

The Role of Indigenous Institutions in Conflict Resolution with Particular Emphasis on Siiqqee Practices: The Case of Kelem Wallaga Zone, Oromia

Benti Mekonen Abdisa^{1*}, Biru Ayana Daba², Tamirat Limore degaga³

^{1*}Dambi Dollo University, College of Social science and Humanity, Department of Civics and Ethical Studies, Ethiopia.

²Dambi Dollo University, College of Social science and Humanity, Department of Civics and Ethical Studies, Ethiopia.

³Dambi Dollo University, College of Social science and Humanity, Department of Civics and Ethical Studies, Ethiopia.

Corresponding Author Email: mekonen.b@yahoo.com

GRAPHICAL ABSTRACT



Highlight

- Conflict is common phenomenon among all humans around the world.
- Indigenous conflict resolution mechanism is a social capital of indigenous people.
- Siiqqee stick has a special honor and used as a weapon to fight against the violation of “Seera Waaqaa and loss of Safuu.

ABSTRACT

The major purpose of this study deals with Indigenous institutions developed for guiding the social, political, economic and religious life in Kelem Wollega Zone, with particular emphasis on the role of Siiqqee institution, in conflict resolution among individuals and communities. There are various indigenous dispute settlement institutions among Oromo communities in Kelem Wollega Zone such as jaarsummaa, Gumaa system, Siiqqee Institution, Qaalluu system, Moggaasaa, Guddifachaa and dispute settlement among different religious institutions. However, this study is delimited to explore the role of indigenous institutions in conflict Resolution at Kelem Wollega Zone only, because the researchers has been teaching at Dambi Dollo University at present time. As an institution Siiqqee represents the over all aspects of Oromo women. In order to realize this intended objective, methodologically the study were employed qualitative research approach which enables the researchers to have an understanding of the nature of disputes in the study area and how they are resolved through indigenous means. Relevant data for this study were collected from both primary and secondary sources. Tools such as key informant interview, focus group discussion, case study and pilot observation were utilized for collecting primary data depending on the objectives of the study. Secondary data were gathered from published and unpublished, articles, journals, books, MA thesis and PHD dissertations and the internet. These secondary sources helped to secure information on historical background of the people in the study area and to explore the role of indigenous institutions in conflict resolution. The interview was conducted in Afaan Oromo and it was audio recorded after informants consent was gained. The data obtained from both primary and secondary sources were organized thematically and analyzed qualitatively. Furthermore, the finding indicate that, as an institution of conflict resolution, Siiqqee resolve conflict between different social groups, like between spouse, between mother and son, between the Oromo and different ethnic groups and so on. Women are considered as peace makers and respected by all members of the community. In this regard, the findings of this study confirm the idea of structural functionalism and symbolic interpretation theory. The general emphasis of this study specifically focused among Oromo Communities, by emphasizing on the role of Indigenous institutions as mechanisms of conflict resolution in Kelem Wollega Zone of Oromia national regional state.

Key concepts: Indigenous Institutions, Conflict Resolution, Gadaa, Siiqqee, Oromo

1. Introduction

Conflict is a naturally and socially occurring phenomenon in day-to-day human interactions and activities¹. Conflict may originate in a single event and escalate into broader and devastating ends. Human relationships have been characterized by competition for control of resources and dominance of one over the other². People experience dispute in their day-to-day life while they are existing conditions and courses of interaction³. It is common to observe confrontation in schools and work places, in families and religious institutions, at international and domestic levels. In Africa, as in other parts of the world, people with different backgrounds, cultures, classes and others come into dispute⁴.

Indigenous conflict resolution mechanism is a social capital that implies the ability of social norms and customs to grasp members of a group together by effectively setting and making possible the terms of their relationship, sustainability and facilitates collective concern for achieving mutually beneficial ends⁵.

In addition, Oromo still practices almost all of the Oromo culture, social institution, political arrangement, traditional laws, and belief systems in visible and invisible aspects⁶. The Oromo's belong to the Cushitic language family from Afro-Asiatic super family of language which extends over the horn of Africa and the single largest ethnic group⁷. The Oromo share common cultural heritage and speak the same language (Afaan Oromo) or Oromo language which is written in Latin script, with slightly different dialect. They are followers of the religions of Islam, Christianity and Waaqefannaa; the indigenous Oromo religion. The Oromo people settle various disputes through indigenous institutions that they have developed through long years of experience. The Oromo people solve most of the problems of human relations through their own institutions and mechanisms outside of state structure⁸. In Oromo community there are several customary conflict resolution mechanisms. They are such Gadaa system as an umbrella concept or as a totality of Oromo civilization, jaarsummaa, Qaalluu system or decision of spiritual leaders, Gumaa system, Siiqqee institution, Waaqeffannaa, Irreechaa, Moggaasaa, Guddifachaa,

Marabbaa, Medhichaa, kakuu, Buttaa⁹ etc. As an institutions Siiqqee institution represents the over all aspects of Oromo women. It protects the rights of Oromo women. "Siiqqee is used as a weapon to fight against the violation of "Seera Waaqaa and loss of Safuu"¹⁰.

Siiqqee is one of the material cultures of Oromo. It is the ritual stick of Oromo woman that can play cultural, economic, political and religious roles in Oromo society. Physically, Siiqqee is a stick, but as the custodians of Oromo oral literature say, a deeper and richer symbolic meaning of it should be sought within the context of the history and culture of the people who defined, named and practiced it¹¹. Therefore, this study is designed to deal with the types of and cause for the major prevailing conflicts, explore the role of Siiqqee indigenous institutions in conflict resolution and explore the process and procedures of purification under taken at Siiqqee institution and the major rituals involved in the Kellem Wollega Zone, with particular emphasis on Siiqqee institution.

There are different mechanisms of conflict settlement in Ethiopia. The inhabitant of the Kellem Wollega Zone uses various systems of conflict settlement, which can generally be categorized into two settings; formal (state-based) and the informal (custom-based) institutions. People use either or both of these institutions under different circumstances in order to settle disputes. This study deals with exploring of indigenous institution for dispute settlement focusing on Siiqqee institution in KelemWollega Zone, Oromia. From the researchers' knowledge, the detail studies of Siiqqee institution in conflict resolution in the study area needs further study. These missing gaps include; firstly, the inhabitants did not clearly explain the rationale behind persistence use of Siiqqee institution for conflict, Secondly, they did not also show the ritual powers of purification undertaken at Siiqqee institution in the process of conflict resolution and reconciliation. To the best of researchers' knowledge, there is no specific study setting on the role of Siiqqee institutions in conflict resolution in the Kelem Wollega Zone.

In this study, the researchers want to explore the role of Siiqqee institution in dispute settlement in line with factors that help Siiqqee institution in bringing long-lasting resolution of conflict. Because some of the populations having the information that the institution will be used only as a symbol of marriage ceremonies and some of them didn't know what Siiqqee institution is all about. Therefore, in light of the existing different views, this research will looks to explore the role and place given to Siiqqee in settling disputes, using both ritual powers of purification process and secular activities.

The overall objective of this research was to explore the role of indigenous conflict resolution institutions in KelemWollega Zone, Oromia: With Particular emphasis on Siiqqee Practices. More specifically, this study was attempted to:-

- To find out if there is any form of indigenous mechanisms of conflict resolution practiced in the study area;
- Explore the role of Siiqqee institution for dispute resolution in the study area;
- To explore the process, procedure and rituals of purifications at siiqqee institution.

2. Methodology

This study was entirely employing qualitative research, focusing on ethnographic research model since the major intent of the study was securing detail information from field. Ethnographic research is one of the most in-depth observation methods that studies people in their naturally occurring environment. Thus, the research design aims to understand the culture, challenges, opinions, attitudes, relationships, motivations & settings occurring among the community at large. Primary sources of information were collected from local elders, women/haadha Siiqqee & Gadaa Leaders employing major qualitative data collection tools. Focus Group Discussion, interview & observation at natural setting. Data obtained through these techniques were first translated from Afan Oromo to English & reviewed repeatedly as to secure precision by the author. The translated information was categorized based on their relationship & coded as to minimize repetition & facilitate for integrating concepts, views & thoughts. The thematically organized information was stated using narrative explanations through words & statements in the analysis.

3. Results and discussion

The causes of conflict in the study area can be grouped into two major categories, economic related (resource/interest-based) conflicts and socio- cultural conflicts. Physical violence, homicide, theft, inheritance, breach of agreement, marital, rape, Incest, illegal trade, and lying are the major conflicts that occurred frequently in the Area.

Table.1: Civil and Criminal cases presented before the court over the last two successive years and half

N0.	Cause of conflict	Years(G.C)	
		2018	2019 /mid 2020
1	Physical violence and damage	69	70
2	Theft	12	17
3	Marital related conflict	25	27
4	Rape and Incest	32	41
5	Breach of agreement and trust	55	62
6	Insultation	11	13
7	Intimidation	3	5
8	Homicide	17	22
9	Breaking rule of law	1	2
Total		225	259

Source: From Dambi Dollo Woreda zonal administrative police office report of 2019, 2020 and mid- 2021).

Theft (Hanna) as the Causes of Conflict

Dishonestly taking of property belonging to another person/ without their consent. There are different levels of theft, such as grand theft or petty theft, which usually are linked to the value of the property stolen¹². If they could not be able to find their animals/house property, the inhabitant may suspect someone and may come into conflict. However, sometimes owners would present their case to the Ateetee/Siiqqee or jaarsummaa assembly to investigate the case. During investigation the Saddeetaa women collected together and they ululated to call each other. Then, they call jaarsolii araaraa Shanan (the five elder of reconciliation).If they failed to know the one stole the properties/animals of their person, their final option is cursing. Through this ritual the Ateetee women putting together the tip of their Siiqqee and curse the one who stole their neighbor and they belief that, they observe the result in a number of ways within a few months on the life of the cursed.

Marital Conflicts

It refers to dispute arises between husband and wife. It results from the practice of early marriage, polygamous marriage, Adultery, rape, insult, false witness, incest and getting unmarried girl pregnant and denying the fatherhood of a born child. Happen when the need, desires, wants of either of the spouses is unsatisfied with each other.

Case 1:- marital Conflict Over adultery

Tola and Ayantu are husband and wife who lived in Gawo Kebe town. They married to each other 14 years ago and now they have three children. Later on, conflict has begun to arise between them when he (the husband) failed to trust her, from the ground that she (the wife) may have another informal husband or sanyoo in Wallaggaa dialect in the absence of her legal husband or when he go far for work, because he is NGO worker and may go far from her for more than one month, however, he is always with her and his children through dream and daily call for her, send her enough money within two weeks. But over the last two years, he (the husband) did no trust her from her saying and daily needs. After one month he come back to his home, at that moment before he eat something from her hand, one of the members of their coffee group reported her deeds to the husband, told to him that she do have sanyoo and let alone your children stay outside till night, then the husband respond now it is enough, this is what I always thought, but failed to find out the root causes of the reason why I failed to trust her, the husband angrily returned to his home, without saying anything he beats her with her Siiqqee, she cry loudly and left home for him without taking anything or bare hand. After two days stay outside, she comes back with the screaming women, to punish the husband who beats his wife with her sacredness or Siiqqee. But, when he(the husband) observe screaming women's far on the way to his home, he run and left out of the home, after staying one week with his boyfriend, he decided to rent house 10kilometer away from her in Kake, start to lead his life by isolating from his wife and even close friends.

One of his boyfriends heard what happened from other informants and depressed to hear what happened on his friend and steadily reported their case to the jaarsa araara for reconciliation. But, they failed to do so. Because, they didn't find out the root cause of the problem as the wife presented to them simply a lot of petty issues as the source of the conflict, putting aside She have another sexual partner which was actually the fundamental cause. On the next time, the wife presented the case before the Gawo Kebe town court to be divorced by saying "every time my husband comes home he is too drunk and disturb my family. After hearing the case, the Gawo Kebe court tried to refer the case back to the jaarsa araara, in recommending that the conflict is not beyond jaarsa araara or women institution. But, the wife failed to accept, as the case is already seen there. Then, the court gave them a period of three months to think over and decide on the issue. During this period, the husband, on his turn, presented the case before Siiqqee institution saying that "my wife accused me at the court with false statement in order to polish her deeds; so, she has to admit here, if the case is true or compensate me otherwise for the crime she has committed." The elderly women of eights deeply investigated the case by approaching to the wife.

They called the wife to them and ordered the husband to stay at a distance for a moment. The group of women asked her to tell them the real cause of their conflict by promising to keep the secret things silent. Admitting the wrong action she has made, the wife told them the issue saying "this place is the place of truth. I cannot conceal it from you, for the God sees all my life. It is obvious that Tola is my husband. We have lived together for fourteen years. However, for the last two years we are not husband and wife, rather, it is fair to say, brother and sister. I have my own bed and he has also his own. I have nothing to say more. So, you have to decide whatever appropriate decision you think." The group of women with Siiqqee holding added jaarsa araara and made a discussion with the husband separately and understood a problem and the husband openly tells to them that he decided to divorce her and go far away from her in order to get peace of mind. At the end, the group of eight brought them together and told them the decision they have agreed up on, that is, to finish their case through divorce decision (from the interest of husband). Besides, the group of eight gave advice to them to pay special attention to the care of children, since it depend on children's choice to go with either of them and they shared the resources among themselves in front of Siiqqee holding elderly women and Jaarsa araara. (Source: case brought at Siiqqee Institution April26, 2021).

The above case shows how failed to trust each other within the same parent gives rise to conflict between the husband and wife. It also clearly explains that although it is the underlying cause of their conflict, the parties do not usually openly express cases before other persons. This could be due to the reason that in the society's culture sexual life is surrounded by some secrets, norms, safuu and values.

Conflict between Mother and Son

Siiqqee can resolve the conflict between 'mother' and son or conflict between sons and daughters. According to the informants, the 'mother' here does not refer only to a biological mother but also includes those who can be taken as a mother due to her role as per the culture. Women gather together when a man beats his 'mother'. Because, women's are sacred and highly respected in Oromo culture as of the informants from Dale Sadi. A man who is mentally, physically and spiritually healthy must not beat a 'mother'. So, when a 'mother' is beaten by her son, the women tell each other saying, 'mucaan maraatee dutee haadha rukute' meaning 'the boy has gone crazy, he shouted at and beat his mother as of our informants in Dale Sadi (Dasitu Hambisa, interview April 27/09/2021).

Case 2: Related with conflict between Mother and Son

In Dale Sadi town, Megertu Solomon have 8 children, she grown her children determinately without the assistance of her husband Abera who lost one of his legs due to car accident 18 years ago, one year after marry Megertu. However, Megertu patiently moving here and there to save his life, his life is saved with God even though he lost one of his legs. Last year, She gave birth to a baby, her elder son who is doing something daily laborer in Dale Sadi town, who stay outside most of his time outside the permission of his parent, one day during Sunday he come back to home and observe his mother in the bed, he asked her to give him 500 Ethiopian birr, but she listened carefully and respond I haven't a single coin in my pocket at this time, one month after I gave birth, I failed to do something to get money, even I get what I eat from my neighbor women, Whom I had Iddir association, they daily assisted me and even your father who always stay at home by failed to do anything, except housekeeping. The rude son stands and beat woman with little babies. Women among Dale Sadi town, especially neighbor gathered together when a man beats his 'mother' just as they do when a man beats a woman with Qanafaa. Dale Sadi Oromo community never permits mothers to be deprived of rights /violated their right, to be beaten. Women are highly respected. A man or son who is mentally and physically and spiritually healthy must not beat a 'mother', or other women who can be his 'mothers' in the clan. So, when a 'mother' is beaten by her son, the women tell each other saying, 'mucaan maraatee dutee haadha rukute' meaning 'the boy has gone crazy, he shouted at and beat his mother'. The call for help iyya Siiqqee or screaming of Siiqqee for conflict between 'mother' and son can happen in the same ways. Megertu or the beaten women tells it to neighboring women. Then, the neighboring women can call for help by ululating. According to our informants while doing this they do not call each other ordinarily, but by their ululating song. While calling they sing the following.

This is literally translated:-

Obboleettii koo dhageessee?	My 'sisters', have you heard?
Oduun sigessee?	Has information reached you?
Ilmatu na reebbe dhageessee?	My son has beaten me, have you heard?
Oduun si geesseeeee?	Has information reached you?
Dur hin jirreetu naqaqqabee dhageessee?	the inconceivable has happened to me, have you heard?
Oduun sigessee	Has information reached you?

After a long stay singing the above Screaming women, they stop singing and refuse to talk to elders for a short while when the community elders arrive. The community elders ask for "nu oofkalchaa" as they did for solving problem when a women with 'Qanafaa/little child was beaten. (Source: case from informants during field work, April 25/2021).

The women make the elders to ask them repetitively to show how serious the matter is. Then, they allow elders to intervene to arbitrate. Elders then take the offending son to the shade of a tree to sit and mediate. This case may not be resolved easily. The women also may get agitated and demand that the punishment be greater, in order that others to be learn from him.

Breach of agreement /trust (Amantaa Hir'isuu)

In the processes of living with each other, people usually make informal agreement on different things. Included:- agreement on house rent, house sell, marital agreement and agreements on share crops. Culturally, the practice is considered as normal, acceptable and valued. However, sometimes, individuals may show a delay or may not return what they have borrowed and even breach the agreement. When either parties breach the agreement conflict may arises. This type of conflict cannot be resolved at a formal court as it lacks formal agreement or evidence.

Case3: Conflict over delayed loan resolved after ritual of curse is performed evidence.

Kejela Lamu and Ejeta Wakgari are youngsters who lived in Sadi Chanka town of Kelem Wollega Zone, Oromia National Regional State. In January, 2016 Kejela has graduated from Haramaya University with BA degree in agriculture, stay at home with his poor family for two years without job. In September, 2018 Kejela deal an agreement with his best friend Ejeta and took 8000 birr from Ejeta after he made informal agreement with lender that to do business and share the profit between them, and to return the initial amount in four months. However, he failed to share the profit as well as to return the principal. Then, Ejeta claim him at the court in Sadi Chanka town first instant court in 2018. But, defendant denied taking the money from the plaintiff. Alternatively, Ejeta present the case to jaarsa araaraa, where he admitted the case and signed agreement to return the money, and date was set by jaarsaa. But, he still refused to repay. Having tolerated him for three months Ejeta accused Kejela at Siiqqee institution. Kejela degraded women's court and failed to appear. As a result, Ejeta performed a ritual of curse in March 2018. Fearing the punishment of ayyaanaa, as soon as he heard that he was cursed, Kejela brought the money and gave it to Ejeta at his home. But, Ejeta refused to take it, as he cursed him already through Siiqqee ritual. On his turn, Kejela went to the Siiqqee institution where he was cursed, and accused Ejeta demanding him to take the money and forgive him. The two parties presented their case before Saddeetaa women's and Kejela was fined 1500 birr and returned a total of 9500 birr. Lastly, they performed the ritual of "aagii baafachuu"/forgiveness which is the symbol of actual resolution of conflict and reconciliation. (Source: case resolved at Siiqqee institution, April 15, 2021 in Sadi-Chanka town).

From the above case, it is possible to understand that people may breach the agreement they make with each other and the effective institution to resolve such type of conflict in the study area is Siiqqee institution. This type of conflict cannot be taken to the formal court due to lack of formal agreement that used as evidence. Since Siiqqee institution does not require dhugaa or witness statement to deal with conflict and the possibility of speaking truth at Siiqqee institution is high, as the society fears the punishment by ayyaanaa, the plaintiff usually takes his/her truth at Siiqqee institution. The plaintiff not only gets his/her truth but also gets compensated.

The Role of Siiqqee institution in Conflict Resolution

Wherever the Oromo lives, there is Siiqqee institution, irrespective of deep-rooted principles of Gadaa system in Oromo society¹³. In the Oromo social system, women are the only groups that are protected from physical attack by any party in any conflict. They are sacred humans/soften woods (muka laaftuu), messengers of the peace. The Siiqqee institution is a means that gives tremendous rights to women in the Oromo traditional social system/Gadaa. In the Gadaa a check and balance system was built by which Siiqqee was institutionalized. Siiqqee is an emblem that is made of a thin stick given to a marrying girl by her mother as a sign of maturity¹⁴. In times when Safuu is lost and Seera waaqaa (the law of God) is violated, Oromo women use their Siiqqee for a rather political purpose. As a stick and symbol of marriage, Siiqqee is given to the bride and horooroo to the bridegroom on the day of their marriage. If she sees peoples fighting, "haadha Siiqqee" (mother of Siiqqee)

can use her Siiqqee to intervene. They will put their Siiqqee between the fighters to separate them while the community elders come to resolve the conflict. An interest of a woman with Siiqqee always comes first. Siiqqee is used as a weapon to fight against the violation of Seera waaqaa and loss of Safuu (moral and ethical order) in Oromo society¹⁵. The women who enter the battlefield with their Siiqqee have a special song named Diloo (Bayush Getahun, interviewed on April 20/2021 at Lalo Kile).

Ani meeshaa waraanaa hin qabu	I don't have a weapon at hand
Siiqqee Koo qofan of-harkaa qaba	I do have only my siiqqee with me
Humnaan simiidhuu hin danda'u	I don't challenge you with force
Yoo maqaa waaqa isa hundaan	except in the name of God the king
oliin taate malee	Above all
Garee lachuun kadhada coqorsaanaa	I beg both sides with evergreen grass
naaf dhaga'u jedhees abdiin qaba	hoping they would listen to me
Sirriidha gareen lachuu abshaala	yes both sides are wise
Wal-waraanuu battalatti dhaabu	they stop fighting immediately

Origins of Siiqqee and Powers Symbolized With it

Historically, Abbaa Bokkuu, the male leader in the Oromo Gadaa system, received Siiqqee and Bokkuu from the Qaalluu (spiritual leader). The male leader was to have bokkuu and his wife was to have Siiqqee. Though this is a common legend in the study area, there are many variations to it. The Qaalluu, being a religious leader, may have received these spiritual sticks from waaqaa (God) or may have been given direction to make them. Several of female informants in the area acknowledged the story about Siiqqee coming with the Gadaa system. Siiqqee descended from Akkoo Manooyyee (the powerful mother of Oromo, according to Borana legend story). As a result, Siiqqee was more respected as it represent a ritual, symbolic rights of Oromo Women, because, its origin is highly linked to the Gadaa system which has more attention and greatly respectful living institution among the Oromo community. Physically, Siiqqee is an ordinary stick, but it has a deeper and richer symbolic meaning¹⁶. No one could cross the women holding Siiqqee in any place, especially during conflict resolution, during rituals such as Irreechaa, moving to rivers around for falaa/furmaataa (solution) to hazardous natural calamities or man-made environmental problems. Abbaa Gadaa, Abbaa Bokkuu, Abbaa Duulaa, Abbaa Sa'aa, Abbaa Alangaa and other high ranking officials or other individuals should give their respect and receive blessing from gathering of Siiqqee holding women's.

Death of Siiqqee (Du'a Siiqqee)

Up on the death of Siiqqee's owner or the owner's husband the Siiqqee also dies. The power and the object as a being, thus dies with the person¹⁷. Because, Siiqqee is part of an agreement between a husband and wife, when a husband dies, this shared connection with the material object and being also dies. The Boraatii (Head-rest) and sometimes Siiqqee are broken on their husbands' graves as the informants in the study area.

Siiqqee scream (Iyya Siiqqee) and its procedures

According to the informants, another different action is "Iyya Siiqqee" Siiqqee scream or Ateetee scream. So, Iyya Siiqqee is the mode of communication between Oromo women. It is a way of telling one another that seera waaqaa (law of

God) is violated and sacredness of women lost. As soon as iyya Siiqqee is heard, women must give up whatever they are doing, even those who are breast feeding at the time of scream should let the babies cry and leave the house to join in the scream. Siiqqee war never be down till the solution reached. The demonstrated women say “Ateetee hundatu dhale, kun baatu malee hin daaku galee” to express their determination not to return back home until their problem is considered. Groups’ mobilization is critical to achieve justice (Dhugaa).

Siiqqee Migration (Godaansa Siiqqee) and its procedures

Sanctioning Siiqqee’s right is Godaansa Siiqqee. That is the final measurement taken if the women find and evaluate the case as a serious violation. They leave their children and homes and set on Siiqqee migration¹⁸. They leave out home and villages and assembled under Odaa (sycamore) tree. Men say “abiddi biyyaa dhaame”; the fire of whole country has gone out. The going out of fire signifies the collapse of society and the decay of life. If the women agree among themselves according to an Oromo saying “Dhuufuun mari’atanii dhuufan hin ajooftu” roughly translated as a furt- furted with consensus does not smell, that the Jaarsa is reputable enough to mediate, after they accepted their greeting ‘nagaa gaafachuu’ they unanimously reply “Hoofkalaa, milka’aa”. They spread grasses on the ground under Oda tree and invite him to sit among them under sycamore tree. They do the himata for waaqaa and lafaa (God and earth), Margaa fi bishaan (grass and water), ifaa fi dukkana (for light and darkness), aadaa fi seera (for custom and law). They do the himata to restore Sacredness (kabaja).

Siiqqee Curse (Abaarsa Siiqqee) and its procedures

Curse is one way of invoking the spirit to harm a person in all aspects of his life. Curse hurts the descendants of the cursed up to seven generations. When women collectively raise their ritual stick Siiqqee and curse the one who violate their right individually or collectively and failed to accept their decision, we call Siiqqee curse or Ateetee curse. It is also believed that the collective act of raising Siiqqee is more- sound full. According to informants curse is not only in speech, but if a women do not reach at their target or do not mediate and went home without slaughtering of animal and went home without blessing, it is taken as a curse. Women have strong spirit which will never forgive anybody, we have no energy, we fall when thrown, and cry when beaten, and so may our spirit (God) pay you back what you did as of the respondent of the study area.

Siiqqee’s Ritual and Its Procedures

Procedures of Regeneration of Siiqqee’s Ritual Power after Cursing:-

After cursing Siiqqee needs to be cleaned. This process of cleaning it in the river, a significant source of creation and life, regenerates its power and its ability to bless. As a Siiqqee lives, attends ceremonies and get older she needs this regeneration.

In blessing ceremonies and prayers for rain, Siiqqee are bathed in water (bishaan), grass (saardoo) and mud (qaruu).

The Role of Siiqqee in the Purification (faloo) Ritual

Purification is a ritual of conflict resolution and reconciliation performed following the cursing ritual. Purification (aagii baafachuu) ritual is a point at which truth is revealed, the offended forgive the offender after gaining the truth and receiving compensation from him/her.

The Rakoo Ritual (ritual power of elder wife)

Rakoo is one of the important rituals that are performed during wedding in the Oromo cultural marriage. The rituals that are laid down in the Gadaa law. The Rakoo ritual is performed after the wedding, if the bride is virgin on her wedding day. In the traditional Oromo marriage, the bride has the right to send back the groom to her families if the bride is not virgin. The Rakoo ritual is performed only for the first wife even though polygamy is allowed in the Oromo culture. So the Rakoo wife;

the legal wife and she have many better opportunities than the other wives. She is the one who has Siiqqee with all its rights. The Rakoo wife is known as haadha warraa hangafa (eldest wife) and kallacha (forehead). And hence, she is known as “kan barree, (of large gourd), kan Siiqqee (of decorated stick), kan waddeessa (male’s marriage stick), kan umamaa (of nature)”.

Honor Symbolizing Ritual

Siiqqee stick has a special honor. One cannot use it to keep cattle, riding horse, beating donkey, etc with Siiqqee like ordinary stick¹⁹. It is not lawful in general to use the Siiqqee stick as ordinary stick. It is a symbol of honor for married women. A woman holds Siiqqee whenever there is some special event or ceremony. The informants narrates in the same way with Dirribbi that a woman holding Siiqqee stick signifies that she is legally married and has some respect connected to it. For example, if a man riding horse comes across a woman holding Siiqqee, he has come down from his horse for the honor of Siiqqee, greets the woman respectfully and takes leave of her. The man asks for her permission to get back on the horse and pass by. And anyone who comes across a woman holding Siiqqee has to stop and give the way for the woman holding Siiqqee. Even one has to give the way first for a woman holding Siiqqee to cross a river before he crosses the river. Moreover, it is surprising that a woman with Siiqqee is more powerful than elders in conflict resolution and reconciliation.

Praying to God and Siiqqee for encouragement

One of the duties of women holding Siiqqee is for praying to waaqaa. Women have a regular meeting to pray to waaqaa. This is called Ateetee worship. They pray for a barren woman to have a child, they pray for the sick to be healed, they pray for the peace of the people and cattle, during Irreechaa (Thanksgiving Institution), Irreechaa Malkaa (Riverside thanksgiving), Birraa (spring) Irreechaa and Irreechaa Tulluu (Hilltop thanksgiving). Generally, Falaa, Irreeffannaa, dhibaayyuu and Daddarbaa are nothing but processes of thanking God for generosity, they pray for good weather, etc. In case of aggression, women bless the soldiers to defend their country and push away the enemy, Siiqqee raise fund for victims of different calamities and persons fell in acute poverty, seek a child for adoption for a woman who couldn’t give birth to a child, protect a woman traveler from any male attack, pray to God for reconciliation and say good bye to a wedding girl (Beshatu Fereda, interviewed on April 2/2021 at Sadi Chanka).

Siiqqee ritual’s in Gadaa Power Transition

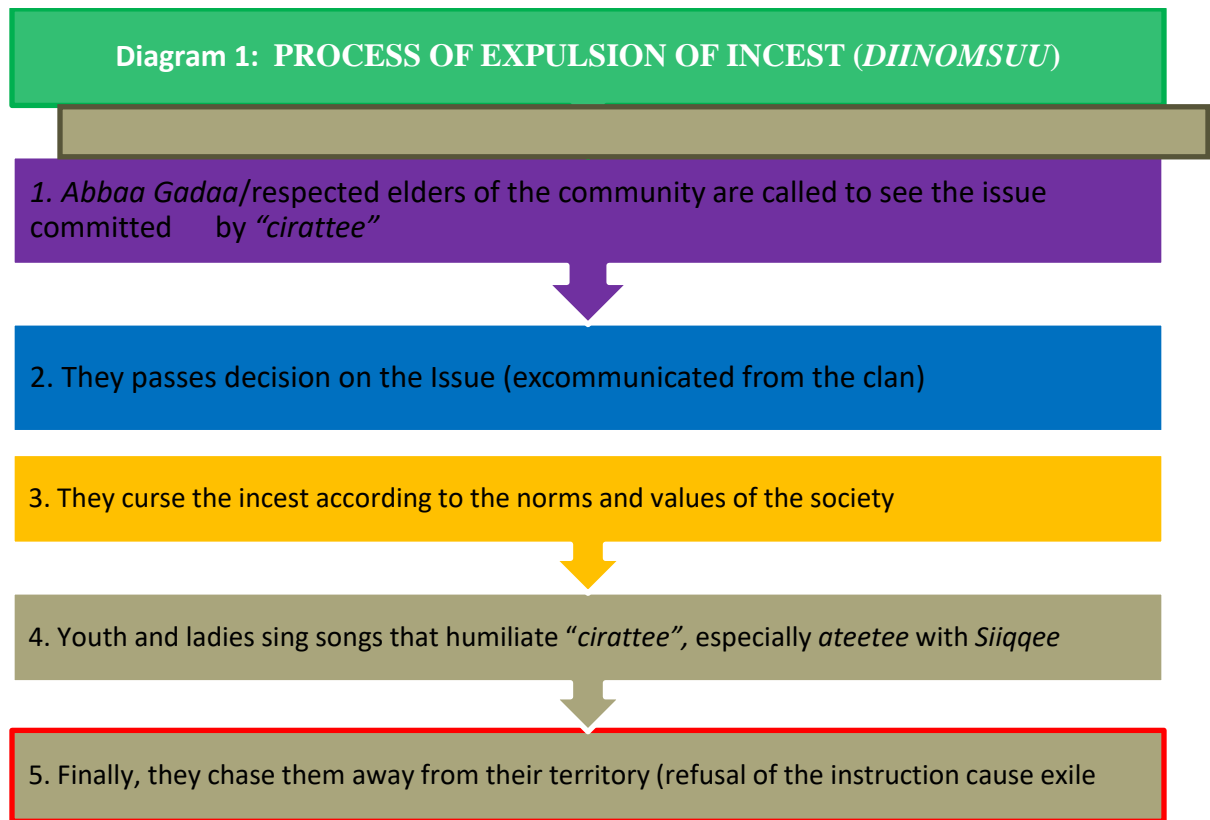
During the power/baallii transferred from one Gadaa class to another in the Oromo Gadaa System, it is the women with the Siiqqee’s that give blessing to the person who takes baallii (power) over the Gadaa offices. The newly elected officials walk under the Siiqqee’s stick raised up by women standing in two rows and touching the other tips of their Siiqqee’s together. This is called Siiqqee Ulluqsisuu (walking under the Siiqqee’s), which indicate a sign of staying in power peacefully by answering questions of the people directly with no delay.

The Role of Siiqqee System in Purification Ritual of Incest

In Oromo culture, marriage between close relatives is strictly forbidden. A Person found committing such an act is identified as haraamuu (literally **incest**). The Oromo don’t marry each other unless their genealogical relations are beyond seven ancestors. When someone breaches this cultural value in favor of alien culture, the Oromo feel that safuu is broken. In Oromo culture, marriage between cousins is shameful and disgusting. This is not simply a matter of cultural taboo. According to the outlook of the Oromo, incest is considered as one of the worst crimes. From one of the study area in Lalo Kile town, one of the elder presents his position as follows:-

“a man cannot marry his own sister just because she is beautiful, everything has a rule”. If someone has committed this sinful act and wants to purify himself, Oromo’s law has a provision/Solution. This process of purification is called “Haluu baasuu,jiila baasuu or kuldhaa baasuu.

Primarily, if the woman gets pregnant by incest, the problem will get solution by the law of dhowwaa (law of state- secret). The rest will be solved by the law of “Gumaa” in the following manner: Elders, ayyaantuu, Hayyuu (salgee) and relatives of both individuals who have committed incest will take them to a river and the Ayyaantuu and the elders have to clean the body of the man who has committed incest. Women go to the culprit with their Siiqqee and say to him “Bay! Day!” Literally “be clean, come back to the norm”. It means, they chased away the immoral sprit²⁰. One who kills a person and refused to pay “Gumaa” (blood payment or compensation) and the incest who doesn’t want to purify he/she are all considered as “cirattee” (sinful individual). All of them are not allowed to live in the society. They have to be avoided or discriminated. The process of discriminating “cirattee” or forcing them from their homeland is known as a diinoomsuu (expulsion from the lineage) as of the informants.



(Source: The researchers during field work April11/ 2021)

And even they don’t leave them until they cross seven rivers. If these “*cirattee*” take action against this decision, the elders pass death penalty over them as of the informants. The Gadaa system has a remedy for those who made wrong actions. The reason why the Gadaa system passes such a harsh penalty over “*cirattee*” is that it is believed by the Oromo that if relatives marry each other, the child born will be disabled and ill fated. These “*cirattee*” (defiance) have the right to re-join their clan after seven ancestors or 280(40x7) years later²¹.

4. Conclusion

Generally it can be concluded that, conflict is common phenomenon among all humans around the world. In dealing with these conflicts, indigenous institutions are a crucial point of reference in conflict resolution and peace building arenas. Among the Oromo in general and the Kelem Wollega Zone Oromo in particular, there were and still are various systems of conflict settlement, which can generally categorized into formal (state-based) and informal (custom-based) institutions.

People use either or both of these institutions in different circumstances in order to settle hostilities under 21st century conditions. Among the indigenous conflict resolution institution found in the study area Gadaa, gumaa, Siiqqee/Ateetee and eldership are frequently used indigenous institutions functioning side by side with courts to settle conflicts.

5. Recommendations

- ✚ Establish good governance and open minded leadership at all levels of administration.
- ✚ Create awareness among young generation by socializing them under Gadaa leadership.
- ✚ In Oromo culture, marriage between close relatives is strictly forbidden. A person found committing such an act is identified as haraamuu, literally incest. It is very important to work cooperatively in order to avoid such a shameful practices, which may cause a generation based problem, in order to save the coming generation/this digital generation.
- ✚ Rebuilding social harmony through training and through a collective concern, based on collective identity.
- ✚ Learn, analyze and document the best attributes of indigenous conflict resolution methods.
- ✚ It is better, if the expert of culture and tourism bureau office should create strong relation with famous elders and knowledgeable women's and accepting their comments as a binding rule.
- ✚ Currently, women's involvement in Jaarsummaa or Gumaa system is also remained in limited aspects. Therefore, it is very important to adopt a flexible policy regarding equal participation of women rather than being rigid.
- ✚ Under incumbent federal system of Ethiopia a pragmatic policy that accommodates Gadaa System of governance and a serious action that constitutes government bodies built on Gadaa principles are essential for full-edged and inclusive democracy to preserve indigenous institutions.
- ✚ While women need to be present at the negotiation table and their voices need to be heard and considered in the conflict resolution process, we must also remember that when it comes to curing society's ills and working toward the elimination of war and violence – women are not alone. Like the Chinese proverb suggests, “women hold up half the sky, but we must work with those who hold up the other half”.

6. Bibliography

1. Cromwell, A. and Tadevosyan, M., 2021. Deconstructing positionality in conflict resolution: Reflections from first-person action research in Pakistan and the South Caucasus. *Action Research*, 19(1), pp.37-55.
2. Johnson, M.F., 2021. Fighting for black stone: extractive conflict, institutional change and peacebuilding in Sierra Leone. *International Affairs*, 97(1), pp.81-101.
3. Tengö, M., Austin, B.J., Danielsen, F. and Fernández-Llamazares, Á. 2021. Creating synergies between citizen science and Indigenous and local knowledge. *BioScience*, 71(5), pp.503-518.
4. Firchow, P. and Gellman, M., 2021. Collaborative Methodologies: Why, How, and for Whom? *PS: Political Science & Politics*, pp.1-5.
5. McIntosh, J., Marques, B. and Mwipiko, R., 2021. Therapeutic Landscapes and Indigenous Culture: Māori Health Models in Aotearoa/New Zealand. In *Clan and Tribal Perspectives on Social, Economic and Environmental Sustainability*. Emerald Publishing Limited.
6. Clarke, F., Jones, A. and Smith, L., 2021. Building Peace through Sports Projects: A Scoping Review. *Sustainability*, 13(4), p.2129.
7. Howlader, A., 2021. Understanding the Formation of Local Agri-Environmental Institutions: Historical Evidence from Soil Conservation Districts in the Great Plains.
8. Assefa, Jalata. (2020). “Indigenous mechanisms for the presentation of Conflict: The experience of the Oromo.” *Proceedings of the Second National workshop of OSA: Organization for Social Science Research in Eastern and Southern Africa*. (Pp.50-74).
9. Koree, Dagagina. (2020). *Aadaa, Seenaa fi Amentii Oromo, Wadda Maccaafi Tulama. Waqeffenna*. Jil.1. Lak 1.
10. Paalo, S.A. and Issifu, A.K., 2021. De-internationalizing Hybrid Peace: State-Traditional Authority Collaboration and Conflict Resolution in Northern Ghana. *Journal of Intervention and State building*, pp.1-19.
11. Spee, J.C., McMurray, A.J. and McMillan, M.D. eds., 2021. *Clan and Tribal Perspectives on Social, Economic and Environmental Sustainability: Indigenous Stories From Around the Globe*. Emerald Group Publishing.

12. Koren, O., Bagozzi, B.E. and Benson, T.S., 2021. Food and water insecurity as causes of social unrest: Evidence from geo-located Twitter data. *Journal of Peace Research*, p.0022343320975091.
13. Asmerom, Legesse. (2020). Oromo democracy; an indigenous African political system. The Red sea press.
14. Liu, H. and Sullivan, C., And the Heat Goes On: Police Repression and the Modalities of Power.
15. King, M.D. ed., 2021. Water and conflict in the Middle East. Oxford University Press.
16. Gianni, S., Freiburger, M.I., Jemth, P., Ferreiro, D.U., Wolynes, P.G. and Fuxreiter, M., 2021. Fuzziness and Frustration in the Energy Landscape of Protein Folding, Function, and Assembly. *Accounts of chemical research*, 54(5), pp.1251-1259.
17. Yeung, D.A. and Kelly, N.H., 2021. The Role of Collagen-Based Biomaterials in Chronic Wound Healing and Sports Medicine Applications. *Bioengineering* 2021, 8, 8.
18. Cvajner, M. and Sciortino, G., Uncanny Babushka: Migration, aging and the search for a new sexual Self. *Sexualities*, p.1363460720982926.
19. Dirribi, Demissie. (2020). Oromo Wisdom in black civilization. Finfinne printing and publishing s.c .Finfinne, Ethiopia, p.58.
20. Melchiorre, M.G., Di Rosa, M., Macassa, G., Eslami, B., Torres-Gonzales, F., Stankunas, M., Lindert, J., Ioannidi-Kapolou, E., Barros, H., Lamura, G. and JF Soares, J., 2021. The prevalence, severity and chronicity of abuse towards older men: Insights from a multinational European survey. *PLoS one*, 16(4), p.e0250039.
21. Chung, C.A., Policelli, S. and Redmond, M., Conference on the Yale Peruvian Expeditions.