Interreligious Marriage: Social and Religious Perspectives

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Abstract: *The article crtically examines the existing literature on the social and religious dialogs of one of the hub of social issues in many socities, interreligious marriage. It conceptualizes its meaning from the religious and scientific perspectives and operationalize the various core variables which significantly influence people's attitude towards the practice. Moreover, the prospects and challenges of interreligious marriage and the stand of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church (EOTC) and Islamic religion perspectives towards the issue has also been explored.*

Key Words: *Interreligious marriage (IRM), attitude, Islam, the Ethiopian Orthdox Tewahedo Church (EOTC)*

1. Introduction

Religion is a dominant social institution which affects every spheres of human life. It is inexorably interwoven with the family, polity, economy, education, and other social institutions of the society. In any society, religion determines people's day to day life and we hardly find a phenomenon which is totally out of its domain. Marriage norms, food habits, dressing customs, festivities, politics, and people's way of adaptation to their environment are some among others which are influenced by religion [25].

Marriage is a cultural universal. It exists in every society with varying forms. It is also the basic reason for the perpetuation and continuity of society and generation. Furthermore, marriage is "subject to the reciprocal influences of social, cultural, and political forces" [25]. These forces collectively constitute conduct norms. According to Sellin, conduct norms are guides that regulate the behaviors of people by delimiting boundary between right and wrong [5]. In religious societies, religion predominate the composition of conduct norms and serves as a pertinent criterion in regulating not only marriage but also much of the behaviors of people [25]. In most of these societies,

the marriage norm commence people to practice religious endogamy at the expense of exogamy [20].

The meanings of endogamy and exogamy are not straightforward as they appear. Their usage varies from one social group to the other. They can have broader or specific meanings depending on the context of their usage. In some societies, in-group marriage (endogamy) may connote marriage within ethnic group regardless of religious differences of individuals. In other cases, endogamy can have detail meaning to the extent of considering many similarities (religion, ethnicity, language, etc.) of the husband and the wife [18]. Due to such ambiguities, experts in the area have preferred the use of specific terminologies that can possibly describe the precise status of the husband and wife like intercultural marriage, inter-ethnic marriage, interracial marriage, interreligious marriage, same faith marriage, and homogamy.

Intercultural marriage is a very broad concept which embraces inter-ethnic or interreligious marriages. Religious and ethnic intermarriage are single dimensions of intercultural marriage. Intercultural marriage refers to the marriage between persons of two different cultural backgrounds. It may involve difference in country, language, religion, race, ethnicity, political ideology, dressing styles, food customs, living styles, etc. Inter-culturally married spouses have extreme differences and the challenges associated with it are by far complex and intertwined compared to inter-ethnic and inter-religious marriages [33].

Interreligious marriage which is also called mixed religious marriage, religious exogamy, and interfaith marriage implies "a marriage between persons of differing religions". It is a form of intermarriage and a "type of interaction between religious groups, sub-societies, or societies" [9]. Such practice is as old as the origin of different religions. It, therefore, reveals the degree of integration and social distance among people from different religious groups [7, 14, 35]. Social distance

refers to the gap which exists among different religious groups and it has an inverse relation with interreligious marriage. In other words, the higher interreligious marriage implies the lower social distance between religious groups and vice versa [36]. Since many major religions in the world prohibit interreligious marriage for the sake of religious devotion, purity, and maintaining their groups' custom and tradition, many people engage in such type of marital relationships by transgressing the dogmas of their religions [20, 25].

The magnitudes of interreligious marriage vary across societies depending on the various personal attributes of the members and the response of structural factors for IRM. People's attitude towards IRM, the response of society and religious community, heterogeneity, group size, educational status, prejudice, degree of discrimination, and religiosity are some among the many factors which determine the magnitude of IRM in a particular society [11, 28]. For example, according to the American Religious Identification Survey (ARIS) 2001 as cited in [21], the national data of US indicated that "22 percent of Americans marry outside of their own religious traditions." Conversely, this is less than half of the Jewish intermarriage in general, which was 52 percent in 1990 [26]. Despite the variations in enormity across societies, social scientists have reported that, at the present time, interreligious marriage is becoming more common and normal aspects of life [20, 25].

Interreligious spouses are treated differently in different societies. These treatments are subject to the attitude of the society and the dogma of a particular religion towards the practice. In some societies, the practice is considered as 'deviant' behavior which goes against the established norms and values of marriage [22]. In societies where IRM is highly abandoned, interreligious spouses, especially in the past, were subject to punishment. The Jews, for instances, consider intermarriage as a "threat to the survival of the Jewish people". Today, many authors in Israel have gone far to the extent of publishing studies which publically condemn the practice [26]. In Western countries, religious intermarriage has become a common features of people's day to day life and it has reached a stage where it is considered as "norm rather than [the] exception" [29].

2. Theoretical Frameworks

Intergroup relationships are explained by a variety of theories. Theories that explain intergroup relations can possibly be applied in the study of interreligious marriage with varying applicability. The social structure theory, assimilation theory, and theory of market marriage are the most widely utilized theories in the study of intergroup relations in general and ones in particular. Unlike most others, the social structure theory enables to investigate interreligious marriage by placing it within the frames of the broader historical, social, cultural, and political contexts [11].

Blau's 1977 influential work "Inequality and Heterogeneity" is one of the most acknowledged writing in applying the social structure theory for the study of intergroup relations including intermarriage. Till today, it is one of the most widely employed theories for the study of intergroup relations in general and intermarriage in particular [11].

Social structure refers to the "constraints that collective life imposes on the individual" [34]. The central theme of the theory lies on the assumption that individual's behavior within the society is constrained by historical, socio-cultural, and political influences that surrounded them. Individuals may react against but this reaction is futile compared to the influence of the social structures on them. Above all, the constraint social structure imposes on the individual is inescapable. This assumption goes back to the works of the known classical sociologist Emile Durkheim. Durkheim, in his study of social fact, has indicated the power of social structure on the fruitless reaction of individuals [31].

According to Blau, intergroup relation is subject to a number of structural constraints and opportunities. Heterogeneity and group size are prominent among others. To mention a few, "group size, physical isolation, distinctive ideology, prejudice, the salience of group parameters, and social mobility" are the major structural factors that determine intergroup relationships[11]. According to social structure theory, personal behaviors are subject to the influence of social structure and intergroup relations are the outcome of different structural factors.

In fact, people's behavior, their practice, and attitude towards certain issue cannot be viewed as a mere product of structural determinants instead they are the outcome of the interplay between both agency and structure. But the degree of personal freedom an individual has within the society independent of the influence of structural constraints may vary from society to society. Durkheim, for instance, in his study of 'Division of Labor', has argued that compared to modern society, the influence of structural constraints on the individual members is potent in traditional society. This is because unlike modern society, where individualism and division of labor are apparent and sources of solidarity, in traditional society the members are bound together because of 'collective conscience'; similarity in economic activities, belief systems, consensus and understanding on norms and values. Hence,

according to Durkheim, 'traditional societies', have repressive laws and the violation of norms and values in these societies are followed by severe punishment which, in turn, makes structural factors vary dominant [31].

In some societies, despite the constraints of structural factors like the restriction of interreligious marriage by the religious community and the public, we find the practice immensely increasing from time to time. The trend of interreligious marriage in Europe affirms this reality [20, 25]. This reveals the decreasing role of the influence of structural constraints on individuals and the increasing freedom of individuals with rationalization [31].

3. Factors Influencing People's Attitude Towards IRM

Several micro and macro variables account for molding people's perception of religious intermarriage. Heterogeneity, educational status, religiosity, parents' religious background, age, group size, prejudice are some among others to mention [11].

According to Blau, exposure to heterogeneity has its own impact in influencing one's attitude towards intergroup relationship including intermarriage. People who grew in religiously heterogeneous society would have a more positive attitude towards IRM than people who spent much of their life in religiously homogeneous society [11]. Heterogeneity refers to "the number of different groups distinguished by a given parameter and the size distribution among them" [8]. Logically, for interreligious marriage to occur in a particular society, at first different religious groups should exist in that particular geographic area. Yet, the argument may not always hold true. Sometimes, in some societies, we find the reverse explanation if heterogeneity is taken as a sole factor for IRM. In other words, while the potential for interreligious marriage is higher in religiously heterogeneous societies compared to religiously homogenous societies, in reality this proportion may not hold true for all societies. Ethiopia can be taken as an example in this regard. Regardless of the existence of the followers of more than five different religions, interfaith marriages are very limited in the country [3].

Education creates smooth environment in the relationship between different religious groups and decreases the social distance between them. Studies indicated that a person's attitude towards religious intermarriage is profoundly influenced by his/her educational status [28]. The more people are educated, the more they would develop positive attitude towards religious intermarriage. Education is considered as a potential source of secularism. With educational progress, people's involvement in

religion decreases and this invokes positive attitude towards religious intermarriage. This argument is consistent in many studies.

A common view among scholars of religion is that education has a secularizing influence on religious commitment. Education encourages critical thought and is the primary agent by which people are exposed to scientific and other forms of secular knowledge that may be antithetical to religion [28].

The role of educational institutions, Universities and Colleges, in accelerating students' intermarriage has also been underlined. Educational institutions are the place where students of different race, ethnicity, religion, customs, and political ideology meet. They serve as a potential source of marriage market for students of different background which, in turn, let them to engage in different forms of out-group marital relationships [2].

Related with education, secularism is the other variable identified in influencing people's attitude and thereby in determining one's tendency of IRM. Most theologians support this argument and attributed religious intermarriage as the outcome of the "deterioration in the religious practice of the spouses" [24]. With secularism people's interest in religion dramatically shrinks, individualism increases, and the influence of parents and kin groups on children decreases. The more people become secular the less they would abide by religious and parental norms and values. This, in turn, leads people to become self-determinant on matters that concern their life and increase their probability of intermarriage.

Religious plurality among the members of a given family has the tendency to positively influence the members' attitude towards interfaith marriage. Children of inter-religiously married parents have a greater tendency to engage in mixed marriage than children of same-faith spouses [22]. Due to the religious difference between the husband and the wife and the poor socialization they receive from them, most of the time children grow with religious quandaries. Besides this, the real fact that they observed since their birth from their parents' religious difference would teach them to assume IRM as a normal aspects of life. The cumulative outcomes of these and others would enable them to develop positive attitude towards the practice and are more prone to engage in such kind of marital relationship [18, 27,30].

People's degree of commitment to their religion has also a stronger influence in regulating their perception, either positively or negatively, towards a certain practice. Yet, this perception is reliant on the dogma of their religion [11]. The more people become religious, the more they would develop positive attitude for those practices which are supported by their religious dogmas and

would reject and develop stronger negative attitude for those practices which are proscribed by their religious doctrines [20]. Despite the conditions provided by Islam which allows Muslim men to marry from "the Peoples of the Book" both Islam and Orthodox Christianity generally prohibit mixed marriage and limit their respective followers to marry from their own religious group. As a result, religiosity is inversely related to mixed marriage. People would develop negative attitude towards religious intermarriage as they become more and more religious and vice versa.

It is indicated that people of different age groups have different perceptions about out-group marriages. But this difference in attitude is highly observed between the youngsters and the elders. The number of years a person lives since birth is accompanied with many life experiences. Some research findings affirmed that people's religiosity and understandings of situations increase with increasing in age. Furthermore, elderly people are considered as guardian of the society's traditional norms and values. Yet, these norms and values vary from society to society, especially on matters related to marriage [33]. This constitute the reason behind for the difficulty of maintaining a more general argument whether or not the elderly people have negative attitude towards interfaith marriage than the youngsters across societies instead we focus on specific research finding done on a particular social group [2]. But in Ethiopia, based on the religious dogma of the two religions, Christaninty and Islam, it could not be misleading if one argues that the elderly people would have negative attitude towards IRM than the youngsters.

4. Opportunities and Challenges of Interreligious Marriage

4.1. Opportunities of Interreligious Marriage

A number of studies indicated that religious intermarriage contributes for the growing awareness of cultural relativism and religious tolerance. Any intercultural marriage including religious intermarriage provide the couples the opportunity to see the world from multiple perspectives and to internalize the concept of cultural relativism by rehearsing it in their day to day life [33]. This is because more than any one who claim himself/herself as cultural relativist couples of interreligious marriage discus their religious differences, celebrate religious rituals together, and tolerate their differences. This is not something that they do once in a year or in a month instead it is apparent in their day to day life. This gives them the opportunity to acknowledge their religious and other related differences.

Since immemorial, societies have had intermarriage (racial, ethnic, religious, etc.) to create conditions for brotherhood relationships and

for averting the potential sources of conflict which might otherwise explode between them. This was common among politicians and some call it 'political marriage' [10]. Intermarriage between different political groups was considered as a real attestation in manifesting their future peaceful co-existence and in avoiding political confrontations.

'Political marriage' was very common among the past Ethiopian politicians and many Ethiopian rulers had used it as basic tool to avoid tension and conflict between different groups. For instance, Lij Iyasu, who ruled Ethiopia from 1913 to 1916, was born from the arranged political marriage between Mohamed Ali (later named *Ras* Michel) and daughter of Emperor Menelik II. After Menelik II came to power as a result of the death of Yohannis IV at *Metema*, since Ras Michel peacefully submitted to Menelik II's power, as a reward and to strengthen their relationship Menelik II gave his daughter named Shewaregga to *Ras* Michel and Lij Iyasu was born from this marriage. Later when Lij Iyasu became ruler of Ethiopia he had performed 'political marriage' from different ethnic and religious group in different parts of Ethiopia [37]. This is because any intermarriage is viewed as a cause for the tightness of the social distance and for increasing the solidarity of various groups [7, 18].

In any cases, increasing intermarriage of various groups leads to the solidarity of the groups and help to develop positive attitude towards the practice. This enhances tolerance and plays significant role for nations or societies with diverse religion and ethnic groups [7].

4.2. Challenges of Interreligious Marriage

Some research findings, though controversial, directly or indirectly have considered religious intermarriage as a potential challenge to the stability and smooth functioning of the family and religious institutions. For instance, Cavan has argued that "inter-religious marriage threatens values, security, and continuity of a religion" [9]. Religious intermarriage is considered as a potential cause for secularism and there by imperiling the religious involvement of the spouses. Moreover, due to the religious differences between the husband and the wife and the related tension and conflict as they become more religious, the spouses' religious participation decrease after marriage [27]. Here we find secularism as a potential factor as well as consequence of religious intermarriage.

Likewise, the research findings depicted that inter-religiously married couples have higher rates of divorce compared to same faith couples. Baher in 1981, for example, stated that "the divorce rate for certain interfaith combinations is as much as nine times higher than that for other combinations" and he attributed the cause to the religious difference of

the husband and the wife and its related negative consequences in their marital relationship[4]. It is indicated that a higher rate of marital dissatisfaction is recorded among couples of different religion than same faith couples [4].

Religious intermarriage is reckoned as a potential treat for religious identity problems of children of interreligious spouses [18, 27, 30]. Due to the religious difference of the couples, most parents fail to properly socialize their children on either sides of their religious group. The findings of Bisin, Topa, and Verdier in 2004 for instance, stated that children from same faith parents receive stronger socialization than children from interfaith spouses especially on matters related to religion [6].

5. The EOTC and Islam perspectives on Marriage and IRM

According to social structure theory, the dogma of a particular religion perceive IRM is one among the dominant structural factors that determine the propensity people to involve in IRM [11]. This invites to assess Holy Scriptures and related academic literature of Islam and the EOTC about the issue.

Different religions of the world have various views about marriage and interreligious marriage. As far as interreligious marriage is concerned, almost all the world's religion perspectives can be categorized into the following classifications. Total prohibition, total permission, tolerance with pre-condition(s), and leaving the issue to the free-will of the believers decision making [20]. The next section deals about the stands of the EOTC and Islam about marriage and religious intermarriage.

5.1. The EOTC Stand on Marriage and IRM

Human beings regardless of differences in culture, politics, and religion pass through the phenomenon of marriage. This is true for all human beings unless someone have biological defects, leaves it for special religious service, or other personal reasons. But the way it is viewed and performed varies among individuals, religious groups, and societies. Sociologists and anthropologists, for instance, view marriage as a cultural phenomenon that varies in form and type from one social group to the other. But not only for the EOTC but also for all Christianity marriage is a sacred natural institution decreed by God with the creation of human beings [19, 23]. The Holy Bible, on Genesis 1:28 which is read as "be fruitful, multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it" affirms the fact that marriage is the holy creations of the Almighty God since the creation of Adam and Eve. Despite the difference in the ways of expressions, this argument is consistent in all Christian textbooks and the preaching of Orthodox Christian religious leaders.

Marriage unites a man and a woman and serves as a bridge to get the blessings of God. This is possible when marriage is performed in the house of God with the blessings of religious leaders. The EOTC may give recognition for request but do not bless any marriage performed outside of the church even if the married couples claim themselves as Orthodox Christians. Any marriage performed outside of the church would get sacrament after the couples come to the house of God for confession and after they receive the Holy Blood and Flesh of Jesus Christ [16].

Marriage in Orthodox Tewahedo Church has a broader meaning that moves beyond the achievement of the worldly needs and serves as a manifestation of believers for their obedience to the God's command and justifies their very existence [16]. For instance, When St. Paul "calls marriage a 'mystery'…, he means that in marriage man does not only satisfy the needs of his earthly, secular existence, but also realizes something very important of the purpose for which he was created; i.e., he enters the realm of eternal life" [23]. The EOTC has its own rules and procedures for marriage and its related outcomes which emanates from the verse of the Holy Bible. For instance, the EOTC bless marriages that are preformed only either in Holy Eucharist and *Teklil* (holy matrimony). Furthermore, as per God's command marriage is recognized as "one man to one woman" relationships and any other forms of marriage other than monogamy are considered as adultery and unclean. Divorce and re-marriage are strongly forbidden and remarriage is allowed only in conditions of adultery and death of the husband or the wife [16, 19].

The issue of mixed marriage has remained problematic and an enduring discourse among the followers of different religious groups and even among religious leaders within the same religious group. The difference in perspective among those religious groups who claim themselves as Christians but hold differences on certain grounds can be taken as a typical example [15].

More or less religious groups under the denomination of Christianity share the same Biblical foundation but they differ on different grounds including in the interpretations of some of the verses of the Holy Bible. There are some verses in the Holy Bible and in some related Christian textbooks which deals about mixed marriage but so far these verses of the Holy Bible have been interpreted differently by different religious groups. This has brought difference on stand about the issue. St. Paul's epistle in 1 Corinthians 7:12-16 is prominent in this regard. These verses of the Holy Bible are interpreted differently by different religious groups in the denomination of Christianity [20]. St. Paul's epistle in 1 Corinthians.

7:12-16 says:

> *If any brother has a wife who does not believe, and she is willing to live with him, let him not divorce her. And a woman who has a husband who does not believe, if he is willing to live with her, let her not divorce him. For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband; otherwise your children would be unclean, but now they are Holy. But if the unbeliever depart; a brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases. But God has called us to peace. For how do you know, O wife, whether you will save your husband? Or how do you know, O husband, whether you will save your wife?* [38].

There are some who interpret St. Paul's writing in a way that satisfies their interest, but the message he conveyed is clear and open [16]. St. Paul did not allow mixed marriage. The verses of the Holy Bible on 1 Corinthians: 7:12-16 concerns those men or women who are married before they become Christians and later converted to Christianity while one of the partner remain in their old faith. In this situation St. Paul had ordered those men or women who converted to Christianity not to divorce his/her marital partner unless the request comes from them. St. Paul conveyed this massage because it was the time that Christianity was in expansion and the majority of people during the time were the followers of other faiths [16].

The EOTC totally prohibit mixed marriage and these marriages cannot get the sacrament[1] of the church unless conversion happens. Not only mixed marriage but also any marriage performed outside of the church by the followers of the faith is equally condemned. These two marriages are not blessed since they are out of the commandments of God. There is no reason for the church to bless these kinds of marriage [16]. The prohibition of mixed marriage by EOTC is also clearly written in *Fetha Nagas*t as follows:

> *If a Christian marries an unbelieving woman, he must command her to embrace the faith; women who are believers must not marry men who are not of the faith, lest the men convert them to their faith and cause them to lose the [true] faith. If a Christian woman marries a non-Christian man, she shall be expelled from the community. If she repents and leaves him, she shall be accepted by the community as an apostate converted from her impiety.*

Despite this all, the EOTC can baptize children of inter-religiously married parents if the parents are willing for the act even if the spouses remain living with their religious differences [16].

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[1] Sacrament in Orthodox Christianity has broader meaning but literally it refers to "the very special blessing which it bestows upon the man and the woman who get married" [23].

5.2. The Islam Perspective on Marriage and IRM

Similar to Christianity, marriage in Islam is sacred institution that shows the power of Allah. It is a way in which Muslims receive half of the blessings of Allah. There is no perfection in Islamic faith without marriage [32]. Besides, "marriage in Islam is a legally-binding agreement between a man and a woman establishing their intention and mutual commitment to live together according to the teachings of the faith" [17].

Islam highly encourages marriage for various reasons. At the top of all, it manifests the believers trust on Allah and fulfils their faith. For instance, the holly Qur'an verse 24:32 says "Marry the spouseless among you...if they are poor, God will enrich them of His bounty" commands all matured believers to engage in such relationship regardless of their economic and other status [32, 39]. Failure to do so due to poverty and other reasons reveals lack of trust on Allah [32].

There are many verses in the Holy Qur'an that deals with marriage. All of them encourage the believers to engage in such relationships. By reviewing some of the verses of the Holy Qur'an which deal about marriage Rizvi has stated the following:

> *... according to Islam: (a) marriage is a sign of God's power and blessings; (b) marriage is a highly recommended act of virtue which should not be avoided because of poverty; (c) sexual urge is a creative command of God placed in human nature. After equating sex with Allah's creative command, there can be no room for equating it with guilt, sin or evil* [32].

Furthermore, the Holy Qur'an unlike the Holy Bible allows Muslim men to marry up to four wives. Yet this is possible only if the husband fulfils the preconditions ordered by Islam. Among others, the husband's economic capacity and impartiality are the two important requirements to do so.

Despite the variations on many ground, both Christianity and Islam view marriage as sacred natural institution created by Allah or God and is a mechanism in which believers manifest their obedience to God's or Allah's command.

Most religions' restriction or permission of religious intermarriage heavily depends on the verses of the Holy books. In line with this, religious leaders take into account the fate of children of interreligious couples, and the possibility of religious conversion. Islam also considers these crucial points for the restriction and permission of Muslims from marrying non-Muslims [12].

Islam treats non-Muslims not in the same manner instead non-Muslims are categorized into two broad classifications as "the People of the Book" and others and the earlier have got greater

respect and dignity in the Holy Qur'an [1, 20]. But the boundary who the Holy Qur'an calls "the people of the Book" is not clearly defined and it remains ambiguous. However, the Holy Qur'an testifies that Christians and Jewish are part of it and they are also called "people of an earlier revelation" [1].

Due to the privilege and respect they received from the Holy Qur'an "the People of the Book" or Christians and Jewish are considered as "Muslims' natural allies" [1]. This privilege is due to the fact that these religions share some of the major religious dogmas of Islam. For instance, the Holy Qur'an in 2:63 revealed that:

Surely, the believers, and the Jews, and the Christians and the Sabians whichever party from among those truly believes in Allah and the Last Day and deeds shall have their reward with their Lord, and no fear shall come upon them, nor shall they grieve.

The Holy Qur'an goes beyond this and teaches the followers of Islam to give respect, share meal, and marry females from "the Peoples of the Book." For instance, 5:5 verse of the Holy Qur'an says:

This day all good things have been lawful for you. And the food of the People of the Book is lawful for you and your food is lawful for them. And lawful for you are Chaste believing women and Chaste women from among those who were given the Book before you, when you give them their dowries, contracting valid marriage and not committing fornication nor taking secret paramours.

But Muslim women are not allowed to marry other than Muslim men. This restriction is made due to the fear that children of interreligious spouses might follow the religions of their father due to the jurisdiction Islamic law vests up on the husband over the wife on matters of children especially in nationality and marriage. Esposito has stated the reason as follows:

> *Muslim women must marry a Muslim or someone who converts to Islam. Under Islamic law, the male is recognized as the head of the household, and in marriage his wife is expected to take the nationality and status given by her husband's law. The man is also responsible for the religious instruction of his older children and for serving as their guardian, particularly in matters of marriage. Thus the marriage of a Muslim woman to a non-Muslim man would represent the potential "loss" of the children from that union to Islam [12].*

Despite this all, Islam in general does not appreciate the marriage between Muslims and Non-Muslims. Instead conversionary marriage[2] is highly

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[2] It refers to a marriage between two people who previously had different religions but one of the married couples converts his/her religion for the sake of marriage. In conversionary

encouraged. Any attempt of Muslims to marry from outside of Muslims and "the people of the book" is considered as unlawful and is highly condemned by Islam [12]. The exception is in case of conversion. Muslims can marry from any religious group if his/her partner is willing to convert to Islam. But the marriage could not be blessed and in effect until the conversion is realized [20].

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marriage while it is common to convert religion before or at marriage, in some instances the conversion can take place after the marriage is performed [33].

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