

Procedures used in Raaga Indigenous Conflict Resolution institutions among Mareko ethnic group in Gurage zone southern Ethiopia

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Abstract: The main objective of this study is to explore the procedures used in Raaga-Maaga indigenous conflict resolution institution among the Libido-Mareko ethnic group in Gurage zone Southern Ethiopia. To attain this objective, the study employed both secondary and primary data sources. The primary data were gathered through in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, and observations. Secondary data were obtained through a critical review of related literature and documents. Both primary and secondary data were organized thematically and analyzed through systematic interpretation and triangulation of various sources. The study found that conflict related with land holding, marriage and gender related issues and alcoholism are the main causes of conflict among the Libido-Marko ethnic group in Marko Woreda. Conflicts are manifested at family, neighborhood and clan level with varying magnitude. The study further found that the conflict resolution procedures for homicide in Raaga-Maaga conflict resolution are divided into three stages: Hoda, weerkefeena, and heemachagudda stages. Finally, the study concluded by suggesting possible areas for future intervention and further research.

Keywords: Raaga-Maaga, Libido-Mareko, procedures in conflict resolution

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I. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Conflict and disputes within a society and individuals over different issues are part of human history (Burtone, 1996:12). It is often argued that conflict is inevitable normal, positive and even some times necessary and useful for social changes (Jacob et al., 2009:1, Augesurg, 1996 in Stewart 1998). Conflicts are facts of life, inevitable and often creative (Fisher, 2000). Fisher (2000) points out that in our day-to-day interaction with others, we either observed or pass through conflicts, which range from the very interpersonal quarrel, family and neighbors dispute, ethnic and inter- state conflicts to the global war.

Burtone (1996) states that a great deal of conflict and violence is provoked by such circumstances as childhood environments, absences of job opportunity, insecurity experienced because of a minority status, resource deprivation and post-colonial boundaries that cut through ethnic communities. Wolf and Columbes (1981 in Assefa 2005:72) also classified causes of conflict under seven major categories, these are systematic failure, human aggression as biological needs, great power imperialism, economic rivalry, elite and popular fatalism regarding war, political conspiracy and the general movement of history.

The biggest challenge today confronting human nature is not about occurrence of conflict per se, but how to these conflicts are fully resolved whenever they occur to prevent them from further escalation (Bokari, 2013). In this, regard Ahmad (2011) notes that humans have sought, as long as there has been conflict, to handle conflict effectively, by containing or reducing its negative consequences. Alula and Getachew (2008) also argued that resolution of conflict is crucial for day-to-day coexistence as human societies are in constant search of resolution mechanisms of conflicts.

According to Alula and Getachew (2008), conflict resolution mechanisms in Ethiopia can be broadly classified as customary conflict resolution mechanisms and formal conflict resolution mechanism (state justice system). The formal conflict resolution mechanism (which is provided by the state) in Ethiopia is mainly European origin (Ayalew, 2012:8). It was introduced in Ethiopia in the 1960s, and subsequent laws issued by succeeding governments. The professed intention was to create comprehensive set of laws, modernization of the legal framework that would serve modern Ethiopia (Ayalew, 2012).

According to Alula and Getachew (2008:1), indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms are prevalent throughout the country at local level and it is the dominant justice system in the country. Indigenous mechanism to conflict resolution is made by the people not by the state and drives its legitimacy from participation and

consensus of the community and its recognition of the same by the government (Abera, 2003:839). Indigenous conflict resolution mechanism emanates from the custom of the people as practiced over long period, accepted by the community as governing principle, and hence binds the society, a breach of which entails social reaction and even punishment (Dagne and Bapu, 2013:2).

Ethiopia is home for various ethnic groups. Almost all ethnic groups have developed indigenous mechanisms of conflict resolution. Different ethnic groups like Oromo, Afar, Amhara, Benishangul- Gumuz, Hareri, Somale, Sidama, Walayeta, Gamo, Tigeray and other ethnic groups develop their own indigenous mechanisms of conflict resolution with certain peculiar features. These features, which comprise social traditions, values, norms, beliefs, rules, and laws, communicated and accepted among the respective communities for peaceful co-existences. Abera (2000) argues that these indigenous conflict resolution institutions of different ethnic groups were the major body of law in Ethiopia for centuries.

The Libido-Mareko ethnic group of Southern Ethiopia have their own time tested indigenous conflict resolution institution, *Raaga-Maaga*, which has been used to resolve intra- and inter -group conflicts. This study explore the procedures and processes involved in *Raaga-Maaga* indigenous conflict resolution institution, types and causes of conflict in the study area,

II. DESCRIPTION OF THE PEOPLE AND THE STUDY AREA

Overview of Libido-Mareko

Libido-Mareko who lives in the central plateau of Ethiopia, is one of the ethnic groups in Ethiopia. They are found between the longitudes of 38: 26' and 38: 33'E and latitudes of 7:55' and 8: 04'N (Senhizebbuklet, 2007). According to the data from Communication Office of Mareko *Woreda*, from 66 clan of Libido-Mareko around 49 clans are found in Mareko *Woreda*. The remaining clans of Libido-Marko ethnic group live in Meskan and Silite *Woredas*.

This study focuses on the mainland of Libido-Mareko, Mareko *Woreda*. Administratively, the Mareko *woreda* is one of the thirteen *Woredas* that make up today's Gurage zone of Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples Regional State. The *Woreda* is located in the eastern corner of the zone where they share boundary with Oromiya regional state, Silite Administrative Zone and Meskan *Woreda* in east, south, and north respectively. The *Woreda* consists of 26 rural *kebeles* and the administrative center is Koshe, which is 160 K.m far from Addis Ababa and 82 k.m from Wolkite, the capital of Gurage Administrative Zone.

Mareko *woreda* is one of the largest districts in the Gurage zone administration of Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples Regional State. According to the data from Central Statistics Agency (2008), the *Woreda* has a population of 81,892 in which 50.2% of them are male and 49.7% are female. The *Woreda* is inhabited by Libido – Mareko, Gurage, Silite, Oromo, Amhara, Hadiya and other ethnic group.

Following the incorporation of the Libido- Mareko land into the larger Ethiopian polity under Emperor Menelik II and the expansion of Amharic language as the administrative and working language, the generic term 'Mareko' is collectively applied to call those people who live in the *Woreda*. However, the informants (Imame Tuke Tumebo and Ato Hailu Gagoro) explained the term "Mareko" does not represent them. Rather the local people call themselves Libido and their land *Meex*. However, currently, according to my observation and documents from Communication office of Mareko *Woreda*, the term Libido –Mareko is used to call the local people.

The Libido- Mareko ethnic group is the Cushitic language speaking society which is surrounded by the neighboring Semitic language speaking societies (Sodo, Mesqan and Silite). The language they speak is collectively known as *Marekegna*.

The ethnic group has a complex clan system by which conflict is often managed. The ethnic group is made up of more than 66 clan and more than 100 sub clan and detailed families, which have its own role in *Raaga – Maaga* indigenous conflict resolution institution. Among Libido- Marko, decent and clan categorization is core of social organization. They trace decent in depth and they recon up to seven to nine generation patrilineally. Terracing decent through the mother side is unacceptable, though unofficial matrilineal concept is observed in the ethnic group. The Libido- Mareko is patriarchal society where the males are heads of households and follows a patria local settlement pattern

Marriage among Libido- Mareko is exogamous. Having sexual relationship or marriage among the same clan or sub-clan is considered as taboo. For this reason, prior to the conclusion of any marriage, consulting elders or enquiring about the blood relationship of the boy and the girl is must. In addition to this, member of the same decent have a moral obligation to care for all relatives.

Religiously, the majority of Libido-Mareko ethnic group practices Islam. Christianity (Ethiopian Orthodox Church and Protestant) also practiced by significant number of the ethnic group. Among the ethnic group Catholicism and indigenous religions are numerically insignificant..

Economically, Libido- Mareko led their life through subsistence agriculture. The area is known for production of different plants like wheat, *teff*, maize, bean, and other. The Libido- Mareko's land is well known

in its production of the well-known Mareko pepper and onion. The dominant staple food in the area is *teff* and wheat. Productions beyond consumption are provided to market for transaction. In addition to farming, the significant number of the *Woreda* population also engaged in trade and service activity.

The *libido*- Mareko gives high value for domestic animal, which is a sign of prestige. Animals are also part of their daily life. Particularly, the value of those animals as a medium of compensation, in return to the inflicted conflict and dowry was high in previous time. Due to this they rear cattle, goats, sheep, donkey and other domestic animals. These domestic animals are reared for various purposes. They are the sources of butter, cheese, milk, beef, fertilizers, and means of transportation for the local people.

III. MAJOR TYPES OF CONFLICT

According to the data gathered from Mareko *Woreda* court, administration, security office and *Raaga* and *Maaga* elders different types of conflicts arise in the study area with varying frequency. These conflicts range from simple insult to homicide. Some conflicts in the study area are extremely rare like homicide and abduction, while others like theft and land related conflicts are considerable.

The gathered data from Mareko *Woreda* court and focus group discussion with elders shows that conflict over land, destruction of property, abduction of girls, rape, car accident, quarrel and physical injury, theft, intimidation, refusing to give food for the family and homicide are major types of conflict in the study area.

Due to the homogeneous settlement of *Libido*-Mareko, the majorities of conflict are observed at intra- and inter-clan level. Both the official statistics and informants indicate three levels of conflicts in the study area. Conflicts are common at the family, neighborhood, and clan level. In the study area, conflicts at the three levels have a different magnitude. Conflicts at family and neighborhood levels are frequent while conflicts at the clan level occurred rarely.

IV. 4. CAUSES OF CONFLICT

According to the discussants and the the major causes conflicts in the study area are land related conflicts, marriage and gender related conflict, alcoholism, socio-cultural value related conflict and accidental conflicts.

Land related conflicts

Lederach (1997:43) argues that the underlying causes of conflict at grass root level are social and economic insecurity. As far as source of conflict is concerned, on other hand, the advocates of human need theory argue that the unmet needs could lead individuals to conflict. According to informants from the Mareko *Woreda* court and elders, the main cause of conflict in the study area emanates from land and economic related issues.

Libido- Mareko ethnic group inhabited a land, which is suitable for agriculture. However, with the growing population land shortage is becoming acute. Hence, according to the informants (*haji Jateno*, *Temame* and *Mezegebu*), conflict that arise from land related is the main reason for the occurrence of other types of conflicts like homicide, quarrel, destruction of property, burning some one's property and physical injury (damage of teeth, damage to eye or ear and amputation of different body parts).

Land is the fundamental property for *Libido*-Mareko ethnic group. Land related conflict in the study area have different forms. The most common are renting ones land for more than one person for specified period, breach of rented land contract, refusal to return land after expiry date of contract, conflict over border mark, plough or plant a tree by crossing a marked border of a neighbor land,.

According to informants from Mareko *Woreda* Administration, the present potentially productive land is possessed by the old generation. Due to this and population growth, the young generation is unable to get access to land. As a result, the young generation gets access to land only through contract, inheritance and lease or purchase from the owners. Nevertheless, this kind of land possession is full of breach of contract/agreement, which leads to conflict.

The breach of contractual agreement is prevalent in the study area. Sometimes after someone rented the land, other claimant mainly wives or children, refuse to recognize the agreement and take the case to the court. The court depending on the evidence returns the land to the owner. The one who lost his money and land therefore, uses force to either get his money or land that could finally break in to violence. The other cause of land related conflict are refusal to return land after expiry date of contract and renting land to more than one person at a time..

Marriage and Gender Related Conflicts

Marriage and gender-based violence are also common in study area and among *Libido*-Mareko ethnic group members. Conflicts like the practice of polygamy (though *Libido*-Mareko ethnic group as any other Muslim community believe in marrying more than one wives, sometimes this belief face challenge from the first wife, her family and/or the community). Marriage between the same clan members, extramarital sexual

relationship, abduction of girls, refusal to accept arranged marriage are also common gender and marriage related conflicts in the study area.

Adultery is other source of conflict within Libido-Marek. Having an extramarital sexual affair with any married women is a heinous act. Adultery is a serious moral shock against the whole community in the study area. It reduces the social status of the spouse. If a wife is found committing adultery, the husband can initiate a divorce. In addition to adultery, the cause of several conflicts, which could result homicide and serious physical injury, emanate either from rape or from abduction against one's sister or daughter. According to informants (, marriage, and gender-based conflict are the second sources of conflict in the study area. These conflicts have no boundary; they could occur at any level.

Theft

Theft cases are predominantly common in the study area, especially domestic animals. It can happen at any time. Group of thieves could dislocate animals especially high value related animals such as ox, donkey, and mule, from the field or the owners' home in the absence of the shepherd or the owner, took them to neighboring *Woredas* or ethnic groups, and ask money called *yeqechema*. At this moment, the owner who knows the whereabouts of the lost animals may get into conflict with the thieves, or with the clan or the ethnic group found in the act of hiding those lost animals.

According to *Raaga* and *Maagaleders* beside the economic importance, animals among Libido-Mareko ethnic group are symbols of status. Thus, animal theft is a serious offence. According to informant from the formal court and police office this is the main cause for intra- ethnic conflict in the area.

Alcoholism

Discussion with the Mareko *Woreda* court prosecutors clearly indicates that alcoholism is the common source of conflict. According to this discussion, most homicide and physical injury are the result of alcoholism. Conflict due to alcoholism is prevalent during the time of abundance mainly between the months of December and March. The other period is whenever most rural men have idle or less occupied (between September and November).

Elders also see alcoholism as the common source of conflict. In addition to the prosecutor's information, elders also claim that alcoholism has become a common cause of conflict at family level. Mostly, if not always, husbands spent money on drinking. The wives who realize the economic and social consequence of alcoholism may oppose drinking and long absence from the daily activities. The husband who is not economically affected turndown the warning of the wife. This in turn leads to serious conflict and divorce cases.

Breach of social norms

In addition to the above land and marriage related conflicts, there are also other conflicts that have social and cultural dimensions. These conflicts are mainly occurs when individual breaks the social and cultural law of the community or refuse to accept the law. These conflicts include intimidation, insulting of an individual or a specific clan, improper dowry, refusal to accept arranged marriage, and so on.

Among Libido-Mareko blaming someone without evidence for something has gone wrong, undermining one's clan or an individual and putting a person to lower status is defamation. Such conflicts in the study area are considered as serious offences because they affect individual's life and social interaction.

Homicide

Libido-Marko ethnic group strongly concerned with any form of homicide. Among the Libido-Marko ethnic group, homicide is an atrocious crime. In the study area, the occurrences of homicide offence are rare but very serious crime, which involves clan and family. According to discussants, the homicide case is not an overnight event but the accumulative effect of other causes of conflict (see fig.1). It could be the result of dispute over land, alcoholism, car accident and so on. Some causes of homicide like land related conflict, adultery, economic related issues, inheritance could finally break in to revenge in which again lead to loss of life.

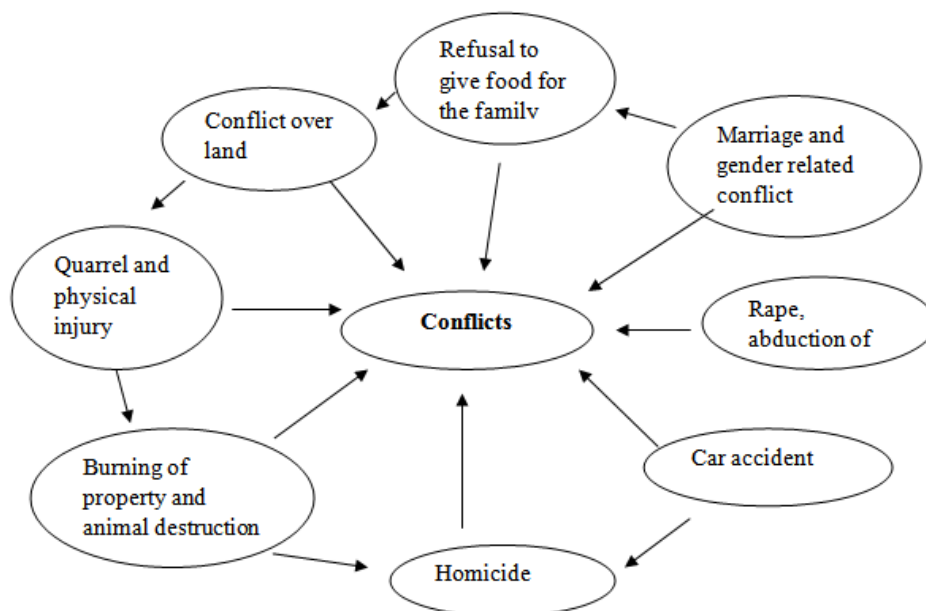


Fig1. Causes of conflict and their relationship

Source: FGD and informants

In conclusion, as the above figure shows, causes of conflict in the study area do overlap. The cause of one conflict may result in the other form. The conflicts that arise from quarrel, physical injury and property distraction seems purely economic. Marriage and gender related conflicts and lack of willingness to uphold families and community responsibility are arising from the violation of social norms.

V. PROCEDURES USED IN RAAGA-MAAGA INDIGENOUS CONFLICT RESOLUTION

As tried to explain above, different types of conflicts are observable in the Mareko *Woreda*, ranging from simple insult to homicide, with varying degree. *Raaga-Maaga* indigenous conflict resolution institution uses different procedures to resolve these conflicts. In this sub-section, different procedures of conflict resolution are discussed as follows.

5. 1 Homicide

According to mareko ethnic group elders anyone in the study area, who kills somebody must inform the case to the *Maaga* or to the police within three days. If not, he/she becomes public enemy and his/her property has no protection according to the *uultenseera* of the ethnic group.

The conflict resolution procedures for homicide case among the Libido-Mareko ethnic group indigenous conflict resolution institution can be divided into three stages: *Hodastage*, *Weerkefeenastage* and *Heemachagudda* stage.

1.4.1.1 Hoda Stage

In conflicts other than homicide, the conflict resolution process could be initiated by either the claimants, concerned parties or in rare cases by the offenders themselves. However, in homicide case, the prime initiators of the resolution process are the offenders or his/her relatives.

The first step before launching any conflict resolution process is that the slayer himself/herself informs for his/her close relatives as he/she killed somebody and requests all of his/her close relatives to go away from the resident area. Those who received the information immediately hide themselves from the village territory and exile to distance until the resolution process is transferred to the second stage. The slayer or his/her relatives also are expected to inform the *Maaga* about the issue and request *Raaga-Maaga* conflict resolution to handle the conflict. The informed *Maaga* immediately gather other *Maagas*, who are respected and known by their reputation and move to the slayer and his/her family's properties and made thorn yard on their properties. The thorn is a sign that the slayer is out of the land of the Mareko and his/her family properties are under the protection of the Libido-Mareko ethnic group.

Then the *Maagas* move to the deceased family to ask their consent for *Raaga-Maaga* to resolve the conflict and this is called *hoda* (pled). The initial *hoda* began before burial ceremony of the bereaved. During this time, the *Maaga* told to the deceased's family that they are ashamed of the incident and they express that it

is their wish to adjudicated the conflict according to the Libido-Marekoultenseera. If the deceased's family refuse the *Maaga's* proposal, the *Maagas* leave the area by saying *melaamete* means 'consider about our proposal'. In every three days, the *Maaga* ask the deceased's families willingness by saying *meegen...meexemeegen* which means 'please for the sake of Libido-Mareko land...please accept our proposal'. This pleading continues until the deceased's family accepts the *Raaga-Maaga* indigenous conflict resolution institution. However, the *Maaga* stop the *hoda* and advise the slayer to go to the formal court if the deceased's family refuses the final and highly feared *hoda*, *ediotalwachchco*. According to informant this *hoda* may take fourteen days to years.

During this time the slayer's family leave the village, market, pounds and any participation in the society that causes face to face communication with the deceased's family. This *hoda* stage ends when the deceased's family give consent to be adjudicated according to the Libido-Marekoultenseera.

5. 1.2 Weerkefena Stage

After the deceased's family accept the proposal of the *Maaga*, since the two parties cannot see each other, both parties select two individuals representing both side called *ye guddadaagna*, in the ceremony called *ye kiirgudda*. *Ye guddadaagna* are selected by the full consent of their respective parties and they are responsible if any wrong thing is happening in the conflict resolution process and/or between the deceased's and slayer's family. They facilitate the conflict resolution process and serve as guarantor for both sides. This *guddadagna* also advise the family of the disputants regarding the conflict resolution process and the customary law.

The conflict resolution began after the slayer pays all the funeral expenses as requested by the deceased's family called *weche*. This brings a scenario of cease fire- that the deceased family are refrain from taking any revenge act and open the ground for discussion. According to Libido-Marekoultenseera, taking more money than the funeral expenses from slayer is forbidden. For this reason *Maaga* and *guddadagnas* warn the deceased's party not to take or demand more than what they have been spent for different funeral purpose because taking more than what they spent is considered as *xirro*. However, whatever amount of money the deceased's family ask the slayer is expected to pay, by informing the *Maag* (at the end of the conflict resolution *Maaga* and *Raaga* may order the deceased's family to return the extra money they take from the slayer). At this stage, all the communications are made through *ye guddadaagna*.

Before the actual conflict resolution began, the slayer also gives to the deceased's mother girdle, carpet, blanket and heifer. This gift is called *weerkefena*. This is done with the belief that it would help the mother to forget her lost son/daughter.

The compilation of *weerkefena* and which allowed some of the exiled family of the slayers to return to their home and remove the thorn yard. However, the close kith and kin should not go to common market, common pond to fetch water, not use common high way, cannot appear at common public gathering.

This stage is the main part in the conflict resolution process, which takes time and resources. According to informant and discussants the *Maaga* may take separate meeting with both parties in order to convince them and move long distance to do so.

If such a conflict is between two different clans, the respective clans, both the mother's and father's side, must present during the conflict resolution process. However, they cannot stand together, rather one party set under a tree, while the other party presents its case.

At this stage, the *Maaga* give due attention to identify the cause and how the incident happens, *naarote* (intentional) or *hantaatote* (accidental) because it determines the decision of the *Maaga* and *Raaga*. After the whole investigation, *Maaga* decide on the amount of *guuma* (blood money). However, taking *guuma*, according to Libido-Marekoultenseera, is highly forbidden and the decision of the *Maaga* in this respect is more of symbolic.

After all mediation is done and both parties accepts the decision of the *Maaga*, the *Maaga* refer the disputants to consult *Raaga*, regarding the ritual procedure and to find if there is *ixiira* in their family. Then, the disputants with two or more *Maaga* visit *Raaga*, and consult him what their case was about, how the incident happened, what the *Maaga* decided, and what should they do to avoid similar incidences in the future. After hearing the case from the disputants, the *Raaga* advises disputants to investigate their previous history regarding the occurrence of similar incidents with the current one either by themselves or by their ancestors and/or their clan.

The disputants return to their home and make a thorough research to find similar incidents with the current one. In the appointemen day, the conflicting parties inform *Raaga* about their findings and the *Raaga* provides the interpretation of the incidence. In addition to this, the *Raaga* advises the disputants what they should do for the future. Finally, the *Raaga* announces the kind of ritual needed to finish the reconciliation and the slayer's family prepare the ritual procedure as advised by the *Raaga*.

5. 1.3 Heemachaguuda stage

After few months or days, the final stage, *heemechagudda*, proceeding would done. This stage is full of ritual performance in which the slayer and his/her family are reconciled with the relatives of the bereaved, and integrate the slayer with the community because claiming life in Libido- Mareko is a high crime and *xiiro*. It is the first face-to-face meeting of the two conflicting parties since the onset of the conflict.

Among the Libido-Mareko ethnic group members, the issue of *guuma* and expenses for the ritual ceremony is not only the responsibility of the slayer and his family but also the responsibility of the clan members. The slayer does not pay the *guuma* and expenses from one's own wealth rather it is the clan, which collects the money from its members and give it to the slayer. This money is called *guumaqeershe* or *xiiggenqershe* (blood money). This is done mainly to show the mutual responsibility of the clan members.

After the slayer's family prepare ceremony as advised by the *Raaga*, they invite the deceased's family (both mother and father side) and the *Maaga*. The ritual ceremony began at night. While the deceased's family entering to the dark house leading by *Maaga*, two women at the get sprinkle a local beer, *deeqasa*, on each of the deceased's family, which shows a sign that the conflict is over.

After all the deceased's family take their seat, the slayer enters to the house by hiding himself with *gaabi* with his father or older person from his family. He sets under a pillar of house where the traditional drink *deqasa* is seat. The slayer and the close family of the deceased one by one sprinkle *deqasa* each other, which shows that they are forgiving each other. Then the first day ritual ceremony end and all the deceased's family and the slayer's family eat, drink and sleep the night at slayer house.

In the morning all the deceased's family, *Maaga* and the slayer family seat outside of the house. Before doing anything the *Maaga* ask the clan members of both parties if there is any *xiiro* or/and *guuda* between the two clan. Then the last ritual ceremony began by slaughtering black goat, *heemecha*. While the slayer's *guddadaagna* slaughter, the deceased *guddadaagna* take bowel out of the goat and put at the toe of the slayer and the deceased's close family.

Now, the *Maaga* ask the slayer how and why he kills the deceased. During this time, the slayer is expected to speak the truth and whatever he/she said during this time is taken as truth. After all question and answer is done the *guddadaagna* take the bowl from the toe of the individuals. Both *guddadaagnas* take the bowl and the dead goat to burial, which sign the conflict is over.



Photo: *Heemechagudda* ritual ceremony, the slayer confesses about the conflict while bowel is tied to the toe of slayer and deceased's family:

The bowel is considered as a sign of brotherhood and makes the disputants to enter *gudda* (covenant) not to need each other for feud rather they become family called *gudda* family. After *heemechagudda* is concluded no party feel sense of enmity against the slayer because the ritual practice makes the two parties families and banish the conception of enmity. If anyone from the deceased family takes revenge it is against the *uultenseera* of the Libido-Mareko and brings *xiiro* to his/her family and clan. After *heemechagudda* ceremony, the conflict resolution process ends and the restriction, which is imposed by the formal court any slayer must also perform *heemechagudda*, to integrate with the society and to avoid revenge from the deceased's family. However, according to interview with the *Raaga* (Chololo), if the slayer and deceased are close family, *heemechagudda* is not performed because their blood relationship is *gudda* by itself.

VI. PROCEDURES OF CONFLICT RESOLUTIONS OTHER THAN HOMICIDE CASE

In a conflict of physical injury, the conflict resolution process is not begun until the injured party gets better. However, *Maaga* who were at the place during the conflict and/or any interested person may initiate and facilitate conditions for the beginning of the resolution process. Until the injured person is getting better injury is expected to pay all medical expenses. Taking money for medical purpose by the injured is a sign, that he is ready to resolve the conflict through *Raaga-Maaga*. However, asking more money and/or using the money for other purpose is forbidden and considered as *xiiro*. To control this they assign *Maaga*. As soon as the person gets better, the conflict resolution process began.

As Hannah (2008) puts it, elders wear dual hats in the contexts where they operate-both as mediators and as judges-and they use their different functions flexibly and instrumentally when solving conflicts. In the study area, *Maaga* elders exert their best in mediating disputants to end the conflicts through reconciliation. The first step of the conflict resolution procedure is to check the conflicting parties' willingness and consent to be adjudicated by the *Raaga-Maaga*. If they are positive, both parties select their own *Maaga* to represent them in the resolution process.

The conflict resolution is held under a tree called *haffa*, near by the house of the injured party, where a selected *Maagas* and the concerned individuals hear and determine a particular conflict. Before the hearing start, the *Maaga* requests the defendant to call *wasse* (guarantor) to assure his/her presence in the appointment date when his/her cases is handled and to accept the rule of elders. The *wasse* also questioned his/her consent to be the disputants' guarantor and to bring the plaintiff at the court of the elders at the time of needs. If the *wasse* agreed to be the guarantor, the elders could start the hearing process.

Horowitz (2007) writes that at the beginning of the process, the mediator should create an atmosphere of trust based on his integrity and ethic, which would allow the avoidance of negative emotions of anger, hate, and betrayal. In order to replace these with positive atmosphere, the resolution process in the study area starts through utterances of blessing. Following the blessing, the elders' briefly explain the theme for the crowd and they let the conflict parties to present their sides of the case. Following the debate of the conflicting parties, elders let the crowd to express their questions, suggestions, and objections. After entertaining the crowd's point of views, the elders begin to investigate the case in detail according to *uultenseera*. At the end, elders usually need to have a discussion on the issue presented before them and in the main time *Maaga* may decide the parties and other participants to allow them some time. When the parties move aside, *Maagas* discuss the issue and come up with compromising decision that is comprehensive and able to settle conflict among the parties. Based on the information from the parties and witness, *Maaga* identify the guilty and pass the decision.

In Libido-Mareko ethnic group conflict resolution institution, *Raaga-Maaga*, as far as criminal matters related conflicts (physical injury, loss of property, animal destruction and so on) are concerned, conflict cases have two fate, once they are presented to the first stage of the indigenous conflict resolution institution, *Maaga*.

First, if the conflicting parties are not satisfied with the decision of the *Maaga*, they have the right to take the case to the formal court. However, in most cases, the *Maaga* at all structure exert their maximum effort to finish every conflict under their jurisdiction in order not to expose cases to the attention of others and to stop future reprisal. In the study area, according to the discussants (FGD 1 and 2), in many occasions refusing the *Maaga* decision and taking the case to formal court would not resolve the conflict rather it causes another conflict. The *Maaga* effort ranges from giving *geffecha* (appeal) to whatever structure the unsatisfied party wants to change the *Maaga* and replace them by other *Maggaw* with high mediation quality and knowledge of *uultenseera*.

By taking the case to the formal court and/or due to his/her refusal to accept the *Maaga*'s decision, the party not faces immediate sanctions from the community. However, in his/her future life he/she faces many challenges, like refusing his/her initiations in conflict resolution, and consider the person and his family as breaker of *uultenseera*. For this reason, once the case is presented to the *Maaga*, the tendency of refusing *Maaga*'s decision and taking the cases to the formal court is minimal.

Second, if the conflicting parties agree with the decision of the *Maaga* the conflict resolution process pass to the next stage, to *Raaga*. After the conflict resolution hearing and asking question for the conflicting parties end, based on the information from the parties and witness, *Maaga* identify the guilty and pass the decision. Despite elder's coercive power, Tareegn (2008), notes that the key method here is persuasion rather than threat of coercion. Hence, the elders look for win-win outcomes that could repair the severed relations among the disputants. As a result, the elders' prefer to persuade disputants to reconcile than influencing to accept the decision or punishing the offender. Then they sent the conflicting parties with two or more *Maaga*, who were seat in the conflict resolution process, to seek advice and consult the *Raaga* for understanding the root cause of the conflict and to recommend on the decision of the *Maaga*.

The sent *Maaga* told to *Raaga* about the conflict, how it began, how the *Maagas* are selected, what they did to resolve the conflict, how they pass the decision and what punishment did they impose on the wrongdoer and so on. Following this, both the claimant and the defendant present their case to

Raaga respectively. However, argument at this stage is not allowed. After listening all the information from the conflicting parties and the represented *Maaga*, in order to understand the root cause of the conflict and to show how to get relief from such kind of incidences for the future, he investigates the conflicting parties and their familial background in relation to the present incidences they suffer. He deeply asks the conflicting parties about their family history to find out what misdeeds (*xiiro*) had been committed generations earlier by the ancestors of a person or the conflicting parties themselves. According to the observation made and informants (Jateno and Chololo), in many occasions the *Raaga* gives appointment for the parties in the conflict to search for their history in relation to the present incident, about not more than 15 days.

After finding out the roots of the incidence (*xiiro*), the *Raaga* announces a judgment based on the root cause (*xiiro*). The *Raaga* tells the concerned parties what he/she should do to get relief from such kind of incidences for the future and tells the procedure how he/she can purify himself/herself from the past misdeed. Upon the interpretation, provided by the *Raaga*, disputants convince themselves as one of their or their ancestors past misdeeds lead them to experience the present incidence. Disputants consider themselves as part of the problem. Because they believe that the reason for their suffering is related to one of their or their ancestor misdeed or abuse that leads them in crises.

According to informant (Chololo and Jateno) and discussant (FGD 1 and 2), in the conflict resolution process the *Raaga* gives more emphasis to find out *xiiro* and *faro* because conflicting parties believe that he is entitled to find out the root cause of the conflict and show the way out. As a result of this, conflicting parties become submissive to the *Raaga*'s judgment. However, if anyone from the conflicting parties not satisfied with the *Raaga*'s decision, he/she has the right to ask *geffecha* (appeal) to the neighboring ethnic group indigenous conflict resolution institutions.

The resolution process ends through various ritual ceremonies depending on the nature of the conflicts as order by *Raaga*. These different ritual ceremonies symbolize revive of peace and harmony between disputants and mark the end of reconciliation.

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