

The Role of Sidama Indigenous Institutions in Conflict Resolution: In the Case of Dalle Woreda, Southern Ethiopia

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Abstract The major goal of this study was to assess the role of indigenous institutions in handling/ settling conflicts in the Sidama Society. Sidama Communities are found in Sidama Zone, Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples Regional State (SNNPRS). The research was conducted in Dalle woreda, Sidama Zone and it was purposively selected. Qualitative research methodology was employed in the study for its appropriateness to assess the role of indigenous institutions in handling/ settling conflicts in the study area and data was collected through the use of interview, key informant interview, focus group discussion, personal observation and document review. The results obtained from the study suggest that Conflicts in Sidama, as in anywhere else, may vary from trivial interpersonal disagreements to a serious dispute which might eventually lead to homicide. The most common conflict issues in Sidama are grazing land, water, farmland and borderland. There are many deeds and accounts in the daily activities of the society which are considered to be crimes with regard to the norms and traditions of the Sidama community. However, the most serious ones are: beating a man with a slump and/or thin stick, Beating elderly, raping, murder, Physical damage, Adultery. Sidama indigenous institutions have played a great role to solve different local conflicts and for the development of modern institutions. The modern institutions (Courts) have and took a strong base from the indigenous institutions in resolving conflict and preserving peace and security. Besides to modern institution, the indigenous institutions have played a great role for the emergence of cooperative unions. To sum up, indigenous/traditional/ institutions are costly and time effective in addition to many other benefits provide for the society when we compare with modern institutions. Therefore, at this time government courts encourages indigenous/traditional/ institutions to promote peace and to solve conflicts at the grass root level or at the local level.

Keywords Indigenous Institutions, Conflict Resolution, Sidama, Dalle Woreda and Southern Ethiopia

1. Introduction

1.1. Background of the Study

There is no single definition for the term conflict. Coser (1968:233) defines conflict as a struggle over values or claims to status and scarce resources, in which the aim of the conflicting parties is not only the desired values but also neutralizes, injures or eliminate their rivals. Conflict is an inevitable phenomenon in human society's sphere of life since the entire life of humankind is manipulated by the prevalence of conflict within the society when people set opinion against opinion, run interest against interests (Nader, 1968). Conflict can be understood as "Encasement in a fight or possible confrontation between two or more parties aspiring towards incompatible or competitive means or ends.

In the other hand as to the definition availed by Montagu (1968:32) conflict is a condition of disharmony in an interaction process and usually occurs as a result of clash of interest between the parties involved in some form of relationship. Clash of interest could occur because either they are perusing their incompatible goals to peruse their chosen goal. Fisher on his part defines conflict as "a relationship between two or more parties who have or think they have incompatible goals (Schellenberg, 1996:43)

With Regard to conflict management Fortman has indicated that conflict can be managed through strategies and through institutions. The conflict management process through strategies encompasses reconciliation, adjudication and alimentation; these strategies demand the conflicting parties' commitment to reconcile with one another and their commitment to accept the decision of the third parties. The ultimate objectives of these strategies are to handle and minimize conflict among parties who have different demands (Roberchek, 1990:128).

Almost all societies, regardless of their location in time and space, have laws for handling disputes and achieving

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resolution of differences. Gulliver (1979:1) states that every society has its own mechanisms of handling disputes/conflicts.

Ethiopia is a country in which various ethnic groups live together for long period of time. As conflict is inevitable, these ethnic groups have experienced conflicts of various types at different times. Each ethnic group has its own mechanisms for solving conflicts.

The southern Ethiopia is the home of many multilingual and multicultural societies which referred among some scholars as “museum of culture”. Sidama one of the most fertile and densely populated areas in Ethiopia. With about 2.6 million people, the Sidama make up about four percent of the total Ethiopian population. Sidama Land is located in the south central part of Ethiopia, to the east and north east Lake Abaya and to the east and south east of Lake Hawassa. Sidama society has their own history, culture, traditional institutions and way of life which directly and indirectly contribute the survival of the community. Among the sidama’s culture, there are various traditional institutions such as “Woma”, “Luwa” “Holla” and “Songo” These institutions are one among other cultural elements in the society. (Bahiru, 2002)

Because of the fact that the people are being densely populated there is more likely competition for insufficient resources available. From this it could be logical to think about frequent occurrence of various types of conflicts. The main rationale to study the Sidama traditional institution under this investigation is to assess various roles of the institutions to resolve conflicts and analyze or investigate its different implications.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

We all deal with conflict in our daily lives-at home, work and school, in personal and business relations. In today’s complex society, it is common to see when communications break down, differences increase and conflicts arise. What is important is how to settle our differences. The conflicts in the Sidama areas include dispute over land, conflict over marital issues, conflict over property, and conflict arise due to homicide cases. Issues like cattle theft, abduction, physical violence and adultery are also common.

There are options available in Sidama land for resolving conflicts arise between individuals or groups by peaceful means. These are generally divided in two: formal state structures such as court and informal institutions. The researcher select traditional/indigenous/ institution since it is the most widely and commonly used form of conflict resolution in the study area. The study will further more attempt to assess the interactions of among indigenous institutions and with other customary and formal conflict resolution institutions.

This study, therefore, attempts to address the following research questions:

1. What is the role of these indigenous institutions in handling conflict/disputes?

2. What are the processes and procedures followed by these indigenous institutions?
3. What are the pros and cons of indigenous institutions in conflict resolution process?
4. What challenges are these institutions currently facing?
5. How do people of the study area view the role and procedures of conflict resolution institutions? Which group of the society often uses the institutions and why?
6. What is the role the government and the Non-government organizations in supporting these institutions?

1.3. Objectives of the Study

The proposed research has the following general and specific objectives.

1.3.1. General Objective

The general objective of this research was

◀ To assess the role of indigenous institutions in handling/ settling conflicts in the Sidama society: In the case of Dalle woreda.

1.3.2. Specific Objectives

The specific objectives of this research was

- ✓ To identify the role of indigenous institution in handling conflict/disputes in the study area.
- ✓ To explore the processes and procedures followed by these indigenous institutions
- ✓ To discuss the advantage and limitation of these indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms
- ✓ To assess the challenges facing these indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms
- ✓ To assess the attitude of the society towards interaction between indigenous conflict resolution institution and other settlement institutions in the study area.
- ✓ To identify the way in which customary institutions of conflict resolution can be strengthened and /or integrated with the formal modern state judicial framework.
- ✓ To assess the view of the society towards these indigenous institutions.
- ✓ To identify the role of the government and non-government organizations in supporting these indigenous institutions.

1.4. Significance of the Study

The study was significant from the following perspectives. First, it provided valuable information about the role of indigenous conflict settlement mechanism plays among Sidama society. Second, it revealed the preference of people related to conflict settlement mechanisms and the rationale behind it. Third, the finding of the study may be used by the concerned bodies (e.g. legislative) to consider and preserve

indigenous knowledge and values. Further, the results of the study will be contributed to the limited literature on indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms among the nations and nationalities of SNNPR.

1.5. Delimitation of the Study

Shortage of time, finance and other constraints bear limitation on the geographical coverage and extent of the study. Even though, there are many places (sites) where indigenous institutions of Sidama society were organized, this study was limited its scope in Dalle Woreda. Due to the nature of the topic, the researcher was used mainly qualitative method. Therefore, it is with this delimitation that the study was designed.

1.6. Conceptual Framework

This section describes the various types of conflict settlement institutions. Almost all societies, regardless of their location in time or space, have norms and regulations to handle disputes and achieving resolution of differences. Gulliver (1979:1) states that every society has its own mechanisms of handling dispute. Similarly, Bohannan (1967) describes that society is impossible without conflict. But society is worse without control of it. Scholars divided mechanisms of conflict settlements into violent and peaceful. Each settlement mechanism has its own characteristics as seen below.

Violent conflict resolution mechanisms include duel, violent self-help and war. According to Gulliver (1979:1), duel is a violent mechanism in which contenders alternate to either physical violence, or stylized competitions or verbal confrontation in which the winners supposedly prove the supremacy of their cases in spite of the facts underlying the dispute. Violent self-help, as a short term settlement, is usually employed by groups with no or little interactions. This violent ways of managing conflicts is mainly employed among non –centralized societies where there are no observable means for peaceful conflict settlement mechanisms. The method includes the raid on the rival's residence, the attack of property and the industrial strike (Ibid: 1-2). War is another way of settling conflicts that occur between individuals, groups or nations.

Peaceful conflict resolution mechanisms include negotiation, mediation, arbitration, court litigation, avoidance and burying dispute in the symbolic process. According to Gulliver (1997), negotiation, a voluntary act, allows the parties to participate directly in decision that affect their respective interests. The process is controlled by the disputing parties which reach their own decision. Singer (1990:17) divides negotiation into two schools of thought: competitive and collaborative negotiations. In competitive negotiation, each party in dispute aims to maximize his/her gain at the expense of the other party. Techniques such as exaggerating (even lying), flexing muscles, or threatening to walk away may be employed to achieve the goal. This technique may be appropriate only in one shot, single issue negotiation over the limited resource. On the other hand,

collaborative negotiation, also called “problem solving” or “Win-win” negotiation, seeks to help all the parties meet their needs. This is because the negotiators give place for future relationships. This method is to find solutions that satisfy every one's interests, not to leave every one with less than was hoped for. This technique requires everyone to give up something and distribute the pain of losing.

Negotiation does not always work and the process of initiating negotiation can sometimes be difficult as it may be interpreted as sign of weakness. When negotiation is impossible, other peaceful conflict resolution techniques are employed. These include mediation, arbitration and litigation. According to Schulenburg (1996), mediation is a voluntary dispute/conflict settlement process in which a mediator (third party) promotes reconciliation between the disputing parties. The mediator manages the process and facilitates the issues between the parties. The mediator, however, neither makes a decision nor forces an agreement. Their presence does not deprive the disputants of the final ability or need to make their individual choices and to reach an agreed decision. Similarly, Bercovitch and Houston (2000:171) (quoted in Hannah, 2008:146) describe mediation as:

A process of conflict management, related to but distinct from the parties' own efforts, where by the disputing parties or their representative seek the assistance, or accept an offer of help from an individual, group, state or organization to change, affect, or influence their perceptions or behavior, without restoring to physical force, or invoking the authority of law.

Singer (1990:27-29) explains arbitration as a typical method for settling conflict outside the court. Conflicting parties submit their matter to the arbitrator for decision who controls the process. Arbitration can also be ordered by a court or be compelled by a law. However, most arbitration are voluntary in that both parties agree to submit their dispute to arbitration, and the parties then agree on the selection of the arbitrator and on the draft of the rules that govern the process. Kestner & Ray (2002:229) describe arbitration as the submission of a dispute/ conflict to a third party who does decision making. According to them, the disputing parties present their perspectives and positions to the arbitrator, who is neutral party. The arbitrator makes a decision based on presented sources. The arbitration decision can be binding Orson binding according to the rules of the arbitration program. Generally, rules of evidence and procedure are more relaxed than the rules of court.

Litigation, also called adjudication, is a legal dispute argued in court. It is one of the settings which people settle their conflicts. Gulliver (1979) describes the use of court and civil justice systems to resolve legal controversies. Compulsorily or voluntarily, the conflicting groups surrender their own ability to decide on the outcome. Litigation begins by filing a lawsuit in a court. Specific rules of procedure are followed on various aspects of litigation. It is characterized by the fact that decision making and the outcome of the issues in dispute are controlled by a third

party exercising some degree of accepted authority. The people directly involved in conflicts have little control over the process or outcome. An adjudicator determines the outcome of a dispute by making a decision for the parties that is final, binding and enforceable. Singer (1990:29) states that “decisions are made by public employees, in public proceedings, and are publicly enforced. “Singer also states that” lengthy, complex procedures, both costly and time consuming make the courts appear to be exclusively the province of the rich, the patient and hearty” (Ibid:3). Moreover, he states the consequences of confronting each other before courts and the emphasis of courts on pronouncing right and wrong and naming winners and losers necessarily destroys almost any preexisting relationship between the people involved.

Dispute avoidance is another peaceful mode of dealing with conflict. According to Gulliver (1979:2), not all disputes are ‘resolved’, ‘settled or ended’, and then dispute avoidance is used by the conflicting parties. Avoidance is a non-confrontational. It is more or less a deliberate choice of strategy and action to manage dispute. He added that burying dispute in symbolic process as non-violent mode of dealing with dispute. According to him, dispute may be changed and redefined in symbolic and supernatural terms in the absence of any effective ways or fear of the potential outcomes. He termed it as burying the dispute in the dispute. In this case, disputes are deflected, not resolved.

There are some institutions which impose sanction to bring peace among some communities. Dillon (1980) (as cited in Otterbein, 1994) shows the isolation and execution of Meta of Western Cameroon villagers, kinsmen and friends by their fellows from committing wrong doings. According to Turnbull (1961), (as cited in Augsburg, 1992:21-22) among the pygmies of the Ituri forest in Zaire the sense of belonging to a community is so strong the “trouble makers are punished simply being ridiculed, ignored, or, at worst, banished to the forest alone for several hours.”

Radcliffe-Brown (1964) (as cited in Augsburg, 1992:22-23) states the absence of dispute settlement mechanisms and sanctions to bring peace among some communities. Among the Andaman and the Zuni Amerindians, there is no means of resolving disputes. Among the Andaman, for instance, “there was no accepted process to deal with conflict situations. The injured family might seek revenge, or the offender might hide out until it seemed safe to return.” Also, among the Zuni one is not stood up for his or her right and is looked down if involved in any sort of conflict.

Therefore, taking the above conflict settlement institutions into consideration, this paper deals with how the Sidama society in the study area (Dalle Woreda) employ the different mechanisms for conflict settlements with different types of traditional institutions within the framework of the available literature on conflict settlement mechanisms. Based on what has been discussed above, decision will be made under which category of dispute settlement mechanism these indigenous institutions belonged.

1.7. Research Methodology

Research methodology refers to a coherent set of rules and procedures that are used to investigate a problem within the framework of philosophical approaches (Kitchen and Tate 2000). In the same vein, a research methodology includes the tools and techniques of data gathering and analysis (Mikelson 2005).

1.7.1. Selection of the Study Area

This study was conducted in Sidama Zone with special focus of Dalle woreda. The rationale behind the researcher intentionally selected Dalle woreda because of some convincing reasons. In the first place, different types of indigenous institutions are still applicable. Similarly, as casual visit of the researcher to the study area indicate that resourceful informants can easily be found in the selected woreda. The study area is easily accessible for transportation from Hawassa town, which is the seat of the zonal administration.

1.7.2. Study Design

The study was proposed to be carried out in three phases. The first phase was library work. Literature related to the topic was reviewed. Instrument of data collection was prepared. Submission of the first draft proposal was included under this stage. Securing the logistics such as money was the last activity during this phase. The second phase was the time of actual field work. Data was gathered using different methods of data collection. During this phase, the researcher also further reviewed related literature and collected secondary data from relevant institutions. During the last phase, the collected data was organized and interpreted. The final draft was prepared and submitted to Dilla University RDO.

1.7.3. Research Approach

In general, in any research there are two types of research approaches: qualitative and quantitative. However, when we come to this study it tends to use totally qualitative research approach.

Why Qualitative Method for this study?

According to (Straus and Corbin 1998), qualitative methodology is a typical research approach which enables to come up with data that cannot easily produced by statistical procedures or other means of quantification. It is also the means for exploring and understanding the meanings of individuals or groups ascribe to social or human problems (Creswell 2009).

Moreover, qualitative research is preferred to collect data about human life realities, experiences, behavior, emotion and feeling, organizational function, social movement, cultural phenomena and their interaction with nature (Straus and Corbin 1998). But, quantitative approach focuses on generating statistical and measurable facts.

The issues, I focused by this research i.e. to assess the role of indigenous institutions in handling/ settling conflicts in

the study area. To do so, as shown explicitly above, it is the qualitative approach that helped most.

1.7.4. Sources of Data

In trying to obtain the necessary data from concerned parties, I employed both primary and secondary sources. The primary sources included informants such as elders, disputes, court officials (judges), youth, and local authorities (local administrators). With regards to the secondary sources they included both published and unpublished materials such as books, magazines, journals and unpublished reports from government and nongovernmental organizations.

1.7.5. Method of Data Collection

To get the required data for successful completion of this study the following methods of data collection were used:

Interview: Data was collected mainly through semi-structured interviews. The interviews were conducted by taking into consideration criteria such as age, sex, occupation and residence.

Observation (i.e., Observer as percipient) to get authentic data, observation was another major method of data gathering valuable information. Because what peoples say and do may sometimes contradict with each other. Thus, direct observation was the best solution. Through this, the researcher was observed the role, the processes and procedures of conflict settling among the target society.

Key informant interview: in order to get data on past events and scenarios and even on the current reality, it was better to conduct key informant interview with few knowledgeable individuals. Hence, this study was employed this method to supplement the findings obtained through other means.

Focus Group Discussion (FGD): on some specific issues different people may have different concerns. Thus, to look at concerns of different individuals and even to assess their level of understanding on some issue the researcher was used FGD as one method of collecting data. The purpose of this study was to gather diverse information on the merits, demerits, feature and procedure of traditional conflict mechanism.

Case Studies: in order to generate reliable data on the role of traditional conflict institutions in settling conflicts, case study was utilized. I documented and analyzed two actual conflict cases. The selected case was described and analyzed in detail to provide what types of conflicts and ways of settlement mechanisms.

1.7.6. Sample Procedures

Selections of appropriate samples were depended on the sampling procedures followed. To this end, the researcher has opted to use purposive sampling techniques. This technique is meant to give as appropriate response for the questions mentioned earlier.

In terms of sample size, the researcher had the intention to interview (Semi structured) with 10 informants, i.e. eight (8)

informants with elders (both men and women) and two (2) informants from court officials (judges), four (4) key informants from different groups (elders or religious leaders i.e. Christian and Muslim) and three (3) FGDs from different target groups such as elders, youth and local authorities. Each FGD has eight (8) discussants classified based on sex. And in the case of case studies, I documented and analyzed two (2) actual conflict cases.

1.7.7. Method of Data Analysis

It is apparent that in a given research, data collection is indispensable. However, a research should go beyond data collection. Any researcher has the responsibility of analyzing data to meet his/her objectives as well as to make the findings ready for scholarly consumption. Therefore, based on this certainty, in this research, I analyzed and interpreted the raw data collected through literature review, observations and focus group discussion and case study to answer the research questions and to achieve the stated objectives. In analysis part, I used descriptive and qualitative approach in interpreting the data.

1.8. Ethical Consideration

It is true that ethical consideration is as crucial as other aspects in the process of conducting a research for it significantly affects the success of the study. In this regard, a researcher needs to consider ethical values of the host community on which the research will be conducted. Therefore, I considered the socio-cultural norms of the host community on whom the research was carried out.

2. Conflict

2.1. The Concept of Conflict

Conflict happens to appear when individuals or groups have incompatible interests and/or goals. When one has become really an obstacle or shows a tendency to become so for another to meet his/her needs, conflict is, then, more likely to breakout. Conflict could also be a result of human greedy. For the reason that scarcity of any resource is always a fact of life, there would always be a persistent competition to have a greedy control over these resources. Indeed, this fierce competition would lead to a sort of collusion, and at times even to an intense conflict. Thus, a competition for resources, among others, is a major cause for conflicts that may arise between/among/ individuals and nations at large. (Barash and Webel, 2002) in a more or less similar way put it as:

... The word conflict...derives from the Latin conflagere, which means literary "to strike together." It is impossible for two physical objects, such as two billiard balls, to occupy the same space. They conflict, and if either is in motion, the conflict will be resolved by a new position for both of them. Within the human realm, conflict occurs when different social groups are rivals or otherwise in

competition. Such conflicts can have many different outcomes: one side changed, one side eliminated, both sides changed, neither side changed, or (rarely) both sides eliminated (Ibid)

In fact, we argue by saying that it is worthy of noticing not to have a misconception on the very essence and meaning of conflict and competition. They are basically different such that competition does not necessarily end up in confrontations nor does it involve the act of harming and/or destroying among/between the competitors.

While conflict, more often than not, on the other hand, is used to refer to a context which appears to be that there is the act of removing one another. Thus, competition is always positive and should be understood in its constructive sense. Although conflict is also not always bad, this is not, however, the same as saying that it has always a positive impact. Conflict has sometimes a devastating effect when it is particularly violent. It is undeniable fact that violent conflict kills quite a mass of people arbitrarily. It also consumes such great deal of other material resources that they would have been used in such returnable investments. (Alexander, 2005), in this regard, writes:

In any society, conflict is one of the major factors negatively affecting development. It diverts resources that could have otherwise been used productively (Ibid: 30).

Furthermore, this same author once again adds that:

Conflict is regarded as undesirable in many societies. In its violent form, it claims the lives of many people, destroy property, and diverts human as well as financial resources away from development (Ibid:44).

Conflict exists in different forms; mainly of two forms. There are direct and indirect types of violence depending on their magnitude and manifestation. Direct violence is the most outward, visible and easily identifiable sort of conflict. It is just like a direct physical confrontations or clashes between individuals. It could also be manifested in a form of war between nations or groups of different interests. On the other hand, indirect violence, which is synonymously referred to as structural violence, appears to be in a form of invisible and relatively unidentifiable societal structures. Such violence is built deep in to the social, economic and political structures. These structures deliberately prohibit every people from having enjoyed equal social status and equal access to economic opportunities as well as involvement in one's own political matters. It is all about discrimination and marginalization, suppression and exploitative world order. And all these in turn would result in human suffering and life misery in general as the consequence of impoverishment to overwhelmingly majority of the people.

For clearer conceptualization of the two types of violence, and their distinctions, it is important to quote HO-Won Jeong's explanation on this issue. He, for instance, states direct violence as: Direct violence, the popularly understood meaning of violence, is referred to physical injuries and the infliction of pain that is caused by specific person. Thus killing and beating, whether they happen in war or

interpersonal situations represent direct violence.... In direct violence, clear subject-action-object relationships are established, as we observe someone who hurts other people by a violent act. Direct violence generally works fast and grammatically. It is personal, visible, manifest and non-structural (Jeong, 2007).

On the other hand, (Jeong, 2007) also explains how structural violence gradually reveals to be a serious violence in such away as: Poverty, hunger, repression and social alienation constitute another way to characterize situations causing human misery. Quality of life is reduced by denial of education opportunities, free speech and freedom of association. Conditions are associated with uneven life chances, inequitable distribution resources and unequal decision-making power. Given its indirect and insidious nature, structural violence most often works slowly in eroding human values and shortening life spans. It is typically built into the very structure of society and cultural institutions Structural violence is apparent in social systems maintaining exploitative means (e.g. slavery) throughout human history (Ibid: 20-21).

2.2. Sources of Conflicts

Throughout the history of the study of conflict, whether the aggressive behavior is an inborn human quality or a reaction to social, political and economic factors is where lay the controversy among the scholars (Nader, 1968, Collier, 1975, Tadesse, 1988, 1994).

Some scholars have agreed that the causes of conflict are deep rooted in our biology. (Schellernberg, 1996) describes such an approach as individual characteristic theory that focuses on the individual and his acts, rather than the context of the act. This view of conflict has its root in the work of Freud, who believed that violence is rooted in our basic nature as animals. Human conflict is inevitable not because it is part of social life, but for it is a biological fact lying within us all.

Later writers have used Freud's assertion, too. Nineteenth century social Darwinists stressed the role of competition and conflict in all human societies. Taking the idea of the "survival of the fittest" as a basis, they analyzed conflict as part of a universal struggle urged by inborn aggressive tendencies. The new theoretical perspective under the name of ethnology also supports Freud's view. This approach, according to Schellenberg (1996) emphasizes the genetic instance of social behaviors. Ardrey (1961, 1966) and Lorenz (1963, 1966) cited in Tadesse (1988) and McCauley (1990), who argue and popularize that human violent behavior is inherited, were representatives of this approach. For them, according to (Nader, 1968), man inherits the biology of aggression that is natural and universal to vertebrates.

The idea that aggression and conflict is an inborn human quality has faded and received heavy criticisms from other writers. Gibson (1990), Roberchek (1990) and Gregor (1990) presented ethnographies of what they called peaceful societies, the Buid, the Semai and the Xingu respectively.

Montagu (1968, 1978), Plibeam (1972), cited in Tadesse (1988) reported several hunter-gatherers societies of Africa, which are said to be relatively peaceful. Tadesse (1988) further illustrated that a given society or individual persons could be peaceful and/or violent across time and circumstances. Anthropologists have effectively used these ethnographic works to refute the biologically based explanation of the sources of conflict and show its inadequacy.

Even those who have challenged the innate nature of human aggression have taken different paths to treat the sources of conflict. Whether or not material ends are the final causes is another point of debate. According to Roberchek (1990), ecological functionalists (for instance, Harris, 1972, Gross, 1975, Ross, 1978, Ferguson, 1984) assert that material causes are the final arbiter of human behavior. Opposing this view, Gibson (1990) argues that the materialistic and deterministic final cause argument is inadequate to explain the causal dynamics of particular conflicts. It is unable to link material cause with cultural elements, and it leaves no room for consideration of human decision-making. Roberchek (1990) says that the understanding of dispute "requires putting the brute material facts into cultural and social contexts attempting first of all to comprehend how the situation was conceptualized and defined by the people involved".

Other scholars have attempted to explain why the local groups of some cultures are internally more peaceful than the others in relation to social structure with a special emphasis on residential pattern, descent system and marriage rules. Velzen and Wetering (1960, cited in Otterbein, 1994) first developed the fraternal interest group theory. Fraternal interest group is power group that constitutes related males residing close together. They contend that such a group responds aggressively whenever the interest of one of their members is threatened. The authors concluded that in societies with power groups, conflicts are more often, and peaceful conflict resolution is less probable for the disputants have group ready to support them through thick and thin.

Confrontation theorists, who argue that the entire structure rather than mere residence are responsible for conflict, opposed this assumption. For instance, Dillon (1980, cited in Otterbein, 1994) has come up with different research result. Despite the presence of fraternal interest groups, the Meta of western Cameroon stigmatized the act of retaliation.

The structural functional theory is one of the major theoretical approaches to the study of conflict. Nader (1968) shows that this theory emphasizes both the structural sources and the structural functions of conflict. Lewellen (1983) states that the structural functionalists view society as an equilibrium system whose component parts play a role in the maintenance of the whole. Hence, as part of social life, conflicts too work towards the maintenance of the ongoing social structure. The works of Evans-Pritchard (1940) 'The Nuer' and Gluckman's 'Custom and Conflict in Africa' (1956) are typical examples of such an approach, which dominated the period between 1940s and 1950s in legal anthropology

(Lewellen, 1983). The 1960, according to Lewellen (1983), marked a shift to a more process-oriented, more dynamic form of analysis. This was signaled in 1954 by the work of Leach entitled "Political Systems of Highland Burma, in which he asks what accounts for conflicts in a society rather than what holds society together as functionalists did. Similarly, Gulliver's works on conflict and its resolution have been ground breaking for the shift from system-oriented approach toward actor-oriented approaches which take into consideration the new roles and choices in the face of the changing world (Caplan, 1995).

2.3. African Indigenous/Traditional/ Institutions of Conflict Resolution

Africa is a continent which has blindly and wrongly been, and still is continuing to be, considered horribly as a "dark" and hopeless" place with connotatively "primitive" societies. Primitive in this sense obviously implies to mean uncivilized. However, this is not only a mere mistake but it is also an ethnocentrically biased view. Such an unbalanced judgment emanates from the point of view which believes that there is only one perfect, absolute and standard culture, norm or value. As to the notion of absolutism, cultures and/or world outlooks other than the perceived standard one are inferior, savage and barbaric. Proponents of this notion do not recognize, or are reluctant to accept the very idea /principle of cultural relativism. The whole concept of cultural relativism is such that every society has their own norms and values peculiar to them. It is all about the proposition which advocates that any society needs to be judged in its own term. Accordingly, right or wrong and good or bad depends on one's own cultural measurements. This view does not put all cultures in to the same basket and measure them with similar standards. All in all, it denounces the assertion that reiterates the principle 'one size fits all'.

To this end, African societies unanimously have their own cultures of civilizations. It is believed that Africa is the cradle of mankind. As it might also be witnessed in many archeological excavations, there is now a day's a tendency to believe that the first men had probably lived in Africa. Indeed, Africans, at least like any other people elsewhere, certainly have for long time developed their own unique system of administration and governance. As part of their strong and viable system, they had also, and still remain to have, effective and practically workable conflict resolution mechanisms which sustained and solidified them together within their respective communities. Francis (2006) also has to say in this relation that:

According to archeological evidence, Africa is the cradle of humanity. It therefore stands to reason that Africa had, from time immemorial, evolved its own mechanisms and institutions for managing and resolving disputes and conflicts in ways that preserved the fabric of society and encouraged peaceful co-existence. The argument is that the concept and practice of peace and conflict resolution is not new in Africa, but rather it is the institutionalization of peace and conflict studies at African Universities and schools and

civil society organizations, that is the new phenomenon (Francis, 2006).

This is particularly true of Africa before colonialism ravaged it along with the destruction and erosion of its norms and precious inner most values all over the continent. Western colonizers have not only exploited the African rich natural and human resources but they have also corrupted and poisoned its long time and deep-rooted systems of self governance. It is a common knowledge that Africa had existed with its unique civilization and thereby philosophy long before the intrusion of colonialism to generally disrupt the indigenous knowledge systems.

Singleton and Shingler (1967), in this regard, add as Long before the coming of white men, African peoples had organized national governments to protect their citizens from foreign invasions and crime. All African communities have had rules to ensure that individuals lived in harmony with one another and that justice was done when conflict broke out. Africa religions have seen man as part of the universe and have provided a moral code on which man could rely (Singleton and Shingler, 1967).

Thus, it is rational to argue that Africa, as a civilized continent, had the conception of state and state formation as anciently as others. History tells us that there had been miraculous and until this day mysterious level of civilizations in Africa. These civilizations had existed as equally parallel as the world's renowned Middle East and Greek civilizations. This fact could be witnessed by the physically tangible remaining artifacts which are believed to be unique up to this date. To this end, it would be suffice to mention the great Axumite and Egyptian ancient civilizations, to just remind only few. By and large, Africa had also witnessed to have such great and enlightened philosophers of its sons like Zeracob of the Axum who originally had critical thoughts regarding gender equality. Africa is, therefore, a home of wisdom and art in varieties of field of areas. In fact, the indigenous knowledge system in the area of conflict management, prevention and resolution is no exception, if not best. Francis (2006) also confirms this argument as:

It is ... reasonable to assume that ancient and pre-colonial Africa must have developed its own, practical and rational wisdom. And approaches According to pre-colonial historical evidence, Africa had developed rudimentary and in most cases, sophisticated political, socio-economic and political institutions, and with developed approaches to conflict management, resolution and peace building (Francis, 2006).

In spite of the fact that traditional societies in Africa are reputed to settle conflicts long lastingly and for that matter to handle their administrative cases in their own, the European colonial powers rhetorically justify colonialism to have a civilizing mission. In fact, colonialism did not only downgrade the traditional methods of peacemaking but it also had virtually destroyed the democratic institutions in many African societies (Bahru, 2002). Colonizers did this as part of their purpose to homogenize the world in such away

as their values and perspectives would be dominantly flourishing at the expense of vanishing others. In doing so, they replaced the African customary practices and institutions which for centuries had upheld the societies by their own imported customs of rule. It is because this would ultimately serve their colonial interests. Fred-Mensah (2000) has rightly pointed out how colonialism had influenced the local systems as shown among the Buem people. He has put it as:

The colonial experience brought to Buem-Kator significant alternations in political, judicial, economic and socio-cultural structures As should be expected, these changes have had significant impacts on the traditional conflict management of the area Buems say that the presence of national government's judicial and security officials in the area and the alternatives that they offer in conflict management have undermined their traditional conflict mediation system, including their reliance on supernatural sanctions for determining truth in court and enforcing court decisions (Fred-Mensah, 2000).

In a similar assertion, Wilson-Fall (2000) has also written about how effective the traditional institutions to manage conflicts were in the pre-colonial Africa. According to him and other authors, however, these were intentionally degraded and paralyzed. To exactly put the words of Wilson-Fall (2000): Prior to and during the early part of the colonial era in West Africa, indigenous peoples practiced traditional methods of conflict management characterized by a concern for long – term rather than short-term solutions. Many of these methods were also preventive or meant to minimize conflict. When the Colonial regime replaced the power base of local political Structures, the use of traditional methods of conflict management dwindled. Especially in terms of land use and access to other natural resources, the colonial governments made it clear that they were the ultimate authority (Ibid:49).

Withstanding all the influences and attempts of destruction, there are still traditional institutions in Africa many of which are co-operatively working with the imported modern institutions. In spite of the effect of modernization, the existing traditional institutions are yet serving to keep harmonies (Zartman, 2000) and solidarities among people of a certain society. Although sufficient attention is not given to the traditional institutions even in the post-independence era, however, there are to a little extent tendencies to incline to use them applying in the contemporary issues. An exemplary step to be mentioned in this regard is the application of gacaca to resolve “modern” conflicts in Rwanda. The Rwandan societies have been using gacaca traditionally for so long years at a grass root level to handle any sort of conflicts and/or disputes. The Rwandan government has also recently been able to apply it in dealing with the most deadly and worst crisis of 1994 which had eventually led to genocide reportedly claimed near to a million people. Tongeren et al. (2005) states gacaca and how it functions as:

Gacaca refers to a traditional Rwandan method of

conflict resolution at a village level. In cases of conflict in a Community, such as dispute over land, property damage, material issues, or inheritance rights, meetings were convened between aggrieved parties, and presided over by community leaders. The meetings not only were meant to sanction the violators of the village norms, but also ensure that those accused, and found guilty, were again fully accepted as members of the community. Reconciliation between violators and their communities was at the core of the traditional Gacaca system (Ibid:466).

Another African traditional/indigenous/ institution of this kind, to add, is ubuntu which is also an effective conception of peace making institution. The role of ubuntu in conflict resolution and its very notion in general, as in Ibeanu (2006), is stated as: As an indigenous conflict-prevention and peace-building concept, it embraces the notion of acknowledgement of guilt, showing of remorse and forgiveness, and paying compensation or reparation as a prelude for reconciliation and peaceful co-existence The essence of ubuntu is to promote a culture of peace, tolerance, peaceful co-existence and mutual development. As a conflict prevention and peace building strategy, ubuntu is based on the principle of reciprocity, inclusivity and a sense of shared destiny between peoples and communities. The ubuntu tradition, in practical terms, is about reconciliation and building peace in divided societies, and about democratic participation (Ibeanu, 2006).

Even with the presence of such local institutions, it is an open secret, however, that news about the prevalence of conflicts in Africa has become cliché. Conflicts are aggravated and intensified in the post-independent Africa more than ever. The reason may, among others, be because of the fact that Africans are unable to handle their own matters through their customary institutions. The issue of conflict management and resolution is, therefore, no exception in this regard. The interferences of governments and concerned international organizations to calm the conflicts are negligent of the culturally built grass root institutions to take into account. Instead, a prescriptive approach is being applied to pacify the violence. However, this approach is bearing no fruit. Scholars along this line argue that conflict resolution needs to be based on a specific context of the society where the conflict has already erupted. John Paul Lederach, as in Francis (2006), for instance has argued that the process of conflict resolution ought to be “elective” as opposed to the universally and dominantly accepted “prescriptive” way of resolving conflicts. Francis (2006) contrastingly further elaborates the elective and prescriptive processes as: The elective process of conflict resolution is based on building and creating appropriate models from the cultural resources and implicit knowledge available in a given setting. The Prescriptive process on the other hand, is based on transferring conflict resolution techniques from one setting to another, the transfer of Western methods to non-Western conflict environment (Francis, 2006). There is, therefore, a need to promptly

revitalize the African traditional conflict resolution institutions so that conflicts for a long-term be resolved.

2.4. Indigenous Conflict Resolution Institutions in Ethiopia

Ethiopia is believed to be the “museum of peoples” with more than 80 ethnic groups constituting and forming one nation state. It is a country of diversity harboring varieties of languages, different religions and faiths as well as quite many nations and nationalities with their own philosophical perspectives and unique cultural practices. History also tells us that Ethiopia is as ancient as 3000 years back. It is, therefore, definitely true that it had experienced strong and cohesive systems of administration with its world top leading civilization, namely Axumite civilization. Indeed, every Ethiopian ethnic groups as their African counterparts have traditionally age-old and time-tested administrative and conflict resolution institutions at the grass root levels. In fact, exhaustive and thorough studies about these institutions are not bulky enough and so are limited literatures in this area. Be this as it may, however, there are some literatures on only few cases elaborating the importance and strength of these multipurpose institutions. For instance, Bahru Zewde (2002) has written about the traditional political and judicial institutions in Gurage. He pointed out the Yajoba Qicha and Gordanna sera practiced in the society. He has stated these institutions as:

The Yajoka and Gordanna assemblies seem to combine legislative and judiciary functions. Representatives of the Constituent units of the Sebat Bet and Kestane, respectively, were assembled to agree on the fundamental rules governing their community. Periodic meetings were also held to revise the laws when such revisions were deemed necessary. At the same time the assemblies serve as courts of final recourse Individuals who felt dissatisfied with ruling of their territorial assembly could invoke their right of appeal with set expressions: Ājoka (“let the Yajoka rule on this case”) or Gefacha (“I appeal”) ..., confirmation (or otherwise) of a lower verdict by the supreme court was mandatory in all cases, irrespective of appeals being made or not (Bahru, 2002).

To add one more traditional/indigenous/ institution of Ethiopia, there is also another such similar multipurpose institution of the Kambata, South nations, nationalities and peoples region. This indigenous institution as to Yacob Arsano (2002) is known as seera. Seera is everything to the kambata society. It is everything such that it serves as a basis for the political administration, social interaction and means of conflict resolution within the territory of the society. Yacob (2002) explains it more comprehensively as: ... Seera refers to the code of conduct practiced and internalized among the Kambata. Relations between individuals, tribes and territorial units are regulated by seera. It is alternatively known as Marietta, which means commitment to truth. Seera is broadly neither conceived nor native realm within which individuals and groups are expected to behave. The territorial or tribal councilors function according to their

respective seera. Love affairs, marriage and family relations, peer group association, work and entertainment parties, games and sports, hunting bands, etc. Are all bound by seera relevant to the specific activity. Childcare, socialization of the young, circumcision, initiation and rites of passage are handled as seera requires. Seera prescribes the way farmers relate to the environment, young to old, women to men Seera administration aims at pacification, conciliation, correction and reintegration (Ibid: 48-49).

Elders in this regard, according to the rule of seera, are considered to have the most esteemed and graceful status. It is believed that it is with the lifelong experiences and accumulated knowledge of the elders which seera would appropriately function (Yacob, 2002). Gada is also the most known political, social and judicial traditional institution widely practiced among the Oromo people. Much is said and written in different sources about the democratic nature of the Gada system. Hamdesa (2000) and Assefa (2005) also have written that it is an effective institutional system to manage any source of conflicts among the Oromo so that harmony, peaceful co-existence and smooth relations would be maintained in the society. As to Hamdesa (2000), there are thirteen steps on the way to the whole process of conflict resolution through the use of the Gada system to finally arrive at reconciliation.

There are also many other traditional conflict resolution institutions in each and every nations, nationalities and ethnic groups of Ethiopia. These, among others, may include, to list at least some, as Gereb in Wajerat (Tigray) and Mablo in Abala of Afar (Kelemework, 2000); Abagar in Southern Wollo (Netsanet, 2006), Michu in Metekel (Tsega, 2002), Awassia in Walyta (Mellesse 2008), Afocha in Harar (Biruk and Jira, 2008), Jarsumma and Haffi Hamee in Oromo (Assefa, 2005), Guma in Waliso Oromo (Dejene, 2007) and so on and so forth.

3. Back Ground of the Study Area

The study was conducted in Dalle Woreda of the Sidama Zone in the Southern Nations, Nationalities and People Regional State (SNNPRS). The Sidama is named for the Sidama people whose homeland located in this zone that consists of 19 Woredas of which Dalle is the one. Before discussing the study woreda is proper to deal with that the Sidama zone in which the former is a part.

3.1. The land of Sidama

Sidama zone is one the most fertile and the most densely populated areas in Ethiopia that make up about four percent of the total Ethiopian population. The staple food of the Sidama, enset (false banana) is the very drought resistant (though it has periodically suffer from a virus diseases which has caused serious and frequent food shortages), and allows under normal condition a dense population in relatively small area. The Sidama land also provides valuable resources to the economy. The most important contribution

is cash crops, mainly coffee but also khat (an ever green shrub whose leaves are chewed as stimulant) and other agricultural yields.

Location of the sidama Zone is in south central parts of Ethiopia, to the east and north east of the Lake Abaya and to the east and south east of the Lake Hawassa. The midlands contain a continuing of chain of villages, while in the highlands are a little more scattered. On the open savanna in the lowlands (including the study woreda) settlements are even more scattered. (Bahiru Z and et.al 2002). Parts of the Sidama land are located in the famous the East African Rift valley, the deep volcanic rift which starts in the Middle East and pass through eastern Africa down to Mozambique before stretching the Indian Ocean. The lowland to the west of sidama, including half of the Lake Abaya and Lake Hawassa, are on the floor of the rift valley. (Ibid)

3.2. Occupations

The main occupation of the rural Sidama people is farming, and 1,783 square kilometer is cultivated land where 85 percent of the total population (i.e. 2,954,136 with nearly equal proportion of men and women), are farmers. (CSAE, 2007) Coffee is the most lucrative cash crop. Khat market has become another huge cash crop market in the last few years. But basically the Sidama people cultivate a variety of grains and fruits for the households and local consumption. They also depend on the dairy products. (Bahiru Z. and others 2002)

3.3. Socio-Cultural Contexts of the Sidama People

For any social science which attempts to investigate the cultural issues and their influence, therefore, this section may contribute a lot to have subsequent information about the people under investigation.

3.3.1. The language

The sidama people speak their own Cushitic sidama (locally as sidamoo afe) language that belongs to the eastern highland Cushitic sub-group of the Ethio-Cushitic family of languages. The language shares some basic phones, morphemes and syntaxes with other languages within the same sub-groups such as Gedeo, kambata, Hadiya and the like which also known as the sidama languages in eastern highland Cushitic sub groups. (Bender M.L. 1976)

3.3.2. The Social Structure

The traditional Sidama community said to have emerged in the sixteenth century about 20 generations ago. Until the emperor Minilik II incorporated the sidama in to the Ethiopian empire, the Sidama existed as tribal unite with several kingdoms. The Sidama is defined as an ethnic group which is the most inclusive level of social organization and that inhabit a distinct area as a homogeneous ethnic group.

There are three Indigenous/traditional/ and cultural administrative structures in the Sidama society which reflect and govern the basic principles of the social structure and

relation. These traditional structures are based on patrilineal purity and seniority. Based on this a series of patrilineal sub tribes and subdivisions of sub tribes are stratified in to different hierarchical levels, clans and families. While the highest ranking groups have a legitimate right to possess land but the lower has no right mostly considered as impure and occupy the artisanship. (Bahiru and others 2002)

The Sidama has highly stratified patrilineal social structure and patriarchal family structure. Sub tribes (gosa) are divided in to three levels. First, the bisallo i.e. clans, second, the aydde: division that consist all descendants of one ancestor for about the three or five generations and which consists an olla (village). Third, mine; (house) the nuclear monogamous or polygamous family. Based on this social structure, there are nine sub tribes in the Sidama society: Alatta, Haweela, Qeweena, Saawoola, Fagisa, Garbicho, yanase, Malga and Holloo. This series of the sub tribes are in descending order of hierarchy (ibid). From this analysis it is interesting to see that the Sidama society is highly stratified society in its social structure.

The cultural daily life in the Sidama society has traditionally been organized around the social network within the Ola (village) or within the mine, the family unit which are governed by powerful male elders. In all traditional authorities, only the elder and only the man have an absolute right to make decision. This social rule and truth, referred to as halale, proclaimed by masculine elders is hard to challenge and is a base for forced consensus. (Ibid) Therefore, in the society, children and their mothers are voiceless participant who are simply occupying the lower stratum in decision making because their age and sex status.

Based on this background study of the Sidama zone administration, I need to proceed to the study woreda which is one of the nineteen woredas of the zone and that shares all attributes of the sidama society mentioned just above.

3.4. Dalle Woreda

Dalle is one of the woredas in the Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples' Region of Ethiopia. Part of the Sidama Zone located in the Great Rift Valley, Dale is bordered on the south by Aleta Wendo and Chuko, on the west by Loko Abaya, on the northwest by Boricha, on the north by Shebedino, and on the east by Wensho. The major town in Dale is Irgalem (43 kms away from regional and zonal capital, Hawaasa). Parts of Dale woreda were separated to create Loko Abaya and Wensho woredas. It is one of the 19 woredas in the zone.

3.4.1. Overview

The elevation of this woreda varies from about 1200 meters above sea level along the shores of Lake Abaya to about 3200 meters at its westernmost point. Rivers include the Gidabo. A 2004 survey of the land in Dale shows that 81.9% is arable or cultivable, none used for pasture, 2.7% forest, and the remaining 15.5% is considered swampy, degraded or otherwise unusable. The same survey reported

important cash crops for Dale include corn, barley, haricot beans, local varieties of cabbage, and sweet potatoes. Coffee is also an important cash crop in Dale, with 15.38 square kilometers planted with this crop, which produced a total of 9.3 million kilograms of beans in 2002/03 (5.7 million kilograms in 2003/04). Industry in this woreda includes 57 coffee pulpers. Two micro-finance institutions operate in Dale: the Sidama Microfinance Institution SC (SMFI), established in 1998; and the Omo Microfinance Institution SC (OMFI), established in 1997. While OMFI is a regional organization, SMFI operates only in the Sidama Zone; SMFI has 2,365 active clients and has loaned 5.5 million Birr to woreda inhabitants, while OMFI has 1,547 active clients and has made about 4.1 million Birr in loans. There are 15 multipurpose cooperatives in Dale, of which 12 are organized and registered in accordance with the new cooperatives law, with about 29,295 members or nearly 50% of the rural population; all of them are members of the Sidama Coffee Farmers Cooperative Union. The remaining 3 cooperatives are in the process of complying with the new law. According to a 2004 report, Dale had 27 kilometers of asphalt roads, 166 kilometers of all-weather roads and 28 kilometers of dry-weather roads, for an average road density of 167 kilometers per 1000 square kilometers.

3.4.2. Population

Based on the 2007 Census conducted by the CSA, this woreda has a total population of 242,658, of whom 122,918 are men and 119,740 women; 30,348 or 12.51% of its population are urban dwellers. The majority of the inhabitants were Protestants, with 79.98% of the population reporting that belief, 8.04% practiced Ethiopian Orthodox Christianity, 4.69% were Muslim, 3.46% were Catholic, and 1.3% observed traditional religions.

In the 1994 Census this woreda had a population of 306,329, of whom 156,772 were men and 149,557 women; 24,183 or 7.89% of its population were urban dwellers. The four largest ethnic groups reported in Dale were the Sidama (91.29%), the Amhara (3.98%), the Oromo (1.16%), and the Welayta (1.01%); all other ethnic groups made up 2.56% of the population. Sidamo is spoken as a first language by 92.57% of the inhabitants, 5.93% speak Amharic, 0.46% Welayta, and 0.33% Oromiffa; the remaining 0.71% spoke all other primary languages reported. 58.02% of the population said they were Protestants, 14.54% observed traditional religions, 9.05% practiced Ethiopian Orthodox Christianity, and 7.59% were Muslim. (Woreda Municipal, 2003)

4. Data Analysis and Interpretation

In this chapter the researcher discussed in detail the role of Sidama indigenous institutions in resolving different conflicts which occurred among the society including the various types of conflict mechanisms, their contribution for modern institutions and finally described the past and current

prospects of such indigenous institutions in the study area.

4.1. Sidama Indigenous/Traditional / Institutions

According to my informants stated that indigenous / traditional / institutions have played a great role to maintain peace and security within a given community. Therefore, indigenous institutions in Sidama society are still widely existed and respected within Sidama culture. These institutions in the society deal with various issues, responsibilities and mainly their duty is dealing with injustices and settling/resolving/ disputes among different groups of the society in the study area. But their duty and responsibilities differ as their levels vary.

4.2. Types and Role of Indigenous Institutions in Conflict Resolution

There are different levels of indigenous conflict resolution institutions in Sidama society. These variations are due to the following reasons:

- A. Variation in kin reckoning system: It indicates that differences of institution level occurred because of kin differences and system of reckoning. Therefore, Based on this differences different villages (neighbors) and those who have the same real ancestor established their own institution.
- B. Geographic and topographic factors: It indicated that because of geographical proximity those individuals who reckon same kin can form and became members of institution with the people who vary from his/her kin.

Generally speaking, Sidama society posses four types of indigenous/traditional/ conflict resolution institutions. The basic criteria for the classification are due to their geographical proximity and kinship variation. Therefore, the following are indigenous conflict resolution mechanism institutions in Sidama society:

1. "Woma" (Hamlet level institution)
2. "Gaanna" (Sub-clan institution)
3. "Karichcha" (Clan level institution)
4. "Garó" (General assemble of clan level institution)

1. "Woma" (Hamlet level institution)

This institution is organized from the lowest level of society, this is the sum total of certain families who are frequently interacted with one another and are highly related by kinship system. Their kinship type is mainly consanguineal or blood relation. They have many things in common and their ancestor or older members form organized group to lead their members. When we compare "Woma" institution with other indigenous/traditional/ institutions, it is least organized, formalized and institutionalized. The basic criteria to be participated/included/ in "Woma" institution are the issues of seniority by age and talent (knowledge) of knowing culture.

The basic duty and responsibility for "Woma" institution is seeing the case of conflict arise in members, giving train how to speak, listening skills for the young members,

teaching young member such as norms what is right and wrong in culture, which is allowed and which is not etc In addition to this, "Woma" institution can settle conflicts among the society such as conflict between wife and husband, destruction of garden by livestock and quarrel over boundaries of two or more neighboring members. The "Woma" institution is always open to see appeal of the disappointed party and to decide final solution. Therefore, major punishment for those parties who did wrong may vary depending on the level of the things that has been completed but some of them are giving pardon if accepting his/her wrong activity.

2. "Gaanna" (Sub-clan institution)

This institution is a little bit wider, more complex, better organized than "Woma" institution. The sum total of "Woma" organization forms the "Gaanna" institution. This institution shared at least same mythical ancestor and the relation between the members more or less blood based or consanguineal. It is also possible to have a member through affinal (marriage) relation in this organization.

"Gaanna" is the principal or chief executive for sub-clan institution. The basic requirement to be principal in this institution is seniority of age, other talent such as ability of communication and ability in solving conflict, patience, unbiased etc. The places where "Gaanna" usually hold assemble to see case called "Hara" or house of discussion.

The basic task or responsibilities for "Gaanna" institution are the following:

- A. Seeing or receiving the appeals: It comes from the members of "Woma" this is because, if the case is not possessed or completed at "Woma" the chief head of institution send both conflicting party to the "Gaanna" to be seen for further decision .
- B. The issue of rape: marriage without consent of the other party by using force. During time of cultural celebration of "Fichchee" holiday, group of male form a group based on age. Then after, same age group performs rape. Therefore, such problems should be solved by "Gaanna" institution.
- C. Case of theft and borrowed money: especially when somebody borrows money and refused to replay. So, "Gaanna" are responsible to see such a case. These and any kind of difficulty which is above to the capacity of "Woma" is finalized by "Gaanna" institution.

The distinguished quality of "Gaanna" institution from "Woma" is the former has the customary law called "seera". It is the law imposed for these individuals who refused to accept decision without convincing reasons or by proposing unconvincing reasons. If an individual punished by the customary law or "seera", it is impossible to eat or participate every social activity with other members until he gets permission from the leader of "Gaanna". Even other members also punished when they involved/joined/with guilty person to take part in various social setting.

Reentrance was too difficult and costly, time consuming task. Because of this punishment "Gaanna" institution is

highly respected, its decision is accepted. Other reason for acceptance of decision is their existence of fulltime specialist who exclusively assigned to see the case and to advise these individual who refuse the decision.

3. “Karicha” (Clan level institution)

“Karicha” institution is wider in scope, more complex in organization, highly institutionalized, and well formalized. The collection of “Gaanna” institution formed wider clans’ level institution. Like that of “Gaanna” Karicha institution shared same mythical ancestor. The only difference is distance or remoteness of common ancestor. It is possible to form and bring member of Karichcha institution through marriage ties as well as blood ties.

The chief executive for “Karichcha” institution is “Qara Karichcha”. Sidama society has eight Karichcha institutions. According to my key informant, the principal criteria to select the head of institution is by personal talent in terms of communication, enduring of cultural values, norms, beliefs, seniority of age, status (social position) in society, prestige in terms of power. The chief executives of “Gaanna” can be selected as candidate to present the clan. The position of chief executive also determined by his orator qualities, ability of handling problems and making decisions. The place where “Karichcha” usually held assemblies to see the case called “Ayidda ahara” or House of Lords.

The basic responsibility for Karichcha institution is:

- a. Religious and administrative matters are dealt with.
- b. Issue of murder, any conflict which resulted to death.
- c. Others matter which are difficult for lower levels institutional are discussed by Karichcha institution.

Like that of “Gaanna” “karichcha” has its own distinguishing quality called “Ayiddu seera” meaning customary law of clan. It is the law imposed for those individuals who refuse to accept final decision by proposing unconvincing reasons. These legal sanctions isolated for those individuals to become a member in institutions and any other social activities. Finally the person remained a social and ritual out caste. This means whatever difficulty and problem has faced to him, no one is willing to help him. He will not be able to participate on burial ceremonies, his wife is not allowed to borrow anything even fire from near villages and no one help him for constructing house. Only the means to inter in to membership is possible through accepting his mistakes and paying cattle for his wrong activity, preparing invitation, drinking with great deal of expenditure.

There are different levels of “Ayiddu Seera” (Customary law) in the Sidama society. These are as follows: fines, ostracism, oaths and cursing which are mostly applicable on males. But women and children are in direct victims of these sanctions.

According to my informants, there are two type of “Ayiddu seera” depend on the level of seriousness of mistake and wrong doing. These are “Yorto” and “kado”, meaning, warning and cursing. “Yorta” or warning is lowest level of sanction. It took place when the elders were not

satisfied by the presentation of accuser. “Kado” or cursing is highest level of sanction which forcing the criminal to leave his area and migrate to another area, but this kind of punishment is very rare. As my informant stated in “hallo” clan in “wansho” institution, this kind of punishment has happened only once.

4. “Garo” tribe based institution

“Garo” institution is highest Supreme Court; highly organized, institutionalized and well formalized. This institution shared one tribe ancestor. My informants stated that, all Sidama society have one “Garo” institution. Marriage relation and blood ties don’t make the matter but being Sidama is only requirement to belong to this institution. The chief executive for “Garo” institution is “Moote” which means lord who lead the institution. The principal criteria to be “moote” in the institution are being member in senior clan in Sidama society. It is Hallo clan among which seniority is given and headed by “Abbo” virtue of wisdom, orator quality, social status or position, prestige in terms of power are also criteria. Unlike other, the position of Garo is inherited based on clan. It is exclusively given for “Hallo” clan among the others the place where “Garo” usually held assemblies to see the case is called “Wansho”.

The basic duties and responsibilities for Garo are receiving appeals from dissatisfied claimants by lower institutions, pray GOD their forefather spirits on issues concerning weather conditions of the time, peace, drought, epidemic etc. and Murder case is also the highest matter to be discussed there. At the time of my visit of field site “Wansho” I came up with two case of murder, saw by member of council. One in Hawella area and other is in Holla area. But both cases are not yet finished and the elders were dealing on them.

The process of seeing the case of murder in this institution is long and time consuming and it follows the following procedures: As my informant told me that, if someone kill a man, shortly after the incident, elders from the institution just go directly to the victims family and the elected elders beg them not to go the court and assured them will solve the problem within the traditional institution. Even the family of the victim not willing to do so, they can’t response negative answer for these respected elders. Then after, elders took any responsibility to punish criminals according to their customary law.

After a long period of discussion and appointment on the issue, the elders bring the criminal and his family to the victim’s house and they wash both families by cold water. This washing symbolize that there will be no more revenge took place between them for future. But if there is no river nearby there, the sister of the murderer will hold a honey and spray it with a leaf of plant on the victim’s family. This is because in Sidama culture women is not considered as criminal and enemy. After all these process, the murderer forced to give money for the victim’s family and additionally the families give a cow called “Cincote adde” cow of patience. Also families of the criminal should give money to

the council as a punishment for wrong doing.

4.3. Luwa Institution

As like of other indigenous/traditional/ institutions of Sidama society, Luwa institution also has important place in the society. The system of organization, reason for formation roles, responsibilities of luwa institution are strongly different from those of the former ones.

4.3.1. Origin of Luwa Institution

Luwa system has recent originated of institution in Sidama society and there are also other indigenous/traditional/ institutions such as Gareo, Karichcha and Woma.

According to my informants, there is a controversial idea about the origin of Luwa. Some people believed that, Luwa Institution of Sidama were adapted from the Gada system of Oromo. But still other suggested that, it was started by children in the form of game, while playing, children form group and choose the leader who led them. They began to visit villages through blessing children, and women in order to get child praying for rain and epidemic. While doing so, these groups received different gifts from their fathers and mothers. These groups grew up and began to perform collective work or activities such as hunting, war etc. These highly organized groups named as Luwa and their leader is called "Gadanna" or helper called "Jalaawa".

4.3.2. Types of Luwa Institutions

In sidama society, there are five luwa institutions. These are "Hirboo", "Darara", "Fullasa" "Bincha" or "Moggisa" and "Waawasa".

According to my informants, "Mogisa Luwa" is excluded from institution because it is believed that it brings disaster, drought, epidemic and uncomfortable fortune to the society. In Sidama society every male member belongs to certain Luwa among its types at birth. The son becomes the member of luwa following luwa group of his father. The sequences are as follows: Waawasa, Daraara, Binacha (mogisa), Hirbora and Fullaasa. Therefore, these sequences showed father-son relationship, i.e. Wawassa is father of Darara, Darara is the father of mogisa and the like.

4.3.3. Criteria for Electing "Gadaanna" and "Jalaawa"

"Gadaanna" and "Jalaawa" remained in position only eight years. After eight years interval other leaders chose. For this purpose the process of searching "Gadaanna" for Luwa began before two or three years of the institution of former. In order to choose Gadaanna, eight candidates to be chosen by retiring elders. These elders consult with different shamans (Kiilancha) and astrology living in different place. They informs all expected qualities of person who are selected as gadana (leader) and Jalaawa (assistance).

Both should be a person who is living parentage without losing his father and mother and must have no physical deformities. Those individuals who have deformities of hearing, thinking, vision and any others cannot be head of

institutions. Persons who fulfilled the criteria can become candidate and head to Gadana and Jalaawa. (Stanley, S and Karstem,D, 1968, The Luwa system of Garbicho of Sidama).

4.4. Socio-Economic, Cultural and Political Roles of Sidama Indigenous Institutions

A. "Woma" Institution

Besides to its role in managing conflict, woman institution played a great role in sphere of social, economic, cultural and politics. Socially: woma institution considered as primary agent of socialization in which it is a lifelong process that people learn the attitude, values and behaviors appropriate for members of a particular culture. It gives various training for the young members of society about what is wrong and right, allowed and not allowed in their culture. Culturally: individuals member who learn a lot about his/her culture put it in to practice culturally based manner. While attending various cultural ceremonies and festivals, rituals and practices, woma institution laid the base for all cultural practices to be practiced by person in a given culture. Politically: Woma institutions also laid the base for practicing many roles which related with political issues such as its role in bringing peace and security, managing conflict. Economically: Woma institution also played great roles. It is the base for individual member to create sense of cooperation, sense of willingness, to become economically well being. Old member of institution provided advice and training for their young.

B. "Ganna" Institution

Like that of other institutions, "Ganna" has various roles in Sidama society besides to its major role of managing conflict. Gaanna has social role in the society in which, people learn his/her responsibilities, how to be socially well being, how to adhere values, norms, behaviours and habits, these and other role fills its gap through Ganna. Politically: this institution laid the base for emergency of modern administration system in which it managed conflict traditionally with cost effective and time effective (manageable) manner. It also contributes a lot to upgrade quality of respect, tolerance in a society. Creating sense of working hard, cooperation and being competent in terms of wealth etc.

C. "Karichacha" Institutions

Besides to its role in bringing peace and security and managing conflict, "Karichcha" as institution played other role in the society. But its role in political, economic, social and cultural is similar to the roles of other institutions. The difference is its scope and level of complexity meaning that Karichcha institution extends its vision goal and objectives up to clan level. So, that it creates generalization for large member of population in the society.

D. "Garó" Institutions

As stated earlier, this institution is highest Supreme Court and is tribal based, most of its roles are focused on bringing peace and security, praying GOD, spirits for good fortune,

resolving extreme forms of crime like murder, so that its roles are very broad which cover every sphere including politics, economics, social and cultural.

E. “Luwa” Institution

In similar manner, Luwa institutions have the following social, economic, political and cultural roles in the society. Socially luwa institution encourages its members of same age to develop sense of cooperation, to work together for the common-goal. If one member among other has faced certain problem, luwa instructions have their own common property to help him.

It also has responsibilities to manage conflict which within given luwa. Economic role: as mentioned above luwa institution is willing to have common property or asset which serves as guarantee in the time of emergency. To become head you should be rich in wealthy, hard worker and competent with other luwas. Political role: politically this system laid the bases for development of democracy, election system, and peace full form of leaving leadership position. It also guides the member to be reasonable to their role in the system.

Cultural role: luwa institutions are the center for the members to learn various cultural elements. For instance, different activities such as ceremonies, festivals, rituals, traditions, folksong, luwa song and etc are conducted during imitating and termination of each luwa. At this point individual member has opportunities to learn every phenomenon in celebration critically. In addition to this, luwa is a center for learning what is right and wrong is allowed to do and not to do in the view point of the society or culture.

4.5. Contribution of Indigenous Institutions for the Development of Modern Institutions

In Sidama society Indigenous/traditional/ institution have long history about their origins, roles, types and other related issues. So, Sidama indigenous institutions have played a great role for the development of modern institutions. The modern institutions (Courts) have and took a strong base from the indigenous/traditional/ institutions in resolving conflict and preserving peace and security. Besides to modern institution, the indigenous institutions have played a great role for the emergence of cooperative unions.

Indigenous/traditional/ institutions are cost and time effective in addition to many other benefits provide for the society when we compare with modern institutions. Therefore, at this time government courts encourages indigenous/traditional/ institutions to promote peace and to solve conflicts at the grass root level or at the local level.

4.6. Prospects of Indigenous Institutions

Nowadays, Sidama indigenous/traditional/ institutions are facing different problem due to modernization/globalization/. In the past, such institutions were the center of peace and security. They were served as schools to gain the value, norm, belief of the Society. But at this time, the core values of

indigenous/traditional/ institutions are changing due to the above mentioned factors especially among the young generation. The young generation began to see the indigenous institutions as less value in solving different communities' problem than the modern institutions in terms of procedures in solving conflicts between two parties. But indigenous institutions very effective, respected religiously or culturally within the society in resolving any local conflicts.

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1. Conclusions

Sidama indigenous/traditional/ institutions played a great role to maintain peace and security within a given community. Therefore, indigenous institutions in Sidama society are still widely exist and respected within Sidama culture. These institutions in the society deal with various issues, responsibilities and mainly their duty is dealing with injustices and settling/resolving/ disputes among different groups of the society in the study area. But their duty and responsibilities differ as their levels vary.

There are different levels of indigenous conflict resolution institutions in Sidama society. These variations are due to the following reasons: the first one, Variation in kin reckoning system, it indicates that differences of institution level occur because of kin differences and system of reckoning. Therefore, Based on this differences different villages (neighbors) and those who have the same real ancestor established their own institution and the second one, geographic and topographic factors: It indicated that because of geographical proximity those individuals who reckon same kin can form and became members of institution with the people who vary from his/her kin.

Generally speaking, Sidama society posses four types of traditional/indigenous/ conflict resolution institutions. The basic criteria for the classification are due to their geographical proximity and kinship variation. Therefore, the following are indigenous conflict resolution mechanism institutions in Sidama society: “Woma” (Hamlet level institution), “Gaanna” (Sub-clan institution), “Karichcha” (Clan level institution) and “Garro” (General assemblies of clan level institution).

As like of other indigenous/traditional/ institutions of Sidama society, Luwa institution also has important place in the society. The system of organization, reason for formation roles, responsibilities of luwa institution are strongly different from those of the former ones.

In sidama society, there are five luwa institutions. These are “Hirboo”, “Darara”, “Fullasa” “Bincha” or “Moggisa” and “Waawasa” According to my informants, “Mogisa Luwa” “is excluded from institution because it is believed that it brings disaster, drought, epidemic and uncomfortable fortune to the society. In Sidama society every male member belongs to certain Luwa among its types at birth. The son becomes the member of luwa following luwa group of his

father. The sequences are as follows: Waawasa, Daraara, Binacha (mogisa), Hirbora and Fullaasa. Therefore, these sequences showed father-son relationship, i.e. Wawassa is father of Dararo, Darara is the father of mogisa and the like.

In Sidama society indigenous institution have long history about their origins, roles, types and other related issues. So, Sidama indigenous institutions have played a great role for the development of modern institutions. The modern institutions (Courts) have and took a strong base from the indigenous institutions in resolving conflict and preserving peace and security. Besides to modern institution, the indigenous institutions have played a great role for the emergence of cooperative unions.

Indigenous/traditional/ institutions are costly and time effective in addition to many other benefits provide for the society when we compare with modern institutions. Therefore, at this time government courts encourages indigenous/traditional/ institutions to promote peace and to solve conflicts at the grass root level or at the local level.

Nowadays, Sidama indigenous institutions are facing different problem due to modernization/globalization/. In the past, such institutions were the center of peace and security. They were served as schools to gain the value, norm, belief of the Society. But at this time, the core values of indigenous/traditional/ institutions are changing due to the above mentioned factors especially among the young generation. The young generation began to see the indigenous institutions as less value in solving different communities' problem than the modern institutions in terms of procedures in solving conflicts between two parties. But indigenous institutions very effective, respected religiously or culturally within the society in resolving any local conflicts.

5.2. Recommendations

Based on the research findings, regarding to Sidama indigenous institutions, here are the possible recommendations:

- ✓ Indigenous/traditional/ institutions have played a great role in solving conflicts within the society equally like that of the modern institution.
- ✓ Indigenous institutions have unique mechanism in solving conflicts among society and should be preserved for the next generation.
- ✓ Responsible bodies such as government, non government organizations, researchers/ academicians/ should play a great role to empower and preserve indigenous institutions.

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Acronyms

Aaqle: Somali term for mag-playing group.
 Abbo: Forefathers of "Holla" clan of Sidama
 Ayana: Lineage council
 Carlok: Traditional Institution of Anayana Society
 Dawa, Bale, Doddola: Wonsho place where avvo settled
 Erpo: Group of mediator in Somali
 Fiixusongo: Clans council
 Gadaanna: Head of Luwa
 Geraanna: Person with good judgement in Somali
 Ganna: Sub-clan institution
 Garo: Tribe level institution
 Gurrti: Governor in Somali
 Hoffa: Supper stem of Sidama
 Holla: Clan of Sidama
 Luwa: Age grade
 Jalaawa: Assistant
 Magano: God
 Olluu songo: Nation hood council
 Sidamu Afoo: Language of Sidama
 Weese: Enset
 Wonsho: Full
 Woma: Hamlet level institution
 Wilok: Traditional institution of Neurs
 Xeera: Customary law of Somali
 Xeer beegti: Superme court of Somali

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