stands for," the phenomenon of which it is a representation or a place-holder. Moreover, the relationship between the symbol and its meaning is possibly random and conservative that is, there is no necessary connection between the particular meaning and the particular symbol. It is only cultural habit that unites the two. In other words, humans could and do use any linguistic symbol (i.e., word) for dog and still mean dog. Humans could use any symbol to represent the USA or Christianity and the meaning would be the same (in fact, the USA and Christianity have been represented by other symbols at other times). Also, any symbol could have different meanings, like the swastika for Nazi Germany or Hinduism. Jack David Eller (2007:45)

In this sense, the researcher was employed Symbolic Anthropology to illustrate and interpret symbolic meaning in emic terms meaning that they interpret the symbols in the context of the culture that they are studying. A symbolic Anthropologist believes that culture can be originated in the public routine of symbolic systems and that there is generally a response to these symbols. Furthermore, the researcher will use this theory to study incomprehensible beliefs through interpreting a part of cultural system of meaning and as well as systematic examination of religion knowledge. As religion is one of the important social institutions, this study initiated to apply theoretical framework of symbolic and interpretive anthropology theory in exploring the role of religion in maintaining social peaceful coexistence.

### 2.9.3 A General and Naturalistic Theory of Religion

A general naturalistic theory is one that tells us what religion is, where it comes from, and above all how it functions Hubert (2009:17). According to this theory, function of religion is to adapt human emotions and behaviors to the challenges of changing environment and achievement of personal wholeness and social coherence. So, whenever solidarity, cooperation, security, and harmony appear to be decreasing, or whenever social animosity, discrimination, injustice, and conflict appear to be increasing, we may begin to suspect a failure of religious function. And likewise, whenever happiness, tolerance, generosity, and forgiveness appear to be giving way to depression, aggression, obsession and repression, we may wonder about the religious life Hubert (2009:17). To this end, this study initiated to use these importance's of religious functions to analyze the role of religion in resolving conflicts.

Rue is the most famous proponent of this theory who argues that religion is not only about God', but it is about wellbeing and peace of human being. It is about manipulating our brains so that we think, feel, and act in ways that are good for us, both individually and collectively or socially Rue (2007).

Rue's description of religions, intended to provide empirical evidence for the central religious functions of personal wholeness and social coherence, rather than the fact that these traditions have also been sources of individual suffering and social conflicts. It is obvious that social coherence could not be able to sustain without promoting the roles of social institution primarily of religion. It rather appears to be an idealized vision of what religion should be and how it should function. What Rue proposes is a religious naturalism engaged in the re-enchantment of the world to nurture an acquired sense for the mystery and sanctity of nature itself. His theory of religion drafts the myth of religious naturalism Rue (2007).

### 2.9.4. Structural Functionalism Theory

In view of structural functionalism society is a complex system made up of various parts that works together in promoting solidarity, stability, and social equilibrium. Social institutions play critical role in normal functioning of society. Radcliff Brown the prominent proponent of

functionalist approach suggested that society is system of relationship maintaining itself through cybernetic feedback while institutions are orderly set of relationship whose function is to maintain the society as a system Diah (2015).

Radcliffe-Brown, on the other hand, saw society and its groups and institutions as having their own needs and, therefore, perceived the function of any item of culture or society to be "the contribution that they make to the formation and maintenance of a social order" Diah (2015 :160). Structural functionalism insists that religion plays its most important role in the creation and maintenance of the group and society, not the comfort of the individual. One argument for this perspective is that without social maintenance society can come to an end, endangering the lives of all the individual members Diah (2015).

As one of social institution religion not only tells us what to worship and how to make it rain but what kind of person to be and what the correct behaviors are in your group. By recognizing common rules and authorities, individuals become a community, with shared identity and shared interests. On the other hands, means of achieving group cohesion is through the effectiveness of ritual Eller (2007).

# CHAPTER THREE

# BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY AREA

## 3.1. Study Area and Population

## Overview

In this section, an attempt was made to describe background of the study area in details. In this sense, the general background of Gomma Woreda, location, geological area, drainage, climate, facilities, cultural phenomenon and population size as well as vegetation and wildlife were described receptively. These enable us to understand the overview of the study area. So, let us first instigate by looking at some of the background of the study area.

### 3.1.1 Geographical Location

The study was conducted in GommaWereda, Jimma Zone in Oromia National Regional State. Gomma is one of the Woredas in the Oromia State of Ethiopia. It is named after the former Kingdom of Gomma, whose territory was roughly the same as the modern Woreda. Part of the Jimma Zone, Gomma is bordered on the South by Seka Chekorsa, on the South-West by Gera, on the North-West by Setema, on the North by the Didessa River which separates it from the Illubabor Zone, on the Northeast by Limmu Kosa, and on the East by Mana. The towns include Beshasha, Choche, Ghembe, and Limmu Shaye. Gumma Woreda was separated from Gomma (Finance and Economic Development Bureau of Gomma Woreda).

The altitude of this Woreda ranges from 1,380 to 1,680 meters above sea level; however, some points along the Southern and Western boundaries have altitudes ranging from 2229 to 2870 meters. A survey of the land in this Woreda shows that 60.7% is arable or cultivable (52.7% was under annual crops), 8.1% pasture, 4.6% forest, and the remaining 20.1% is considered swampy, mountainous or otherwise unusable. (CSA, 2007)
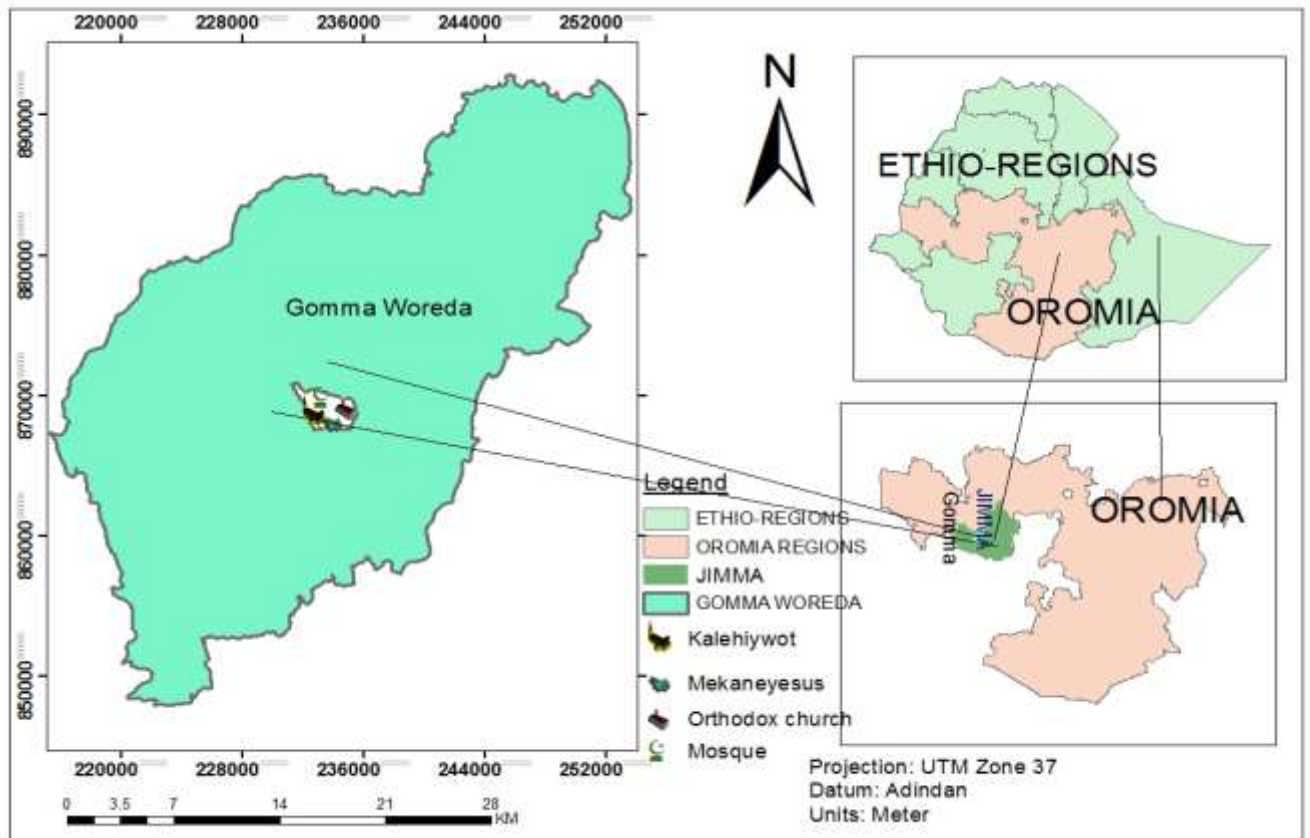
Figure: 3.1 Description of Study Area

## 3.1.2 Climate

The topography of the study area ranges from gentle sloppy to hilly lands with ridges and valleys in between. Agro-ecologically, Gomma woreda is classified as 96% wet Weina Dega (wet midland) and 4% kola (lowland). A survey of the land in this woreda shows that 60.7% is arable or cultivable (52.7% was under annual crops), 8.1% pasture, 4.6% forest, and the remaining 20.1% is considered swampy, mountainous or otherwise unusable. Land in cultivation included the two state coffee farms. Fruits, avocadoes and spices are important cash crops (Ethiopian Metrological Agency, Jimma Branch, 2014).

### 3.1.3. Environmental Protection

The Woreda has potential of natural, historical as well as cultural attraction.The major attraction areas are for instance topography, forest, wild animals, mountains, caves water fall and historical heritage materials that have been kept for a long period.The GommaWoreda has been one of the famous coffee growing areas in Jimma Zone. The Woreda of Gomma is unique as compared to the other areas.  This is because in a place called Cocce, coffee Arabica is believed to be originated; Keta Muduga kebele is believed to be the place where coffee originated.

The place is located 15 kms and 57s km from Agaro town and Jimma town to the South-East in Cocce kebele and the specific area is known as  "Keta Muduga". Apart from its coffee origin and the whole natural beauty, there is also coffee bank having more than 500 species in this area. Keta Muduga is also known for its historical events such as ancient trade route cross in the area.

Figure: 3.2 Cocce museum at the place of"Keta Muduga kebele" the origin of coffee Arabica



Source: From Filed

## 3.2 Historical Context

Jimma today is almost what used to be known as the five Gibe states in the history. Jimma had rose to powerful kingdom during Aba Jifar I (1833– 55) before its conquest by Minilik II at the turn of 19th century and lost its autonomy in 1932 during Aba Jifar II (Guluma 2008). There have been early contacts through trade and Islamization, and the region was the economic center from early times, as it is located in the main caravan routes from east to west, from north to south which gave chance for people to come together across religion and region Mohammed (1990). Islam is a predominant religion in Jimma, since the second half of the 19th century Framingham (1952) in Yonas( 2002). For instance, Aba Jifar I was reported to have invited a number of Muslim teachers and preachers to spread their religion to the kingdom Mohammed (1990). By 1882, most people of Jimma were already Muslim dominated, and Jimma had become the reputation of being the most important center of Islamic teaching in southwestern Ethiopia. During Italian occupation, the Italians are said to have built an "institute" for Islamic studies Mohammed (1990); Yonas (2002). In the same vein, Mohammed (1990) explained that the Gibe region, along with Daawwe in Wollo, is regarded as the most important center of Islamic learning in the Horn of Africa.

It is much later on that other religions made their way into Jimma. Unlike the Islam which spread in the region slowly and through peaceful means, Orthodox religion was orchestrated by oppositions and suspicion, and able to solicit few followers before 1930 if at all. According to Yonas (2002: 74), the first Orthodox Church in Jimma was inaugurated in 1930 through the facilitation of Nagadras Yagilu, who was appointed as district judge of Jimma in 1925. This was in contrary to the previous agreement between Abba Jifar and Menelik that the faith of the Muslim population would not be interfered with. The Orthodox Church was established together with a church and a church school in Jimma town immediately after 1932 Guluma (2008). At about the same time, protestant missionaries also arrived at Jimma and set out to operate but resisted by the local people and very few people dared to join the Protestant church in Jimma up until 1955. During 1950s and 1960s, missionaries were managed to penetrate the countryside around Jimma despite the fact that it was so much demanding.

There was large number of individuals who came from the northern part of Ethiopia to Jimma to work in various capacities. With the rise in coffee price and improved transportations, significant numbers of them came about in 1950s and 60s. Besides, there were also migrants from Wollo and Tigre who came to Jimma during the famine in 1970s. In addition, there had been strong ties and contacts between Jimma (state) and the homelands of the Dawro, Kafficho and Yem as a result of the long distance trade in that area. Hence, they became one of the linguistic groups residing in Jimma area Yonas (2002: 58-59).

According to the data obtained from local elders and officers, the name 'Gomma' is a collection of different names and concepts. For instance, it believed as it comes from the former leader who was called Abbaa Gommol. For others, the name is derived from 'Gommacha' who came from somewhere to govern the Woreda in ancient time. Even if there are various stands on the nomenclature of Gomma Woreda, knowledgeable elders decided to use the name 'Gomma' in 2002 E.C based on historical evidences.

## 3.3 Population

Majority of the residents are Muslims (85 According to CSA 2007, Oromia Regional State has a total population of 26,993,933 individuals dwelling over a land size of 284,538 km$^2$ (CSA2008). This figure is projected to be 32,815,995 in 2014. Religion wise, the region hosts 47.5% Muslim, 30.4% Orthodox Christians, 17.7% Protestant, 3.3% traditional and 0.6% others (CSA 2008 and CSA 2013). Jimma zone is one of the 17 zones in Oromia. It has a population of 2,486,155 individuals, out of which, only 5.56% is urban dweller, while the rest 94.44% live in the rural areas), followed by Orthodox Christians (11%) and Protestants (3%). Jimma town, the zonal sit, is 346 kms from the capital city Addis Ababa.

Gomma Woreda which is one of the 21 woredas in Jimma Zone, is the capital of Gomma Woreda. Agaro town is located on 50 kms far from Jimma town. In Jimma Zone, Gomma is the second densely populated Woreda where there are 256,129 individuals in 41 kebeles and over a land size of 94.4 km$^2$ (CSA 2009; CSA 2013). According to the data from the IRCE, the religious composition in the woreda is 65.9% Muslims, 26% Orthodox Christians and 7.2% Protestants. Based on the data obtained from this Woreda, it has an estimated total population of 350,882, of whom 172,888 are men and 177,994 are women; 71,018 or 20.24% of its population are urban dwellers, which is greater than the Zone average of 12.3%. With an estimated area of 1,230.16 square kilometers, Gomma has an estimated population density of 285.2 people per square kilometer, which is greater than the Zone average of 150.6.

The five largest ethnic groups reported in Gomma were the Oromo (79.11%), the Amhara (7.28%), Dauro and Konta (4.2%), the Silt'e (2.6%), and the Kafficho (2.04%); all other ethnic

groups made up 4.77% of the population. Afaan Oromo was spoken as a first language by 78.78%, 14.22% speak Amharic, 2.43% Dauro and Konta, 1.14% Silt'e, and 1.12% speak Kafa; the remaining 2.31% speak all other primary languagesCSA (2007).

So far, this woreda, has undergone religious conflicts in Bashasha kebele that range from simple disputes to sever conflicts which took the lives of the people.

## 3.4 Socio-Economic Activity

There are different economic activities in Gomma Woreda. Land cultivation included the two state coffee farms. Fruits, avocadoes and spices are important cash crops. Coffee is also an important cash crop in Gomma; over 50 square kilometers are planted with this crop. Coffee is grown in this Woreda under shade trees; while the dominant species are Albiziaifergumma, which can shade as many as 150 coffee trees, and Millettiaferrugine, other species are also used as shade trees (Finance and Economic Development Bureau of GommaWoreda).

Industry in the Woreda includes 118 grain mills, 35 coffee hulling and 33 coffee pulping mills, one sawmill, an office and furniture factory, and one edible oil mill. There were 45 Farmers Associations with 45,226 members and 21 Farmers Service Cooperatives with 43,088 members. There are Commercial Bank of Ethiopia (CBE) and Awash Bank. Gomma has 55 kilometers of dry-weather and 89 all-weather road, for an average of road density of 117 kilometers per 1,000 square kilometers. About 41% of the urban and 15.9% of the rural population has access to drinking water. (FEDGW)

## 3.5 Marriage

Marriage and families are found in all societies. They vary significantly across cultures. Marriage, for instance, differs across cultures with regard to premarital decisions such as which one marries, how one marries, a proper marriage ceremony, and length and purpose of the marriage. From an anthropological perspective, there are various marriage systems or "marriage like" relationships that fulfill both biological and social functions.

Although marriage remains customary across societies, it does not necessarily constitute the basis for family life James (2010).

Gomma communities have various marriage practices based on their culture. Among these marriage customs, *'waljaalala'*, **'***sabbat marii'* (betrothal), *'farad hidha'*, *'hasa'annaa'* and religious based marriage are practiced in the woreda.

### 3.5.1 Waljaalala (Naqataa)

This mode is characterized by that when a boy remains qeerroo (single) for several reasons either because S/he not handsome or S/he is from a family of low social status, the way he gets married is advised by his parents. The boy has no consent of the family of the girl. Sometimes, the girl's mother is involved in arranging marriage of her daughter through waljaalala, but she keeps as a secret in order not to make it known to her husband (the girl's father). This type of marriage is common among poor people and because of this, the best alternative is secret selection type of marriage. Then, the boy tells his father to go on negotiating the marriage where by then the father or any representative, or even the boy himself starts finding a friend around her house. It is mostly the girl's sayyuu (wife of the girl's brother) that the boy approaches and whom he thinks that she can keep secret and acts on as a go-between.

### 3.5.2 Sabbat Marii (Betrothal)

Next to naqataa type of marriage, sabbatmarii is the second most frequently exercised type of marriage among this society. It is asking a girl for marriage which is done by breaching appointment arrangements or it is asking a girl for marriage without prior arrangement. Sabbatmarii literally means rolling or folding a sabbataa (a long step of cloth, which is worn by Oromos of Gommaa area round their waist) and it connotes a state of fact where the specific time set for a matter is fold and the case is desired to get its conclusion right there. Its conclusion takes one of the two forms, which are discussed subsequently.

### 3.5.3 Religious based marriage

Marriage can be defined by different peoples in various way based on perspectives of their own cultural understanding. For instance, persons with little knowledge of cultural diversity might say that marriage is a relationship between a woman and a man involving romantic love, sexual activity, cohabitation, child rearing, and shared joys and burdens of life. People trained in law might also note that marriage has legal aspects, such as joint property rights and obligations to share support of children. Religious people may want to include their beliefs that marriage is a relationship sanctioned by God, a relationship that should last until the parties James (2010).

### 3.5.3.1 Nika

Nika is one of the marriage types in Muslim society. And it has its own process. First the boy family sends elders to the girl's family then after they decide the day that the boy can give the promise ring (Nika). This process can take place at marriage day or before that. At Nika (ring) time the boy should pass the money with it or instead of money can give a cow and also with this the boy should bay clothes for her because marriage can be at the day of Nika (ring) ceremony.

### 3.5.3.2 Samana

One kind of marriage type is samana this in known in Orthodox Church. The view of samana related with age mean marriage should be permanent until the age eighty this shows at the day of their death they agreed to live with each other this day is the day the two couple is signed their negotiation to live each other until the death starting from that time every property they have are recorded as both of them. At this day the bridegroom's family pay some money for the girl who their son going to marry. At the home of both bride and bridegroom's family, marriage ceremonies and celebration take place. Finally, with the boy being with his party take the girl and go to his father's home.  Thereby, they live together in their life span.

# CHAPTER FOUR

# RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

## 4.1 Research Design

This research is a qualitative research; it employed the descriptive design in which purely qualitative data was gathered. According to (Straus and Corbin 1998:13), qualitative methodology is a typical research approach which enables researchers to come-up with data that cannot easily be produced by statistical procedures or other means of quantification. It is also the means for exploring the meanings of individuals or groups ascribed to social or human problems (Creswell 2009:14). Moreover, qualitative research is preferable as it enables investigators to gather data about human life realities, experiences, behavior, beliefs, emotion and feeling, organizational function, social movement, cultural and religious phenomena in social interaction (Straus and Corbin 1998:16).

## 4.2 Sources of Data

Relevant data are obtained from both primary and secondary sources. The primary sources include informants such as religion leaders from Islam Shek or Imams, Orthdox Church Keses or `Mamere` (Teachers of Orthdox Church ) and Protestant Church pastors and followers.  The primary sources are expected to provide the researcher with the information about the conflicts took place so far, how the conflicts were resolved, who participated in the resolutions process and the roles played by the religious institutions in the setting.

The secondary sources comprise both published and unpublished materials such as books, magazines, journals and different documents in religious centers. These sources are expected to provide information regarding studies conducted so far and what have been done in relation to conflict resolutions related to religious issues.

## 4.3 Methods and Instruments of Data Collection

The following methods were used to collect the necessary data during the field work. The study employed qualitative research approaches: fieldwork data were collected through personal intensive key interviews, focus group discussions and document reviews. The sources of data included religious leaders and followers, knowledgeable individuals, community members and representatives, and relevant state and non-state actors operating in the research sites. Accordingly, data were collected from different respondents who are supposed to be crucial in relation with the topic under study. Interview, key informant and focus group discussions (FGD) were primarily used as methods of data collection. Document reviews whereby various documents accessed from different religious institutions were thoroughly analyzed to further complement the data.

In Gomma Woreda of Jimma zone, there were frequent religious conflicts among the community living in the area. When the conflicts took place, religious institutions and governmental institutions have played important roles to resolve the conflict and to bring the community back to the normal and peaceful state of living.

In this regard, it is critical to explore the roles played by the religious institutions in the area to resolve the conflict. Furthermore, identifying the roles the religious institutions can play helpful in making them aware of what they can do to enable the community not only to overcome such problems but also to prevent it in collaboration with the government and followers of the religions.

### 4.3.1. In-Depth Interview

In-depth interview guide was one of the instruments of data collection. The interviews were conducted by taking into consideration criteria such as age, sex, occupation and type of religion they followed. The interview was conducted with purposefully selected followers of the religions and leaders of the religions in the area. Totally, the researcher selected 10 informants from the different religions such as from Islam three informants, from Orthodox Christians four informants and Protestant Christians three informants in the study area.

### 4.3.2 Key Informant Interview

Key informant interviews are an appropriate method of anthropological study. Key informants were employed as major source of data. In order to get data on past events and scenarios and even on the current reality, key informants can give rich information that can better support other data gathering tools. This key informant interview was conducted with 24 informants from Muslims, orthodox Christians and Protestant Christians. The researcher interviewed four key informants from Muslim in which three of them were male and one was a female. Besides, I also gathered data from three male and one female key informant from Orthodox Christians. Similarly, the researcher got rich data from three male and one female key informant from Protestant Christians. The researcher was also conducted key informants interview with six individuals in which three of them were male and the rest are female from Gomma Woreda Culture and Tourism office as well as Administration and Security office of the woreda particularly with religion and religious co-existence value affairs process of the office.

### 4.3.3  Focus Group Discussion (FGD)

 On some specific issues different people may have different concerns. Thus, to look at concerns of different individuals and even to assess their level of understanding on some issues, the researcher used FGD as one method of data collection. The researcher formed two FGDs. One of the FGDs was conducted with the religious leaders and the second one was done with the selected followers of the religions in the area. One FGD was conducted at Gomma Woreda, Aggaro Town and the other at Gomma Woreda, Beshasha Kebele. Ten individuals were participated in each FGD. The total participants of the FGD were 20 individuals. FGD guide was used as an instrument of data collection. Each FGD meeting took only 40 munities and magnificent data was obtained from the hot and interactive discussions made with both religious leaders and followers of the religions in the area. FGD guide was prepared and used to facilitate a commonsense and smooth discussion with the FGD participants. The guide addressed major questions about the role and potentials of religious institutions in conflict resolution. The researcher facilitated the discussions as moderator.

### 4.3.4 Observation

To get genuine data, observation is another major method of data gathering tools. Because of this I conducted observations to cross check what people say and the fact there. Therefore, what I observed and the informants told me was in line with the data I gained by other methods of data collection. I conclude that our society is a faithful and loyal to give tangible information.

### 4.3.5 Document Analysis

The researcher explored recorded or written documents put aside to be used in conflict resolutions. In other words, efforts were made to find out if the religious leaders or the community have some agreed upon rules or guidelines to be employed during conflict resolutions. The researcher used different written documents obtained from IRC, Peace office of Ethiopian Evangelical Church of MekaneYesus (EECMY), Ethiopian Orthodox Church (EOC) and Gomma Woreda Peace Affairs.

### 4.3.6 Method of Data Analysis

In order to analyze the data for this research, the investigator employed qualitative method. The data obtained from interview, FGD, observation and document analysis were transcribed, discussed and narrated. On the whole, the data was classified, thematically categorized, analyzed and interpreted to achieve the stated objectives

### 4.4 Validity and reliability

The instrument of data collection was developed by reviewing relevant literatures on the topic to ensure reliability. The tools were seen, checked and commented on by the adviser and colleagues in the area. Research experience in studying the issue at hand were also commented on the instruments of data collection in guaranteed the face and content validity. The researcher, hence, also sufficiently collected and analyzed the data carefully in helping reliability, accuracy, and transferability of the findings of the present study. The current study ensured the validity and reliability data collected and analyzed. Thus, the use of several methods of data collection like

In-depth interview, key informants, Focus Group Discussion (FGD), Observation and Document Analysis helped the researcher to get reliable and valid data.

## 4.5. Ethical Consideration

It is true that ethical consideration is as crucial as other aspects in the process of conducting a research for it significantly affects the success of the study. In this regard, a researcher needs to consider ethical values of the host community on which the research is conducted. Therefore, in order to respect the rights of individuals who are chosen to be participants in this research, several ethical issues were concerned. Likewise, these ethical issues executed starting from explaining the main purpose of the research to the participants up to keeping the privacy of the information they provided. In so doing, the researcher secured letter of consent from Jimma University, College of Social Science and Humanities, Gomma Woreda Administration Office and Religious Institutions. After explaining the goal of the study to the informants, the researcher made sure that they take part in the work. The participants had the right to discontinue participating any time if they don't want to do it. Interview and focus group discussion guide prepared in English and translated to Amharic because all the informants of the study understand Amharic very well.

Since the topic under investigation was sensitive, the researcher had ensured that the participants of the study did not skill any psycho-social discomfort during data collection process. The environment under which all interviews and FGDs were carried out was quite comfortable. All participants were told that data collected could be treated with confidentiality and that it shall be used only for the purpose of this study.

# CHAPTER FIVE

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

### 5.1 .Causes of Religious Conflict in Gomma Woreda

According to the informants, the causes of conflict in Jimma zone, Gomma Woreda, is caused by disagreement between two or more individuals or institutions of different religions. As to one of the key informants, most of the time, conflict emerged when one denomination was differentiated as inferior and intolerance of unlike religious doctrines among local religious community. Moreover, challenging preachers were considered to be another root of conflict among religions groups in the area. According to the result of FGD, the main cause of conflict is the dispute over the claim of teachings that have been taught by the original preachers.

*An informant woman from Muslim religion aged 41 with 4 children informed the researcher in proverbs saying, ``Waleensuu harkaan dhaabanii dhakaraa itti barbaadu.'' In her expression to mean that, sometimes simple problems done by individuals can be expanded and become out of control that can`t be solved easily.*

Furthermore, the conflict was intensified by the factors such as the emergence of various Islam sects, and religious extremism. Besides, the explosion of challenging religious publications and preaching is one of the causes of conflict among religions. This idea has been supported by FGD and key informants haggard from religious conflict of the Woreda.

### 5.1.1 Conflict from Peer Pressure

The other religious leader from Muslim told the researcher peers can either positively or negatively influence each other. According to the key informant's response, the Holy Scriptures gives an insight on the magnitude of the peer pressure on this specific issue. To illustrate, the Bible in Proverbs 13:20 reads *"the one going with wise will be wise and the friend of a foolish will be punished."* Additionally, in 1 Corinthians 15:33 reads*" Don′t be misled, bad association spoils a good manner*. From both quotations, it is possible to understand that whoever exposed

to a peer who has a good behavior can be positively influenced and on the contrary, whenever a person is exposed to a bad peer or association, the possibility of to be influenced negatively can be high. The reason is that human beings have a tendency to be attracted to their peers and similarly has a tendency to be highly molded by others' ideas.

## 5.1.2 Proselyting

In the other way, the other informant told the researcher that the other cause of conflict is proselyting. Here, the informant told the researcher that some religions adherents through the process of expansion or proselyting; they unconsciously become the potential reason for rising conflicts. To illustrate, they might do their activities innocently in order to share their beliefs to others who are not the member of their religion. The other person who is listening might think that she or he is negatively interpreting that she or he is losing her or his faith in the argument. In this regard, religious symbols, quotations, pictures that show the convictions of a certain denominations may be posted in or on public transportations; spiritual songs or menzumas are also played without the interest (desire) of the passengers. Besides, video clips can also be a potential reason for conflict when they are inappropriately used by other members of religions.

Some one's religions Conflict may happen depend on doctrine. Everybody thinks as his/her religion is perfect rather than the others. At this time conflict become happen between peoples. The other think is when one celebrated the holidays in his/her religions the others don't care for that holidays again this also the cause of conflict. And sometimes while some one preach his/her religions may blames the other religion at this time conflict also occur. Therefore, while preaching our religions, we should put in consideration about some once religion. By doing this we can minimize conflict. All the above illustrations are perhaps evidences that proselytism is one of the factors that contribute to inter religious conflict. Conflict is prevalent among religions while they are preaching to propagate their religion. (Solomon G/Egziabher, 2013:212)

Case 1

Once up on a time, I observed two people walking across the road. One was Protestant and the other was Muslim. The protestant one started to preach us saying that Jesus is Lord, but the Muslim one said, No Almesi Isa is prophet. While they were debating about this issue, a conflict happened between them. Finally, their debate became to climax and went to wrong way. What I observed at the time from this event was that while we preach about our religion, it should be in a wise way unless it may lead us to conflict with other religion followers who are different from us.

## 5.1.3 Religious Dominancy

The other religious leader from Orthodox Church told the researcher other cause of conflict is the dominance behavior of some religious institutions in some areas in Gomma Woreda. Accordingly, when one religious organization is dominant in a certain area, it can be a source of conflict at least in those specific areas. The religious institution counts are self as superior to others. One controlling mechanisms that the dominant religious use to influence other religious members is the collaborative association called 'Idir' (Afooshaa). This afosha institution is established to give a quick response in social life activities like birth, marriage, illness and death. These social life activities are basic human needs and what every human being passes through in life. In order to benefit from the above privileges, at least the householder is expected to be a member of this institution. This in other way means, if one householder is not the member, she/he cannot be a beneficiary. In order to get benefitted from the above privileges, this householder is dominated by the dominant religion in his area.

## 5.1.4 Value Judgment

The key informant explained to the researcher that the other causes of the conflict are the judgments of other's values based completely on our value systems. This can be occurred when the individual wants to share his personal views, belief, and ways of thinking and doing things. According to the respondent, while individuals interact with each other in their day to day activities, there can be misunderstandings, value judgments and sometimes language differences.

The idea has been supported by FGD and key informants haggard from religious conflict of the Woreda.

The person who thinks that his/her value or way of thinking and doing things is superior does not have a room for tolerance for others' attitudes and actions. According to the respondent, this type of conflict springs from public teaching of their religious leaders. Some religious leaders teach their members to shun other peoples who have different religious beliefs in one or the other way. In most cases, members have the inclination to obey their religious leaders to do what they are expected to do.

Due to this reason, the person thinks that only his/her way of thinking and doing is right and the rest are wrong. Therefore, those who are labeled or assumed as wrong are either to conform to the right or to be destroyed. So, this attitude is extremely dangerous and can affect even the nation or the country

## 5.2. Roles of Religious Institutions in Conflict Resolution

For mutual co-existence, religious followers have prominent role to make peace, to bring conducive environment for other people to be a law abiding citizens.

In Agaro town, where many religious institutions are located, people live in mutually co-existed way for many years. There has been no incidence of religious conflict for a long period of time. The informant said that he is playing an important role in his community teaching a word of God from the Bible in relation to the legal context of the country. One of my key informants said that *"even though his religious institution doesn't have a dominant role, most of the time negotiation is used as a mechanism in conflict handling."*

The other informant described himself as a religious leader and informed that he teaches respect to other people and their religions. Besides, he teaches them to be role models for peace and forgiveness.

The FGD religious leader also told that gives presentations on cultivating and developing habit of discussing on different issues with others to locate culture of discussion in member's mind. It

is educating members so that they could get tolerance through awareness of other's thoughts, values, beliefs and different ways of thinking. The leader in addition told that he teaches one key value called love for humanity, particularly unconditional love, regardless of their background including their religion.

The other male informant from Protestant religion aged 62 informed the researcher that he with his co-peers teaches and guide members based on the principles of the Holy Bible.

Other religious leaders from Islam informed the researcher that the *"Holy Book of Islam or Koran teaches love, respect for others and this is a mandatory principle to be realized"*. Even, the principle works to guide the relationship with animals and plants as well. Other informant briefly expressed that he teaches his church members love for all people even the enemies because the Holy Scriptures commanded to do so. Therefore, he further informed the researcher that it is teaching members to love their enemies even under persecution and to restore peace in their side.

Although I am not religious, as a follower of religion, I tell and advice others to act or live in harmony with the rule and regulations by tolerating other religions.

The other informant from Orthodox Church aged 54 informed that he teaches the members to live by Bible principles so that they could be flourishing in their entire life. To do so, he said that he teaches them together on weekends. By doing so, their life will be shaped and molded to fit to the standard of God. The members exercise God's love through Holy sacraments, getting Holy Baptism and taking Holy Communion.

Also other female informant from Muslim aged 27 described that she commented that *using Holy Scripture (Holy Koran) to teach members to focus on what they have in common with different religious members. She also told the researcher that it will be better if religious leaders even try to identify common values and assets with other religious members like common country, peace, forgiveness and the likes.*

The Other informant described that as a religious leader, he used to teach church members to love one another and to avoid conflicts. In addition to this, he told that he did teach in case they face conflict saying that the best remedy is to discuss on the issue and make reconciliation.

According to the response of the other informant, he teaches his religious followers about the negative effects of conflict and magnifies the importance of peace. He teaches them that God of peace wants all people to live together peacefully. Above all, the Holy Scriptures are the bases of his religion to teach people. Without having (using) Bible, it is impossible to say something about peace and whatever else regarding the follower′s life. So, he mainly expressed that he considers the Bible is their teacher. He also explained that he teaches them what he believes and shows them Christian behavior, i.e. being a role model. He also expressed that he teaches what he believes and shows them in practice so that he lets the members imitate his good example in all aspects of their life. Besides, he believed that he guided the followers through the word of God, because the word of God is used as an instrument or tool to mitigate.

The other religious leader key informant told the researcher that he teaches based on God's word to resolve conflicts, to be as humble as Jesus Christ, the founder of Christianity when they face conflicts of any kind to forgive and forget, to respect each other and each other's values, to cultivate and exercise tolerance in whenever they come across any different thinking, belief and behavior. Furthermore, he described that he strongly advises the members to seek advice from religious leaders as soon as they face difficulties.

According to the researcher's key informant, Religious institutions are influential part of the society. The institutions play important roles in peace building activities. The community approach changes depending on the idea that religious institutions teach. Religious leaders widely participated in the Woreda in the issue of peace making and building. They did play critical role in minimizing conflicts among the community. They also played significant roles in deescalating the conflicts and organized each religious institutions of the woreda with common value and objectives. The religious institutions in the area namely Islam, Orthodox and Protestant have been working attested that the guiding Principles respecting religious differences, acting on deeply held and widely shared moral concerns and values, and preserving the identity

of each religious community. According to the informants, those religious leaders from each respective religious institution were well versed in their specific religion and cultural set up of the community. The mutual relationship was respecting different religious values and tolerance among religious community. These religions: Islam, Orthodox and Protestant communities have a long local history.

Table: 5.2 Name of Religious Institutions in Gomma Woreda

| No | Name of Religious Institution | Unit |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Mosque  (Masjida Juma'a) | 304 |
| 2 | Mosque (Kan Jamii) | 394 |
| 3 | Orthodox Chruches (EOC) | 28 |
| 4 | Protestant Churches | 25 |

Source: Gomma Woreda Administration office (2008 E.C)

### 5.2.1 The Roles of Inter-Religious Council (IRC)

The 2006 Beshasha incidence was considered by most as a point in time when the true nature of inter- and intra-dynamism that has been contained by the numerically vast religions (Islam and Christian) begun to be understandable in the area. As indicated elsewhere in this text, in October 2006 conflict had broken out between Muslims and Orthodox Christians in Beshasha Kebele ,Gomma Woreda in which people have been killed from the Christian side (IRC Gomma Woreda).

According to one of the respondents, it is only after this incidence that the local government began to make genuine consideration of the threats of extremism as well as the implications of the various 'sects' in Islam and the tensions among themselves. Similarly, the same incidence

has also revealed the nature and extent of relationship which has existed among Muslims and Christians.

Table: 5. 2.2 Name of Members of Inter-Religious Council in Gomma Woreda.

| No | Name of Religious Institutions | Number of Members |
|----|-------------------------------|-------------------|
| 1 | Islam | 1 |
| 2 | Orthodox Church (OC) | 1 |
| 3 | MekaneYesus church(MYC) | 1 |
| 4 | Kele Hiowt church(KHC) | 1 |
| 5 | Christians Union | 1 |

Source: Inter-Religious Council of Gomma Woreda (March 2008 E.C)

**5.2.2. The Role of Religious Leaders in Conflict Resolution**

As per the information obtained from Culture and Tourism Bureau of Gomma woreda, religious leaders are visible as other actors in resolving conflict. The society considers religious leaders as those who can act on behalf of the will of God and who could argue for truth. No one expects them to speak false because they are God envoys who are respected, trusted and have got high position by the society. Leaders of each religious institution thought the society about the disadvantage of conflict. That means they thought their followers as conflict was bad and that killing or wishing to kill a person and take the property of other persons were strictly forbidden in the eyes of God and this isolates them from heaven. Finally, such leaders bring the conflicting parties into agreement to reconcile their antagonistic idea.

## 5.3. The Types of Conflict Resolved by Religious Institutions

### 5.3.1 Family Conflict

According to one informant, one type of conflict occurs among family members. According to the respondent, conflicts that arise between a husband and a wife plus their children can be a potential reason for its happenings. This type of conflict arises when the couples influence their children to follow what they themselves follow and demand them to think the way they are. In other way, children have their own way of thinking and seeing the world. Besides, they have their own perspective to think and do things. Whenever, couples disregard these values of their children and expect from them what they desire based on their own way of doing things, here comes the cultural shock and children deny fulfilling the expectations from their family. In addition, parents may give unbalanced attention to family members that right have back fire. As a result, conflict arises.

Case 2

During my observation, I faced family conflict between husband and wife. This was at Agaro Mekane Yesus church. Both of them came separately and told their case to the priest. Finally, the priest of the church called the husband and wife together and asked them to express the case of their conflict. After they expressed their case the priest said to them as conflict is normal, and the main thing is try to solve conflict through discussion on time. I was there while this case was happened. What I observed here was the way the priest solve the conflict was impressive and interesting. Because he used many Oromo proverbs like "Harkii fi harkii ilee osoo waldhiquu walitti bu'aa". This shows if the number of wise leaders are many in the church number of conflict can be minimized and finally, the husband and wife agreed each other come back to their home together. From point of view of this I observed we should be wise and systematic to solve conflict.

Case 3

The case was between the child in my village and his family's one contradictory issue was happened. The case was like this the child wants to study Law, but the families want to study accounting. While debating on the issue the father said to child, who is elder me or you? And finally, the child leave home and start staying with vagabond children in village. But from the village one mother attempt to counsel the boy and help the boy to return to home. What I observed here was again the way she goes through was teachable and impressive. Again to resolve conflict we should tolerable and systematic.

### 5.3.2 Dynamics of Interest

Based on the response from a 52 year old male among the key informants, the researcher understood that the intention for the fulfillment personal religious interest among the institutions has been one key reason for the outbreak of the conflict. Here, the key informant revealed that every religious institution that existed in the specific area has its own interest to be fulfilled. To mention some, the need for place of worship, place of burial, place for performing religious ceremonies like Meskel, Epiphany, Arafa, Id Al adha and religious conferences. To perform the above ritual ceremonies, religious institutions need buildings. These buildings may exist nearby. In this case, during performing their activities one or both of the members in the institution can worship loudly that the other people get disturbed and offended. This emotion can grow to the level of conflict. This dynamics of interest can also be seen in language aspect. Here, there is seeking for the social justice and the concept of multi-lingual and multi-cultureless. Of course, the person can best learn and understand if s\he uses her\his mother tongue. Because of the disputes over the issues of to use or not to use alternative languages, with the previous one puts members in division. So, claiming for the medium of instruction can be one source of conflict.

### 5.3.3 Neighbor Conflict

Based on the information from the key informant, the neighbor can be one of the areas of conflict. This type of conflict can occur while there is a disagreement and intolerance between or among neighbors while they do their spiritual activities. Some neighbors doing things may not

giving due concern for their nearby neighbors, those who can be affected in one or the other way. To illustrate, when the person who lives near to the other person who is quite different from her/his neighbor in religion performs her/his spiritual activities, may disregard the values of others or may show despise for others. This can be shown in worshiping loudly during the inappropriate time that can have the potential of disturbing.

Case 4

I heard that between two neighbors conflict was happened due to religion differences. One was Protestant and the other was Orthodox. The case was we can get eternal life through Jesus Christ and Angels. The protestant one says one way, one truth that is Only Jesus. And the other woman say the role of Angel also play vital role. During this one of the religious elders from the study area heard their debating and asked them their case. They stated, and the elders said, "*Foon lafa jiruuf, Culluleen samii irratti wal nyaati" Jedhan*. This means the one can give eternal life is God. So, be patient and you see it at that day about who is give eternal life.

**5.3.4 Economic Conflict**

Information from the other key informant revealed that conflicts can be raised between individuals due to several reasons. It can be between an employee and an employer, religious leader and a member, a merchant and a customer and a driver and his/her supporter, a maid and her servant.  For instance, disputes between an employer and an employee may grow to fiery conflict when the employer's expectation is beyond the expectation of the employee. In religious institutions, when the relationship between the leader and the member is not smooth and the leader becomes dictator, conflicts can be raised.

A merchant may bring fake commodity that can't be easily detectable by the customer and this condition can also put them in to hot conflict. According to the respondent, seeking positions in religious institutions running after personal benefits than the benefits of other members can be potential reasons for conflict. Due to these reasons, "*Shikucha*" will arise between them. This can also affect the other members as well and divisions may arise between members.

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According to the informants from focus group discussions (FGD), the cause of conflicts can be multi- faceted. The informants thoroughly discussed and came to conclusions that the types are the following: Dynamics of interest, conflicts in family, conflicts between religious leaders and members, ethnocentrism, proselyting and religious dominancy. After deeply discussing on the points, the other focus group (FGD) informants informed that individual interests, value judgments and neighbor circle conflicts are the types of conflict they identified.

### 5.3.5 Inter-Religious Conflicts

A 45 year old, male key informant from Beshasha Kebele said "Seven years ago there were religious conflict between Christians and Muslims in some parts of Jimma zone like, Agaro, Beshasha, Nada, Asendabo, Dimtu, Ako".  The male key informant aged 47 from Protestant religion believed that this happened due to religious fanatics. According to the informant; in the church he belongs to, he confronted a conflict of language supremacy. Some members prefer one language to another in order to learn and understand spiritual issues; simultaneously others prefer another language, so that members separated in idea and action. As the consequence, the conflict went so high and the members of that congregation divided in to two groups. Besides, there were some leaders who had civil motive led the followers to their interest. They weren't willing to collect church offering and worship according to church`s rule and regulation. The leaders tried to solve the problem using different mechanisms like praying, teaching Holy bible and Holy Quran

Religious leaders have significant role in the process of conflict resolution and they follow different dispute settlement mechanisms accordingly. In Gomma Woreda, religious leaders are working in conflict resolution in the community. They are recognized as peace makers in their community. As one male interviewee from Muslim aged 65 stated, *government officials invite religious leaders to resolve complex social conflicts. The ability of religious leaders in the community depends mainly on their moral quality. As he further explained, religion can influence every sphere of human being; and religious teachings are related with day-to day activities of an individual.*

*Case 5*

According to the data obtained from IRC Gomma woreda, the Case was about what happened in 1991 E.C around Beshasha because of religious conflict in the area. There are three major religions: Islam, Orthodox and Protestants. The case happened between Orthodox and Islam religion followers. Violent conflicts took place between Christians and Muslims because of religion interest. The main cause for the conflict which happened in Beshasha kebele was that there was no Orthodox church in Bashasha Kebele before 2003 E.C. Thus, until this time there was no burial place for Christians. On account of this, the people of Bashasha were forced to travel more than 5km to Kotta Kebele carrying the bodies of deceased Christians in order to bury it. This was often made by both Christians and Muslims. In order to avoid long distance journey carrying dead bodies, the people decided to build a church in their vicinity, in Bashasha. The idea of building a church got acceptance not only among the Christians, but the Muslims also united for the realization of the idea. It was intended to solve such problems and the Orthodox Church (Abbo Church) in Beshasha was built in 2003 E.C by the money contributed by both Christians and Muslim residents.

The same case happened around Omo Nada between Protestant and Islam religion followers. This conflict resulted in the death of many people and the destruction of materials. Not only this but also the good social interaction between the people was changed and became worse. The two groups developed negative to attitudes towards each other. But finally, different measures were taken and the conflict was resolved.

Case 6

The 2006 Beshasha incidence was considered by most people as a point in time when the true nature of inter- and intra-dynamism that has been contained by the major religions (Islam and Christian) begun to manifest in the area. As indicated elsewhere in this text, in October 2006 conflict had broken out between Muslims and Orthodox Christians in Beshasha Kebele of Gommaa Woreda in which people have died from the Christian side.

According to respondents, it is only after this incidence that the local government began to make genuine consideration of the threats of extremism as well as the implications of the various 'sects' in Islam and the tensions among themselves. Similarly, the same incidence has revealed the nature and extent of relationship which had existed among Muslims and Christians in clear and explicit manner.

In this regard, some of the respondents in Agaro and Beshasha have a view that explained the fact that the source of the Beshasha incidence got its beginning from a historical point in 1991. This point is the time when the Dergue regime was over thrown and a new political circumstance seemed flourished in the area.

**Case 7**

According to the key informants from the Muslim religion, there was an internal split within Islam itself as the expansion of a new revivalist move has also affected intra-religious relations. Until the 2006 incidence, the tensions among sects within Islam were not overt ones in the area at least formally to the outsiders. Of course, it was reported by respondents that some changes were noticeable to them as new, young and foreign educated leaders began to replace the former senior Imams in grand mosques in the area. Majorities of these new leaders were said to be educated in Arab countries, particularly Saudi Arabia. New teachings and new developments, which intended to challenge the old ways of doing things also began to be seen in mosques and among some followers of Islam that have inevitably challenged the status quo. These changes included discarding the celebration of Moulid, the birth day of Prophet Mohammed among others. This new development is later known locally as Wahabiya, as others call it.

**5.4. Responsibilities of Religious Bodies in the Process of Conflict Resolutions.**

The other informant told the researcher that he personally has the responsibility for making effort for the sustainability of peace loving people. He stressed not to use words that trigger hates and actions that exacerbate it. He further explained that he uses negotiation, bringing both parties and addressing the common gaps and preparing teachings from the bible in relation to the law of the country.

The interviewer used semi-structure interview in order to dig depth information from the informers. By doing so, the informer told the researcher that everybody has to be responsible to resolve conflict and ties church has to get involved through the process by preaching love and using Bible pinnacles to teach and giving discipline. In addition to this, advancing negotiation power, bringing both parties together and uncovering the common gaps can also play a great role

In order to get full information about the issue undertaken, the researcher tried to discuss with lacey informants also. The informer told the researcher that better policy could be seeking immediate solution as soon as the problem arises plus in the resolution process. It is advisable to cool down both agents so that this would go spool and additionally, he revealed that religious leaders could be highly experienced and the members have to give round for them.

Face - to -face discussion with these religious leaders can help. Besides this, those religious fathers can give more awareness about peace and how to be peace loving and mating with members of the specific religious institution. They further lowly shins biblical perspectives that would have power to solve conflicts. They can show the way on how to meditate on the Bible quotations and the takes. Another informant told the researcher that he passed through tough, compiler and challenging conflict resolution process and learned from it. He added that they finally solved the problem but, he revealed that conflicts and chaos are the act of aril; so, believers should abstain themselves from conflict and follow the principle of forgetting and forgiving. He also told the researcher that he always teach church mongers, the value of forgiving persecute, and the importance of restoring of the relationship.

The other member of FGD group told the researcher that he always tries to know the real reason of the conflict. Separating the conflict form the individuals is also an asset in the peace making process, entertaining others' ideas and listening to these comments from each other and it is better to focus on solution than criticizing one another on who made what. This is better to magnify the value of patience and tolerance throughout little process and conflict resolution parole. The informant further added that the problem creators themselves could be potential solution finders; so, better to participate them in the entire process.

From the information gathered through FGD, one group informant told the researcher that in the whole process of reconciliation, fencing, advising and leading the conflict makers is important. He added that the religious leaders play the facilitating roles. The informant further tried to explain that the meditation on what is in breed also helps to solve the problems. The informant also told the researcher that he took part in conflict resolution particularly in force and challenging type. The informant explained that he did his past in the process of reconciliation and clearly stated chaos is the act of evil and the believers should abstain from conflict and forgive each other.

Other informant clearly stated that in the process of restoration of peace and good relationship, he used Holy Scriptures as an instrument. He further expressed that the pineapple of the bible order that loving once enemy is obligatory. In other way, the other group informant stated that primarily, identifying reasons for conflict minimizes lots of things. Separating the idea of conflict from the individuals can also configure for the process, haring open mind, hastening to gain onsite on the cause of the conflict, and fowling on the solute on heaps to come to the ultimate goal of the process. In doing so, the informant explained that it is possible to come to the point. Endurance and tolerance plays their parts in the whole process. Inviting these parties to the whole process can help in many aspects.

According to the results of FGD, everything is in the worth of conflation, teaching about peace together. Additionally, most of the time, the roles of religious leaders are mitigating. The roles of religious leaders also include pronging in addition to counseling and teaching to make peace among different religions. The informant further expressed that the members are also expected to pray for peace and love and discuss the issue by accepting each other and also trying to understand the source of conflict. Other informant from a different group also informed the researcher that religious leader's shoulder big responsibly to teach the members, how-to value forgiveness plus they here to impose their approach so that they can be more attractive and pleasing. Additionally, he explained that others are also expected to be open for discussion hacking in mind the ultimate goal of solving the problem in mind.

## 5.5 The Existence of Conflict Resolution Guidelines in the Religious Institution

Here, the informant informed the researcher that everybody should be responsible to resolve conflict and maintain peace. But there are  no written guidelines which are used to solve the problem. People use traditional, societal way of solving problems besides to spiritual mechanism. On the contrary, the other informant told the researcher that he prepared plan of action such as working plan in addition to propping plan which is connected with his religious activity. This was intended to render the holistic ministry within the community and to address the whole community.

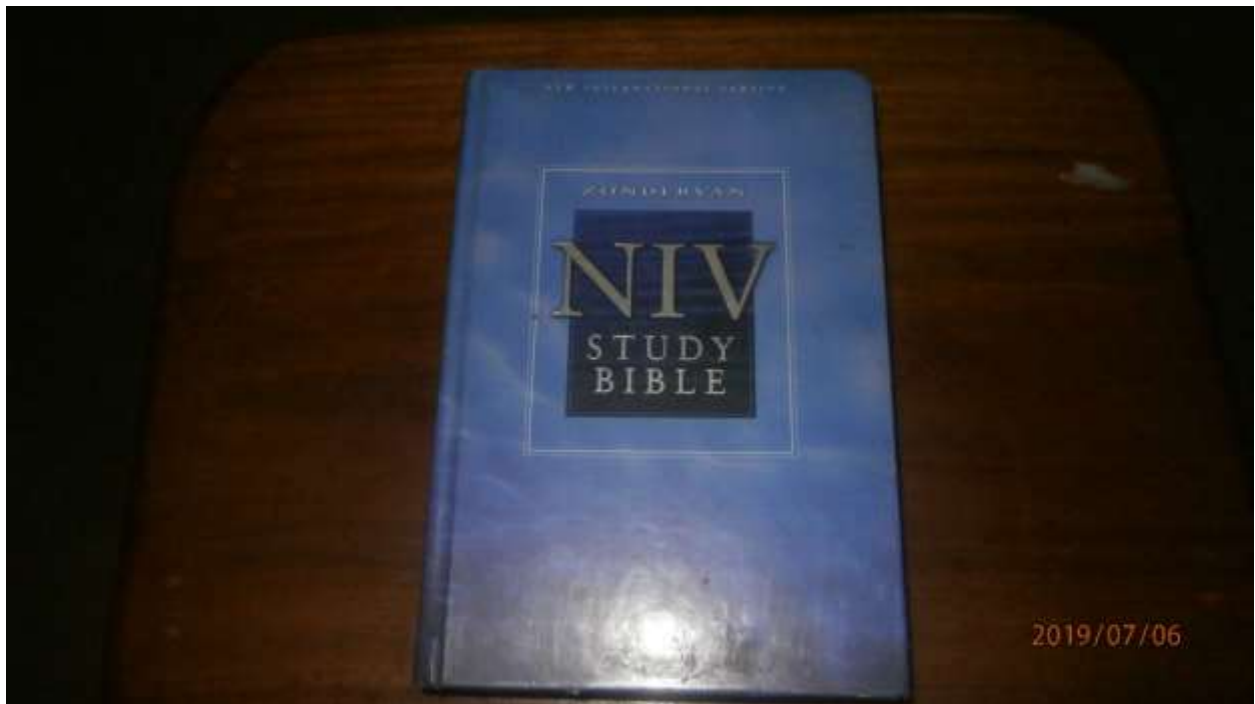Figure: 5.1 Amharic Holy Bible
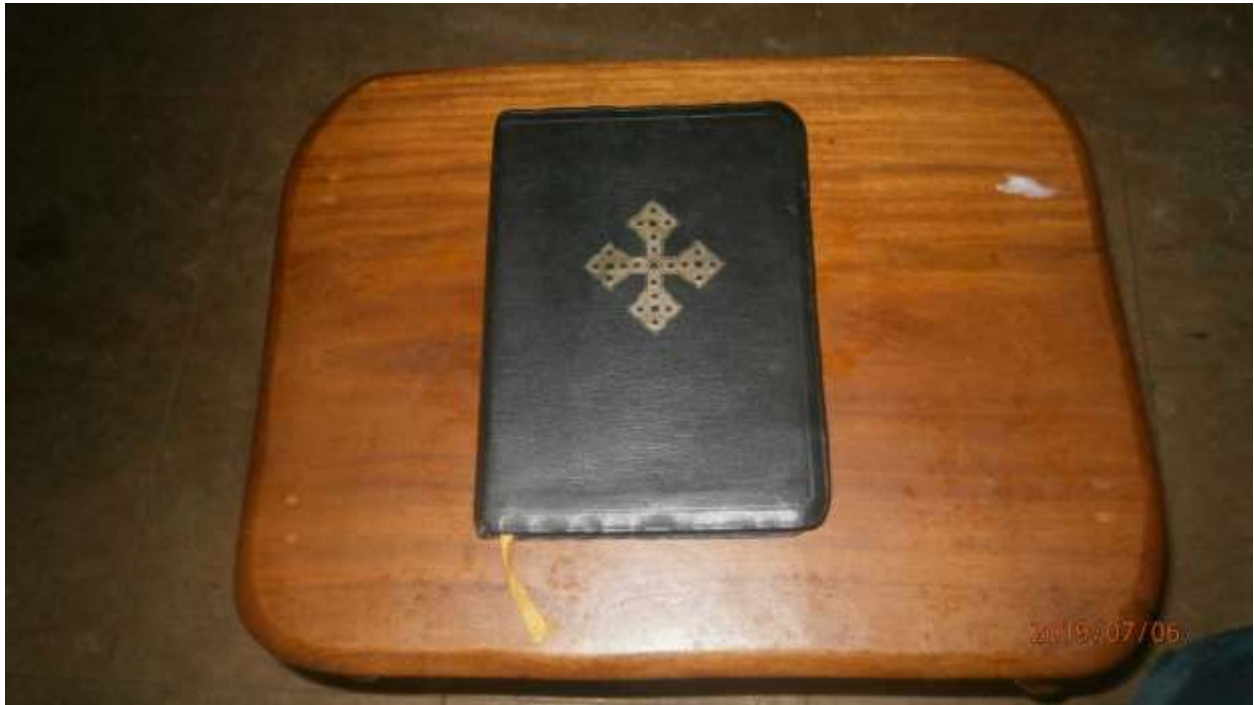


Source: From Filed

Figure: 5.2 Holy Quran



Source:   From Filed

Figure: 5.3 English Holy Bible



Source: From Filed

The other informant informed the researcher that he didn't at all know whether there is a guideline for conflict resolution. But, he further explained that he is using God's word to counsel

and teach the members and he expressed that there are identified responsibilities listed in the Bible and Quran to the followers and leaders.

Here, the key informant interviewees told the researcher that they have guidelines prepared and developed by Human Right Commission and other organizations. He further added that this guidelines by far help them to teach respect for human kind, to be role made for others being peaceful, developing or cultivating the spirit of discussion and at last, cultivating tolerance. Similarly, the other key informants told the researcher that they have guidelines to resolve conflicts when conflicts arise. On the contrary, other informant said that there is no guideline prepared but, he uses the bible as a guiding principle in every aspect when the there is a conflict. But, the other informant told the researcher that their guiding principle is not something differently prepared by their religious institution. He added Koran, the holy Book of Islam can be used as a guideline to be governing not only human relations but also relationship between humans and animals and plants. Contrary to this, the other informant told the researcher that he has a flexible guideline that could govern the relationship they have with other members of the believers. In case, if there is verbal or physical attack, there are rules orders to be followed. Though there is a guiding, in the process of peacemaking, we always try to check this guideline is in line with or in harmony with the teaching of the religion.

Similarly, the other informant told the researcher that he has guideline to govern the behaviors of the members and resolve conflicts when it arises. He further added that since he is a Pastor in his specific religious institution, he faces the problem from members and he feels he would have a responsibility to solve the conflicts being a sentinel leader, frequently called to make reconciliation between God and people or members of the religious institution.  Another informant also commented similarly. He told the researcher that the main guiding principle is the Holy Bible.

In addition to Bible principles, he has a governing law guideline for handing the conflict .Also there is another mechanism called peace office. But, other informant told the researcher that there is no specific guideline related to conflict resolution. But, he further explained their guideline is bible. Everything that guides human relations is Holy Bible .Contrary to the above

informant, the other in formant told the researcher that he has excellent guidelines in handling conflicts. This guideline of course is not well organized and written. But, exponent exposed guideline because experience by itself is a best teacher. So, based on the degree, situation and magnitude of the conflict, he uses his experience to solve the problem. Eventually, the other informant told the researcher that he has no such type of manual to eradicate and resolve conflicts. But, God /Allah bless those who make peace. In order to be peaceful and law abiding members God (Allah) gave us his Holy Book .This guiding principle governs all aspects of member's life.

## 5.6 Mechanisms (Approaches) Religious Leaders used in Conflict Resolving Process

There are various alternative conflict resolution mechanisms among different societies. Religious dispute settlement is one of such mechanisms. It is rather obvious that mainly religious leaders have had important role in conflict aversion.

### 5.6.1 Teaching as a Mechanism of Conflict Management

The researcher, here, was informed by the informant that a leader in his religious organization teaches and gives advice as the primary mechanism of giving awareness and insight for members' knowledge of value of diversity for others and mutual understanding and respect are given in the process of awareness creating. To give knowledge and insight, religious leaders use Holy Scriptures based on their religious doctrine, for example in case of Christianity the guideline is the Holy Bible, and in case of Islam, the guideline is Koran. The respondent further told the researcher that they frequently use Holy Scriptures in order to teach and guide the members. The same Scriptures can also be used to give advice, discipline, and reconciling conflicts. Other informants also explained that they always try to cling to the teachings of prophets which are truth and justice. That means, they always follow the teachings of prophets in resolving conflicts, and they said that before doing so, we are expected to hear both sides and parties so that we could be able to give sound judgment and minimize bias.

The other key informant told that he usually teaches to respect other people and their religion, teaches them being role model regarding peace. Teaching the members to love one another and

to avoid conflict is the way the other informant explained so as to control and resolve conflicts. Using the knowledge as a tool, members try to minimize their differences and solve problem. Round table discussion is one way of resolution propped by other informant while the researcher interviewed. He told the researcher that he plays a role of media so that he can identify the causes with the end result of apology from those identified as offenders. To make peace as the informant told the researcher better to teach members the negative effects that can be occurred by conflicts. In other way, magnifying and praising the importance of peace and its elements have to be worked on. So, the informant added he refers to the God of peace that expects the same value from us. To approach peace in full situations, God gave us his Holy word called Bible. So, using the bible as per the direction of God, people in conflict will come to peace and resolve their issues very easily. Similarly, the other informant pointed out that God's word can shape person's behaviors and helps people to put on good manners or personality that of Christianity. Other group informant also summarized that in order to bring good result in members' life and make their teaching be acceptable in the members side, they have to show Christianity humility, respect and compassion for humanity, real tolerance for other's different way of living, and valuing the efforts that religious leaders are doing. According to him, followers always value what is being done over what is being taught. So, practice of leaders in our case the teaching of values of peace and elements of peace can be contagious to the rest of the members.

The other informant informed that teaching the members to live by Bible principles so that they could be flourishing in their entire life. To do so, we teach them together them in weekends. Doing so, their life be shaped and molded to fit to the standard of God. The members exercise God's love through Holy sacraments, getting Holy Baptism and taking Holy Communion.

Figure: 5.4 Holy Communion

Agaro Town MekanYesus Church



Source: From Filed

Figure: 5.5 Declaring Holy Communion

Agaro Town MekanYesus Church



Source: From Filed

The Other informant described that He used his Holy Scripture (Holy Quran) to teach members to focus on what they have common with different religious members. He told the researcher that religious leaders even try to identify common values and assets with other religious members as common country, also various religions all demand for peace, forgiveness and the likes.

### 5.6.2 Negotiation

In the conflict resolution process, the key informants informed the researcher that negotiating between parties is an essential approach to pass through. This may embrace persuasively guiding them and bringing them to the peace table. In the peace making process, both parties get an opportunity to forward their points through facilitators that are reputable in the area and skillful in negotiation. Both parties are expected to be transparent and genuinely express their inner feelings and thoughts so that the process can be smoothly handled. These values can help to dig out and understand the root causes of the problem, and to give immediate possible solution. After all, the final expectation is to bring the two parties to peaceful situation. In the peace handing and making process, one issue is bringing the two parties together so that they meet face to face in order to dig out the root cause of the problem. According to FGD informants informed both parties can also be part and parcel of the solution as well. In the peace making process, religious leaders facilitate the issue to come up with good results. In this mechanism, discussion can pave the way to thoroughly know and understand the root cause to the problem and propose possible solution for it.

### 5.6.3 Role Model

A response from other key informants revealed that being a role model can highly influence the peace making process and can come with a very good result. By default, human beings are more inclined to what they see than what they hear and the same is true for members. Actually, when members see the life style of their leaders particularly reflecting forgiveness and love with their fellow members, in the middle of conflict, things will be easily resolved whenever they face in their life.

That is to mean the members can easily resolve the conflict through the same method that they see in the life of their leaders as the saying goes, "Actions Speak louder than words."

Another important issue raised by another informant is that he learns from the rich experience of previous role models particularly those who have been successful in this regard. Praying is another crucial mechanism to take place because the members take into their heart that when they pray about the issue, God will help them solve the problem or conflict occurred.

Besides, the group informant commented that in order to helper role top the interests of both potions have to be handled. According to him, as a religious leader, he tries to get first panel information from the disputers step by step eventually, to the above inexperienced religious leader. Here, the informant is rich in resolving conflicts he told the researcher that he is good at using God's word to handle and solve disputes. He also revealed that the same principle helps him to be raptly listening to their feelings and emotions before going to any kind of advice or judgment.

### 5.6.4 Love as an Approach to Conflict Management

The informant here responded that love can be used as the key approach to reduce and resolve conflicts. As he has informed, in the process of peace making, this element can contribute a paramount importance since, all humans are indeed of love. Whenever there is love, parties who are under conflict cannot resist the power of love. When you show love to someone, it is natural that someone shows it back. Loving our enemies is the principle in the bible as explained by the informant. He stressed that this bible guidelines is crucial in order to make peace, flourish love and maintain good relationship among various disciples. The roles that religious leaders play in handling conflict resolution has great place, and the way of handling may be different from different ways of handling conflict. The first and usable is biblical perspective conflict management. The others are leaders in Koran and life of property that they experienced in solving conflicts during their era. The role of leaders is teaching their member how to live together with other in peace because religion is the institution of love. In addition to this, the other is cultivating and developing culture for discussion and love towards all regardless of their

background. Showing unconditional love to both parties is another mechanism that works. Love can change lots of things. People can be attracted towards love and person who shows love to them can dissolve hate and the idea of conflict in their mind and heart and bring both parties to reconciliation. Eventually, the other informant informed the researcher that active listening is a best mechanism to solve problem. People love and give ear to those who gives ears to them. Furthermore, active listening is the way we show respect to the person who is talking and respecting others will come with positive results.

The other informant a 33 year old male also commented similarly. He said that "*love is the central and focal point to approach the person under problem.*" This value helped him to be active listener so that he could get the causes of the conflict. He further, revealed his secret that he look bother parties for the common mistakes done by both. Andean courses them to come to harmer solving their problem. Besides, the other group member told the researcher that he has experience in resolving conflicts. He also revealed his secret that careful listening plays a prominent role, here he explained identifying cares and the responsible person needs reap at tension, as being the prime thing for the peace making process. Sequentially, the same real pattern can help while evaluating the problem done. He further told the researcher that it needs skill to metical to both parties specifically the person who is responsible for the problem.

In order to persuade, skill and experiences are also highly essential to encourage parties to forgive each other Most of the time, both parties couldn't be responsible for the mistakes they have done. So, this process requires persuasive power to do so. Passing through this process, the informant revealed that at the end of the day, stress cooled down and the two conflicting parties came to consciences. He further explained that he followed the footstep of previous leaders and carefully looked at their living style towards peace related issues. He also said that he has a good understanding of bible principles that are directly relevant to conflict resolution: praying about the issues, discussing it with respective parties to reach at conclusion about the cause and proposing the possible solutions. In addition, the other group informant informed that his way of leadership is founded on love. He told the researcher that he tends to approach both parties by

love. Love in words, using very selective, winsome, pleasant words that don't hurt both parties and love in action.

### 5.6.5 Compromising Method

During data collection, the other idea entertained by the researcher from the focus group discussion was an approach of compromising. As stated by the respondent, compromising can be a good approach to come to peace. According to him, compromising is the way both parties leave some ideas, dropping some wrong things that has been done in order to make peace. To come with good results, compromising ideas could be a noble idea for both parties so that they can narrow their differences and magnify their similarities.

The informant revealed to the researcher that in order to pacify the members and come with good results, it would be better to involve influential leaders in the community; reputable persons can have ears from other members and followers. Disputing persons may hear and compromise in order to make peace due to the involvement of those community icons. Doing so, those icons can identify the root cause of the conflict and propose possible alternative solutions. Informant from Islam commented that they always try to list down common grounds that could put both disputes in harmony. Grounds like, common country, common culture and interest to be peaceful, forgiveness, living together, social life and the others. In order to know the cause, the informant, added that they separately talk to them. But, if the conflict is at mass level, we select some of them from both sides, in order to thoroughly discuss on the cause of the dispute and plan for way out from the problem.

### 5.6.6 Forgiveness as an Approach of Conflict Resolution

The researcher while collecting data came to the informant that forgiveness is the other alternative to make peace. According to his response, he told the researcher that forgetting and forgiving others' mistakes can mend a broken relationship. He further explained Holy Scriptures encourage every person to be known as a forgiving personality. In this regard, Christ Jesus (Isa) can be taken as a perfect role model to be imitated. If a person can follow His foot step in this regard, the respondent believes that peace making process can be smooth. In order to get

forgiveness or in order to come to this conclusion, no need of putting preconditions. The ultimate goal is coming to peace and the process is forgiveness. According to informants' genuine response, forgiveness is voluntary and unconditional. It is not motivated by pressure from a third party, nor is it dependent on the apology or recognition of wrong doing on the part of the offender. All the FGD members have supported that forgiveness is mostly employed by religious leaders and institutions in peace making process among religious adherents of the study area.

The Oromo society in general and people in the study area in particular, use a proverb "*Bulu Cooma*". This is to mean they come to round table discussion whenever they are not coming to harmony, they prolong the time of re-union to do a discussion. This will give to come with a brilliant solution to all persons who participate in peace making process.

### 5.6.7 Discussion as an Approach of Conflict Resolution

In order to make settlement, discussion has its prominent role as suggested by the other informant. Respecting human dignity and value plays its part. Once human beings are ready to value that humans should be respected without any precondition, things will go smooth and the process of making peace will be easy to be put in action. Cause identification is the primary step in order to go ahead. Identifying individual's conflict may need good judgment and insight because, if it is not done the right way, possible solutions might not be right as the result can't solve the intended problem. Teaching the religion followers about peace and co- existence is also invaluable and irreplaceable activity.

According to the results of focus group discussion, it was explained that magnifying the values of peace, mutual respect and dignity have to be thought to members of the religious institution. The informant underlined that listing or showing the member Common values that can help them live together in love, common values like, peace, forgiveness and social life. According to the informant, praying is the key mechanism to pacify peace and stability. Discussion is another key mechanism to make peace and stability among members because discussion can open door for understanding and minimizing differences.

Case 8

I observed that in one room there were different religion followers. They were couples: one was Muslim the other one was Christian. What I appreciate here was that no conflict took place between them because of religious difference. He respects her religion and also she respects his religion. If there is the habit of tolerance between different religion followers, conflict will be less. Most of the time we observed that conflict is the result of absence of discussion between people. Discussion is the best way to resolve conflict among people.

## 5.6.8 Reconciliation

Reconciliation in the study area is one of the mechanisms of conflict resolution in promoting peace in religious communities. As the key informant of the IRC-Gomma Woreda depicted, reconciliation is a popular version of dispute settlement in Inter-religious Council (IRC). As the information obtained through in-depth interview from respondents shows, this trend emanated from the teaching of Holy Bible and Holy Quran as well as the teachings of '*dhiifaama*' in Arab ``*Afootuu*`` conflict resolution. Similarly, necessary preconditions for peace: understanding the importance of reconciliation among religious leaders and various religious institutions to maintain peaceful relationship between them are also mentioned very important.

*"If you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift"(Matthew* 5:23-24)

Case 9

One of the key informants stated that he made reconciliation between different people who had conflict due to religious differences. As a reason for involving in reconciliation he revealed the following points: I am called by God to reconcile people with God, 2 Corinthians 5:20 and People with people. Mathew 5:9. The first text (2 Corinthians 5:20) says ''we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciling to God and the second text (Mathew 5:9) says ''based are the peace makers, for they shall be called sons of God. We have a Golden law that our lord Jesus Christ taught in the

gospel. Mark, 12:29-31 ''love God with all your heart, with all your soul, with your entire mind, and with all your strength. Love your neighbor as yourself''.

The third reason is without forgiveness God never hears our prayer. Mark 11:25. Accordingly, in protestant church love has the core value of our religion and it is our doctrine. One of the requirements to be called Christian is to love one another and forgive to each other. The whole/ Bible teaches all about love and forgiveness (Gospel of John 13:35). Therefore as a pastor, my main duty is teaching those values and helping our church members to live accordingly. In addition, I am reconciling people when they are conflicted due to different reasons in the church or outside the church, whether they are believers or not. In so doing, I remember that I made peace between people who are conflicted due to religions difference.

### 5.6.9 Traditional Practices

In addition to the conflict resolution mechanisms specified earlier, the key informants pointed out that there are traditional practices utilized to reconcile and keep peace among people who go into any kind of conflict.

It was indicated that there are problems and contexts in which traditional mechanisms of sorting things out have proved successful in solving problems than others. In conflict resolution, for instance, many scholars are inclined towards the importance of employing traditionally sound mechanisms than entirely depending on formal legal system. Ethiopian communities in this regard are praised for having different and diversified cultural mechanisms for solving problems that occur at various levels: from individual to communal (Gebre et al., 2011).

According to (Yonas 2012), in order to solve the 2011 conflict in Gomma Bashasha, religious and community leaders and elders were involved to ensure the conclusion of the reconciliation process with repentance, forgiveness, and mending of broken community relations. He further noted that the Muslim community was mobilized to organize welcoming luncheons for Christian communities who were displaced by the conflict. Furthermore, the religious leaders apologized and the community participated in rebuilding the churches (Kessels et al., 2016). In the study area, particularly in Beshasha, for instance, reconciliation between disputant religious

communities was winded up by slaughtering a bullock as symbol of calling an end to bloodsheds, or as a sign of reconciliation where revenge is no longer needed. This is believed to have succeeded to tone down emotional gaps.

## 5.6.10 Local Elders Lessening Mechanisms

There are experiences of employing traditional mechanisms to reverse the effects of former slaughter. Such mechanisms were proved successful in preventing the continuation of conflicts as retaliation for former deaths. Hence, indigenous institutions that have maintained their traditionally bestowed acceptances and recognitions in their communities can be other partners to work with. However, caution should be there while using these institutions. That is because it was noticed by the present researcher that some of those personalities which have partaken in these institutions have played contrary roles. Those local elders who have already established links with political bodies or whose acceptability within the wider community has already deteriorated may not serve this purpose.

## 5.6.11 Jarsummaa (Arbitration)

Jarsummaa is one of the mechanisms that Gommaa Oromo used to resolve the conflict upraised among community. It is used as reconciliation practices that the 'jaarsa biyyaa' (respected reliable elders) play important role to implement the rules and regulations needed on the peace settlement. This is one of the valuable cultural practices which have been with Oromo people from early time. The term 'jaarsaa' in Afaan Oromo means 'an old man' matured enough. However, in jaarsummaa in context, it means that men take part as selected respected representative of the community and have deep knowledge to settle down the uprising as mediators whenever there is dispute or conflict. Jaarsa/ Jaarsa biyyaa (respected and selected elders) were selected by the two bodies those who came with conflict case based on their agreement.

# CHAPTER SIX

# CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATION

## 6.1. Conclusions

Conflict is worldwide realism in every part of the world. It is essential part of a human being. Religious believer as part of society are facing different conflicts within Inter-religious conflicts. Furthermore, the conflict was intensified by the factors such as the emergence of various sects, and religious extremism. Besides, the explosion of challenging religious publications and preaching is one of the causes of conflict among religions. Conflict resolution is a community process involving the identification of the root cause of the problem, and bringing all parties involved to address the underlying issues. This usually ends with the guilty accepting wrong doing, leading to reconciliation which may include compensation or just forgiveness Utne, (2001:8); Murthi (2006:9). The process of conflict resolution has to do with how religious principles and followers ensure action in bringing peace at the individual and community level relationships Kendie and Guri (2006:17).

The researcher concluded the study based on the data collected, interpreted and analyzed through using qualitative research method. The study explored the roles and responsibilities of religious institutions, types of conflicts in the study area; mechanisms employed by religious institutions to resolve those conflicts and checked for the availability of conflict resolution guide lines among religious institutions being studied. Religious institutions have the role and responsibility of inculcating elements of tolerance and peaceful co-existence in their member's hearts and minds.

## 6.2. Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the researcher forwarded the following recommendations

➢ Religious leaders should give awareness boosting to religious followers. Awareness rising can be done by addressing the public widely through trainings, workshops and etc. Besides, forums which could fill the gap in awareness have to be conducted. This needs to reach all levels through various actors and institutions jointly taking part in the activity. Integrate secular and religion-based themes which foster tolerance and co-existence through religious leaders.

➢ Using converts to play positive contributions. People might be converted due to various implicit and explicit reasons. As we can see from the accounts of the respondents, most conversion stories tell that there are conversions made out of frustration and/or economic dependency. Regardless of the driving causes, converts could be used to play viable role by serving as a connecting bridge between the two religions so as to promote tolerance and reconciliation. Hence, projects could make an advantage out of involving the converts to deliver positive contributions. In empowering the converts and using their skill and experience from both religious group, it is possible to make them actively participating in teaching tolerance and maintaining peace.

➢ This study is delimited to three independent religious institutions (Muslim, Orthodox Christian and Protestant Christian). There are other independent religious institutions that are also affected by religious conflict. Therefore, it is recommended that further research should be undertaken by other researchers who have interest in this area.  In terms of research settings, the research only focused on Gomma woreda of Jimma zone in Oromia National Regional State. Similar and other conflicts may occur in other Woredas of Jimma zone. Therefore, it is recommended that further studies should be carried out on religious based conflict and its mechanisms of resolutions in other areas of the zone.

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# Annex I

## Interview Guideline

Thank you for your consent to respond to the interview. This interview Guideline is designed to generate data on the research topic, 'The Role of Religious Institutions in Conflict Resolution: The Case of GommaWoreda of Jimma Zone, Oromia Regional State".

**Part one: personal back ground information**

1. How old are you? _____
2. Sex? F____M ____
3. Can you tell me about your Educational background? _____
4. Are you Married_____
5. Religious type? _____
6. What is your position in your religion institution? _____

**Part two: General interview guidelines**

1. How do you understand situation of conflict in your woreda?
2. Which type of conflict mostly observed in your woreda?
3. How do you understand the role of your religious institution in resolving conflicts?
4. What mechanisms your religious institutions used for involvement of conflict handling?
5. Have you learned or preached about preventing or resolving conflict in your religious centers?
6. How do you understand what the doctrine of your religion says about peaceful coexistence with followers of other religions?
7. Are there identified responsibilities cascaded to followers and leaders of your religion in relation to conflict resolution?
8. Do you abide by the rule and responsibility given to you and act accordingly?
9. Are there plans to be executed in handling conflict that you have involved?
10. Is there articulated manual that is used to eradicate and resolve conflicts?

**Part three: interview guideline for FGD**

**FGD1: For religious leaders**

1. In your woreda, have religion or other conflicts had been happened so far? When and what were the causes?
2. What are the roles of religious leaders in handling conflict?
3. What experience do you have so far in resolving conflict?
4. As religious leader how do you teach and guide the followers of your religion?
5. What mechanisms do you follow in handling conflicts?
6. Do you have plans and guidelines that are used in the work of handing conflict?

**FGD 2: For religious followers**

1. Was there a conflict among different religious followers?
2. What are the causes for such conflicts?
3. How do religious followers involved in handling conflicts?
4. What roles do religious followers play for the mutual coexistence of people from different religious background?
5. What are your responsibilities in sustaining peace?
6. Do you involve in the preparation and implementation of plans and guidelines with the religious institutions? How? Why?

Thank you!

# Appendices

## Appendix I: Informants Photo





Gomma Woreda Diocess Manager (EOCT),

Gomma Woreda (IRC)



Gomma Woreda administration and religious leder

Gomma Woreda (IRC) of General Secretary



Gomma Woredaa Evangelical Churches Fellowship leader

Religions Followers of the FGD

Jimma Zone and Gomma Woreda (IRC) Religious leaders FGD



Reconciled Disputants Kissing Each other to Symbolize the Reconciliation

**Appendix II:** Pictures of Religious Institutions

Picture 1. Agaro Town Orthodox Church



Source: Socio-Economic Profile of the Jimma Zone

**Picture 2.** Agaro Town Mosque



Source: Picture 3 Agaro Mosque (Taken by: Solomon Banti, March, 2017)

Picture 3. Agaro Town MekanYesus Church (EECMY)



Source: Taken by: Solomon Banti, March, 2017

Picture 4. Agaro Town Kale Hiwot Church



Source: Taken by: Solomon Banti, March, 2017