

Feragezagn: Customary Conflict Resolution Mechanism Among Gurage Zone in the Case of Meskan Woreda Southern Ethiopia

Kebede Lemu Bekelcha, Wondu Yasin Said

Abstract: *The major goal of this study was to explore the role of Feregezagn in handling/ settling conflicts in the Meskan bête Gurage. Meskan Communities are found in Gurage Zone, Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples Regional State (SNNPRS). The researcher was conducted in Meskan woreda. Qualitative research methodology was employed in the study for its appropriateness to explore the role of customary institutions in handling/ settling conflicts in the study area and data was collected through the use of interview and focus group discussion (FGD) and case study. The results obtained from the study suggest that Conflicts in Meskan bête Gurage, 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 Meskan bête Gurage are land and boundary related conflicts, family related conflict, marriage related conflict, alcoholism, and socio-cultural value related conflict, disagreement over the and accidental conflicts and there is values and beliefs systems related to the customary conflict resolution Institutions Meskan: customary institutions have played a great role to solve different local conflicts and for the development of modern institutions. To sum up, Feragezegn customary conflict resolution institutions are costly and time effective in addition to many other benefits provide for the society. Therefore, at this time government courts encourages customary institutions to promote peace and to solve conflicts at the grass root level or at the local level.*

Keywords: *Feragezag; Conflict; Customary; Meskan; Resolution*

I. INTRODUCTION

Conflict is a natural and unavoidable part of human existence with some form of friction, dispute or disagreement occurred within a group or between a group when beliefs or actions of one or more members of the group are resisted or acceptable to catch other. In the history of human being conflict is not a new phenomenon that there are opposing interests between parties in a situation and there must be a belief by each a side that other one is acting or will act against the others (Akhim,1997)

According to 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. Customary conflict resolution mechanisms are locally organized institutions working according to the custom and norms of given society and works according to the specific culture of particular community (Murithi, 2008). In Africans place great emphasis on peaceful resolution of disputes so as to restore social harmony to the conflicting parties, and families, while the principles of equity and justice entrenched, in their customs and traditions are maintained. Among many African societies, it was strongly upheld that disputes should be settled amicably by persuasion rather than the resort of force or coercion (Agbu and Bolarinwa 2006). Ethiopia is one of the country that characterized by multi ethnic, Linguistic and multicultural society. Ethnically diverse societies are living in Ethiopia (Merera, 2003:1). The Ethiopia people are very much accustomed to settle their dispute other than going to court law. Customary all traditional law that are easily accessible to the people are applicable. Ethiopia has different kinds of conflict resolution mechanism among different ethnic group. Among this Awssia of Wolayta, Abegar of Northern Wollo, Songo of Sidama, Yejoka of Gurage, Yehager shimagle of Amhara and Jarsuma of Oromo are some of the examples. These compact resolution mechanisms are not limited to ethnic group's pus but also they are expanded at community level (Mammo, 2005: 6). Therefore in this study the researcher we have tried to analyzed and interpret "feragezgn" customary conflict resolution mechanism among Gurage zone Meskan woreda.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

Many societies assume that conflict as wars, but the concept war describe that a state of connotation is always present and deemed legitimate by the preparing part, and in which actual violence and chaos occurs as regular basis in the society (Ferguson,1999). Conflict and society developed its own culture, beliefs, attitude and conflict resolution mechanism based on their customary customs and values. Like others, Africans have their own means of addressing and resolving conflicts since the remote past (Zartman, 1989).

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According to Rabar and Karimi (2004), customary conflict resolution mechanisms in Africa are generally closely bound with socio-political and economic realities of the lifestyles of the communities. These mechanisms are rooted in the culture and history of the African people, and are in one way or another unique to each community.

In Ethiopian context also has numerous means to address conflict. Ethiopia is believed to be the country of more than eighty ethnic groups, who have their own languages, and cultures. These diverse ethnic groups have developed their own distinctive political, administrative, economic, social and judicial systems. These diverse groups had been living in cooperation and conflict for a long period of time. They have also developed and employed their own mechanisms to solve different conflicts that arise due to divergence of interest and other factors (Assefa, 2001) The scholarly works on regarding the Southern Nations Nationalities and Peoples regional state also showed that the region employed its own methods of conflict resolution mechanism. Yewondwossen (2006) was conducted the “Yejoka” as customary conflict resolution mechanisms among the highest authorities all over the Sebat bat Gurage. He has conducted “Yejoka” as customary conflict resolution mechanism provided binding and un-appealable decision in the Ennor Gurage and all over the Sebat bat Gurage. However, in the Meskan society have own customary conflict resolution mechanism but there is no study conducted yet. The main concern of this research was to explore *Feragezagn* customary conflict resolution mechanism in Meskan society Gurage zone so; we were initiated to study the issue. Therefore, this research was designed to find out and explore of Meskan bête Gurage conflict resolution mechanism in preventing conflict.

1.3. Research Questions

1. What are the major causes of conflict in the study area?
2. How customary Conflict resolution mechanisms in the study area?
3. What are Values, Beliefs and Systems Related to the customary Conflict Resolution Mechanism Institution?
4. What are the way or system and procedures of *Feragezgn* customary conflict resolution mechanism institution to solve conflict in Meskan?

1.4. Objectives of the Study

1.4.1. General Objective

The general objective of this study was to examine the *Feragezagn* the customary conflict resolution mechanism Gurage zone Meskan people.

1.4.2. Specific Objectives

- ❖ To describe the major causes of conflict in the study area.
- ❖ To identify the customary Conflict resolution mechanism in the study area.
- ❖ To explore the Values, Beliefs and Systems related to the customary Conflict Resolution Mechanism Institution.
- ❖ To describe the way or system and procedures of *Feragezgn* customary conflict resolution mechanism institution to solve conflict in Meskan people.

1.5. Significance of the Study

The significant of the study have *Feragezagn* as customary conflict resolution method to give some valid contribution to minimize social problems and it's creating awareness. This study have been contribute for those who wants to do extended their work or research on related issue in customary practice of conflict resolution mechanism. It serves as of information for the town cost and number of justice to participate the people. It gives some sort of understanding about *Feragezagn* customary conflict resolution and it serves as spring board for other studies. In addition these studies have been entitled to serve the above crucial significance

1.6. Scope of the Study

The study was conceptually, delimited to the customary conflict resolution mechanism in Gurage in the case of Meskan woreda limited when we requested to select title because we were recommended by our department to conduct research on some themes. Geographically, the study delimited to Meskan woreda, this because to save our time and financial, *Feragezgn* customary conflict mechanism is the last and the higher stage of in the meskan society. Methodologically, this study was conducted by using qualitative research methodology.

II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

2.1. Description of the Study Area

2.1.1. Location

The study was carried out in Meskan society, in southeastern part of Ethiopia and 135 km far from Addis Ababa apart to south east direction in Gurage zone of the south Nation Nationality and people's regional state of Ethiopia. Meskan is one of the woreda in the Gurage zone of Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples' Region of Ethiopia. This woreda was named after the Meskan speaking Gurage people. As Part of the Gurage Zone, Meskan is bordered on the south by the Silt's Zone, on the west by Muhor Na Aklil, on the northwest by Kookier Gedebano, on the north by the Oromia Region, on the northeast by Sodo, and on the south east by Mareko. The town of Butajira is surrounded by Meskan. Meskan was part of the former Meskan and Mareko woreda. (CSA, 2007)

2.1.2. Population

The Meskan Community is settled in Meskan Woreda and Butajira Town Administration. The combined current population of Meskan Woreda and Butajira Town is 225,931, (2007 census) of which the Meskan ethnic group constitutes the majority. Compared to the Sebat Bet and Kestane Gurage ethnic groups, migration to other parts of Ethiopia is less common among the Meskan. Less than five per cent (which is 11, 296.55) of the total population is believed to have migrated to urban towns in Ethiopia.

The relative abundance of fertile land and suitable agricultural climate could be cited as discouraging factors for migration in past. As Demographics Part Based on the 2007 Census conducted by the CSA, this woreda has a total population of 155,782, of whom 76,396 are men and 79,386 women; 11,388 or 7.31% of its population are urban dwellers.

2.1.3. Religion and Language

The majority of the inhabitants were reported as Muslim, with 60.19% of the population reporting that belief, while 34.55% practice Ethiopian Orthodox Christianity, and 4.7% were Protestants. Meskan is an Afro-Asiatic language spoken by the Gurage people in the Gurage zone of Ethiopia. It belongs to the family's Ethiopian Semitic branch.

2.2. Research Design

The study was based on cross-sectional research design to gather enough data at specific point of time. Qualitative research explores attitudes, behavior and experiences of people. In addition, it also attempts to get an in-depth opinion from study participants (Dawson, 2009). Qualitative research method enabled the researchers to explore the customary conflict resolution mechanism views, perspectives and experiences of the participants about customary conflict resolution mechanisms in the study area. Data was gathered using different methods of data collection tools such as Interview, FGD and Case Study and by using primary and secondary data sources.

2.1. Sampling Technique and Sample Size

The sampling technique was purposive sampling technique. Purposive sampling technique we used to select the informants from elders and others. Purposive sampling is a method commonly used in qualitative research that permits the researchers to carefully select informants as it illustrates some feature or process the researchers were interested in explore (Silverman, 2000). The researchers were selected purposive sampling techniques to get the reliable information from informants with in specific time period enable us to answer our research question. The study was based on their knowledge and experience on customary conflict resolution mechanisms. we have used From this primary data, interview, seven (7) and one session (1) focus group discussion (FGD) this consisted participant is (6) six we have been used. The total sample is thirteen (13).

2.2. Sources of Data

To obtain the necessary data from concerned parties, we employed both primary and secondary sources of data.

2.3. Primary Sources of Data

The primary sources were first hand sources for a data collection tool includes Interview, focus group discussion (FGD) and Case study.

2.4. Secondary Sources of Data

The secondary sources include both published and unpublished materials such as books, magazines, journals, articles and unpublished reports from government and nongovernmental organizations.

2.5. Data Collection Method

2.6. Interview

The data were collected mainly through unstructured interview. The interviews we conducted taken in to consideration criteria such as, sex, age, occupation and experience of the informants. An interview with elders, religious fathers, and clan leader, those who were experience in resolving disputes and an individual who faced personal conflict in the study area. We have used seven (7) individuals for interview from meskan society

2.6.1. Focus Group Discussion (FGD)

The researchers were used FGD as one method of data collection. We were used one sessions of focus group discussion (FGD) to ask our informants open ended questions about customary conflict resolution mechanism of study area. The purpose of this study is to gather different information on the merits, demerits, feature and procedure of customary conflict resolution mechanism. We have used six (6) individual for focus group discussion those all have same back ground.

2.6.2. Case Study

We documented and analyzed tangible cases conflict. In order to generate reliable data on the role of 'Faragzagn' customary conflict institutions in settling conflicts, case study was utilized. We have used three (3) different cases. The selected cases were described and analyzed in detail to provide what types of conflicts and ways of Faragzagna customary conflict mechanisms. Case study is very important because it tells individual history what is happened in their life for this reason we have used case study.

2.7. Methods Data Analysis

We used qualitative method of data analysis. It is apparent that in a given research, data collection is necessary. However, a research can be going beyond data collection. Any researchers have 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, we analyzed and interpreted the raw data collected through interview, focus group discussion and case study to answer the research questions and to achieve the stated objectives. In analysis part, we used qualitative approach for interpreting the data. This approach mainly answers the questions such as why, what or how. Each of these questions is addressed via quantitative techniques such as questioners, attitude, scaling, standard outcomes, and more. The data which is collected were recorded in meaningful manner. It was analyzed and interpreted in the form of qualitative paragraph. The data were collected through interview, FGD and case study analysis

2.8. Ethical Consideration

The researchers were applied the necessary ethical approval that is needed for anthropological research that involves voluntary informants in the study.

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Also the researchers were loyal to the privacy of the informants and preserving the integrity of them. Finally, we were applied the legal request letter from our Bule Hora University to legalize our study while we were want to field to collect necessary data. Researchers were also loyal to give the concept about the occurrence of pandemic corona virus to their participants to save their life from this pandemic virus. There for researchers used the necessary virus prevention methods like wearing face mask, keeping social distance, washing their hands with soap and water and using sanitizer during interviews and FGD for themselves and their participants.

III. DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

The purpose of in this chapter is data presentation requires skills and understands of data. It is necessary to make use of collected to be data and data analysis helps in the interpretation of data and helps take a decision or developing answer to question Conflict is natural to any society that people who live together engage in various forms or interactions, including clashes of interests. Similarly, in Meskan woreda conflict is occurring in the communities by different reasons. According to Meskan people there are two causes of conflict. The first one is personality problem of individuals they are actor of the conflict. If same body committed something is wrong which violate the society's norm, open the door for conflict for example one individual quarreled with his neighbor and he killed his neighbor. This is because of the two individuals committed something wrong, which is finally led to some body death. Those, conflict are somebody gifted for wrong doing from god. However, the final result of such like conflict educates the people. More over the responsible body for the existing conflict is not only one party, but both the conflicting parts are accountable or responsible. On the other hand, conflict is inevitable in every society, not only irrelative people but also relatives may enter in to conflict. So since conflict is evitable, the Meskan people have their own conflict resolutions institutions. By using these institutions, the people of Meskan try to find sustainable solutions for their conflict. So this chapter focuses on the major causes of conflict, values related to the customary institutions and its resolution mechanisms in the study area.

2.9. Causes of Conflict

According to The gathered data from Meskan elders and interview with elders shows conflict over land, destruction of property, car accident, quarrel and physical injury, theft, intimidation, family and homicide are more causes of conflict in this area.

2.9.1. Land and Boundary Related Conflicts

The main types of conflict in the study area emanates from land and economic related issues. Land is the fundamental property for Meskan woreda. Land related conflict in the study area have different forms. The most common are renting one's 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 interviews from Meskan elders, 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.

Case 1

According to informants conflict resolved by Fragezgen conspiracy they ordered that strangers kill them indiscriminately, claiming that they would pay a ransom. He fled in order to carry out his duties under the cover of darkness. The victims of the massacre were eating and drinking coffee at home, claiming that the country was safe. The man handed over the weapon to carry out the task, and suddenly someone appeared behind him. The man was shocked by what he saw. He struck his right hand with a cane, threw his weapon, and the men of the house were shocked. They killed him, took his body to the grave, and buried it. This conflict then turned into ethnic conflict. In order to defuse the conflict, a number of senior elders were elected from both sides of the aisle. After a thorough investigation, the elders found out that someone else was involved. He went on to suggest that those who are behind the scenes of ethnic strife should surrender and be restrained. Ethnic clashes are said to have disappeared. The victim's family and the killer's family then proceeded to the courtroom. They began by asking the defendant's family. Why did you kill him? Why did you kill him? The family of the deceased said that the attempt to kill our son was a mistake and that he had been deceived by money. The elders then proceeded to reconcile the accused and the plaintiff. The elders who had separated me held a ceremony between the plaintiff and the defendant. They swore that they would not take part in such an act and warned anyone who would do it. According to the Meskan ethnic conflict resolution ceremony, the family of the deceased was given a gift to be paid and given. He then confessed that he was guilty of murdering the next generation and gave the whole family to his mother and wife. He gave his brothers a robe, money, a cow, and some of them paid homage to him. They are now living in peace and love, reconciled by the elders of Meskan.

2.9.2. Family Related Conflicts

According to the informants, conflict within a family mainly caused by conflict over division of labor, property management, resource distributions like land and cattle, Incompatible inheritance, the common in study area and among Meskan bête Gurage Conflicts like the practice though Meskan bête Gurage as any other community and family related conflicts in the study area. In relation with this, one of our informants told the following case of family related conflicts

Case 2

He had two sisters and a brother, who lived in the same yard and had a horse-drawn carriage. While they were alive, they said that the smell of horses and urine was making us cold and sick. So they repeatedly asked him if he could rent a house or rent another house.



The owner said he got my daily bonus by driving a horse. And he said, "I can't afford to live in another house. Don't come to me." As a result, they argued. One day, the wheelbarrow will disappear. Neighboring elders gathered them, saying that no one could take them except my father-in-law. The elders said, "Why did you gather us? They stole my horse. No one but me can steal it. Investigate me." Then they ordered the elders to be summoned. The in-laws came and asked, "No one can steal my tires except you." They said, "We do not despise anything." The elders set a date for the next week to investigate. The appointment date has arrived. The elders decided that the matter was beyond our control. Then the matter was referred to the plaintiff. Both the plaintiff and the defendant presented their case to the dissenting elders. The disgruntled elders listened to what they had to say. After much deliberation, they made a decision. They said you should swear directly to the black sheep. They believe that swearing by a black sheep in the Meskan community will inherit the darkness of poverty. Defendant also admitted that we had stolen the urine and exposed him to pain so that he could sell it. The elders returned the stolen tire and it was still in use. They decided to buy some teff and give it to him. They did as they were told.

2.9.3. Alcoholism

According to the interview, physical injury is the result of alcoholism. Elders also see alcoholism as the common source of conflict. According to the elder informants 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.

2.9.4. Neighbor conflict

Among Meskan bête Gurage homicide is an atrocious crime, which involves clan and family. According to (Haji Saber and Aba-Awol both are feragzezn person) says that the homicide case is not an overnight event but the accumulative effect of other causes of conflict it could be the result of dispute over land, alcoholism, car accident and so on. Some causes of neighbor conflict like land related conflict, adultery, economic related issues, inheritance could finally break in to revenge in which again lead to loss of life.

Case 2

One woman was pregnant with her neighbor. Then she pushed her away. It was market day and no one was around. When the husband returned from the market, he found his wife lying on the ground. She was rushed to the hospital. According to doctors, her baby was dead and her family was shocked. Then they knew they had an argument with a neighbor. They suggested that people ask the locals, and she was asked, and she denied that she knew anything. My husband said that my case should be investigated. Then it was passed on to the elder who had broken my heart. The elders then ordered the defendant to appear. Did you commit the act? "I'm not the defendant," she said. The elders said that if you tell the truth, you and your

descendants will be protected from this kind of danger or if you do not believe the truth, you and your descendants will be born blind and our curse will be destroyed. Defendants begged her to tell us the truth, so that we would not be cursed by the elders and we would not be blinded by our race. Defendant was shocked and said in a low voice, "I am guilty and I do not want your curse." The defendant said, "We will do whatever you decide." They then proceeded to the courtroom. Since the deceased was a boy, they sentenced him to a full sweater, a shirt, a robe, a robe for his mother, a loaf of bread, a lamb, a can of honey, milk, four columns of bread, fifty loaves of bread, and everyone was satisfied. Finally, harm was done, washed with milk, graduated, and there was no revenge, and they made peace.

2.10. Feragzezn institution: The Customary Conflict Resolution Mechanism in Meskan Society

This is the last conflict resolution institutions in the Meskan bête Gurage. It gives solutions for any type of conflict in the society. In these institutions the conflicting parties are having not the right to appeal after decision so this is the last conflict resolution institutions in the Meskan bête Gurage. According to informants, *Feragzezn* is the highest institutions which give final decisions in Meskan woreda. This hierarchy observes issue which has not got decision by the lower bodies (*Maaga* and *Raaga*). *Feragzezn* is the last body of conflict resolution institutions in Meskan woreda. People cannot appeal after the *Feragzezn* decide on the issues. Thus, this branch is non-appeal institution. The members of *Feragzezn* decision makers are nominated by ethnic based in addition age has considered as criteria, so elders take the position of *Feragzezn*. The origin of *Feragzezn* is related with religion, particularly Islamic religion. it is found in embor Keble and this institution has not permanent place for meeting, as a result it held on the homes of the oldest *Feragzezn* but the meeting time is weekly on Sundays only.

2.10.1. Maaga

According to Haji saber, this is one branch of *Feragzezn* institutions. It has 3-7 elders (*shemagle*). They are elected by the will of the conflicting parties as result this branch is not permanent. However, the role of this organ is limited with mediation and have no the power of decision making and also they obliged the killer to give a gift which is called *weerkafen* in its local name to the killed one as the first compensation. The gift may include heifer, ox, butter, honey, cloth etc., finally this branch transfers the issues to the higher branch called *Raaga*.

2.10.2. Raaga

According to Haggy saber, *Raaga* is the *second* level of conflict resolution branch in the *Feragzezn* institutions. In this hierarchy it observes issues which are referred by the first institutions which is called *Maaga*. *Raaga* has the power to give decisions and it ordered *Maaga* to implement the decisions. It has not a specific time to make decision, however most of the time it held weekly in Saturday and Sunday.

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Before *Raaga* give decision it collect information from *Maaga* and based on this information *Raaga* give the chance to the conflicting parties to suggest their comment. The members of the *Raaga* have not a specific term of time. The members are elected based on their knowledge, love for truth and their commitment to their religions. The judgment is held on the big tree. Even if *Raaga* observe many issue, sometimes it refers some issue to the highest body which is called *Feragezagn*.

2.10.3. Values and Beliefs Systems Related to the Customary Conflict Resolution Institution

Any community has its own long existed values and beliefs, which help the society to live together and uphold its identity and provide *guidelines* in maintaining peace and harmony of the society. *Feragezagn* customary conflict resolution institution is concerned, the beliefs, values and procedures the system involves during conflict resolution take credit for the system's success in maintaining peace and harmony of the society. This sub-section discusses those values and beliefs the customary conflict resolution institution involves in the study area.

2.10.4. *Xiiro* (Atrocity).

This *Xiiro* is considered as a main source of criminal matter conflicts among the Meskan community (Haji saber). *Xiiro* is believed to be result of some hidden misdeed or immoral act of the conflicting parties or their ancestors that left unresolved. It is not something that gained by chance rather it is the result of a person's and his/her *ancestor's* and sometimes their clan misdeed and immoral act. *Xiiro* is not confined to the life span of an individual person rather it transcends the life span of an individual person with the potential of manifesting the spirit of *Xiiro* in the descendants. According to interview with *Feragezagn* person (Haji Saber and Aba Awol) the Meskan bête Gurage community members believe that human and animals have equal value and *Xiiro*, because one God creates both. Due to this, Meskan bête Gurage give high concern in their interaction with the surrounding environment, which *ranges* from the way one treats his/her domestic animals like cat, dog, donkey and so on to the interaction and treatment of different people. For example, if someone kills domestic animal immorally or without purpose, due to that immoral act, the blood of the killed animal is in his/her hand. Due to this, he/she or his/her descendants might kill someone or be killed.

2.10.5. *Gudda*

Gudda literally means a covenant or contract entered by two conflicting persons (groups) to solidify Trust, friendship, and *support* and so on between themselves. *Gudda* in many occasions performed at the end of the conflict resolution process. Once an individual or groups are entered *Gudda*, it is a lifetime partnership.

Even though the breach of *Gudda* is punishable by *Feragezagn* its practicality is more of moral obligation than legal obligation. People are bound by *Gudda* not because of their fear of legal aftermath rather the fear of *Xiiro* and *Ferro*. Because *Gudda* is entered through swearing by the name of God and underpinned by different ritual activities, any breach of *Gudda* is penalized by God and bring *Xiiro* to the family and the group. For this reason, *Gudda* is feared

and respected among the local people and people tied by *Gudda* are life time friends and family called *yegudda zemedede*. According to the Meskan bête Gurage community member conflict resolution institution (interview: shmolo and ermolo) *Gudda* is given on two causes: one, in homicide and two, in serious conflicts

2.10.6. *Yegegn Seera*

Meskan bête Gurage have developed a set of customary a law called *Yegegn Seera* that proscribe particular action This *Yegegn Seera*, govern the behavior of any member of Meskan community member and limits all possible action of individual and group.

Seera literally translated as customary law, which contains moral ideas about good behaviors, and specific prescription about mundane like dress and grazing practices. It covers every aspect of social relations, including marriage, family administration, animal rising, dressing, conflict resolution, religious practices, speaking style and so on. For example, according to *Yegegn Seera* of Meskan bête Gurage taking *Guuma* (blood money) and marriage between same clan is forbidden (interview: Haggy Saber).

2.10.6.1. Steps and Procedures used in *Feragezagn*

Customary Conflict Resolution Mechanisms

Conflict Resolution mechanism in *Feragezagn* Customary conflict resolution mechanism Meskan bête Gurage. In Meskan community, there are six different death crimes. Thus, the decision and the compensation are also different depending on the kind of crime.

A) *Delago*: - this is a kind of death crime by which the defendant killed a person in measurable condition. This is the highest crime in this woreda, as a result the defendant obliged to pay 10000 birr as a compensation for the death advantaged family.

B) *Telmama*: - in this type the killer committed the crime in a planned and deliberate manner. But the defendant does not harshly cut the dead body makes it different from *Delago*. However the compensation is 8500 birr.

C) *Sekeba*: - this is uncelebrated killing of somebody by unexpected materials which also do not expect that these materials are used to kill a person. For example, the conflicting parties died in a simple or unexpected touch, so the compensation is 5000 birr.

E) *Medala*: - this is happened sudden events occurred, example car accident. The compensation is 3500 birr.

F) *Yemedela Medala*: - unexpected killing of a person as a result the death maybe committed on his/her relatives or friends are this situation there is no compensation required. Simply, apologies. After concluding the case, the *Feragezagn* advises the 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.

Finally, the *Feragezagn* announces the kind of ritual needed to finish the reconciliation and the slayer's family prepare the ritual procedure as advised by the *Feragezagn*.



The conflict resolution procedures for homicide case in Meskan bête Gurage ethnic group customary conflict resolution institution have three steps

In Meskan community, 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. After all the deceased's family takes their seat, the slayer enters to the house by hiding himself with gaabi with his father or older person from his family. The slayer and the close family of the deceased one by one sprinkle each other, which show 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, elders and the slayer family seat outside of the house. Before doing anything the last ritual ceremony began by slaughtering black goat. While the slayer's *Gudda daagna* slaughter, the deceased *Gudda daagna* take bowel out of the goat and put at the toe of the slayer and the deceased's close 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 *Yedom Gudda* 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 *Yegegn Seera* of Meskan and brings *Xiiro* to his/her family and clan. After *Yedom Gudda* ceremony, the conflict resolution process ends and any slayer must also perform *Yedom Gudda*, to integrate with the society and to avoid revenge from the deceased's family.

The Meskan fear doing evil act or atrocity. Evil actors might get the response from God, but it might take time. They believe that truth will never die rather it takes a long period of time. Those evil actors at some point in time may see sign of their wrong doings. according to the Meskan bête Gurage the effects of *Xiiro* (atrocity) is not only far the actors but it affects the family and relative of the murderers and if the actor didn't do anything especially if he believes nobody looks at him when he does evil act, the consequence becomes harder and it will be changed into "*berchenet*".

The Meskan society *Xiiro* (atrocity) has three signs. Locally they are named *Barukenedamu*, *Bajo* and *Simu*.

1) *Barukenedamu*: - the *Baru* is seen first and it is well known sign. They called kind hearted (hedger). The murderer clearly sees his wrong actions mostly it seen when evil actor is alive and because of this the actor may apologize his mistakes and there will not be loss of another life and because of this they call it kind hearted.

2) *Bajo*: - this sign is seen after the death of wrong doer and the sign might be seen by the relative of the murderer. And it is very difficult for negotiate two parties. But the murderer is checked by his best friends and close relatives whether he is alive or not and it will be negotiated but until negotiating two parties there might be loss of life for many people. It is very dangerous especially for the relative of the murderer.

3) *Simu*: - it happens after a long period of time or it takes a lot of time. The sign is seen after it is forgotten already. Even the generation of the murderer may not be alive. It is assumed that people who have been on that era may not

have any signs. If the sign is *Simu*, it has a number of consequences like, loss of life of many people from the part of the evil actor. It brings a number of problems on the side of the murderer, their generation dies. They believe it brings about frequent danger act and risks to their relatives.

Therefore, to negotiate this evil act they oblige to go to *Farageegn* (it is a name of a tribe and the elder of the tribe gives a decision on the issue is believed that he has the ability and knowledge not to transfer the problem to the relatives of the murderers)

The second atrocity is if somebody becomes physically disable or loss of some body parts because of somebody, it is another atrocity by the Meskan society. It includes loss of hand, leg, teeth, finger, deafness, loss of sight and the like. The importance of this body parts and the reason behind doing the action is investigated deeply, is it an accident or not is explored. After all, in accordance with the severity of the problem, customary conflict resolution technique takes place.

The third kind of atrocity is killing and harming body part of animals. In Meskan society, killing and harming of animals bring a negative consequence on the doer. If somebody does that at some point in time some kind of sign might be seen.

Ferageegn investigates everything and according to the severity of the problem, the actors are expected to pay compensation, they are asked to give gifts and try to negotiate the parties and forget their problem lastly. The other responsibility of *Ferageegn* is looking appeals that come from the *Raaga*. The decision that has been given by the *Ferageegn* may have appeals by one of the negotiators, then he tries to persuade through going to *Ferageegn*. They told the process of the decisions to *Ferageegn* and he thinks of the decision and if the decision was right it will not be changed and if it has mistaken the decision will be seen again.

In Meskan society *Ferageegn* have different rolls specially in resolving conflict among the people. The conflict resolution mechanism takes place in a short period of time. If the issue is firstly seen by the *ferageegn* and if it gets decision but if somebody has appeal on the decision, it will take only short time. but if it is evil act or *Xiiro* (atrocity) it takes many time specially to know the reason unless and otherwise if the person who did evil act is alive it might be ended with a short period of time. *Ferageegn* looks different issues on Sunday. With *Ferageegn* there are three up to five religious leaders. They sit in a big tree look different issues at the same time, they give decisions accordingly.

The sign which is seen may not be known especially why it happened, why it happened, what type of atrocity will not be recognized. Therefore, the *Ferageegn* give another responsibility to look the case again and again. And the concerned body is expected to tell the information what he got quickly and he searches the reason if the sign is seen this generation and if the evil act was done on the previous generation. It is very difficult to get information hence; here it is expected to search the information from his relatives. Then, the information will be formed to the *Ferageegn*.

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If the case is simple they will go to the negotiation if not, the investigation will be continued and seen from different areas.

The other investigation is done on the previous generation if the evil act was done previously. To do this the information will be collected from any individual of his relatives, if they expect to get information from them. If somebody knows the case, he must share the information and is advised not to hide what he knows, because it is believed that, if he hide the case the consequence will be harder on him and his relative. If the reason is investigated they enter to the negotiation, but if it is not identified, the investigation will continue until they got real information.

On the process of the investigation, if they didn't get any information it shows atrocity (Xiiro) is done long time ago. As it is already stated on such case, it takes a long time to investigate the information. It is believed that it is a very risky for his relatives and there might be loss of life of many people. Member of the society fear such kind of case. As already stated on the previous topics the type of wrong doings are different, it might be killing somebody, killing of animals, harming body parts of somebody even animals and the decisions are different depending on the severity of the wrong doings.

If it knows human, it needs deep investigations and later got decisions. The investigations might be the reason, how he kills him, their relationship, is investigated. If the atrocity is 'Xiiro'(berche) type is not known, there will be no compensation, but the two parties are expected to sit together and apologize each other. This is because there is no real information. It is not known whether it is killing or harming human body. Therefore, simple negotiation is enough for them. The relatives of the wrong doer may give something to their counterpart. Then, negotiation takes place. Later on their conflict will be resolved.

IV. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

2.11. Summary

The study focused on the *Feragezgn* customary conflict resolution mechanism among Gurage zone in the case of meskan woreda. Major goal of this study was to explore the role of customary institution in handling or resolving conflicts in the community of Meskan beta Gurage. Qualitative research methodology was employed in the study for it is appropriateness to explore the role of customary conflict resolution in the study area and data was collected through the use of interview and focus group discussion and case study. The most common conflict issues in meskan community are land and boundary related conflict, family related conflict, alcoholism, and socio-cultural value related conflict. There are values and belief system related to the customary conflict resolution institutions. According to researchers' participants' idea researchers summarized that, Meskan customary institution have played great role to solve different local conflicts and for the development of modern institutions. To sum up, *feragezgn* customary conflict resolution institution are costly and time effective in addition to many other benefits provide for the society when we compare with modern institutions.

There for, at this time government have to encourage customary institution to promote peace and to solve conflict at local level.

V. CONCLUSION

Conflict is inevitable human phenomena, thus it would be better to have and use conflict resolution mechanism to reduce conflict. Meskan is one of the woreda in the Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples' Region of Ethiopia. The major causes of conflicts in the study area are land and boundary related conflicts, double marriage related conflict, alcoholism, and socio-cultural value related conflict, disagreement over the inheritance of land and accidental conflicts. There are two customary conflict resolution institutions in Meskan bête Guragea. Thos are: - Meskan bête Gurage customary administration institution. Feragezgn institutions this is the last conflict resolution institutions in the Meskan bête Gurage. Maaga this is one branch of Feragezgn institutions. And also it has 3-7 elders (shemagle). Raaga is the second level of conflict resolution branch in the Feragezgn institutions. In this hierarchy it observes issues which are referred by the first institutions which is called Maaga. In Meskan bête Gurage there are Values and Beliefs Systems Related to the Customary Conflict Resolution Institution among thus are Xiiro (Atrocity), Gudda and Yegegn Seera. There are Steps and Procedures used in Maaga, Raaga and Feragezgn Customary Conflict Resolution for homicide case and finally we have seen Geffecha it is appealing system to Feragezgn

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