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Original Research

Roles of the *Waataa* Community in Conflict Resolution among Arsi Oromo

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine the roles *Waataa* people play in resolving conflicts among the Arsi Oromo. To conduct the study, ethnographic research design and qualitative research approach were used. Many of the data that were used in this study as sources of dependable information were gathered from 11 persons (7 males and 4 females) of the *Waataa* community, 5 persons from the Arsi community, 2 Gadaa leaders, and 3 police officials. All were purposely selected and interviewed. These sources were consulted through intensive interviews, focus groups discussions, and observations. One focus group discussion was conducted in Chopa village where the *Waataa* people are found. All generated data were assembled, inspected; thematically categorized and analyzed. The data analyzed in this study clearly reveals that conflicts in the society of Arsi Oromo arise on multitude of grounds. Since the sources of conflicts can be traced to a number of causes, the major ones are attributed to economic factors, such as constraints of farm land. The *Waataa* people have a good awareness of conflict and its sources and they are responsible to resolve conflict especially in homicide cases. Since these cases are generally complex in nature they are resolving conflict through demanding and effective mechanism and practices. In the society of Arsi Oromo, the *Waataa* and Gadaa leaders are complementing each other in processing and resolving social conflicts. It seems, (in many aspects) processing conflicts through traditional approaches have advantages over modern bureaucratic court systems. Though, the activities of *Waataa* people are contributing much in conflict resolution, it is not well studied and they are not empowered to function as expected. Currently, the role of *Waataa* people is replaced by the other elders selected by the police of the district and they are becoming inactive in the process of conflict resolution. The police and the *Waataa* people are not doing together. This shows that the traditional cultures of these people are replaced by the modern culture and the roles of *Waataa* people in conflict resolution is already ignored. However, a conflict resolution mechanism without considering the traditional way may not be as effective as expected. Therefore, it seems important if the modern legal system takes the tradition system into account and works with the traditional system.

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INTRODUCTION

Traditional conflict resolution mechanisms in Africa are closely bounded with socio-political and economic realities of the lifestyles of the communities. These mechanisms are rooted in the

cultural and history of African people and are in one way or another unique to each community. The customary courts rely on good willing of the society to adhere to its ruling (Rabar & Karimi, 2004). Traditional conflict resolution can occur at any stages of a conflict, from on- the spot mediation to prevent a violent outbreak to effort to mitigate the more violent aspects of the dispute has escalated to violent conflict.

Community members involved participate in the conflict resolution process. These community members can include traditional authorities, elders, chief women's organizations, local institutions and professional associations. The elders function as a court with broad and flexible powers to interpret evidence, impose judgment, and manage the process of reconciliation. The mediator leads and channels discussion of the problem. Parties typically do not address each other, eliminating direct confrontation. Interruption is not allowed while parties state their case. Statements are followed by open deliberation which may integrate listening to and cross-examining witnesses, the free expression of grievance, causing with both groups, reliance on circumstantial evidence, visiting dispute scenes, seeking opinion and view of neighbors, reviewing past cases, holding private consultations, and considering solutions .

The Oromo people who belong to the Cushitic speaking people are one of the largest ethnic groups in the horn of Africa. Today they live in the present Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia. In Kenya the different clans of the Oromo are referred by the name of their clans, Gabra, Garrii, Orma saaknyee. In Somalia they are known as Jaarso, Anniyaa, and Gurgura (Kuwee, 1997). In Ethiopia they are named Oromo. Their language Afaan Oromo is one of the most widely spoken indigenous languages in the whole of Africa. (Kassam & Megersa, 1998)

The Oromo constitute various groups of people which fall under two major dominant groups (Borana and Barentu) (Hailu, 1997). The groups in turn are divided into sub groups the sub groups in to clan and the clans in to lineage. Arsi is one of the many sub-groups belonging to the Oromo, specifically to the administrative Zone of Oromia regional state. Like other Oromo the Arsi were ruled by the *Gadaa* system for centuries. The system organized the Arsi society in to groups that assume

different responsibilities. It has guided also the religious, social, political and economic life of the Arsi for many years (Tolesa, 2010). This thesis deals with the Oromo of Arsi in general, *Waataa* in particular.

Before we embark on the discussion of *Waataa* of Arsi, a few points must be made about *Gadaa* system. The Oromo developed their own cultural, religious and political institutions, which shaped their history and expressed their worldview. Accordingly studies on Oromo culture the history demonstrate that Oromo public life was administered under the *Gadaa* system which was uniquely egalitarian political and social institution that governed the life of every individual in the Oromo society from the birth to death (Asmerom, 1973).

According to Asefa (1993), the *Gadaa* as a political, economic, social and religious institution was the pillar of the Oromo culture and civilization. Every male Oromo was born in to one of the five age's level. The *Gadaa* system established different mechanism of conflict resolution which encompasses *Siiqqee*, *Bokkuu*, *Gumaa*, *kallachaa*, *Caacuu* and *Jaarsummaa* (mediation). Similar to the group pastoralist of East Africa, such as *Kerimjong*, the *Masai*, the *Nuer*, the *Pokot*, the *Samburu* and the *Sebei* (Tolesa, 2010), Oromo had a well developed age based system grouping up on which the religious, political, economic and social life of the people were based, that is *Gadaa* system. It (*Gadaa*) is the Oromo nation's social, political, and legal system. It has safeguarded the social, cultural religious, political and economic life of the Oromo people for many centuries with its philosophy, history and art.

Like the other Oromo groups, the Arsi Oromo is organized under the *Gadaa* system, which is an organization for the whole Oromo ethnic group. *Gadaa* system of Arsi Oromo has five grades called *Birmaji*, *Bultuma*, *Horata*, *Bahora* and *Robale Abbas*, 1982). There are two big Arsi clans: *Utaa* and *Waayyuu*. *Waataa* is from the branch of *Waayyuu*. *Waataa* is one of the clan of Arsi Oromo who is playing a significant role among the Arsi Oromo in preventing and resolving conflict (Debelu & Mayer, 2004). This clan has been used at grass

root level to settle conflict between other non *Waataa* Arsi Oromo with the *Gadaa* of Arsi.

The Arsi Oromo is one of the groups of different clan of Oromo who has been governed by *Gadaa* system a long period of time. In the Arsi Oromo there is *gumaa*. This *gumaa* is performed by *Abbaa Gadaa*. Before the *Abbaa Gadaa* is discuss about the paying of *gumaa*, *Waataa* is called for clean the murderer. Cleaning is making the murderer free from any attack by the family of died and giving him a chance of member ship.

Tolesa (2010) and Zebeay (2009) reported that the majority of the disputes among the Arsi Oromo were settled through traditional procedures. These authors are quite right in these reports. But they did not discuss the role of *Waataa* people have in conflict .resolution and the part they have before the payment of the *gumaa* of Arsi Oromo is processed. Although this community plays a great role in conflict resolution in Arsi Oromo, it is very less studied. Even Mulatu's (2007) and Debela and Mayer's (2004) studies which have been taught up on *Waataa*, in detail with real picture are missing. Thus, this study is an attempt to bridge this missing gap. It also examines both continuity and change of the role of *Waataa* community with special emphasis on the practice of reconciliation in conflict resolution in *Waataa* community.

Objective

- 1) To find out the role of *Waataa* in reconciling the disputing individuals and families in bringing long lasting solution to conflict
- 2) To examine the relationship between *Waataa* and the role of *Gadaa* of Arsi on conflict resolution

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study employed qualitative research methodology. Such methodology is more flexible than quantitative methodology and used ethnographic approach (Patton, 2002; Collins, 1986 & Guest, 2005).Regarding the sampling techniques the researcher has decided to employ judgmental (purposive) and snowball (chain referral) sampling techniques to collect viable information. The major participants (sources of data) for this study were

the community (the *Waataa* and the Arsi elders). Different categories of people such as people with formal and informal education, old and young, male and female were made participate. 17 informants (12 males & 5 females) were interviewed from both Arsi and *Waataa* communities. Additional community members who experienced eight people (7 male and 1 female) who were considered to be sound informants were made to participate on FGDs from the community members. All were purposely selected and interviewed (Flick, 2002).These sources were consulted through intensive interviews, focus groups discussions, and observations. One focus group discussion was conducted in Chopa villages where the *Waataa* people are found. All generated data were assembled, inspected; thematically categorized and analyzed.

Waataa Community

The *Waataa* community has many unique cultures from the community among whom they are living in Ziway Dugda district. Their basic differences are: marriage, making pot, begging, the *Waataa* community is hunting hippopotamus, the perception they have towards gender and age, spiritual ability they have to bless and curse, and the ability to reconciling as well as the way of reconciling conflicts.

Marriage

The *Waataa* people do not marry the girl from the Arsi or from any non-*Waataa* community because of two reasons. The first reason is that they are not allowed by the God to marry the Arsi girl or totally from non-*Waataa* community; however, they are cleaning the blood of Oromo when they kill each other. The second reason is that the *Waataa* and Arsi are revolting (*hoda*) each other. Concerning this, one of my informants narrates as follows:

We are not allowed to marry from the Arsi and other non- *Waataa* community. We are ordered by God not to marry from the non *Waataa* community. But we clean the blood of Oromo when they kill each other. It is strictly forbidden for *Waataa* to bleed Oromo. When we say bleeding not only bleeding that comes as a result of beating but any types of bleeding. For example if I marry the virgin

girl from the Arsi, there will be blood discharging during the first sexual intercourse. This forces me to break the law given to me from God. Because of this, we couldn't marry from other clan and Oromo community.

The *Waataa* people marry only from their own subgroups but different line. A man from *Momajii* group may marry women from *Gergeeda*, *Dullati* or *Golla* and so on (Debela and Mayer, 2004). However, one of my informants from *Waataa* claimed that they can marry from the same groups. He took himself as an example; his father and his mother are from *Momajii* (January, 21, 2011). The age at which members of *Waataa* marry is not far different from other Ethiopians. The female can marry at the age of sixteen or above and male can marry at the age of eighteen or above. Participants of the FGD also confirmed their consensus in the age restriction. The other thing what we informed is that, anyone from the *Waataa* community can marry more than one wife. Moreover, one of our informants from Arsi communities forwarded from his experiences that the Arsi Oromo are not married from *Waataa* communities because they perceived as if the *Waataas* were out of the norms of Arsi Oromo (March, 16, 2011).

Begging

Begging is to ask earnestly, implore, or supplicate. It often occurs for the purpose of securing a material benefit, generally for a gift, donation or charitable donation. It is one of the activities in which the *Waataa* communities are known. This community goes out for begging (they call it blessing) every year. Whenever they go out for begging, they always take the *Botoyaa* with them. *Botoyaa* is something which has a bundle of cow and sheep hide string on it. Debela and Mayer (2004) described the *Botoyaa*, as if it is a simple stick approximately 1.5m in length. However, as far as we observed and as our informant told us that it is not a stick. The stick what Debela and Mayer described is not a *Botoyaa* but it is the holder of the *Botoyaa*. Only the head part is said to be *Botoyaa*. The stick and the *Botoyaa* can be detached after the ceremony is completed.

The *Waataa* community is using the *Botoyaa* not only for begging but also as a symbol which

differentiates them from the other group. Besides, they are using it as a ritual material during the process of conflict resolution. Without *Botoyaa* there will not be treatment (*fala*). One of our informants describes this from his experience:

Wherever we go out, we are different from the other person because we have *Botoyaa* which is given only for us from God. It is our flag which shows us for anybody who want us. For example, if you and I are in the market anybody can differentiate me from you; because I have *Botoyaa* but you have not. If I do not have *Botoyaa*, no one can differentiate me from others.

Moreover, he stated that begging is not age limited; the entire male who is the member of the community of *Waataa*, in any level of age, allowed going out for begging except females. Females cannot go out for begging because the law of *Waataa* could not allow them to do so. The person, who gives something for a father, should give for the son if the son is with his father in equal amount and with the same item. This is why the spirit (*Qaalluu*) that the father has and the spirit (*Qaalluu*) that his son has are equal and similar. As his father, the son can dismiss anybody when he curses or he can make plenty when he blesses anyone. In most cases, the son is coming out with his father to learn how his father blesses the community and how he begs.

As Debela and Mayer (2004) the elder son acts as a *Waataa* when only the father is dies. However, the *Waataa* communities highly disagree with the information given to these authors. The son can come out for begging if he is strong enough to move in the village. In relation to this, the daughter does not go out for begging, because it is not her part to do so. Their responsibilities are making pot, bringing up children and preparing food in the home. Generally, the role of female is limited in domestic activities. This does not mean that she has less ritual power than the male, she has equal power. But she was not ordered by God to come out for begging because she has not all the laws of *Waataa*.

From these points we can conclude two things. The first thing, these people are perhaps begging to

earn something from the Arsi Oromo it is not only because it is their culture. The second things, the females of the *Waataa* are highly discriminated and they are limited for only the domestic activities.

While begging, the *Waataa* performs a special prayer called *karaarat*. This *karaarat* has three different phases: when they arrive at the door of Arsi, after they are given a seat, and after they are given cereal or other things. When a *Waataa* blesses a house, the inhabitant of this house gives him butter or milk in the former time. Nowadays since there is no enough milk and butter the inhabitant gives him any kinds of cereal except barley. Moreover, one of the interviewees express about the issue of begging by comparing the past with the present.

In the former time they used to give us milk and butter but now there are not enough cows to provide us milk. Today we are receiving any types of cereal with in exception of barley; barley belongs to *Ateetee* not for us. (January, 26, 2011)

Before she comes with something, the house wife of Arsi provides a seat for the *Waataa*. And then the *Waataa* blesses the housewife, continues begging until she comes with some milk or some butter or some other thing to provide him. After he has received something from the Arsi's wife, he blesses and goes back to home. If the inhabitants give him nothing, he curses them indirectly. One of my informants says: "We advise them if they give us nothing but the advice has cursing within it (January, 26, 2011).

Waataa have their own specific time to beg. In the former time they went out for begging during summer because in the summer there was enough milk and butter in Arsi people and in the summer there was enough food for the cows to give the owner enough milk. But now they go out for begging in the harvesting time because there is enough cereal. In the harvesting time they take cereal for compensation. This seems that the *Waataa* are going out for begging to get something from the other Arsi community. When the Arsi provides with cereal for *Waataa* they use colander (*gingilchaa*). This has two implications. The first is to bless the donor to get all things what she/he wants

to get simply from God as the colander (*gingilchaa*) let all things down. And the second implication is that to appreciate the Arsi to give them all things they want simply. "*Qanqallon tiyyaa akka daftee guttufi*" (it is to fill my container).

If the inhabitant has nothing to give for *Waataa*, she will give him water with white bead of glass (*iliillaan adii*). This white bead of glass (*iliillaan adii*) used to make false milk (*aannan safuu*) because the *Waataa* used to take the milk for his/her blessing in the former time and now he can understand the owner has not milk to give him. The *Waataa* blesses the owner as equal as the other who gives him milk. The *Waataa* do not take all the water from the vessel; he leaves some water with *iliillaan* for the person who gives him water. They regarded it as plentifulness. There is an Afaan Oromo proverb in *Waataa* people which realize "*Nyaattees hinfixin dhugdees hinmaddisiin*". This means "Don't finish all the foods and all water from the dish or vessels while you are eating or drinking. Here we can conclude that the *Waataa* people are highly respected by the other people in the surrounding in one way and they are highly feared in the other way.

The *Waataa* is not allowed to get in to the home of Arsi or the home of other groups while they are begging. Even in the other time they are not free to get in to the home of any Arsi Oromo and other ethnic group. One of my informants from the Arsi stated that *Waataa* are not clean enough to enter the home of anybody. All things that they want during begging are given to them out side of the home with their own *Ciccuu* (tradition vessel which used to drink something). In the other way they are feared not to curse the house when the Arsi allow the *Waataa* to enter home. One of my informant from the *Waataa* community confirmed that they do not enter the home of Arsi or other groups' home. The reason they are not entering the home of Arsi or other groups is not due to their uncleanness; but due to the *Botoyaa* they carry during begging. If the *Waataa* enter the home of any groups with his *Botoyaa*, there should sacrifice for it.

For fear of this sacrifice, Arsi does not allow the *Waataa* to enter the home; however, he can get in to the home of any Oromo if the *Waataa* with their *Botoyaa* put the *Botoyaa* outside. According to one of the *Gadaa* leaders, some Oromo call the *Waataa*

with his *Botoyaa*. When he enters the home of any Oromo with his *Botoyaa*, there is a belief that the house holder will be blessed. Sometimes they call them from their home for blessing.

From these points we can see two contradicting ideas. The first idea is the Arsi does

not allow for *Waataa* to enter their home due to their uncleanness and the second is the *Waataa* people disagreed in that they do not get in to the home of Arsi not due to their uncleanness rather due to the *Botoyaa* they carry.



Figure 1: The *Waataa* with their *botoyyaa*

Hunting of hippopotamus

The *Waataa* people hunt the hippopotamus for its hide and meat. Concerning this, one of my interviewees from *Waataa* replied:

Hippopotamus is our cattle. No one is allowed to use the hippopotamus except *Waataa*. We don't

feel any shame when we eat the meat of hippopotamus. Because it is given for us from God for replacement of the cattle disappeared from our hand. The other thing, we hunt the hippopotamus for its hide and the hide of the hippopotamus used us to make the whip (*alangee*) which is used by the Arsi Oromo to make their law (*seera*). We sell the whip (*alangee*) for them. (January, 21, 2011)



Figure 2: The *Waataa* on making whip

If anyone who is from non-*Waataa* groups kills the hippopotamus, he or she will be punished by *Waataa* because he or she is killing the cattle of

Waataa. This idea is contradicted with the idea of other Arsi Oromo; because the Arsi Oromo told me that they are killing and selling it to *Waataa*. We

can say that hunting is a good source of income for the *Waataa* community because first of all, they are used for eating and sekilling the whip (*alangee*) to Arsi. *Oromo* One of my informants from the outside of the *Waataa* explained this issue:

The *Waataa* can sell one whip (*alangee*) in about 100 birr and they can make approximately 80 whips (*alangee*) from a single hide of hippopotamus. From this we can calculate that they can gain approximately 8000 birr per hide of a hippopotamus. Moreover, we ourselves are beneficial because we can sell the meat and the hide of the hippopotamus to the *Waataa* for

about 3000 birr from a single hippopotamus. (January, 21, 2011)

The other strange thing in relation to eating hippopotamus is that these people eat died hippopotamus. One of my interviewees from *Waataa* community claimed that if a hippopotamus dies before days they can eat the meat unless it is expired. Unlike the surrounding community, they kill the hippopotamus with spear. They believe that no need of slaughtering it just killing is enough. Eating of the dead and killed animals for their meat is not acceptable in both Muslims and Christian communities of the surrounding. To be eaten these animals should be slaughtered formally.



Fig. 3: The whips of *Waataa*

Furthermore, while they are skinning the hippopotamus (they call it *qaluu*); the four clans of *Waataa* group themselves in to two. *Gargeedaa* and *Dullattii* make the first group and *Momaji* and *Golla* make the second group. The first group is given the right side of the hippopotamus to skin (removing the skin from dead animal) and the second group is also given the left side to do so. In this process the second group is not allowed to skin the right side of the hippopotamus and vise-versa. This is because the right side of the hippopotamus belongs to the elders (*Gargeeda* and *Dullattii*) and the left side is belongs to the Younger (*Momaji* and *Golla*). This is until skinning is completed. Then they divide the meat equally in to four parts. Before dividing the meat, they mix it from both sides. Just they divided themselves in to

right and left parts during skinning is to show the respect they have each other.

After they mix, they call the families to participate in division of meat. No female or children stay at home during the division of meat. From this point we can see that these people highly respect each other depending on their ages.

Reconciling

The *Waataa* people have a great role in resolving the conflict in Arsi Oromo but they can not resolve the conflict between *Waataa* themselves.

Making pottery

As one of my interviewees expresses about making pottery, it is the other activity in which the

women of *Waataa* are known. According to their belief, when God dismissed the cattle of *Waataa* and gave them jobs, the God also gave the job for the females of him. This job is making pottery. The pottery that the females of *Waataa* make are poor in quality, however, they related the quality of the pottery with God. He told me a legend which related to God and *Waataa* women:

God showed her the way of making pottery by making it. As soon as he made and showed the way to making it, he broke the pottery down." My lord, you made it for me but you broke it why? This show that "If it is not broken soon, you will not be able to sell enough pottery;" replied God. This is why the pottery that our women made does not have high quality. (January 19, 2011).



Fig. 4: The female of *Waataa* on making pottery

The low status of the *Waataa* is also indicated in the work of their women, which is to make pottery. This handicraft, however, is regarded as an ignoble work throughout the whole of Ethiopia and it's diversified. Nobody else among the Arsi in *Chopha* makes pottery except the wives of the *Waataa*. But still they are making the pottery and sell it for their daily income.

The capability of ritual ability to curse and bless

There is a strong belief in Arsi Oromo that the *Waataa* has a ritual power to bless or curse any other person. One of my informants from Arsi clan describes the ability of curse and bless of *Waataa*:

The *Waataa* community is feared in one way and ignored in the other way. They are feared because there is a belief; the *Waataa* community has ritual power given from God to bless or curse. If the *Waataa* curses anyone, the

cursed person will disappear from the land. If the *Waataa* bless anybody, they can make him plenty. This is because they are believed to be equal with God in the minds of the community. (January, 21, 2011)

They realized the equality of *Waataa* with the God with the proverb of Afaan Oromo "*Waatnii dhufee Waaqnii dhufaa eegdaa?*" "Here is *Waataa* do you expecting God will come?"(January, 21, 2011).

This shows that the community believes that if the *Waataa* is there, they can get everything they expect from God and also they believe *Waataa* has a power that can wipe out anyone from the land because they are equal with God. On the other way, the *Waataa* blesses the people when they come out for begging and when they are called by the community to do so.

The community calls them when they are not successful in their life. For example, if the females of

ones cannot give birth or if she gives only one, and if their cattle do not reproduce well, they call the *Waataa* to bless them. In general if anyone is not successful in his life, he/she will call them to bless his/her home. They highly believe that if anybody is blessed by *Waataa* the entire problem he/she faced will be resolved.

Cross cultural relationship

The *Waataa* community has relatively positive relationship with the other Arsi communities. Debela and Mayer (2004) described that the *Waataa* are not allowed to eat together with other Oromo people and they use their own *Ciccu* to receive the food from the Arsi women while they are begging. In contrast to this, however, we observed the *Waataa* communities eating with the Arsi Oromo. When we were there for data collection, we observed that the *Waataa* were chewing *chat* and having coffee together with Arsi Oromo but they told me that they use *Ciccuu* to receive food from the Arsi Oromo. They use their own *Ciccuu* not due to their uncleanness rather they fear that their ritual power will vanish from them when they use other *Ciccuu* from Arsi. This does not mean that *Waataa* and Arsi have an intimate relationship. In the respective societies the *Waataa* are known for uncleanness on the one hand and ritual knowledge on the other. One of the informants from the Arsi clan expressed:

We fear the *Waataa* because they are given a ritual power from God to curse or bless. There is a proverb which realizes the power they have, "Waatamoo Waaqatu siabaaree" (is God or *Waataa* cursed you?) When anybody is unsuccessful in his/her life or "Waatamoo Waaqatu siebbisee" (is God or *Waataa* blessed you?) the Oromo said when they saw any successful person. When they cursed you, you will disappear from the land and you will be plenty, when the *Waataa* blesses you. On the other way we have not intimate relationship with them because they are eating the hippopotamus which is not totally accepted by our community. Really, they are out of the norms of our community.

This community does not only eat a living hippopotamus but also the dead one and other animals by killing with spear they have not slaughtered. However, the relationship between

us is becoming better than the former. (March, 12, 2011)

Generally, the relationship between Arsi and *Waataa* is reveals improvement. This improvement between Arsi and *Waataa* may be due to the cultural policy of the current government of Ethiopia. Concerning eating of hippopotamus, the *Waataa* people never denied and they confirmed that they are the only group who are allowed eating hippopotamus. To be real *Waataa*, anybody should eat the meat of hippopotamus. Refusing eating the meat of the hippopotamus is interpreted by the *Waataa* community as ignoring the culture of them. And it is considered as denying the commandment of God. Furthermore, one of my interviewee expressed:

Anyone who refused eating the hippopotamus is not *Waataa*. Because the *Waataa* cannot marry the Arsi girl is due to giving priority for hunting of hippopotamus at the day of marriage (January, 21, 2011)

From this, one can understand that these communities are rejected by Arsi Oromo due to five reasons. The first is they are eating hippopotamus which is not accepted by the other Arsi community. Second they are eating died hippopotamus. Third they do not slaughter rather they kill for its meat unlike the other community performs. Fourth they are making pottery which is regarded as backwardness by their neighbors. The finally they are beggars.

Conflict resolution

Under this section the perception the *Waataa* have towards conflict, sources of conflict, the procedure they follow to resolve the conflict, the hierarchy of different people in conflict resolution and the relationship *Waataa* has with the police of the district in conflict resolution.

How *Waataa* communities perceive conflict?

Conflict is a struggle over values and claims to scarce status, power, and resources, a struggle in which the aim of opponents are to neutralize injure, or eliminate rivals. It means perceived divergence of interest or belief that parties' current aspirations cannot be achieved

simultaneously. It may be defined as the pursuit by two different persons of goals that are incompatible so that any gain by one person must inevitably come about at the expense of the other (Avruch, 2004).

The perception the *Waataa* community has about conflict is not far from the idea mentioned above. Concerning this one of the *Waataa* elders explained as follows.

Conflict is the disagreement between two individuals, groups, clans or between two parties. If somebody is living with another body, there must be conflict between these two individuals. It may be between father and son or may be husband and wife or it may be between two outsiders or it may be between two countries, there might be conflict at least once in a life. (January, 19, 2011).

Besides, other informant agreed that it is common in different groups of the society that there is conflict; however, it can be different in type and degree, from community to community. But there is no community or individual with no conflict throughout its/his life. "Don't you know nowadays a brother is killing his own brother or the father is killing his own son? I think conflict is inevitably bad situation that occurs between two or more groups or individuals" (January, 21, 2011).

In short, conflict in *Waataa* community is the disagreement between two parties or between individuals or it might be between the countries. It also occurs everywhere in which the people are living together but the degree and the type can be different from place to place or from time to time. From this, we can conclude that the *Waataa* people have good understanding about conflict.

Sources of conflict

Since conflict is everywhere in any society, it has been occurring among Arsi Oromo due to several reasons. The Arsi economy is mainly agrarian in which land is given a high value in the society. The most sources of conflict among the Arsi Oromo are land, grass, and border major among the others. Thus when such kind of conflict occurs, there are different types of conflict resolution mechanism which mitigate and resolve conflict from its root. This mechanism fall under the category of traditional conflict resolution mechanism, this is mainly because the tactics and techniques employ for the resolution process

originate from the societal, culture, norm, value and socio-economic activities which best first to deal with all conflicts within the society. The major and rampant process for conflict resolution, in which it is not absent from any kind of conflict resolution process is *jaarsummaa* (mediation). According to the informants from *Waataa*, most conflicts in Ziway Dugda district or in the area where they are calling for the reconciling come from the competition for resources.

In our surrounding and in different areas where we are calling for *fala* (treatment), we saw that the main sources of conflict in between the community in rural area are competition for farm land and grass land. But sometimes it can be raised suddenly between two individuals. (January, 21, 2011)

The other informant added that the source of conflict is not only the competition for resources but the child and domestic animals like hen and dog can be the sources of conflict. Theft and jealousy are the other sources of conflict. The *Waataa* regard as the conflict between two or more parties is out of their business because they taught that they do not react with any one and nobody react negatively with them. However, the Arsi call them when they kill each other. The *Waataa* receives a kind of payment like money, cattle, or other compensation from Arsi when they complete the process of treatment (*falaa*).

From this, we can infer two things: the first thing is that the main sources of conflict as the perception of *Waataa* people are the competition for natural resources especially competition for farm land and grass land, theft and jealousy. The second thing is that the *Waataa* community does not react with the other communities negatively because they are feared by surrounding people due to their ritual power. I think not only due to the ritual power they have but they are not active enough to compete with the surrounding community and the incomes they get from the treatment (*falaa*) make them inactive.

The kinds of conflict the *Waataa* can resolve

Traditional mediation is effective in dealing with interpersonal or inter-community conflicts. This approach has been used at the grassroots level to

settle disputes over land, water, grazing-land rights, fishing rights, marital problems, inheritance, ownership rights, murder, bride price, cattle, raiding, theft, rape, and banditry and inter ethnic and religious conflict (Lederach, 1994).

The *Waataa* communities are not authorized to resolve all of these conflicts however; in most case they are responsible for the murder case. Because the Arsi community do not allow them for the other conflict other than murder case. The Arsi are trying to resolve the conflict other than death case by them because they believe that the *Waataa* is responsible to resolve only the conflict of the murder case. In contrast to this, one of the respondents from the *Waataa* community confirmed that they can resolve the other conflict more than the Arsi can do; but the Arsi does not allow them to do so. Furthermore, according to other informant from *Waataa* people, they can resolve different types of conflict because any Arsi respect and fear them due to the ritual power they have and the ability to resolve conflict. In most disputes they are effective but the Arsi perceive that the *Waataa* is responsible for the conflict of the death case only.

If anyone kills anyone else in the presence of *Waataa*, he will be asked to pay three blood prices (*gumaa*). The first blood price is for deceased person, the second for the land where they were fighting on in the presence of *Waataa* and the third is for the *Waataa* who were between them. Therefore, the Arsi do not kill a person in the presence of *Waataa*. This may be for two reasons; the first they fear not to be cursed by the *Waataa* and the second they fear the three blood prices that they are going to pay.

He further explained that as *Waataa* is equal for all, they do not go to warfront because they cannot kill anyone from both side. But they can resolve the conflict between two groups. "During *Derg* regime our sons were forced to go to warfront but none of them come back as the sons of the others did. All of them died because we are not allowed to kill anybody. We are equal for all. Additionally Concerning this issue one of the respondents from the *Waataa* clan explained by giving example as follows:

We are given a ritual power to treat the Arsi for every types of conflict in between them. But in

most cases the Arsi call us for only murder cases. The other types of disputes are resolved by the Arsi themselves; however, when they cannot resolve it they call us to meddle for the reconciling. In most cases we are more effective than the Arsi elders. Sometimes we are called for the conflict between two ethnic groups. For example, before 30 years there was conflict between Shewa and Jillee-Jiddaa. The two groups, the Shewa and Jillee-Jiddaa, were ready for fighting at the moment. The people in the surrounding discussed the way that conflict can be resolved. Then they approved that calling the *Waataa* is the only alternative because *Waataa* is equal for both Shewa and for Jillee - Jiddaa. The *Waataa* do not side for any clan and no one can kill *Waataa*. Hence, it is called that "Waatni ambaa dinaafuu qixa." (*Waataa* is equal for all). Because of this the *Waataa* could resolve this conflict easily (January 21, 2011).

Thus, the *Waataa* elders resolve the conflict between other Oromo clans easily due to the power they have. No Oromo can fight to each other when there is *Waataa* in between them. Moreover, the *Gadaa* leader and the elder of Arsi communities agreed with the idea of *Waataa*. They can resolve the conflict of murder case. According to the informants, *Waataa* is responsible to resolve the conflict for only death cases; they are given only this case. "Since the *Waataa* are the elder of Oromo, they are given the power to resolve the conflict of murder cases." This *Gadaa* leader further explained:

When the Oromo made the law (*seera*) for all things, the *Waataa* took his part from the already made law. When the *Waataa* took his part, the Oromo told him that, to resolve the cases of murder with 100 cows (this means the murderer should give 100 cows for the family of the deceased) but they were not given the other cases to mediate. (February 12, 2011)

Besides, one of the informants from the Arsi communities stated that the *Waataa* are called for only murder case but not for the other conflict. As to him, the Arsi themselves can resolve the conflict other than death case. The death case is given for *Waataa*; they can mediate about the issue but now they are not effective as before. They have lost

their ritual power nowadays. This is because they have not acceptance from Arsi community as before. Generally,

I have never seen when the *Waataa* is called for resolving conflict except the case of death. Arsi call them for the death case because they have a ritual power to resolve such kinds of conflict but Arsi do not want to let them to participate in the other cases because they have their own elders to do so (March, 12, 2011).

From this we can understand here is that there are two contradictory ideas about the responsibility of the *Waataa*. The *Waataa* argued that they can resolve all the conflict if the Arsi allow them and the Arsi deny the responsibility that the *Waataa* has on the other cases other than death cases.

The procedures the *Waataa* follows to clean the murderer

As we have seen in the above section, in most cases the *Waataa* is responsible to resolve conflicts, this does not mean that all the processes of mediation in the murder case are settled by *Waataa*, but they perform only the cleaning of the murderer. However, the part covered by *Waataa* is the largest part of the process. The blood price (*gumaa*) process is the responsibility of the *Abbaa Gadaa*. The process that they perform is said to be cleaning (*qulqulleessuu*). In other words, it is making the murderer free from any attack and making him ready for paying of blood price (*gumaa*). The process of cleaning (*qulqulleessuu*) has its own steps to be followed.

Hiding of the murderer

In the Arsi when an Oromo kills the other Oromo he should hide himself from the sight of any other Oromo until the *Waataa* cleans him. During FGD one of the discussants expressed how *Waataa* can resolve conflict. According to this respondent, when any Oromo kills any other Oromo, he should hide himself from the sight of anyone because it is believed that any Oromo who sees the murderer will be affected by uncured disease which is called *citaa* or *ukaa* (cough).

As soon as a murderer kills a person, he should run to the home of *Waataa* to be saved from the disease and from the attack of the family of the deceased. No one can come and attack him in the

home of *Waataa*. The *citaa* or *ukaa* cannot affect the *Waataa* in the presence of a murderer in his home. However, the murderer cannot go to the other Oromo's home because the family to whom the murderer enters is believed to have been affected by this disease *citaa* or *ukaa*.

The reason why the family of deceased does not go to the home of *Waataa* to attack the murderer is there is a belief that God and *Waataa* are equal (*Waatniif Waaqni qixa*). They may be cursed by the *Waataa* if they come and attack the murderer in the home of *Waataa*. They will be affected by the disease if they do not respect the *Waataa*. On the other hand, running to the home of *Waataa* shows that the respect that the murderer has for the family of the deceased person.

If the home of *Waataa* is not nearer to the place where the murderer killed the person, he should hide himself in the nearby *ona* (the home in which no one lives). After he has hidden himself from any Oromo, he goes to the nearest home at night calling the householder to tell him what was happened and where he is found. "I am Mr. x, I killed Mr. y, I am at the *ona* of this; please call the *Waataa* and *Gadaa* as fast as you can."

While telling to the nearby householder, the murderer should be careful not to be seen by that person (householder). The person, to whom the murderer told what happened, provides the murderer foods and drinks with broken pottery through the hole on the wall of the *ona* made by murderer until the *Waataa* calls and cleanses him. But he should take care again not to be seen by the murderer and he himself no to see the murderer. Or the person who provides food for murderer should cover his face while giving food to him. The murderer is not allowed to eat with his two hands; He should take the food by his mouth from the broken pottery.

The reason why he gives the murderer the food with broken pottery is to punish the murderer for the mistake he has done. To memorize this, the murderer is not allowed to eat the food by his two hands. The second reason is his two hands are not pure enough to be used for eating. It has become impure by the blood of deceased person. The third reason is that he is not full person to eat with unbroken pottery until he is cleaned. This is performed if he is in the *ona*; but if he is in the home of *Waataa* he will stay there eating from the home of *Waataa* until he is cleaned.

If there is not *ona* around the place where the murderer killed the person, he should put himself in to any water bodies with the cloths he wears. This is another way to clean himself from deceased blood. If anyone is around the place where the murderer killed the person, he should hide himself with the murderer until the *Waataa* come and clean them. This is because if any one sees the murderer before he is cleaned by *Waataa*, he is regarded as criminal as the murderer and equally affected by the disease.

If there is no water around there, the killer should be beaten by *baddana*. *Baddana* is a tree which is used as a medicine for cleaning in the place where no other alternatives for cleaning. If the Arsi killed the murderer before the *Waataa* cleans him, all the sin that he did is transferred to them and they will be affected by the *citaa* or *ukaa* as the murderer do. I think this is the way to reduce the intensity of the crime. If this law is not there, the family of the deceased may attack the murderer and again additional misdeeds will happen and this will lead to endless crimes. After he gave the murderer something to eat, the person who is told to call the *Waataa*, searches for the *Waataa* and *Gadaa* and calls them to clean the murderer as fast as they can.

The process of cleaning

According to the elders from *Waataa*, cleaning is performing as follows: As soon as the *Waataa* arrives at the place where the murderer is found, he makes the solution from the "*hexo*" and water. This solution is utilized for the cleaning process. After the solution is made, the *Waataa* asks murderer's name, which he killed, how he killed and the instrument he used for killing. After he has answered all these questions, the murderer will ask the *Waataa* to clean him. "I was an Arsi but now I killed the Arsi and became their enemy. You are here and you are equal for all of us so please clean and make me an Arsi!"

Then the *Waataa* sprinkles the face of the murderer three times with the solution they call first hand cleaning. Making Arsi is making the murderer free from any attack by the family of the deceased and from the disease *citaa* or *ukaa*. As one of the respondent from Arsi, "... if this person once

becomes the member of Arsi, no one can attach him because Arsi do not attack their own members." Moreover, one of my informants from *Waataa* expressed that

The reason why the *Waataa* uses the bitter solution to sprinkle is that they believe everybody who kills the human being is bitter and he is not the member of the community. To make the murderer clean from his bitterness, there should be bitter solution. One of the *Waataa* elder justified about this issue as follows:

We use the bitter solution to make the murderer clean because he is bitter in front of Oromo. Any Oromo who kills the other Oromo is bitter. Because he kills the person who can act or perform as he is performing. The first thing he did is the bitter thing because the person who kills the other person is bitter. And the second to clean the bitter from anybody there should be bitter solution. (Hadhawaa hadhawaatu baasaa' jetti Arsiin keenya) "Bitter dissolves bitter. (January, 21, 2011).

After sprinkling of the solution on the face of the murderer, he will ask forty birr for his first appearance before he takes the murderer out from *ona* (the home in which no one lives). This is what they call it gift (*irreessa*).

From this one can conclude that murder is highly rejected by the community of Arsi. As their perception, killing of any person is becoming out of the member of the community and the killer is considered as person who is not clean enough to eat with any human being. In the other way there is a belief *Waataa* has ritual power to clean the murderer or to make him equal with the other community.

Shaving hair and cutting of nails

Shaving is another process of cleaning. After the *Waataa* has completed sprinkling the face of the murderer and taking forty birr from him, he will take the murder out from the *ona* and ask the Obsidian (*Cabbii*) to shave the hair from the body of the murderer "*Waataaf Cabbii keenni Gadaan sodda baasii jedhaa seerri Oromo.*" The *cabbii* is the igneous rock that can shave the hair from the body of the murderer. The *Waataa* used to use the Obsidian (*Cabbii*) in the former time but now they are using the blade instead of Obsidian (*Cabbii*)

for shaving the hair of the murderer. “*Sodda baasi*” means make him free from any attack. Regarding this issue one of the elders from *Waataa* explained:

Our parents used to use Obsidian (*Cabbii*) to shave the hair of the murderer because there was not blade at the time when God Oromo made the law and gave his due for *Waataa*. But now we are using the blade. Just we are using Obsidian (*Cabbii*) for formality and then we are using the blade. The reason we use the Obsidian (*Cabbii*) is to remember the law of our parents and to pass it down to our children. (January, 21, 2011).

Furthermore, one of the *Gadaa* leaders agreed with the idea of this elder but he stated that the Obsidian means cooling of rock material (*Cabbii*) these *Waataa* people use for formality and the Obsidian (*Cabbii*) what their parents have used before for shaving are not similar. The Obsidian (*Cabbii*) that their parents used was very sharp and which can shave safely. This Obsidian (*Cabbii*) is still found somewhere around Jamjam in Arsi and Bale. Moreover, one of my informants underlines and shares the idea of others by expressing his experiences as follows.

The hair which is found on the body of the murderer will be shaved. The underarm hair, the moustache, the pubic hair and eyelash will be shaved. “When we shave the hair of the murderer, the sin that he did will be also washed away from him with the hair.” Before shaving and washing of the murderer, no one can see him except *Waataa*.

Slaughtering the black sheep

After the shaving process is completed, the three persons: the *Waataa*, the murderer and the person who saw the murderer first go to cave or to the forest area where no one can arrive. Then the *Waataa* carries the black sheep and circling the murderer three times and slaughters it in front of the murderer in the forest or in the cave. This is to let the evil spirit (*seexana*) exorcise the murderer. During FGD one of the discussants expressed:

We circled the murderer three times carrying the black sheep before slaughtering, because

the evil spirit (sexan) that forces him to kill is exorcised when we circled him with black sheep three times. The thing is exorcising said to be “*xoosii*” with the others language and it is said to be “*muluqa*” in our language. It is not from himself, but the murderer is forced by evil spirit (sexan) to kill a person. It can also force him to kill his wife or his brother or it may force him to kill his own son. If it is so, this is not considered as human being but he is evil spirit (*seexana*). (January, 21, 2011)

The *Waataa* slaughter the black sheep in front of the murderer after they circle the murderer carrying the black sheep three times because the evil spirit (*seexana*) that forced himself to kill the person leaves the murderer and remain on the black sheep. But no one is allowed to eat the meat of that black sheep. All the meat of the sheep and the knife that *Waataa* uses for slaughtering are thrown in the forest for the evil spirit (*seexana*). If anyone eats the meat of the sheep slaughtered in the forest he/she may believe to have exposed him/her to evil spirit.

In the home of the murderer

After they slaughter the black sheep and throw it in the forest or in the cave. The *Waataa* and the murderer come back to the home of the murderer. In the home of the murderer, there are the elders of the Arsi who are waiting for them. If there is a person who saw the murderer before cleaning, he should be there, with the murderer and the *Waataa* when they come back to home because he should be treated as the murderer. If he is not there at the moment, he should be called from his home to be cleaned. There is an assumption that this person will be affected by uncured disease unless he is cleaned together with the murderer. Because he saw the murderer before he is cleaned. He is also considered to be criminal as the murderer.

As they arrive at the home of the murderer, the *Waataa* asks for another sheep for further cleaning. Then the *Waataa* orders the murderer to take off all the cloths he wore with the money in the pocket, the ornament and watch he had on his hands when he killed the person and the instrument he used to kill. Then the murderer does as he is ordered.

The *Waataa* slaughters the sheep and put all the old clothes, the ornaments which are unclean due to

the sin of the owner in the blood of the sheep or they slaughter the sheep on it. The instrument he used to kill a person is also put in the blood to be cleaned. The new or the pure cloths will be given to the murderer to wear instead of the old one. Before they put the clothes and the instrument in the blood and they dress the murderer the new clothe, the *Waataa* sprinkle the face of the murderer with the blood of the sheep and washes him with water and soap. This is the final cleaning process. All the old clothes, the money in the pocket, the ornaments in his hands and the instrument he used to kill are taken by the *Waataa* who cleans him. But if the owner wants the instrument, he will give half of the price of the instrument for compensation and he will take it from *Waataa*. Besides, one of my informants expressed:

Until today we did not take the gun with us; we took only half of the price of the gun. But we took other instrument like stick and knife. We took them with us many times from the hands of the murderer. (January, 21, 2011)

Endowing the murderer to Arsi

After the process of slaughtering and dressing of the murderer is completed, the *Waataa* endow the murderer in front of the elders of Arsi. These elders of Arsi are eight in number four from deceased family (ethnic group) and the other four from the killer family (ethnic group). They sit down one in front of the other. Why are they eight in number? Because to be represented by four *Waataas* (*Golla*, *Momajjii*, *Gargeeda* and *Dullatii*). The *Waataa* sit down in between the two groups for reconciliation. Concerning this one of the respondent from the *Waataa* people records, "There should be eight elders; four from each group (from the victim family four and from the killer four) because we are four *Waataas*. During discussion about the issue with the elders, each of us takes one from each group and sits down in between the two groups" (January 21, 2011).

Having sat down in this way, the *Waataa* calls the Arsi three times to endow murderer all in all. Then the *Waataa* provides the murderer to the elders of the Arsi. The Arsi also takes the murderer from the *Waataa* by accepting all what they did. Moreover, the *Waataa* elders explain the process clearly as follows:

We call the Arsi three times to take the murderer from us, "your son who was unclean and who was the enemy of Arsi, now we make him clean and we make him the member of Arsi; please would you take him away from us? (Mucaa kessan kan kalee dinaa amaa siif arsomsee, mucaa kessan kan kale xuraa'a amma kunoo isiniif qulqullesse nurraa fudhhaa). In turn the Arsi reply "do you make our son clean and do you make our son the member of Arsi, we take him away from you". (Mucaa keenya Kan kale dinaa nuuf arsoomsittee, mucaa Keenya kan kale xuraa'a nuuf qulqullesitee sirra fudhanne)" (January 21, 2011).

From this anyone can understand that the *Waataa* promised the Arsi not to attack the murderer after all. And the Arsi has a great respect to the *Waataa* and they accept all what the *Waataa* says with no hesitation. The next step used by *Waataa* is dividing the meat of sheep in to the right and left parts. All the left side of the meat and the hide of the sheep will be taken by the *Waataa* and the right side is remaining for the murderer. The reason the *Waataa* leaves the right side of the meat of the sheep for murderer is to wish for him all the best for the rest of his life. In addition to this one of my informants said:

The left side of the meat belongs to the *Waataa*; we can take it to our home with the hide or we can eat with the Arsi. It depends up on the relationship we have with them. Why we take the left side just to wish him the entire best thing in his life for the murderer. (January 21, 2011)

Asking gift (irreessa)

After the *Waataa* completed all the process, he will ask additional gift (*irreessa*) from the Arsi and the Arsi also give the *Waataa* whatever he asks. It is a must that the Arsi gives the *Waataa* bull (*korma*) and calf (*goromsa*). If the Arsi begs the *Waataa* to leave one of the two, he can leave the calf and take the bull to his home but it depends up on his interest.

After this is completed, the next step would be Abbaa Gadaa will continue the blood price process. However, the *Waataa* makes the murderer free from any fear. He can live with the Arsi and he will be effective in his life. But he will pay the blood price determined by *Abbaa Gadaa*. It is not paid by only the murderer but his ethnic groups to participate in. There should be kinds of creeping ivy (*gaalee*) in the hand of him until he pays the entire blood price determined by the *Abbaa Gadaa*. The (*gaalee*) is the symbol to show he has blood price (*gumaa*) to be paid. The *Waataa* is cleaning the murderer, not to protect him from punishment in front of law for the crime he has done, rather to reduce the conflict between the families of the deceased and the family of the killer or to protect the conflict between two ethnic groups. Besides, one of the *Gadaa* leaders expressed:

This cleaning process is performing for two things: the first is to protect the murderer not to be affected by the disease *citaa* and the second to prevent the conflict between the two ethnic groups or between two families (February, 12, 2011)

The other informant stated that if the ethnic groups of the murderer do not call the *Waataa* for cleaning, the ethnic group of the deceased or his families will fight with the ethnic groups of the murderer. The family of the deceased asks whether the murderer or his ethnic group calls the *Waataa* and shaves the hair and cut the nail of the murderer or not. If the families of the killer do not call the *Waataa* for a week, the ethnic group of deceased will feel grief and became ready for revenge. They feel that he is boasting over them or he is undermining the ethnic group of victim.

From this we can infer that the Arsi communities are regarding as that shaving of the murderer shows the respect the murderer has for the family of died and not being shaved is regarding as undermining of them.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Waataa people have many unique rituals and cultural experiences which are kept and passed down to their children. Begging, hunting hippopotamus, making pottery and reconciliation are the main activities in which they are known. The *Waataa* people are feared in one way by the

surrounding community due to the ritual power they have; on the other hand they are ignored due to unacceptable activities they are performing.

Murdering is highly forbidden and the killer is rejected in the community of Arsi. As their perception killing of anybody is becoming out of the member of the community and the killer is regarded as a person who is not clean enough to live with the human being unless he is cleaned by *Waataa*. He should hide himself from any Oromo until the *Waataa* cleans him. The *Waataa* people have good awareness of conflict, the outcome of conflict and the cause of conflict. The causes of conflict in this district are mostly competition for farmland, grass land and sometimes theft and jealousy.

The *Waataa* people have responsibility to resolve the conflict between the Oromo if the case is murder case. But they cannot cover all the process of resolving. They are responsible for only cleaning process. The rest part of the processes which is called *gumaa* is performed by the *Abbaa Gadaa*. During the process of *qulqulleessuu* (cleaning), the *Waataa* has steps to be followed.

The Arsi community is considering that shaving of hair and cutting of the nail of the murderer shows the respect the murderer has for the family of the victim. They are cleaning the murderer not only to protect him from the punishment in front of the law but to reduce the conflict between two groups (the family of deceased and the family of killer).

There is strict hierarchy in the process of resolving conflict depending on the status of the murderer. The *Waataa* do not clean the other *Waataa* if he kills a person. To clean *Waataa*, there should be *irreessa*. Besides, when the *Waataa* is killed by the other, they never take the *gumaa* from the murderer unlike the other community. They take *gumaa* when they are beaten by the others. Amusingly, they take equal amount of *gumaa* as the *gumaa* paid for deceased Arsi when the *Waataa* is beaten by the others.

- This study has shown that generally traditional conflict resolution contribute to manage various social crises and the *Waataa* community in particularly play a decisive roles to resolve disputes among the Arsi Oromo and it has to be fully acknowledged since it empowers the community as the whole.

- The nature, cause, and magnitude of conflicts are changing from time to time. To identify categories and shape the occurrences of conflicts and come up with effective solutions, it seems necessary to develop the capacity of local peace-makers through training, tours and workshops. These trainings and workshops need to focus on increasing the knowledge base and skills in conflict management and enhancing capacity to gather and analyze information related to conflicts, and narrowing down social distances.

Nowadays the roles of *Waataa* in conflict resolution are highly declining and the community

is assimilating to the others culture. Because they are small in number and they are dominated by the surrounding communities. Therefore, attention needs to be given to render services at full capacity to their communities.

Currently, the role of *Waataa* community is replaced by the other elders selected by the police of the district and they are becoming inactive in the process of conflict resolution. Therefore, it seems important if the modern legal system takes the tradition conflict resolution system in to account for long lasting peace and security of the district or in the country.

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