



OROMO INDIGENOUS CONFLICT RESOLUTION INSTITUTIONS: AN EXAMPLE OF AFRICAN INDIGENOUS INSTITUTIONS

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ABSTRACT

The paper briefly introduces and explains the essence of indigenous Oromo conflict resolution institutions and an example of African Indigenous institutions that are relevant for the current condition of Africa in general and Oromo society in particular. It also illustrates how Oromo Indigenous institutions had functioned as a socio-political institution by preventing conflict oppression and exploitation and by promoting relative peace, security, sustainable development, and political sovereignty, and how those Indigenous institutions organized Oromo society around economic, cultural and religious institutions. Finally, the paper explores how the Oromo Indigenous Institutions play a role in preventing conflict and achieving sustainable peace for multinational democracy and struggles to revive and revitalize the Oromo democratic tradition.

KEYWORDS: *sustainable development, and political sovereignty, multinational democracy.*

INTRODUCTION

Prior to their colonization during the European Scramble for Africa by the alliance of European imperialism and colonialism (Holcomb and Ibssa, 1990 cited in Aseffa, 2005), the Oromo people were independent and organized both culturally and politically using their own Institutions like of gadaa system (Oromo democratic Socio-political institutions) to promote their peace and to maintain their security and sovereignty. Conflict is an inevitable phenomenon since human beings exist on earth. The cost of conflict is also varied on the systems that the conflicting parties used to settle their dispute. Conflict is not a new phenomenon in the history of human beings. That means it always exists as long as human beings live together and it is an inevitable human experience. Conflict can be understood as engagement in a fight or possible confrontation between two or more parties as aspiring towards incompatible or competitive means or ends (University of Peace, 2005).

There are two ways of conflict resolution institutions, i.e. the formal and informal. According to (Macfarlane, 2007) the formal one is conducted in the court through litigation with official recognition of the government and tends to be more strictly examined and monitored whether there are signs of impartiality, entrenched inequities and lack of due process. Indigenous or sometimes called informal conflict resolution institutions is the ancient set of practices in almost all the societies in the world in general and Oromo people in particular with an ultimate application of third party arbitration and mediation (United Nations, 2010).

The Oromo people have their own varieties of customary practices. Among these practices they have indigenous conflict resolution institutions which are more than helping the people to build solidarity and peaceful coexistence among them. It has a gap filling role for the state made laws. They are such as *Gadaa* system or *Abba Gadaa* council, *Jaarsummaa*, *Qaalluu* institution or decision of spiritual leaders, *guma* system, and *siiqqee* institution etc. *Gadaa* system is one of the interesting ways of conflict resolution institution and well respected among the *Oromo* community in Ethiopia (Deselegnetal, 2007: 148). During their long history of egalitarian culture, the *Oromo* developed a uniquely democratic socio-political structure known as *Gadaa* (Cerulli, 1922; Huntingford, 1955; Asmerom, 1973; Melbaa, 1991 cited in Kuwe, 1997: 116) which can be taken as a symbol of practicing collective approach. *Gadaa* system of conflict resolution is one that deserves attention. This institution is well respected by the *Oromo* society at large in the country. If this indigenous knowledge can be controlled, then it is thought that it can be a means through which sustainable development can be achieved (Ibid). However, there exists a weak relationship between these statutory and customary institutions in the management of natural resources and conflict resolution. The *Gadaa* leaders play important roles in natural resources management. While the rules and regulations laid down by the *Gadaa* institution must be respected by all councils of elders, any problem regarding resources use which could not be solved by these elders would be handled by the higher *Gadaa* leaders (Jemila, 2014:2).

GADAAAS OROMO INDIGENOUS CONFLICT RESOLUTION INSTITUTIONS

The indigenous institution of *gadaa* system organized and ordered society around political, economic, social, cultural, and religious institutions (Baissa, 1993; Legesse, 1973 cited in Aseffa, 2012). The *Oromo* traditional administrative and justice system has operating within the institutional context of *Gadaa* system. Under fully operational *Gadaa* system, disputes including inter clan conflicts have been managed and resolved by *Gadaa* officials in line with the *Oromo* indigenous laws. This confirms Asmarom (1973) who says that one of the functions of *Gadaa* Assembly is the maintenance of peace (*nagaa*). Also, Abera (1998:44 cited in Dejene, 2002) states that *Oromo* indigenous law is embedded in the *Gadaa* system.

During the sixteenth century, the *Guji* who had a common *Gadaa* government had also common law. The leaders had legitimacy of declaring war, mobilizing resources for common purposes, resolving conflicts to maintain order and concluding peace on behalf of the people. Similarly, the *Guji* who moved further away to the south were ruled under common law set at their common head quarter (Mohammed, 1990:41 cited in Dejene, 2002). Any inter and intra clan conflicts were dealt with by this common law. Different *Oromo* groups were engaged in constant and unceasing fights. This was mainly caused by the right of pasturage and borders that was economic in nature rather than the political goal of establishing domination over the other. None of them appeared as conquerors, but as constant raiders.

Consequently, the *Gadaa* system underwent considerable changes and lost the former peaceful mechanism of handling inter-tribal dispute over the area. The war fought around involved the loss of many lives and repeated raids and counter raids. Killing a man of other clan was not prohibited rather killers were decorated, warriors were encouraged and raids were initiated. In this case, there was no blood price paid and no negotiation for reconciliation was conducted between the warring parties, rather a simple ritual of purification that involved the slayer was performed. The killer slaughtered a sheep and washed his hands with its blood to insure against future damage in response to supernatural requirements (see Bartels, 1983:235).

On the other hand, the *Guji* claim that there was no war fought within the *Guji* clan; instead the *Abba Dulas* of different *Guji* clans fought others in support of each other. According to the *Guji*, the presence of common *Gadaa* (*Gadaa* of *Guji*) and common law symbolized by common *bokkuu* fully explains the peaceful coexistence of the *Guji* clans. The already operating *Gadaa* system that was unable to provide peaceful means of handling crisis for the society at large was successful in managing dispute arose within individual clans and among the *Guji* clans. The day-to-day conflict resolution and the application of justice

were well performed by the *Gadaa* officials owing to the common *bokkuu*. In this regard, Fortes and Evans-Pritchard's (1940:17) statement "members of an African society feel their unity and perceive their common interests in symbols, and it is their attachment to these symbols which more than anything else gives their society cohesion and persistence" is relevant to the Guji case.

Abera (1998: 52) shows that in Gada court three *gulas* have served as permanent judges. In addition, each party in dispute selects three assessors to sit for hearing their case with the permanent judges. Nevertheless, the nominee of each party should secure the approval of the opposite party to be selected. Together with the three judges, the six selected elders constitute the full bench of the court and would sit for a hearing. The court was known as *dhaddacha* or *shanacha*. The proceeding has been open for any male member to attend.

The court has been held in an open field under a tree as in the case of law making. It has permitted full interaction of the parties. They could even request the postponement of the proceeding when need be. The formal procedure of requesting for adjournment of the hearing was by saying *qabe* (I behold). According to Asefa (2001: 12-13 cited in Dejene, 2002) they usually employ this method in seeking further information and piece of advice on the matter under investigation. Abera (1998) further discusses that after hearing arguments and counter arguments of the disputants, judgments are rendered. Such judgments are supposed to be given by consensus consulting *Gadaa* law and local customs. Of course, according to Abera, there has been a chance to give verdict on a dispute case by majority vote.

The decision of such court was not final, as any party that refuses to accept the decision had a right to appeal against the verdict. Asefa (2012) states that a formal way of requesting for appeal was by saying *bokkuuqabadhe* (I hold the scepter). This appeal has been taken to the court of another clan. According to Abera (1998), while the appellants move from place to place for appeal, any Oromo group through whose land they travel had the responsibilities to guide and provide shelter and food. As Abera (1998) states the appeal has been presented orally by two assessors from the initial court to the court of appeal. The verdict of the later court would be final. Abera makes an interesting conclusion that the system of appeal served two purposes. It served maximum fairness and impartiality. It also maintained the spirit of unity among the Oromo groups through the preservation of common administration of justice. However, such a system of appeal has caused great inconveniences both to the parties in dispute and the assessors who have reported the case to the court of appeal. In the mean time, though the assessors have been expected to present the fact without any distortion, there has been still high chance for the report to be misinterpreted and distorted. As a response to such a great deal of problems, Abera (1998) says that the Oromo has organized a court of first instance and an appellate court in the same locality. Accordingly, the court of appeal constituted judges who were not members of the court of first instance. The number of judges in higher court also exceeded the number of judges in the lower court at least by two.

Women did not serve as judges in such traditional Oromo *Gada* court. But according to Abera (1998: 54) they played a significant role in arranging and opening negotiation between two clans in feud. Traditionally, any clan has cultural duty to fairly treat such a pleading of women for mercy. Women forwarded their requests by holding their *siiqqee* and *caaccuu*, *Caaccuu* is a ritual object used only by women, and is worn on the right wrist serve as a symbol of female fertility and of fullness.

The main aim of Oromo traditional court (*Gadaa* Institution) has been reconciliation of the disputant parties and restoration of peace and order. In this process the person or party who suffered the consequences of the offense has been compensated and the offender fined.

Sisay (2008) describes the Oromo and their *gadaa* system as follows: The Oromo have one of the most open and democratic cultures among Ethiopians. Their system of African democracy known as *gadaa* is a well-known African indigenous political system that governs social order, politics, as well as peaceful conflict resolution. In short, *gadaa* is a unique social, cultural, political and economic institution of the Oromo people and it permeates all aspects of their life. Asmarom (1973) and Lemmu (2004) give an important account of the *gadaa* system. Since *gadaa* system is a vast concept, presenting the full image of it

takes space. Therefore, the researcher would like to inform the readers to refer from the above mentioned and other sources to capture the full image of *gadaa* system in general and its role in indigenous conflict resolutions.

GUMAA AS OROMO INDIGENOUS CONFLICT RESOLUTION INSTITUTIONS

The term *gumaa* stands for many things in Oromo people. In some *zones* of Oromia it is used as compensation paid for something wrong done while some places use it as revenge. In other places it is used as reintegration for people apart by some incident wrong done such as killing practices. As indicated in the work of (Jemal, 2012:32 cited in Jemila, 2014) the term *gumaa* stands for many things. *Gumaa* system does not apply for everything at all. It only applies for things that are selected to be included in *gumaa* system. *Gumaa* makes every effort to convey about peace, justice by compromising parties involved in conflict in every aspect of their movements as socially, politically, economically and psychologically.

Also *gumaa* is used as its mechanism headed for family reintegration (Tamene, 2013: 45). These things included in *gumaa* system are as follows when:

- ❖ A person is killed by other person
- ❖ An eye has been gouged out
- ❖ Teeth are broken
- ❖ An ear lobe has been cut
- ❖ fingers are cut off
- ❖ A person's bull has been killed
- ❖ A person's male sheep is killed
- ❖ A person's horse is killed
- ❖ A female is raped
- ❖ A person's home and furniture is burned, there are specific punishments accordingly.

Gumaa is an institution of conflict resolution, compensation paid for wrong done and is one of the Oromo indigenous institutions of conflict resolution, justice administration and peace-building that was able to persist and function to date. These prevailing indigenous institutions of conflict resolution, justice administration and peace-building have mostly been analyzed from developmental, anthropological, sociological and points of view (Ibid). *Gumaa* is derived from the *gadaa* system, or working in parallel with it, there are other nonviolent methods of conflict resolution, justice administration and peace-building such as *michuu*, *harma-hodhaa*, *luba-baasa*, *moggaasaa* and *waadaa* (Asaffa, 2012).

Tsega (2002) gives a good account of *michuu*, *harma-hodhaa*, *luba-baasa* and *moggaasaa*. The meanings of *waadaa* have been addressed by Asaffa (2012). Dejene (2007 cited in Meron, 2010) gives an account of *gumaa*; its rituals and purification ceremonies. Ibrahim has discussed *jaarsummaa* at some depth (Ibrahim, 2005). It has to be borne in mind that the term *gumaa* carries multiple meanings. Dejene (2007 cited in Meron, 2010). This is why it has often been misunderstood by scholars not well versed in *Afaan Oromo*, the language of the Oromo, and Oromo culture.

For example, in her article, *Ye "Shakoch Chilot"* (the court of the sheikhs): A traditional institution of conflict resolution in Oromia zone of Amhara regional state, Ethiopia. Meron Zeleke (2010) depicts the term *gumaa* as if it refers solely to killing for revenge. In connection with this, Meron (2010) added that states that killing for revenge is a cultural value of the Oromo. This is not shown by the term *gumaa*. The word *gumaa*, alone and in connection with other words also carries different meanings in different parts of Oromia. For example, *warra-gumaa* means parties at blood feud; *gumaa-baasuu* means killing for revenge, *gumaa-nyaachuu* means receiving blood price, *gumaa* means feud, and *gumaa* may also refer to a large piece of meat (Dejene, 2007 cited in Meron, 2010).

Furthermore, the term *gumaa* is most often used to refer to compensation and rituals for purification after homicide. This latter meaning of the word is much more common. In contrary to Meron's understandings of *gumaa*, it should be emphasized that the Oromo regard peace and forgiveness as higher values than revenge and retaliation (Asafa, 2012). This is shown by the existence of numerous indigenous methods of conflict resolution, justice administration and peace-building among the Oromo. Peace and forgiveness are two very interrelated and interdependent concepts that pervade all aspects of the Oromo life. In fact, forgiving is a non-violent means to peace. Peace has a special place and value among the Oromo and it is expressed in greetings, songs, prayers, proverbs, blessings, folklore, and public speeches (Asafa, 2012). The place and value of peace among the Oromo has been well described in the Oromo Studies Association (OSA, 2008 cited in Teresa, 2016). Peace (*nagaa*) is central to Oromo ritual and ceremonial activities, to administrative and legal functions, to traditional religion, morality, and social life, and the conduct of politics. For the Oromo, peace is an essential to an orderly universe and societal wellbeing that humans must pursue (Oromo Studies Association, 2008 cited in Teresa, 2016). It is clearly noticeable from the quote above that the Oromos world view of peace transcends short-lived conflict resolution. Peace largely concerns an orderly universe and societal well-being. Among the Oromo, an orderly universe and societal well-being are prioritized over individual or personal well-being and interest. Therefore, the ultimate goal of any type of peace is communal well-being in an orderly universe (Oromo Studies Association, 2008 cited in Teresa, 2016).

In short, for the Oromo there cannot be an orderly universe and societal well-being without peace and thus peace is highly valued among them. Since peace is so valued among the Oromo people, there are various mechanisms to restore peace when it is lost for whatever reason and sustain it. *Gumaa* is one of such many mechanisms for the restoration of peace. Asafa (2012) defines the core meaning of the word *gumaa* as follows: *gumaa* is a general institution of settling blood feuds. It is an indigenous institution of settling blood feuds between parties in conflict. Some scholars tend to view conflict resolution and peace-building mechanisms drawn from and grounded in African and other non-western cultures as traditional approaches comparing with those from the western cultures (Desalegn et al, 2005; Tsega, 2002; Dejene, 2007; Meron, 2010 cited in Teresa, 2016).

SIQQEAS OROMO INDIGENOUS INSTITUTIONS OF CONFLICT RESOLUTION

In pre-colonial Oromo society, women had the *siiqqee* institution, a parallel institution to the *gadaa* system that "functioned hand in hand with *Gadaa* system as one of its built-in institutions of checks and balances" (Kuwee, 1997: 119). These two institutions helped maintain *safu* in Oromo society by enabling Oromo women to have control over resources and private spaces, social status and respect, and sisterhood and solidarity by deterring men from infringing upon their individual and collective rights (Kuwee, 1997: 115-145). If the balance between men and women was broken, a *siiqqee* rebellion was initiated to restore the law of God and the moral and ethical order of society. When there were violations of their rights, women left their homes, children, and resources and traveled to a place where there was a big tree called *qilxxuu* and assembled there until the problems were solved through negotiation by elders of men and women (Kuwee, 1997: 129-130).

According to Kuwee Kumsa (1997: 126), "Married women have the right to organize and form the *siiqqee* sisterhood and solidarity. Because women as a group are considered *halaga* (non-relative) and excluded from the *Gadaa* grades, they stick together and count on one another through *siiqqee* which they all have in common in the strange *gosaa* (lineage) where women live as strangers, *siiqqee* represents the mother and they even address each other as 'daughters of a mother.' They get together regularly for prayers as well as for other important individual and community matters. If men try to stop women from attending these *walargee* (meetings), it is considered against *safu*. Oromo women used different *siiqqee* mechanisms to maintain their rights; such mechanisms included the law of *mukalaafu* (soften wood), the *abaarsa* (curse), *iyyasiiqqee* (scream), and *godaannasiiqqee* (trek). As Kumsa comments, "because of their liminality, women

wield a special religious power where they draw an enormous moral and ritual authority. Men, therefore, try to avoid their curse and seek their blessings. Women in general are symbolically and politically luminal and correspondingly enjoy special sacred power as a class. People respect and revere a woman because *Waaqaa* made her to be respected and revered. Interference with a woman's sacred authority is regarded as violating *seeraWaaqaa* and *safu*" (Kuwee, 1997:127).

A man who violated women's individual and collective rights could be corrected through reconciliation and pledging not to repeat the mistakes or through women's reprisal ritual: A group of women "ambush the offender in the bush or on the road, bind him, insult him verbally using obscene language that they would not normally utter in the direct presence of an adult male pinch him, and whip him with leafy branches or knotted strips of cloth. In extreme cases, they may force him to crawl over thorny or rocky ground while they whip him. They demand livestock sacrifice as the price to cease their attack. If he refuses, they may tie him to a tree in the bush and seize one of his animals themselves, then other men rarely intervene" (Kelly, 1992:187). Assefajalata has briefly discussed about the roles of *siiqqee* in Oromo societies based on the idea of Kuwe. He has written that; if the peace between men and women was broken, a *siiqqee* rebellion was initiated to restore the law of God and the moral and ethical order of society. The *Gadaa* and *siiqqee* institutions greatly influenced the Oromo value system in pre-colonial (Pre 1880s) Oromo society. These two institutions helped to maintain *safu* (Oromo moral codes) in Oromo society by enabling Oromo women to have control over resources and private spaces, social status and respect, sisterhood and solidarity by deterring men from infringing upon their individual and collective rights. Recognizing the importance of the *Gadaa* system, Oromo nationalists are struggling to restore the system (Asafa, 2012: 4). Kuwe and Tolosa assert that as a stick and symbol of marriage *siiqqee* is given to the bride and *hororo* to the bridegroom on the day of their marriage. As symbols of women's power most writers are agreed up on the idea that *siiqqee* is given to women by *Gadaa* leaders. (Bula Sirika 2009: 9 cited in Jemila, 2014) has stated that the Oromo women had been given a shelter in the *Gadaa* system and the *Abba Gadaa* was given a *siiqqee*, ritual stick, to take home for his wife by the *Qaalluu*, the spiritual leader. The *siiqqee* was granted her to use whenever she performs important ritual performances and to symbolize her feminine rights and respect. Similarly, (Jeylan, 2004: 113 cited in Jemila, 2014) has wrote that "the *Abba Gadaa* was also given a *siiqqee* (ritual stick) and a *qanafaa* (sacred piece of wood) to take home for his wife. The ritual stick was granted her to use when she performs anointment (and other important ritualistic performances) as well as to symbolize her *hanfala* (feminine) *mirga* (rights) and *wayyoomaa* (respect)." (Tolosa, 2011:24 cited in Jemila, 2014). According to him "*siiqqee* came into being in the Oromo culture with the *Gadaa* system which has governed the social, religious, political and economic life of the Oromo people for many centuries. (Esrael, 2009: 31 cited in Asafa, 2012) has pointed out that "*siiqqee* is a *Gadaa* system in-built mechanism that can be seen as a means of check and balance to the men dominated Oromo social order. He has said that women can stop violent conflict that can happen between clans by using their *siiqqee*. As Asmerom (1973: 279) has stated that 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 it.

A woman can use her *siiqqee* to enforce women's rights and resolve conflicts according to the traditional law of the Oromo. If she sees people fighting, she can use their *siiqqee* to intervene. They will put their *siiqqee* between the fighters to separate them while the community elders come to resolve the conflict. The men do not challenge to continue fighting in the presence of the *siiqqee* since they are bound by tradition and culture to the traditional law of the Oromo (Jane et al, 2008: 10). Using sticks that symbolize as peace is not only found in Oromo society. There is the same institution with that of *siiqqee* of Oromo women known as *yakkain* Sidama society in which the group of women can resolve conflict by using their *siiqqee* stick. Accordingly, the Sidama women can use their *siiqqee* to control and defend over their rights. Specially, when man beaten his wife or pregnant wife the *yakkag* group would come together in front of their leader and resolve the conflict (Ibid, 2008:12). In addition to these according to this writers in most parts of

Ethiopia in different ethnic group such as women *Abagarin* Wollo area of Amhara region, *Gambela* women, *Debateof Raya-Azebo* in Southern Tigray are some the examples of women that can be seen as source of peace like that of Oromo and Sidama community. Therefore, Kuwee believe that we should have to reviving *Siiqqee* on a new basis. She has written that; the most important principle of *siiqqee* is building sisterhood and allying to fight against oppression. For the Oromo women of the old times, the countervailing group was just the Oromo male. In the contemporary world, however, forms of oppression and its perpetrators have been multiplied; domination, oppression, and exploitation have been globalized; and Oromo women have been pushed down to the bottom-most rung of the economic, political, and social ladder of the emerging world-wide oppressive hierarchy. But they are not fragile objects that are easily crushed under this formidable weight. They are, indeed, challenging the system as they are being changed by it. It is within this process of their dynamic multifarious struggle that the prospects of reviving *siiqqee* on a new basis must be examined (Kuwee, 1997: 140). In Oromo community, family ties and community networking are constantly respected, maintained and strengthened. When there is a conflict between different parties, main concern is given to restore the relationships. During the conflict resolution, which would normally involve supporters of the conflicting parties and the local elders meant to talk the matters through, relationships are given main attentions. Women are among those local elder who plays special roles in peace building using their *siiqqee* rights.

QAALLUU AS INDIGENOUS CONFLICT RESOLUTION INSTITUTIONS

Original Oromo religious leaders, *qaalluus*, have had a moral authority and social obligation to oppose tyrants and support popular Oromo democracy and *gadaa* leaders, and to encourage harmonious and democratic relations based on the principles of *safu*, *kaa'oo*, *Waaqaa*, and *uumaa*. The *qaalluu* "is thought to possess sacred characteristics that enable him to act as intermediary between the people and God," and "he had no administrative power, but could bless or withhold blessings from *gadaa* leadership, and had an extraordinary power to curse anyone who threatened the wellbeing of the entire community by deviating from God's order" (Kelly, 1992: 166 cited in Asaffa, 2005).

The *qaalluu* institution has been committed to social justice, the laws of God, and the rule of law, and fair deliberation; the *qaalluu* "residence was considered politically neutral ground, suitable for debating controversial issues and for adjudicating highly charged disputes, although he himself might not take a prominent role in proceedings" (Kelly, 1992: 166). The *qaalluu* institution has played an important role in protecting original Oromo culture, religion, worldview, and identity. When those Oromos who were influenced by this institution kept their Oromo names, most Oromos who were converted to Islam or Christianity willingly or by force abandoned their Oromo names and adopted Muslim or Christian names depending on their borrowed religion. The *qaalluu* can be credited with having played an indirect role in the preservation of the Oromo identity and the Oromo political system. The criteria to be a *qaalluu* included seniority in lineages, respectability in the community, expertise in ritual practices, moral qualification, and respect for cultural taboos, sound social status, and other leadership qualities (Knutson, 1967: 66-67). The leader of all *qaalluus* was known as *AbbaaMuudaa* (father of the anointment) who was considered to be the prophet and spiritual leader of Oromo society. Oromo pilgrims traveled to the residence of *AbbaaMuudaa* to receive his blessing and anointment to be ritual experts in their respective regions (Ibid: 148).

AbbaaMuudaa served as the spiritual center and symbol of Oromo unity and assisted all Oromo branches to keep in touch with one another for several centuries; "as the Jews believe in Moses and the Muslims in Muhammad, the Oromo believe in their *AbbaaMuudaa* (Hassen, 1991:79 cited in Jemila, 2014). *AbbaaMuudaa* like other *qaalluu* leaders encouraged harmonious and democratic relations in Oromo society. According to the *qaalluu* mythology, *AbbaaMuudaa*, the original Oromo religious leader was descended from heaven (Knutsson, 1967). Oromo representatives traveled to the highlands of the mid-south Oromia to honor *AbbaaMuudaa* and to receive his blessing and anointment that qualified them as pilgrims known as *jilas* to be ritual experts in their respective areas (Knutsson, 1967: 148). When Oromo

representatives went to him from far and near places to receive his blessings, *AbbaaMuudaa* commanded them “not to cut their hair and to be righteous, not to recognize any leader who tries to get absolute power and not to fight among themselves” (Ibid). In its modified form, the *qaalluu* institution exists in some parts of Oromia, such as in the *Guji* and *Borana* areas; it still protects an Oromo way of life, such as dispensing of local justice based on Oromo customs and providing solutions to problems created by a changing social condition (Knutsson, 1967: 133-135).

The *qaalluus* of *Guji* and *Borana* are ritual leaders, advisors, and ritual experts in the *gadaa* system. The *qaalluus* “possess the exclusive prerogative of legitimizing the different *gadaa* officials, when a new *gadaa* group is initiated into the politically active class” (Knutsson, 1967: 142). The Oromo still practice some elements of Oromo democratic values in the areas where the *gadaa* system was suppressed a century ago. The *gadaa* system is still practiced in the *Borana* and *Guji* regions in its modified form; it helps maintain peace, exchange knowledge and practice rituals among some clans and regional groups (De Loo, 1991: 25).

JAARSUMMAA AS INDIGENOUS CONFLICT RESOLUTION INSTITUTION

Jaarsummaa is one of the institutions that Oromo people used to resolve the conflict upraised among people. It is used as reconciliation practices that the *jaarsabiyyaa* (respected reliable person) play important role to implement the rule and regulation needed on the peace settlement. This is one of the valuable cultural practices has been with Oromo people since Oromo born. The term '*jaarsaa*' in *Afaan* Oromo language literally means 'an old man'. However, in *jaarsummaa* context, it refers to mean 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/ jaarsabiyyaa* (respected and selected person) selected by the two parties that conflict happened between them. Depending on the particular area of the Oromo people, different terms are used to refer to these elders. They are simply called *jaarsabiyyaa*, *jaarsaa* or *jaarsaaraaraa* (Mamo, 2006, Dejene, 2002)

According to (Jemila, 2014) for males to be recognized as *jaarsaa*, the individual's personality and his father's position within the *jaarsabiyyaa* (respected community persons) are the most crucial attributes for the community. As a *jaarsaa* it needs to be a sociable, honest, trustworthy and knowledgeable man with a skillful for oratory. And though the institution of *jaarsabiyyaa* is not hereditary, a renowned *jaarsa*'s son or sons will most likely find a place of their own among the *jaarsaa*. If a man qualifies the above criteria, neither his lack of economic success nor his youth preclude him from being considered. No public ceremony or formal gathering is required for the granting of the position of *jaarsaa* to an individual. In the normal course of life, a person stands out for his character, the community takes notice of these traits and starts treating that individual as recognized elder.

CONCLUSION

Every society has developed an institution that could help to manage conflict of various natures. Research shows that all societies across the world have institutional settings and mechanisms of conflict resolutions institutions among themselves and with other groups. Like as other societies built up their own ways of conflict resolving institutions, Oromo people have also built up time proven indigenous institutions of conflict resolution. The paper tried to show the way how the Oromo people settles conflicts on resource, land and land related issues and breach of societal values, norms and contracts. The indigenous institutions of conflict resolution of the Oromo's are playing pivotal roles to achieve sustainable peace and employs peaceful mechanisms to settle conflicts. The paper found that the most commonly and currently used indigenous institutions of conflict resolution such as *gadaa/abbagadaa* council, *jaarsummaa*, *gumaa* and *siiqqee* institutions of the Oromo society have survived and are still practiced in a functioning and modified forms.

The opportunity of not being corrupted, accessibility, the ability of finding truth, flexibility, time and money saving and the exercise of familiar cultural norms are characterized as the main pulling factor behind

Oromo people to prefer indigenous conflict resolution institutions than formal court. In opposite to this, formal court lacks these afro mentioned criteria or qualities while solving conflict, the paper also reveals the role that woman play in indigenous institutions of conflict resolution through *siiqqee* institutions among Oromo people. Women play indispensable roles in resolving conflicts that may occur at individual level or at group level through *siiqqee* institution which is socially recognized institution of women that works starting from fighting against the violation of women's right up to mediating the groups in conflict until the male elders hold the issue. Besides, women play the role of conflict resolution through creating a marriage bond particularly between parties whose conflict resulted in homicide.

To conclude the paper Oromo indigenous conflict resolution institutions are highly respected, additionally the objectives of the paper were adequately and comprehensively addressed.

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