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**Indigenous Inter-Ethnic Peace Building and Conflict Resolution Institution
The case of Gurraacha among the People of South Central Ethiopia**
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Abstract

This article has dealt with Gurraacha institution, which is very important in inter-ethnic peace building and resolving conflict among peoples of south central Ethiopia. This institution was named after the Oromo term ‘Gurraacha’ (literally meaning black) to indicate the power of the institution in inter-ethnic peace building and conflict resolution. It is one elements of Oromo Gadaa system which was established time immemorial to sustain peace between Oromo and non-Oromo neighboring ethnic groups. The data for this study was collected through interview, observation and focus group discussion. As revealed by this study, Gurraacha institution is a guarantee for sustaining peace among peoples of south central Ethiopia by managing conflict over boundary, grazing land, looting cattle and water points. Overall, the study concluded that Gurraacha institution has real significance in inter-ethnic peace-building and sustaining social harmony and inter-ethnic conflict resolution. Therefore, using this indigenous institution for future policy formulation in the country as inter-ethnic peace building and conflict resolution model was important for the realization of sustainable peace and development.

Key words: Gurraachaa institution, Indigenous people, peace building, Gadaa system, inter- ethnic

1. Introduction

Inter-ethnic conflicts have existed since the dawn of humanity and our world is experiencing more conflicts. Results of conflict might include but not only limited to losses of lives, destruction of property and trauma, all of which are responsible to trigger retribution (Isajiw, 2000).

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According to Conteh-Morgan (2005), indigenous societies by their very nature tend to be communal, collective, and more prone to foster an atmosphere of peaceful co-existence. The application of traditional customs and values in reconciliation efforts may result in a more communal grassroots involvement and thereby contribute substantially to eradication of the root causes of the conflict and to holistic reconciliation.

Similarly, a traditional approach to peace building is based on the premise that sustained peace and order in society results from the moral authority exerted by the communal group over its members. In pastoral communities peace building takes the form of elders from two neighboring clans playing an important part in defusing tensions and conflicts, which usually revolve around the control of grazing land or water. The wisdom and experience of the elders is manifested in clear and well-articulated procedures for conflict resolution in which all the parties to the conflict are given the chance to express their views. On the other hand, the elders were vested with cultural authority to act as arbiters and even give judgment on the rights and wrongs of a dispute submitted to them for resolution and then suggest a settlement, although they may have no power of physical coercion by which to enforce them. But often the pressures of culture guarantee obedience. Effective management of conflict and building of peace requires familiarity with history, economic and power interests, perceptions, expectations, fears, feelings, values and cultures of the conflicting parties (Fortes and Evans-Pritchard, 1940).

Ethiopia is composed of several ethno-linguistic communities with different histories, languages, and cultures. Despite their diverse historical origins and with several points of contacts over the centuries, all of them have coexisted and continue to exist as nations among nations. The origins, direction of movement and modes of integration among ethnic or linguistic communities in the unfolding historical processes in the traditional Ethiopian polities had been a multifaceted voyage that could understand a bit more exactly in its context-specificity (Lubo, 2012).

Gadaa system governs all aspects of Oromo life, relations with other communities, and interactions with both social and natural environment. As a result, the Oromo have strengthened the process of ethnic integration between their neighbors. Oromo and their neighbors' relationships were/or is shaped by indigenous inter-ethnic conflict resolution mechanisms which solves problems related with the interrelationships of peoples of different ethnic origins and relations.

As far as our knowledge is concerned, no deep research has been carried out on Gurraacha institution, which is pillar for sustaining peace among the people of south central Ethiopia. Therefore, this article tried to reveal Gurraacha, indigenous institution

of peace building and conflict resolution among Arsii, Gona, Silte, Maskana, Marako and Sodo of south central Ethiopia.

On the other hand, only two studies are available on indigenous peace building institutions among Oromo and non-Oromo ethnic groups or clans. The first one is the work of Tsega (2002) which deals with Michu (a bond of friendship by which the Oromo used to solve conflicts and establish cultural tolerance with other ethnic groups with whom they come into contact in one way or the other), Harma Hodha (system used to establish a kind of parent-child relationship between the Oromo and other groups, but without complete absorption) and luba-baasa (which may be translated as 'to set free' or 'to make free'). It is a mechanism by which the Oromo used to incorporate members of other ethnic groups, especially those captured in battle) and Medhicha institution (an institution which non-Oromo communities were supposed to assume positions of full equality with the Oromo). The second one is the work of Asebe (2012) which focuses on the role of cultural practices as inter-ethnic connectors, especially Gondoro and Wodo traditions in integrating Guji, Burji and Gedeo ethnic groups in southern Ethiopia.

Tsega's work was limited to Metekkel region of Ethiopia and Asebe's work was restricted to southern part of Ethiopia. Their work did not touch the south central Ethiopian people in which Gurraacha institution was active. Also, they did not discuss Gurraacha institution and its role in peace building and conflict resolution.

Lenin (2016) highlighted about this institution in his article. He merely pointed out how other non-Arsii clans participate on Tajoo ritual through Gurraacha institution.

Therefore, to fill these gaps, this study focuses on the indigenous peace building and conflict resolution institution by focusing on Gurraacha among Arsii, Gona, Silte, Maskana, Marako and Sodo people of south central Ethiopia.

Overall the research investigated:

- The concept of Gurraacha institution,
- The main social actors and participants in the institution,
- The processes and procedures followed in Gurraacha institution,
- When and how the institution was established,
- The role of Gurracha institution in peace building and conflict resolution and kinds of conflicts addressed by the institution,

2. Material and Methods

In this study researchers used interview, observation and FGD. Accordingly, interview was used to understand the participant's point of view rather than making generalization about behavior. Researchers used open-ended questions some prepared in advance and some rose naturally during the interview. Thus, 12 purposefully selected key informants were interviewed. This includes the Arsii, Gona, Marako, Maskana, Sodo and Silte elders (two individuals from each group). The number of key informants was determined by saturation point during fieldwork.

Observation was another method which was used in this study. By this method, researchers observed conflict settlement processes organized by the Gurraacha institution leaders at Koshe town, the administrative town of Marako district. We observed Gurraacha institution gathering at this town while they were discussing about stolen cattle from Marako people.



3. Results and Discussions

3.1 The Concept of Gurraacha Institution

Gurraacha is an Oromo term literally meaning 'black'. Conceptually, blackness is symbol of powerfulness and a sign of purity in Oromo worldview. It also symbolizes the mystery of Waaqa (God). Oromo use black for something feared and unknown. For instance, Waaqa Gurraacha (black God); Halkan Gurraacha (black night); ganna Gurraacha (black summer); bosona gurraacha (black forest), bishaan gurraacha (black water), buna gurraacha (black coffee) to express the power of black/blackness. Arsii Oromo say Arsii Gurraacha (black Arsii) to describe being pure Oromoness and

powerfulness of Arsii. On the death of their husband, Arsii Oromo women versify as follows: Gurraacha akka Waaqaa dhabee, afaan maal qabaa qaaqa which means ‘I lost one who is black like God; by what mouth will I speak?’ This is said to express strength and powerfulness of their husbands.

Therefore, Gurraacha institution was named to indicate the power of this institution in peace building and conflict resolution among peoples of south central Ethiopia. Gurraacha institution is feared throughout communities of its member and other surrounding societies. Doing something wrong and standing in front of this institution is believed to be followed by the curse from Waaqa (God). It also believed that no one can deceive in front of the elders; because being deceitful to the elders of the institution is considered as lying Waaqa who is omniscient.

People of central Ethiopia live together peacefully by being loyal to Gurraacha institution. Most of the time, people use the name of Gurraacha to settle personal or group conflict on spot, by referring the institution saying, na hin tuqin buyyaa Gurraachatu nu jidduu jira, meaning please do not touch me for we have oath of Gurraacha between us. No one refuse the sayings and continue the conflict for Gurraacha is respected and feared. If someone harms other by refusing the saying, it is considered as the refusal of Waaqa’s (God’s) will who created all living and non-living things.

The leader of Gurraacha institution is known as Abbaa Gurraacha, literally meaning father of black. People use the saying Abbaa Gurraachaatii jedhi or Abbaa Gurraachatiin si qabe and Abbaa Gurraachaa sodaadhu, which literally mean please I beg you in the name of Gurraacha leader and please fear Gurraacha leader respectively. Refusal is unthinkable for something pleaded in the name of Gurraacha institution and its leaders.

On the other hand, sacrificial ritual is very important in peoples of south central Ethiopia. They sacrifice different domestic animals for different purposes at different places. They sacrifice to avert the trouble, to thank God at the time of success, and generally for the peace of their cattle and society. Most of the time, they sacrifice black animals to eliminate bad deeds. For instance, they sacrifice black she goat to avert witchcraft.

Similarly, they slaughter black bull in Gurraacha institution as a sign of oath and purification on reconciliation process. Sacrificing black cattle is believed as taking oath for each other in front of Waaqa, who is symbolized with blackness. In reconciliation process, they slaughter black bull and break down its backbone and bury all materials like gun, spear and shield which are used at war or conflict time to indicate eradication of retaliation between the conflicting parties.

Sometimes Gurraacha institution is called Gurraachaa-Duguggurtuu (black and backbone) to describe the importance of this institution. This implies the reality that gurraacha is vital in maintaining peace among its members similar to backbone by which one stands and go.

3.2 Historical Overview and Kinds of Conflicts Addressed by Gurraacha Institution

According to Arsii elders, Arsii Oromo started making law at Madda Wolaabuu, Odaa Roobaa which is found in present day Bale zone. The first law is known as Seera wolaabuu, the law of wolaabuu. Arsii refers this law everywhere and every time when they make law and decisions.

The law of Gurraacha was also declared at this centre. They declared laws as the following: ollaa si hin fakkaanneen wal hin tuqin buyyaa Gurraachatu si jidduu jira, yoo akka tasaa wal dhabdanis gurraacha falaa dugugguruu cabsaa araaramaa, gurraachi sii fi ollaa si hin fakkaanne jiddutti nagaa tissa, buyyaa Waaqa kana namni tarkaanfate hin bada.

The above extract is roughly translated as ‘do not clash with non-Oromo neighbours for there is an oath of Gurraacha between you; if you enter in conflict unintentionally, reconcile with them by sacrificing black bull and breaking its backbone; gurraacha keeps peace among you and neighbouring societies surrounding you, the one who break this law will be punished by God.

Therefore, no one can make new laws. They instead modify this law depending on situations by referring to the previous one. Thus, the law of Gurraacha institution is inherited from Wolaabuu’s law. Arsii and their neighbours restore peace and investigate hidden truth using Gurraacha, and take oath by sacrificing black animals. Thus, Gurraacha institution is not a new phenomenon; it is as old as Gadaa of Arsii.

According to Gurraacha leaders, reconciliation by Gurraacha institution takes place when conflict happen between Oromo and other non-Oromo neighbouring ethnic groups. The Arsii Oromo says ‘Gurraacha dugugguruun ka Ambaa diinaati’ which means ‘Gurraacha works between Oromo and non-Oromo groups’. On the other hand, neighbouring ethnic groups used Gurraacha institution to demarcate their boundary. The process of demarcating boundary between these neighbouring societies was as follows:

Gurraacha and Gadaa leaders and representatives of neighbouring communities were available. Gurraacha and Gadaa leaders first started digging the land to indicate the legality of demarcation for no one can start digging the land before them. While demarcating the boundary, they sacrificed black bull and broke its backbone as symbol

of oath among them. They also erected big stone to indicate the boundary and to avoid contention over land in the future.

They dug ground and erected big stones to demarcate their boundary by a material known as Waraana qotaa (digging material which has two apexes). They also entombed soil by material known as wantee gombittii (a conical shield) which is sometimes called wantee kakuu (shield of oath). Entombing and digging soil by hand is unethical in boundary demarcation process because this material was declared to serve this purpose on declaration of laws at Wolaabuu.

Moreover, they exchanged each other Itillee (cowhide used as a sleeping mat), Okolee (cultural milking bucket), gaadii (milking strap), and spear to show their integrity. Additionally, they exchanged their children and breastfed them to show their unity and quest for peace.

They said the following pray with Gurraacha and Gadaa leaders as a form of oath while performing the above ritual.

Photo by the researchers: Gurraacha gathering at Koshe Town, February 2015

For the purpose of this research six FGDs were arranged. These include leaders of Gurraacha institution (2 groups). The researchers discussed with two groups composed of Marako, Silte, Maskana and Sodo at Koshe town and the other two groups at Batu and Maki town respectively. Finally, interpretative and descriptive approaches were used to analyse data.

<u>Afaan Oromo Version</u>	<u>English Version</u>
Ciini kun cidha Gurraachaati	This is a ritual of Gurraacha
Gurraachi buyyaa Waaqati	Gurraacha is the oath of God
Ka lufe Waaqni dila nuu haa dogu	Let God forgive us about the past
Adharraa Itilleen teenna takka	Our sleeping mat is common from todays on
Walitti dhufnu wal bulchina	We host each other when we come to each other
Manni kee mana kiyya	Your home is my home
Manni kiyya mana keeti	My home is your home
Okoleen teenna takka	Our milking container is common
Okoleen kee kiyya	Your milking container is mine too
Okoleen kiyya keeti	My milking container is yours too
Waliin itti elmanna	We milk together in it
Gaadiin teenna takka	Our milking strap is common
Gaaditee naa elmita	You milk for me by strapping
Gaadi'ee sii elma	I will milk for you by strapping
Finni kee finna kiyya	Your child is my child
Finni kiyya finna keeti	My child is your child
Malkaan kee malkaa kiyya	Your river is my river
Malkaan kiyya malkaa keeti	My river is your river
Karaan kiyya karaa keeti	My road is your road

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Karaan kee karaa kiyya Dheedni kee dheeda kiyya Dheedni kiyya dheeda keeti Diinni kiyya diina keeti Diinni kee diina kiyya Rakkadhu sitti dheessa Rakkattu natti dheessi Daangaa kana Waaqatu buuse Daangaa kana buyyaa Gurraachaattu buuse Kana Waaqatu jedhe Kana Waatatu jedhe Buyyaa Waaqa kana ka diige Xiyiitiin isaa bishaan haa ta'u Sibiilli isaa bishaan haa ta'u Wonteen isaa erbee haa ta'u Fardi isaa harree haa ta'u Waaqan abaaramee Waatanis abaarama Tun toltu! Haa qabattu	Your road is my road Your grazing land is my grazing land My grazing land is your grazing land My enemy is your enemy Your enemy is my enemy I escape to you in time of difficulty You escape to me at time of difficulty This boundary is demarcated by God This boundary is demarcated by oath of Gurraacha This is the word God And declared by elders Anyone who bent this God's Oath Let his/her bullets changed to water Let his/her spears changed to water Let his/her shields become leather Let his/her horses become donkey He/she will be cursed by God and elders This is good! Let it be pertained
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After the above declaration, Gadaa leader wash the apex of spear of both groups by daadhii (honey mead), to symbolize clearing all bad things and to indicate harmony among neighbouring societies. They also mix up honey, gourd and heexoo to pour in to the hole. Its mixture is known as hadhaa sadiin (the three bitters). Burying this mixture symbolizes eliminating bad things (as represented by bitterness) from these neighbouring societies. After that, the groups involved consider each other as people of one origin. A person who breaks this oath cannot succeed; Waaqa harm him immediately following his action.

After long time of this demarcation, Menelik subjugated the southern nationalities adjacent to Waayyuu of Arsii Oromo. He tried to antagonize bordering society to subjugate Arsii by war. Sodo was the first to break oath of Gurraacha and the first opponent to Arsii who threatened them for first time with the help of Menelik who invaded Arsii after six battle of failure.

The first war between Arsii and Sodo is known as Lola Dillii, meaning the era of destructive war. This war caused a lot of destruction and loss of life especially from Arsii side. In response to this, Arsii Gadaa declared the war against Menelik sponsored groups and defended itself successfully for the first time.

Arsii Oromo describe about the evilness of Abyssinian in general and Menelik in particular as following, Mililik falfaltutu nutti dhufee utubaa dharaa ka hin buqqane nu jidduu dhaabee haga adhaa ollaa waliin nagayaan buluu nu wallaalchise, haganumaa wanti dandamanneef daddafnee gurraacha itti falanne.

\The above extract is to mean “Menelik who was witchcraft came to us and erected deep-rooted untruth pole between us; we could not live with our neighbours peacefully until now; we adapted to its hectic action by sacrificing black bull”.The conflict continued by the agents of Abyssinian rulers and reached its climax. When the conflict destroyed life and economies, Gadaa leaders and elders decided to initiate discussion on the situation depending on and referring the people’s history and values. Then they decided to renew their oath to rebuild the lost peace.

To this end, a person known as Faangayaa Hirbooroo from Weege clan of Arsii decided to bring back the lost peace between the conflicting societies in the region. He called all Waayyuu clans of Arsii including Woyyuus (the respected), Bokkuus (holders of sceptre) and Hayyuu (cultural expert) by holding Siinqee (women’s ritual stick) and by wearing Kittaa (dresses of women) to bring back peace of Waaqa (creator) and lafa (earth). He was able to revive the vanished peace for the region and for the land by re-establishing Gurraacha institution which was rejected by Abyssinian agents. Faangayaa is still remembered in the daily saying of Waayyuu as “Faangaayaa Hirbooroo ka badii biyya oolche” meaning ‘Faangayaa Hirbooroo who saved the society from disasters.

Gurraacha institution has been fluctuating during successive Ethiopian governments after declining of Oromo Gadaa system. In history, Gurraacha institution was strongly revitalized during Gadaa period of Roobaa Badhaasoo (end of Menelik era) who was from Oliyee clan of Waayyuu.

Looting and stealing cattle is one source of conflict between the members of Gurraacha institution societies. Especially, looting cattle at night have been part of their tradition and the symbol of proud when Gurraacha was weakened by the rule of Menelik. Some Menelik agents tried to weaken the relationship of bordering societies by initiating robbing culture among the peoples. The robber and thief in respective societies work together to exchange what they have stolen from their respective society. For instance, Sodo robber or thief brings stolen things to Arsii thieves and vice versa. Arsii thief drives the stolen cattle up to the border of Sodo and handover to Sodo thieves. Gurraacha institution returns the stolen cattle and other things for all the societies have smooth communication. As a result, the institution serves as local Interpol.

There has been very important grazing land known as hiraphee on the border of these ethnic groups. Basically this land which was demarcated by Gadaa belongs to Arsii Oromo who uses it for grazing purpose. But the successive Ethiopian governments have been trying to give the land to Marako and Silte ethnic groups and settle them on that land. After new settlement, all ethnic groups started competing each other over this

grazing land. Later on, Gurraacha institution has been pacifying the contention to some extent. But there are rumours about the original boundary of this land. This happened because the respective Ethiopian governments have been making new boundaries between these societies by rejecting the demarcated boundary which was made by the society.

Recently Gurraacha institution was revitalized in 2010 in new form when robbing became prevalent in these neighbouring societies. The theft agents started bribing money from people to bring back the stolen cattle which is sometimes equivalent with the cost of the cattle. The elders of these respective societies revitalized the institution to end this and other problems. From 2010 to 2014 stolen properties which are estimated to eighty thousands of Ethiopian birr was returned. They were also able to identify those thieves whom government could not arrest.

In general, Gurraacha institution was fluctuating from time to time by the past Ethiopian governments, but there are no changes which were observed in the institution for the member societies believe the institution as God's law which should be respected by all human beings.

3.3 The Main Actors and Participants in Gurraacha Institution

In Gurraacha institution, everybody has a role. Women bring oath materials, Omole (milk container), heexoo (*hagenia abyssinica*), daadhii (honey mead), gaadii (milking strap) and children to the reconciliation ritual. They also spray heexoo and daadhii to symbolize chasing bitterness and bringing the pleasantness among the people on reconciliation. They also facilitate the ritual by preparing different kind of feasts such as injera, gandawaasaa, caccabsaa, micciiraa, honey mead, porridge, finina, surree, and others. Moreover they ululate while peace is nurtured and absolution is made.

Gadaa and Gurraacha leaders were also very important actors in Gurraacha institution. The institution itself was guided by Gadaa laws. Especially on homicide reconciliation ritual, no activity was performed at the absence of Gadaa leaders. Gadaa leaders are considered as members of Gurraacha institution by default. Any activities undertaken by Gurraacha institution must be reported to Gadaa leaders.

Sometimes Gurrachaa institution request Gadaa leaders when complex case like clandestine killing to investigate it in collaboration. But Gurraacha institution leaders can decide any case without interference of Gadaa leaders. Most of the time, they need Gadaa leaders for praying and blessing purpose in reconciliation rituals. Some of the societies who were members of Gurraacha institution had Gadaa system. For instance, Waayyuu, Sodo and Gona were ruled by Gadaa system since they were Oromo. Marako also have adopted Gadaa from Arsii Oromo.

Gurraacha institution has its own leaders which come from all bordering ethnic groups. Elders of Gurraacha institution are also known as jaarsa nagaa, elders of peace. People who have inter-ethnic problems with each other apply the issue to this institution individually or in group. The first Gurraacha leader was Guutoo Nuuree from Abbayyii clan of Arsii. Leadership revolves between all members of Gurraacha institution.

The elders of Gurraacha institution are elected from all respective ethnic groups. Most of the time, they are elected from bordering clans of these ethnic groups to avail themselves timely in time of conflict. For instance, most of the time Gurraacha members from Arsii side are elected from Weege clan of Waayyuu which have border with Marako, Silte, Sodo, Gona and Maskana. Gadaa leaders also follow the overall activities of Gurraacha institution. Youngsters similarly play an important role in Gurraacha institution. They bring the sacrificial cattle, oath materials like wantee gombittii (conical shield) and waraana qotaa (digging material).

Members of Gurraacha institution are multilingual and they know each other's language in most cases. When a person or certain groups who know only one language come to the institution with conflict case, they use translator. However, this occurs in rare case because most people from all ethnic group of Gurraacha institution know each other's language. In Gurraacha institution, it is a requirement to know most languages of the members to be elected as a leader of the institution. For instance, the current Gurraacha leader is from Marako knows most languages of the members.

The criteria for selecting elders for Gurraacha institution are closeness to the border, knowing languages of most member ethnic groups, age and knowledge of physical and human history of the region.

On the day of reconciliation by Gurraacha institution, all relatives of two conflicting ethnic groups are present. Males and females, children and elders have to come for reunion and to re-establish peace. In the law of Gurraacha institution, crimes are not treated as individual offences. For instance, if an individual from Silte kill Arsii person it is called, Silxeen Arsii ajjeese, which means Silxee killed Arsii.

In general, on reconciliation process by Gurraacha institution, all segments of societies participate without any prohibition. Most of the participants come to learn its values from the ritual. Therefore, all representative members of Gurraacha institution from each society call their respective societies to the ritual.

3.4 Processes and Procedures in Gurraacha Institution

Gurraacha institution has its own process and procedures to pass through to resolve conflict and build peace among peoples of south central Ethiopia. These process and

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procedures may depend on the kind of conflict under discussion. As we have seen above, in procedures of boundary demarcation, we have tried to see its process in murder case in the following sections.

Accordingly, when somebody kill someone from the member groups of Gurraacha institution, slayer and his relatives have to escape from his village and admit to Gurraacha leader to confess. Then Gurraacha leader with Gadaa leaders went to slain relatives to announce the killer's clan and erect gadabaa (rounded stone erected near burial place). Then, they announce the issues on funeral ceremony publically as follows:

<u>Afaan Oromo version</u>	<u>English Version</u>
Waan gale sii lallabaa dhageeffadhu	Listen I will announce what happened
Hundumtuu dhageeffadhu	Let all listen attentively
Ka deemee Waaqni haa araaramuu lallabee	Let God forgive for whom left us
Ajjeesaan gosa kanaa lallabee	The slayer is from so and so clan
Ilma ebaluutii lallabee	He is the son of so and so
Ajjeefataan gosa kanaa lallabee	The slain is from so and so clan
Ilma ebaluutii lallabee	He is son of so and so
Diina hin bu'inii lallabee	Do not go to enemy
Diida hin bu'inii lallabee	Do not go far
Ajjeesee hin dibanee lallabee	He is not proud of killing
Onaa godaanee jiraa lallabee	He escaped with all his family and cattle
Waaqatti dheessee jiraa lallabee	He escaped to God
Waatatti dheessee jiraa lallabee	He escaped to Elders
Gurraachatti dheessee jiraa lallabee	He escaped to Gurraacha
Gadaatti dheessee jiraa lallabee	He escaped to Gadaa
Jala na awwaali jedhee jiraa lallabee	He is deeply regretted for his misdeed
Woyaa kiyyaan awwaali jedhee jiraa lallabee	He has declared to bury the slain by his blanket
Biyee na qabsiisi jedhee jiraa lallabee	He is ready to participate on his funeral ceremony
Keessummaa kiyyaan galchi jedhee jiraa lallabee	The slayer is beseeching to cover funeral feasts and costs
Haga imimmaan qoorutti	Until the issue calm down
Karaa tokko hin baatanii lallabee	You will not use common road
Malkaa tokko hin dhuddanii lallabee	You will not use water Common River
Jaarsii gamaa gamanaa nagaa tissitaa lallabee	Elders from both sides keep peace
Buyyaan Gurraacha isin haa eegu lallabee	Let the oath of Gurraacha protect you from each other
Waaqa Waata irra hin luftanii lallabee	You do not refuse the word of God and elders
Kun galtee Waaqatii cidha nama du'ee ofirraa galchitaa lallabee	This is happened by wish of God and you have to do funeral ceremony
Lallabelle bu'elle	I declared and finished
<u>Afaan Oromo version</u>	<u>English Version</u>

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<p><u>Waan gale sii lallabaa dhageeffadhu</u> <u>Hundumtuu dhageeffadhu</u> <u>Ka deemee Waaqni haa araramuu lallabee</u> <u>Ajjeesaan gosa kanaa lallabee</u> <u>Ilma ebaluutii lallabee</u> <u>Ajjeefataan gosa kanaa lallabee</u> <u>Ilma ebaluutii lallabee</u> <u>Diina hin bu'inii lallabee</u> <u>Diida hin bu'inii lallabee</u> <u>Ajjeesee hin dibannee lallabee</u> <u>Onaa godaanee jiraa lallabee</u> <u>Waaqatti dheessee jiraa lallabee</u> <u>Waatatti dheessee jiraa lallabee</u> <u>Gurraachatti dheessee jiraa lallabee</u> <u>Gadaatti dheessee jiraa lallabee</u> <u>Jala na awwaali jedhee jiraa lallabee</u> <u>Woyaa kiyaan awwaali jedhee jiraa lallabee</u> <u>Biyyee na qabsiisi jedhee jiraa lallabee</u> <u>Keessummaa kiyaan galchi jedhee jiraa lallabee</u></p> <p><u>Haga imimmaan qoorutti</u> <u>Karaa tokko hin baatanii lallabee</u> <u>Malkaa tokko hin dhuddanii lallabee</u> <u>Jaarsii gamaa gamanaa nagaa tissitaa lallabee</u> <u>Buyyaan Gurraacha isin haa eegu lallabee</u> <u>Waaqa Waata irra hin luftanii lallabee</u> <u>Kun galtee Waaqatii cidha nama du'ee ofirraa</u> <u>galchitaa lallabee</u> <u>Lallabelle bu'elle</u></p>	<p><u>Listen I will announce what happened</u> <u>Let all listen attentively</u> <u>Let God forgive for whom left us</u> <u>The slayer is from so and so clan</u> <u>He is the son of so and so</u> <u>The slain is from so and so clan</u> <u>He is son of so and so</u> <u>Do not go to enemy</u> <u>Do not go far</u> <u>He is not proud of killing</u> <u>He escaped with all his family and cattle</u> <u>He escaped to God</u> <u>He escaped to Elders</u> <u>He escaped to Gurraacha</u> <u>He escaped to Gadaa</u> <u>He is deeply regretted for his misdeed</u> <u>He has declared to bury the slain by his blanket</u> <u>He is ready to participate on his funeral</u> <u>ceremony</u> <u>The slayer is beseeching to cover funeral feasts</u> <u>and costs</u> <u>Until the issue calm down</u> <u>You will not use common road</u> <u>You will not use water Common River</u> <u>Elders from both sides keep peace</u> <u>Let the oath of Gurraacha protect you from each</u> <u>other</u> <u>You do not refuse the word of God and elders</u> <u>This is happened by wish of God and you have</u> <u>to do funeral ceremony</u> <u>I declared and finished</u></p>
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After this declaration, the issue goes to reconciliation step by step. The ritual of reconciliation is facilitated by Gurraacha institution and Gadaa leaders. On the day of reconciliation, slayer and all his relatives come to slain kraal by driving black sheep and bull which is sacrificed later as a symbol of peace. All slain relatives also stay in their kraal to wait the coming of slayer with his relatives to restore peace.

On this reconciliation date, they bring black bull to sacrifice for peace and harmony and to make oath. This bull have to be slaughtered and their backbone broken by persons who herds black bulls, black horse, black donkey, black sheep and black goats; because, blackness is the symbol of purity and power. These persons should be ayyaantuu (a person of good fortune) and must own these five bulls in his kraal.

After they reach slain's kraal, the slayer slaughter the sheep and break its backbone in to two and put it in different direction. Then all participants of reconciliation pass between the broken backbones of the sheep. While they pass across the broken bones, two women one from slayer relative and the other from slain relatives spray heexoo (*hagenia abyssinica*) and honey mead on participants by saying heexoo hadhaa baasi; daadhii xurii baas! Which means heexoo remove the bitter! Honey mead removes the unclean!

Spraying these two things is known as hadhaa baasuu, ousting the bitter because honey mead is sweeter while heexoo is bitter. After performing this ritual, they sacrifice black old cow known as dullacha keeraa (the cow of peace) as symbol of peace and purification. This old cow is also known as dullacha madhumaanii (an old cow of intestine) which reconnect the lost peace between the slayer and slain relatives. Sacrificing old cow is symbolized killing past grudge between two conflicting parties. Before this old cow is sacrificed, two conflicting parties touch back of the cow through laid bullukkoo, blanket and say keer, keer, keer (peace, peace, peace!) in one sound. After sacrifice, two parties smear each other by the blood of sacrificed cow to indicate reconciliation.

On sacrifice of an old cow, both parties talk truth about the issue of murder because sacrificing an old cow is believed as oath in front of Waaqa. Being deceitful on ritual of dullacha keeraa is forbidden because Waaqa harm the one who talk false when standing in front of Him.

After this sacrifice, slayer and his relatives come to slain house by covering their head to symbolize deep sorrow. Then both parties spray honey mead on each other and slayer relatives put on cultural blanket on father and mother as well as the slain uncle, raada gaalee (connector heifer) given to slain's brother. Then all participants start eating feast which is prepared by slain family and his relatives. That night, all participants spend night at slain house family. In the morning before the rise of sun, all participants sit in circle and tie their leg by the intestine of sacrificed old cow. This is the final oath on which anyone can complain if there is something wrong/unfair throughout the reconciliation process.

Starting from the reconciliation day, these two conflicting families become relative to the extent of not marrying each other; they do not insult each other; they do not see each other in bad eyes and they do not loot cattle from each other. They communicate each other on different rituals including funeral ceremony. These oaths of Gurraacha institution which are made during reconciliation process transcend generations.

3.5 The Role of Gurraacha Institution in Peace Building and Conflict Resolution

Gurraacha institution plays pivotal role in peace building between Arsii and bordering ethnic groups. Peoples of south central Ethiopia have lived and are living peacefully with each other through Gurraacha institution from time immemorial. It facilitates inter-ethnic community dialogue; it organises and activates ethnic groups in the prevention and management of conflict. It also restores and transforms relations among ethnic groups as part of post-conflict interventions and serves as a vehicle of ethnic relations for peaceful co-existence.

Gurraacha is peace insurance among peoples of south-central Ethiopia. It is oath and guarantee between Arsii and other ethnic groups. It is law of peace and boundary which keeps peace of Waaqa and integrates humanities.

Dugugguruu (backbone) is very important; nobody can stand or live without it. Therefore, deceiving on gurraacha institution is considered as losing backbone.

In case of counterfeit issues, slaughtering, piercing the stomach of cattle and breaking the back bone of black cow is very painful and sinful in front of Waaqa. Generally, Gurraacha institution is very feared and respected in Arsii and its neighbouring ethnic groups in south central Ethiopia and people trust the institution which validates the institution.

Someone who refuses Gurraacha oath may face different problems from both Waaqa and Gurraacha institutions. According to the member societies of gurraacha institution, taking oath on Gurraacha reconciliation is believed as standing in front of Waaqa; it is considered as law of Waaqa which has to be respected by all human beings.

These ethnic groups cannot live without each other because they have strong social, cultural, economic and political tie. These neighbouring peoples have trade relationship; Arsii sell its cattle at market like Hinseenoo, Butajira, Qoshee, Gabremaraa and Daalochaa and buy different crops for consumption. Ethnic groups from Southern nations also sell their products in markets like Baatuu, Bulbulaa, Jiddoo, Adaamii Tulluu, Maqii and Abboosaa. They buy most of the time animal products from these markets. People from far come to near village to the market on the eve of market day to reach the market on time. As a result, they spend the night in the house they like without any fear. They marry each other without any discrimination. As a result, many of the community members are integrated even to the extent that one cannot identify their ethnic origin.

On the other hand, they live in difficult environment which changes from time to time. There is no uniform climate condition to live stable life in the area. Therefore, these

neighbouring peoples help each other during the time of drought. They escape to each other from natural hazards. They also migrate to each other in the time of difficulties. For instance, they migrate to each other with their cattle to save their life. They use each other's market in their life. To realise all these, there must be peace among them. Gurraacha institution preserves peace among the members by building and rebuilding it.

This Gurraacha institution was established to uphold the commonness of the people in the area. They re-started the institution to build and rebuild the lost peace by the strangers and to exchange commodities in market, to go through each other land without any fear. Gurraacha institution was also used as a resistance mechanism to the new comers of Abyssinian and their rule. People of the area resisted the divide and rule policy of Neftegnas by organizing themselves under Gurraacha institution and shown the oneness of the societies.

Gurraacha institution has been reviving from time to time. When central government was overthrown, gurraacha institution revived instantly. Accordingly, it was revitalized during the fall of Menelik, Hailassillassie and Derg regime respectively. Gurraacha institution was very important to settle conflict and restore peace among neighbouring society when central government fell down and societal order becomes questionable. Since the tyrants escalated the differences among people for their political consumptions, people got relief to freely use this institution when governments fell down.

Some autocrats have been trying to ban this institution to lengthen their ruling time by using the differences of the people. For instance, emperor Hailassilassie tried to outlaw the institution because Maskana, Merako and Sodo refused to fight each other by referring the oath of Gurraacha. Therefore, Gurraacha institution was considered as the refusal mechanism to the successive Ethiopian rulers.

Before the coming of Abyssinian invaders, there was no major conflict among the neighbouring societies since the boundary of all societies was demarcated clearly by the decision of local representatives from all respective societies. The institution is as old as Oromo Gadaa system. It resolves conflicts on boundary and used to bring back robbed cattle and settle conflict. In general this institution resolves all kinds of conflicts arising between these societies.

There are many kinds of institutions that promote inter-ethnic dispute resolution including Oromo traditions of group or individual adoption and fostering mogassa or gudifacha, patronage, harma hodha, and bond-friendships, michu, which remains an important element of establishing and maintaining peaceful inter-ethnic relations (Bartels 1983; Baxter 1996; Mohammed,1990; Tsega, 2002).

According to the views of different scholars and local and international organizations who support the 'resource competition thesis, it is quite likely that resource competition has created conflicts between groups that used to live in harmony in the past, such as the Guji and Gedeo in Southern Ethiopia, Amhara and Oromo peoples in Wallaga, the Karayu and Itu, and the Afar and the Arsii Oromos in eastern Ethiopia (Teka, 2004 cited in Asebe 2007).

According to all our informants, Gurraacha institution is effective than government laws. Government justice system focuses on punishing the offender rather than dealing with complicated nature of conflict that involves group. The government does not consider the belief and values of people which is very important to bind people together in its decision about the issues. Government focuses only on physical and material destruction in the process of investigation rather than dealing with human beliefs and values to resolve conflicts. On reconciliation, people fear basically Waaqa, who creates living and non-living things. Peace belongs to creator, therefore Waaqa harm wrong doers in case of disturbing peace and order.

In Gurraacha institution people rebuild lost peace and order of Waaqa by performing purification rituals. There is no corruption in Gurraacha institution because all activities are undertaken according to Waaqa's law and order. There is also an oath which takes place through process and procedure of Gurraacha institution where deemed necessary. There is no untruth oath in this institution because if one makes false oath, it is believed that Waaqa harms him in short period of time i.e. cattle, families, and crops become unproductive.

The oath is taken in front of the people including Gurraacha leaders, bokkuu, ayyaantuus and elder whose power is given to them by Waaqa. People's eye is believed to be not good in case of taking untrue oath in front of the multitude.

Moreover, Gurraacha institution is very close to the societies than government justice system. It also settles conflicts by considering values, history and cultures of people in dispute. Government need eyewitness/witness to investigate the reality of conflict cases. The truth is given only for those who can bring eyewitness/witness; but Gurraacha investigate any case relying on people's values and culture without witness and can investigate any case successfully for it is entrenched in the belief system of the communities. There is no favouritism in Gurraacha institution because the elders work to bring back the peace rather than satisfying the individual. Sometimes, government arrest peoples blindly without identifying the wrong doer and civilians when conflicts take place; however, wrongdoers sometimes escape from the government completely; no one can escape from Gurraacha institution because the institution is well entrenched

into the communities and Gurraacha institution is believed to be regulated by the law of creator who is omniscient and omnipresent.

Someone may bring fake information when taken to formal court; but there is no fabrication in the process of Gurraacha institution. There is a saying which says, ‘dubbiin Jaarsi Gurraacha qabe dubbii Waaqni qabeen qixa’ which means ‘the issues taken to elders of Gurraacha institution is equal to the issues submitted to God’ validate this reality.

Sometimes, wrongdoers refuse to confess at government court; but they admit at Gurraacha institution for Gurraacha institution has the power to persuade people. People fear Gurraacha institution than government court because standing in front of Gurraacha institution is considered as standing in front of God. One can lie at formal court and can be released freely. Government and its law are changing from time to time; but people and Gurraacha institution and its value is there without any modification and changes. Government punish wrongdoers and there is no reconciliation; but Gurraacha institution rebuilds the ruptured relationship.

A person may kill somebody clandestinely. Nothing can be done in the absence of witnesses at government court. But in Gurraacha institution however, the slain kin’s apply to Gurraacha leaders to investigate the issue. Then elders start processing the issues. Accordingly, they urge elders of the slayer clan to inspect the issue. If elders fail to find wrongdoer, Gurraacha leader call the society for oath. On the date of oath, all relatives of slayer and slain are presented with their family to take part in oath. After all concerned body come, Gurraacha elders with Gadaa leaders state the following instructions to the whole participant in general and the suspected person in particular. Maarree adha dhugaa baasuuf Waaqa Waata afoo dhaabannee, jaarsaa Waatni warraa dadhabnaan Waaqattiin dhufnee, amma akkuma seera Gurraacha ka kaleessaatiin namichi shakkame kunii dura niitii ofiitiif ilma ofii mataa haa muruu, achirraan itillee ofii haa gombisuu, gurraacha danqee haa goorra’uu, dhiiga qotee haa awwaaluu, dugugguruu isaa haa cabsuu jedha. This means today we are here to investigate truth by standing in front of God and elders; we brought this issue to God because the relatives and elders of suspected person fail to investigate the truth; now let this suspected person take oath according to the law of Gurraacha; let he shave his wife’s and his children’s hair; let him put upside down his sleeping mat; let him bring and slaughter black bull and bury its blood by digging the ground; let him break the backbone of the bull. Shaving hair of wife and children and putting upside down sleeping mat are symbolizes the death of husband from one household.

These activities are difficult to undertake for husband and his family. One of them must tell the truth because of the fear of Waaqa and Waata to save themselves and their family from disappearance. If the refusal is continued by the suspected parties, Gurraacha leaders state that, waan namni jedhu hundaa argineerra mee amma waan Waaqni jedhu gallee ofirratti eenna, dubbiin kun gara namaatiin dhumeera lammata waan kana namni lafaa kaase yakkicha, gaafa Waaqni dubbate itti deebinee dubbanna adhaaf kanumaan nageenni bu'eera. This means we have done and seen what human beings can do. Now, let us wait the reaction of God. Anyone who talks about this issue will be guilty for this issue is concluded from the side of human being. Peace is restored for today. We may talk about the issue when God indicates about the issue. Then Gurraacha leaders ask the defender for how long this oath works on him. The culpable person may answer about one to two years. Then the elders say let us wait for God's response. The creator may respond in forms of disaster, disease and any other difficulty in short period of time; after that, leaders purify the wrongdoer when he admit that the difficulty is because of his wrongdoing. Sometimes, the wrong doer or his family might be completely vanished by God. In government court however, there are no strong investigation mechanisms rather than depending on eyewitness. If there is no eyewitness, justice is delayed or even abandoned.

Conclusion

No human community can afford to live in isolation from others. This is because society is fluid and hence there is a higher degree of integration between communities coming into contact with one another. Furthermore, the forces of nature, ecological imbalances, the effects of famines and population movements, natural calamities such as floods and epidemics and other similar factors foster the need for mutual inter-dependence and co-existence between ethnic groups. Empirical data from the field indicates that interactions between the peoples of south central Ethiopia were in most cases peaceful. These neighbouring societies have long history of relationships and coexistence. This mutual co-operation and co-existence became achievable through Gurraacha institution from time immemorial. They have strong cultural, economic, social and political relationships. Gurraacha is grass-roots initiatives for peace in a sense that it depended on engaging the whole spectrum of all ethnic groups in the region. This research revealed that, the most significant relationship is vested in economic mutual benefits like marketing to each other, migrating to each other in time of drought, giving cattle, food crops in time of need and fighting common enemies together on their land. After the region was invaded by Menelik, Gurraacha institution has been fluctuating from time to time.

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