

**Addis Ababa University**  
**College of Law and Governance**  
**Center for Federal Studies**

**PHD DISSERTATION ON THE TOPIC:**  
**TRADITIONAL CONFLICT MANAGEMENT AND**  
**RESOLUTION MECHANISMS: THE CASE OF**  
**SHEKO PEOPLE IN ETHIOPIA**

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October, 2018

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

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## **Acknowledgements**

Many individuals have been helpful and supportive in the process and completion of this dissertation. My first gratitude goes to my supervisors Dr. Dereje Feyissa and Professor Honour France for their intellectual support. During my fieldwork, I greatly benefited from the cooperation and participation of many individuals in Sheko, Yeki and Guraferda and hence, I wish to express my appreciation for their invaluable contributions. I would like also to express my appreciation to my wife, Tigist Ali, my Son Amanuel Mengistu and my daughter Azeb Mengistu for their demonstrative support. However, all errors and omissions of the analyses and findings rest solely with me.

Mengistu Fiseha Abebe

Addis Ababa University, 2018

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## **LIST OF ACRONYMS**

EPRDF	Ethiopian people’s Revolutionary Democratic front
FDRE	Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia
SNNPR	Southern Nation Nationalities and Peoples Region
TCMRM	Traditional Conflict Management and Resolution Mechanisms
HOF	House of Federation

## **Glossary**

<i>Sheko</i>	<i>English</i>
<i>Wogbab</i>	<i>King of the Sheko people whose power is descended from ancestral relation</i>
<i>Keyazu</i>	<i>Tribal leader, more particular than a state and refers to some collectives who have closer kin relations</i>
<i>Fichuka</i>	<i>Witch doctors who are believed to have the power to know about everything in the community</i>
<i>Kebesinta</i>	<i>Surrounding or compound where people appeal their matters to the kings or clan leaders</i>
<i>Gish</i>	<i>Abduction or simply kidnapping girls forcefully so that they could possibly be wives of the kidnapper</i>
<i>Yinu</i>	<i>Intestine of goats, sheep or cows that is important for the ritual ceremony that takes place after a conflict resolution is carried out</i>
<i>Gebzu</i>	<i>Borde [tradional drink prepared from Teff and maize]</i>
<i>Debim</i>	<i>Biting someone until he/she will be physical injured</i>
<i>Shbudbim</i>	<i>Serious conflict, loss of life occurs</i>

<i>Bora</i>	<i>Damnation, condemnation those tribal leaders Burjab, elders and the community do</i>
<i>Bertusa</i>	<i>Reconciliation made between conflicting parties</i>
<i>Kejo</i>	<i>Cultural food prepared from maize powder which originally is not dried out</i>
<i>Kerdi</i>	<i>A cold plant that grows in a dense forest which symbolically represents the actual settlement of the conflict between the two parties so that the conflict became cool like the coldness of the plant.</i>
<i>Otsu</i>	<i>A plant that looks like palm tree, which by itself is so important during the reconciliation ritual</i>
<i>Babu</i>	<i>An old man or elderly, especially for men</i>
<i>Becha</i>	<i>Insulting, frustrating or intimidating someone not to do something</i>
<i>Tori</i>	<i>A ring bell put-on leg during a festivity and mourning ceremony</i>
<i>Shengu</i>	<i>a musical instrument or sometimes called guitar made of threads [mostly five], woods and small piece of leather</i>
<i>Mara</i>	<i>Necklace or glass bead worn by girls to decorate themselves</i>

<i>Terbu</i>	<i>Drum made of wood and leather used as a musical instrument during some ceremonial practices</i>
<i>Baka</i>	<i>A potato like vegetable by which its root is edible and is a staple food for the Sheko and the surrounding communities</i>
<i>Kechi</i>	<i>A plant that looks like a grass from the upper side but its roots is edible by the Sheko community</i>
<i>Ama</i>	<i>A plant that looks like a donkey foot and grows on other trees</i>
<i>Shenkuta</i>	<i>Compensation paid to someone's wrong deeds</i>
<i>Burjab</i>	<i>An ethnic member of the Sheko community who undertakes the reconciliation and swearing ceremonies by using cultural materials and the laws of Sheko</i>
<i>Koynab</i>	<i>An ethnic member of the Sheko community whose ultimate decision making power is fully accepted by the concerned people.</i>
<i>Biakin</i>	<i>Arrow used by the Sheko people during hunting, intertribal conflicts and war</i>
<i>Giasu</i>	<i>Shield used as a protective device for the members in times of fight</i>

<i>Chemo</i>	<i>Cultural drink prepared from a coffee leaf and some other spices</i>
<i>Fera</i>	<i>A house utensil prepared from a horn /for elders and those in the higher class/ used for drinking purpose</i>
<i>Teka</i>	<i>Tej /local drink/ made of malt, hop and honey</i>
<i>Tera</i>	<i>Injera made mainly from teff, but sometimes from wheat, maize and other cereal crops by fermenting the flour</i>
<i>Gona (Kona)</i>	<i>Sauce made from different leguminous plants like bean, peas, grapes and spicing materials</i>
<i>Batha</i>	<i>Unity and cooperation among the community</i>
<i>Fensugeni</i>	<i>Material prepared from a local plant “gourd” having wide chamber and an opening that is used for drinking different drinks</i>
<i>Feti</i>	<i>Flute with only one opening that the Sheko uses during musical performances</i>
<i>Buwa</i>	<i>A musical instrument used together with “feti”</i>
<i>Oumu</i>	<i>Plants looking like Coconut tree which are used to prepare a place for a witch doctor</i>

*Zerpebuy*

*White little bird whose feather is an indication of a*

*Sheko man gets coronation*

*Kamidu*

*An young ox [bull] who has not get mated with cows*

*Bechiab*

*Conflicting parties*



## **ABSTRACT**

*Traditional Conflict Management and Resolution Mechanisms: The case of Sheko People in Ethiopia.*

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*Addis Ababa University, 2016*

*The general objective of the study has been to identify, describe and understand the traditional conflict management and resolution mechanisms of the Sheko people. To this end, the study has employed a qualitative research approach and the lived experience of the Sheko people in their traditional way of conflict management and resolution in-depth described. Data were collected using focus group discussion, interviews, and non-participatory observation and moreover relevant literatures and governmental documents are reviewed. It is found that, the Sheko people have developed traditional conflict management and resolution institutions such as Koynab, Burjab, Kalicha and Bertussa and a complex ritual also underpins these conflict management and resolution mechanisms, which cement the reconciliation to be long lasting. Different types of conflicts instigated as a result of theft, abduction, homicide, inter-clan conflict, boundary conflict and family quarrels are managed and resolved having their own mechanisms and rituals. The decision enforcement mechanisms in the form of social sanctions and the compensation mechanisms for the victims vary based on the type of conflict. The relation between the government centered conflict management and resolution mechanisms and the Sheko traditional conflict management and resolution mechanisms are identified and described. There is an opportunity for forum shopping and their alliance is need based. The accumulated wisdom of the community serving the community and creating essay accesses to justice in serving the public are identified as the strength of the traditional conflict management and resolution mechanisms. On the other hand, the traditional conflict management and resolution mechanisms are not gender sensitive and hence the roles of women are minimal and moreover, the system is irresponsive to the challenges of modernity.*

*Key words: Conflict Management,*

*Conflict Resolution, Traditional Conflict Management and Resolution,*

*Sheko People*

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# **Chapter One**

## **Introduction**

### **1.1. Background of the study**

Conflict is unavoidable in human life in which it arises from interest clashes. Hence, human beings always search for conflict management and resolution mechanisms through different ways based on their historical and cultural contexts and economic and power relation circumstances. Nowadays, it is possible to differentiate between the modern, more of western oriented, school curriculum based and formally trained ways of conflict management and resolution mechanism and a traditional, more of cultural context oriented, and indigenous knowledge based conflict management and resolution mechanisms (see Hannah, 2008).

The traditional conflict management and resolution institutions are closely bound with socio-cultural and economic realities and of the lifestyles of the concerned communities. They are rooted in the culture and history of the people and are in one way or another unique to each community (Bukari, 2013).

One of the distinguishing features of the traditional conflict resolution and management mechanisms is their overriding legitimacy amongst their

communities. Even when it comes to conflict “transformation and transcendence” to use Galtung’s (2000) dictum, some scholars weighted the traditional conflict resolution and management mechanism higher than the modern one (see Hannah, 2008). This is because the traditional conflict resolution mechanisms place their focus on the cultural context of the society and allow greater participation of the disputants.

The dissertation is aimed to study the traditional conflict management and resolution mechanisms of Sheko. The main conflict resolution mechanism used by these people is locally known as *Bertussa*, which denotes reconciliation in the Sheko language. An in-depth study of this institution and conflict management and resolution mechanisms is the central focus of the dissertation. In doing so, the conflict management institutions, rituals, the role of gender in the whole conflict management and resolution process, the sanction and enforcement mechanisms, the nexus between this traditional conflict management and resolution institutions and the formal legal institutions and the strength and weakness of the traditional conflict management and resolution mechanisms of the Sheko people are also assessed.

The study will contribute to the studies of traditional conflict management and resolution mechanisms in Africa in general and in Ethiopian in particular and it also helps to document the time proven conflict management and resolution

practice of the Sheko people. Moreover, the scientific study of this practice may also help to highlight the nexus between the governmental system of conflict management and resolution and the traditional conflict management and resolution mechanisms of the Sheko people in managing and solving conflicts in the area. Thus, the study may contribute also to enhance the knowledge of the local governmental actors on the time proven traditional conflict management and resolution mechanisms of the Sheko people and thereby improve the collaboration between the two forms of conflict management and resolution mechanisms in the area.

My interest in this dissertation is the conflict management and resolution mechanisms of the Sheko people. The Sheko live in Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples Regional State (hereafter SNNPR) of Ethiopia. They practice mixed agriculture, focusing on coffee plantation. Their social organization is based on eldership. They have clan based organization and institutions for conflict resolution, i.e., *Koynab*, *Kalicha* and *Burjab*. The Sheko have a well-established conflict management and resolution mechanisms.

## **1.2. Statement of the problem**

Traditional conflict management and resolution mechanisms use local actors and traditional community-based institutions and decision-making mechanisms to manage and resolve conflicts within or between communities (Tarekegn, 2008). Conflicting parties are more likely to accept guidance from the traditional litigation than from other sources because an elder's decision does not trigger any loss of

face and is backed by social pressure. It also brings win-win solution rather than a zero sum game. The end result is, ideally, a sense of friendship and unity among groups, otherwise, who were in conflict. The elders control access to resources and marital rights, they have access to networks that go beyond the clan boundaries, ethnic identity and generations, and are supported by a tradition of belief on the potential power of the elders in resolving conflicts (see Ben-Mensah, 2004).

Thus, the purpose of this qualitative ethnographic study is to assess and thickly describe the conflict management and resolution mechanism practiced by the Sheko people. I have made extensive review of related literature in chapter three to place my study within the existing scholarship in the area of conflict resolution in Ethiopia. My review of the literature resulted in the fact that no one has conducted specifically a research on conflict management and resolution mechanisms among the Sheko. Hence, this study is intended to fill this gap and to shed some light on the traditional conflict resolution mechanisms of the Sheko People. It also tries to show importance of recognizing and proper documentation of indigenous knowledge systems for future use either by the community members or by policy makers. Documenting the practices of these institutions will also help to keep them documented before some of practices are lost.

### **1.3. Significances of the Study**

This study will have significances as follows. First, it will contribute to the documentation of the TCMR practices of the Sheko. Local customs are rapidly changing in the face of overriding modernization. It is thus an imperative to document, in my case textually, as urgently as possible local customs such as of TCMR in Sheko. Secondly, the research will also be made available to the state and stakeholders working in the area of conflict management and resolution. The study will avail best practices of the Sheko people so that the state and stakeholders will make use of them in conflict management and resolution among the Sheko, or perhaps, elsewhere. Thirdly, the study will also contribute to the execution of the principle of the current Ethiopian Federalism on the promotion and protection of customs of nations, nationalities, and Peoples. Study and documentation of local cultures is one step in realization of the constitutional principles.

### **1.4. Purpose of the study**

The purpose of this ethnographic study is to conduct an in-depth analysis of traditional conflict management and resolution mechanisms among the Sheko communities in Ethiopia. The Sheko people have a well-established means of conflict management and resolution mechanisms, which operates side by side with the governmental institutions.

The police, courts and prison systems seem to erroneously interpret the customary law has been rendered obsolete and its places would be taken by the modern court system. But, the Sheko people continued to rely on customary law and mechanisms in resolving their intra and inter-ethnic conflicts and both mechanisms most often than not operate side by side. Specific objectives of this study are:

- To collect and collate the most common types of intra-ethnic and inter-ethnic disputes that are handled through the traditional conflict management and resolution mechanisms of the Sheko people.
- To identify, describe, and analyze the institutions of conflict resolution among the Sheko.
- To critically assess the roles of customary institutions of conflict management in present day Sheko people.
- To examine the ways in which customary institutions of conflict management can be strengthened and integrated with the formal system.
- To assess the sanctions and enforcement mechanisms and the change and dynamics in the conflict management and resolution mechanisms of the Sheko people.
- To explore the role of gender on the whole organization and activities of the traditional conflict management and resolution mechanisms of the Sheko people.

## 1.4. Research Questions

Depending on the nature of the research, researchers may state a hypothesis and/ or formulate research questions, which address the problem to be researched. This ethnographical research, which tries to describe the detailed mechanisms of conflict management and resolution mechanisms of the Sheko people proceeds with few leading questions, which are further developed in the processes of the research. These leading questions are:

- What is the legal philosophy of the Sheko, which underpins the institutions of conflict resolution?
- What are the important steps taken by the *Burjab*, *Kalicha* and *Koynab* in managing and resolving conflict?
- What are the most common types of conflicts, which are resolved by the traditional conflict resolution mechanisms?
- What are the methods and rituals used by the *Burjab*, *Kalicha* and *Koynab* to influence the conflicting parties so that they accept their verdict?
- How is the agreed solution for a given conflict implemented and monitored and what are the sanctions?
- How are the traditional conflict management and resolution institutions working in tandem with the modern governmental institutions?
- What are the strength and weakness of the traditional conflict management and resolution mechanisms of the Sheko people

- What is the place of gender in the whole gamut of the traditional conflict management and resolution mechanisms of the Sheko People

These questions are further developed based on the participants' response and the corresponding questions.

### **1.5. Delimitation and Limitation of the Study**

This research focused only on the conflict resolution and management mechanisms of Sheko people living in three woredas - Gura Fereda, Sheko and Yeki. It did not include conflict management and resolution mechanisms of other ethnic groups living in those woredas. The modern or the governmental conflict resolution and management activities were part of the study in so far as they interact with traditional conflict management and resolution mechanisms of the Sheko. The study focused on conflict management and resolution mechanisms of one group, but a more rich account would have been produced if the work were comparative.

### **1.6. Methodology**

According to Schmelzer (1998), there are two philosophical schools, known as positivism and humanism, that make competing claims on knowledge production. "...Positivism poses the discovery of general laws as the ultimate goal of scientific inquiry and advocates the scientific method of hypothesis testing as a general procedure for generating and validating scientific

knowledge" (Schmelzer 1998: 42). This school argues that the findings a researcher gets should be replicated by other scholars and hence brings about the "same account". The school proposes this replication of results should also be made for social science and humanities research results since these disciplines should also be guided by rules of logic and empirical validation (Schwelzer, 1998).

On the contrary, according to Salzman's (1996), the methodologies advocated by humanistic sciences consist of:

*"The use of empathy, as in participation in local activities to gain a feeling for local life, the collection through casual conversation, interviews and life-histories of expressions by local people of their perspectives, understandings, and experiences, and the recording of collective expressions of local culture such as myths, proverbs, songs, stories, rituals, and ceremonies (p.553)."*

Salzman (1996) further discusses the characteristics of humanistic sciences in the following way.

*"In its more extreme postmodern form, humanistic sciences have no place for information collection that smacks of 'objectivism' and 'positivism', such as distanced observation, surveys, testing, quantitative data or any method which makes the people into research objects" (p. 553)."*

For this study, I followed the humanistic perspective for two reasons. First, since the humanistic approach emphasizes on meaning, reflexivity and historical embeddedness among people (Schwelzer 1998: 76- 77), employing this approach would be pertinent in getting peoples' understanding towards their own culture and institutions that include traditional conflict resolution mechanisms. Second, the humanistic perspective can catch the change or dynamicity of the internal workings of such local institutions. When there is change on the traditional conflict resolution mechanisms, it is expected that the particular community will try to record the changes in their mental repertoire so long as human beings are capable of doing such tasks. As Schwelzer (1998:54) argues, not all knowledge is fixed.

The hermeneutics stress "The historical embedded-ness, incompleteness and limited validity of any system of knowledge in general and western rationality in particular." (Schwelzer1998:49). Inthis regard, even those positivists who conduct natural science research helped by laboratory apparatuses may not establish an absolute fact towards some research findings because of the differences in the researchers' subjective understandings and interpretations.

Thus I preferred to emphasize on the humanistic perspective, which allowed me to write on the traditional conflict resolution mechanism of the Sheko people based on emic perspective that requires situating the researcher in the natural settings. As Schwelzer (1998:54) argues, I also acknowledge that not all

knowledge is fixed. That may be why those who advocate hermeneutics approach argue against universal standard of science. The hermeneutics stress "The historical embeddedness, incompleteness and limited validity of any system of knowledge in general and western rationality in particular." (Schwelzer 1998: 49). In this regard, even those positivists who conduct natural science research helped by laboratory apparatuses may not establish an absolute fact towards some research findings because of the differences in the researchers' subjective understandings and interpretations.

For this study, I have brought dependable data by replicating the different forms of data collection methods at different villages among the Sheko community. But, the replication or validation was primarily planned to minimize bias or generation of false data. That means, the replication was not carried out for the purpose of fulfilling the "rational criteria" external to the social and cultural systems embedded in the Sheko people's traditional conflict resolution mechanisms. This is to mean that the Sheko themselves have the right to determine on the rationality of their ways of lives (including their traditional conflict resolution mechanisms). An outsider cannot put his/her own criteria on the Sheko's ways of lives. It is believed that rationality may depend on the contexts of which the people are living in.

Since the study is a study of traditional conflict management and resolution mechanism of an ethnic group, which is based on an in-depth description of the lived experience of the ethnic group in culturally embedded conflict

management and resolution mechanisms, this study adopts a qualitative approach which is more of humanistic in perspective.

### **1.6.1. Field Entry**

Before I directly entered the fieldwork for data collection, I had to have a letter written from the Department of Federal Studies at Addis Ababa University. Having this letter, I began the fieldwork in 2013. By showing the letter to Sheka and Bench Maji Zone Administrators at Masha and Mizan Teferi towns, I have tried to introduce myself and the research project to the concerned officials. At the time, I elaborated the objective and duration of my research project, my intention and plan to meet selected informants

Before meeting the Woreda and Kebele level officials, I interviewed some informants who gave me preliminary information about the Shekos' community at Teppi and Mizan towns. The name of some of these key informants was She Cho Feji, Ourma Ziti, Shasha Woshkara and Kassa Kershin [for more information about these informants, see the biographies of informants in the appendix].

Since the mentioned informants know about the local institutions, they gave me important guidance on how to begin and proceed with data collection. After having been introduced to objectives of my research, the informants guided me about where to go and whom to. I continued meeting informants

who work at Woreda and Kebele administration, first at Yeki Woreda (Teppi town), then at Sheko and Guraferda. In both Yeki and Sheko, I was able to contact Woreda officials at their individual offices. The officials expressed their interest towards my research work and willingness to support my endeavors. In general, my field entry was somewhat smooth.

Based on suggestions from the Woreda administrators, I have contacted some knowledgeable informants. Despite some variations in their knowledge, the elders provided me with data concerning the narratives about their traditional conflict resolution mechanism.

When I introduced my key informants with my research design, they warmly expressed their pleasure to support my data collection. Having known me as a high school teacher at Teppi, informants were most welcome to support my data collection. The initiative I took to study Sheko was also pleasing to them. Because of my being there as a government worker for long time and clear presentation of my research plan, it seems that they trusted me in providing me with the necessary data.

Almost all of my informants accepted my research attempt and even one of my informants<sup>1</sup> complemented me: "We all thank you for studying this neglected community". The elderly informants were of the opinion that no one had asked them before to write about their history and culture including traditional

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<sup>1</sup> Casual conversation with Bandu Tucha at Fide Kebele, 2013

conflict resolution Mechanisms. In sum, I have created sense of trust from the people by being there in the natural setting. Information flows freely in such trustful ethnographic contexts.

While I interview, I was not used to question informants immediately I arrived there. I, rather, have used to interview the key informants in a way that I was merely carrying on a friendly conversation. Since language is a key factor for social science researchers to build rapport and trust among the study community, it was very important to learn the Sheko language. But since most of my informants are bilinguals who speak both Sheko and Amharic languages, the issue of communication was not a problem during my field work.

Hence the Sheko speaking informants themselves could be able to interpret ideas, values and symbols into Amharic. Thus, I can depict the natives' cultures and the meanings they attach to different socio-cultural issues more critically. Generally my fieldwork lasted for about two years, but with some irregular visit to the Sheko community cultural practices at different times.

### **1.6.2. Methods of Data Collection**

For the proper achievement of the research objectives, first, key cultural experts and research areas have to be determined. The study used qualitative methods. Which are observation, interviews and focus group

discussions.. The literature was also consulted which includes books, locally produced materials and other relevant documents have been used to support data collected through interviews, observations and informal discussions. The quantitative approach was not employed because the objectives set for the research did not require quantification. Rather, to meet the objectives, I had to explore and understand peoples' experiences related to their traditional conflict resolution mechanisms.

#### **1.6.2.1 Research sites and participants selection**

When I thought of studying the Sheko people, I had the preliminary information that this community inhabits three Woredas, namely Yeki, Sheko and Guraferda. As described earlier, the Sheko of the three woredas have more or less similar culture. Thus, I took that wherever convenient place I collected data can be safely generalized to all the Sheko. Study sites such as village of the Koynab (king), clan leaders and Burjab (reconcilers) as well as important rivers like Beko where the conflict resolution takes place have been visited. Thus, in most cases, I have conducted a multi-sited ethnographic research. I had to wander across places where information would be accessible. To collect data on the traditional conflict resolution mechanism of the Sheko people, I searched for the best informants guided by the people themselves based on some criteria set beforehand. During selection, the elders' experiences and knowledge on history, norms and values attached to local institutions were considered.

Their experiences in performing and leading traditional social organizations and political systems were considered during selection.

The total number of key informants was 20, of whom 17 were men and the rest were women (See appendix for biographies of key informants consulted). I frequently contacted knowledgeable elders in the processes of understanding the Sheko peoples' traditional conflict resolution mechanism. Since this ethnographic work is to write on the local community's tradition based largely on oral narratives and interviews, elders' narratives were found to be essential sources of data. Elders have accumulated knowledge about the past and present situations of the peoples' tradition including the processes of and reasons for the changes and continuities. Both the ordinary community members and Woreda Administration officials suggested some elders for interview. Thus, much of the task in providing information about the people's tradition was left to the selected elders. However, I also contacted some youths in villages and hence I was able to include their voices. Apart from the above informants, many others whose level of participation is less than the key informants were interviewed about the Sheko tradition. I made use of informal interviews in different informal circumstances.

### **1.6. 2.2. Focus group Discussion (FGD)**

This research has also employed (FGD) as an important means of data collection. Conducting FGDs was important because informants showed disagreements on some points during interviews. It was important that these disagreements were further discussed through FGDs. The elders, clan leaders, *Burjab* and *Konyab* were FGD participants owing to their experience on issues of traditional conflict management and resolution in the area.

Overall, I have made three FGDs at different places with different people. One FGD was arranged at Teppi town. Teppi is relatively the center place to Shosha, Endris and Teppi itself. The second FGD was conducted at Bechi Kebele. Bechi centers Kebeles like Komi, Bechi, Fide and Michi. From each of the three kebeles mentioned here, I selected two participants. The participants were respected elders and kebele administrators. The third was conducted at Darimo Kebele. This kebele was selected because it centers Korcha, Yeki, Tsano, Zinki and Darimo. From these kebeles, a total of eight participants were involved in the discussion. I had played my facilitator role in all of the FGDs.

I was able to collect essential data regarding the issue at hand. Recurring themes generated out of the participants show the overall pattern of the conflict resolution mechanisms among the Sheko community. From the FGDs, I also understood that it was not only the groups' voices that are represented but also the variations within the group members on some issues. I understood that, when focus group discussants are personally asked, they openly explain their

internal feelings. On the contrary, some discussants tended to dominate the discussion and make others conform to their arguments.

### **1.6.3.2. Interview**

Bryman (2003:9) noted that, “through interviews we collect verbal reports of behavior, meanings, attitudes and feelings that are never directly observed in the face to face encounter of the interview but that are the data the question is supposed to reveal.” Thus, in order to collect the verbal behaviors, meanings, and attitudes of the participants of the study, a series of interviews were conducted with elders, clan leaders, *Konyab*, *Burjab*, government officials working at Zonal, Woreda and Kebele levels and religious leaders using a semi-structured interview questions. Apart from these, I interviewed some people from the ordinary community, youths and women.

The time and place of interviews was arranged based on the choice of interviewees themselves. I conducted in-depth interviews with government official in their offices. For those who live in the rural area, I arrange the interviews at their villages and mostly while they perform their daily activities so that the interviewees were not distracted from their routines.

During the interview, a series of semi-structured questions were presented to the aforementioned participants and a slight adjustment was made in the contents of the interview questions to address the occupational and institutional differences of the participants so that they provide information

accordingly. Ambiguities and misunderstandings about issues at hand were cleared continuously by asking additional questions until the idea become clear enough.

I delivered questions regarding the social structure of the Sheko community, their settlement and related history, genealogy, local institutions including the traditional conflict resolution mechanisms and the main causes of conflicts as well as the various processes embedded in the conflict resolution mechanisms. Generally, I conducted both formal and informal interviews with 35 informants. Out of these, 31 were men while 4 were women.

#### **1.6.3.3. observation**

Observation is crucial in documenting the processes involved while different socio-cultural practices and other activities are carried out in natural settings. Ethnographers often use observation as a strategy for both listening to people and watching them in natural settings (Fife, 2005:56). Observation helps to get meanings attached to the different socio-cultural practices among the community. The researcher observed people while they are engaged in conflict resolution practice. The physical characteristic of the social situation was also observed.

I have observed several cultural and social phenomena of the Sheko community by being there in the natural settings. For instance, I have observed the conflict occurred between two clans during a mourning ceremony. The Sheko tradition restricts members of one clan not be involved in the mourning dance. During my observation, a non-member was involved in the mourning dance and hence a conflict arose between two clans. Following this event, I observed the various cultural performances that took place in resolving the conflict. In another during coffee harvest at Komi. I was there while the different clan groups in the Sheko community praised one against another. That was a good context for me as an ethnographer to understand the difference between the clans in Sheko. Apart from such contexts, I was there in the community while they perform wedding ceremonies and discuss about issues in edir meetings. Further, I observed the community's lives particularly while they practiced the "modern religion" [Protestantism], and along the way, I was able to interview some of the community members about the changes and continuities in their tradition.

I also participated in the daily activities of the community by being there in settings like local bear houses (tej bet), villagers' invitation houses for chemo (local drink prepared from coffee leaf) and bus transport. Hence, I opened informal discussions on issues related to conflict and its resolution mechanisms. On my way to different observation sites, I have taken photographs, videos and notes about issues related to conflict resolution mechanisms that are relevant to the work.

During all these journeys, I made casual interviews with different informants. Such interviews were also very much helpful in making informed consent with the community.

#### **1.6. 4. Data analysis and validation**

In the course of doing this task, I followed some approaches or styles to data analyses. I examined each of the data by categorizing them into different constituent parts. Afterward, the data were analyzed to understand how the traditional conflict resolution mechanism among the Sheko works. To perform such tasks, first, it was essential to carefully listen to the recorded data in the tape recorder and read the note book. Listening and reading to those data allowed me to have a general knowledge of the local institutions of the Sheko community particularly on the conflict management and resolution processes.

In reality, it will be hard to report on each utterance of the study community. Thus, I had to give emphasis to the selected ones that can best represent the Sheko tradition regarding conflict and related issues. Finnegan (1992) expressed the idea as follows: "These could be summed up provisionally as the more formalized and recurrent conventions relating to verbal expression, considered in their cultural context" (p: 3).

As described above, the collected data were arranged based on the similarity of ideas. Data transcribed from interviews and FGDs and notes taken from observations were put into tentative category of related themes I have

attempted to analyze the collected data helped by key informants. The key informants interpreted the meanings attached to the material cultures to know the social meanings implied in those cultural materials. After understanding the patterns and meanings of each of the transcribed data in the notebooks, pictures and voice recorder, I identified the connecting "thread" for the cultural constituents. Generally, by triangulating the various data, I tried to identify the patterns that are common to the community at large. Creswell (2003:23) also noted that "...triangulation is the process of cross-checking data to ensure reliability, which strengthens internal validity and reliability of findings. It also refers to the process of cross-checking data to ensure reliability, which strengthens internal validity." Therefore, triangulation of data was applied by converging different data sources in order to obtain reliable data.

#### **1.6.5. Report presentation structure**

Sheko people cultural setting portrayed and detailed narrated.

#### **1.7. Ethical consideration**

The participants in the research were fully informed of the purpose of the research and there is an ethical protocol which was agreed between the researcher and the participants.

#### **1.8. Structure of the Dissertation**

Chapter one of the dissertations sets the direction of the whole undertaking. It includes background of the study, statement of the

problem, purpose of the study and the delimitation and limitation of the study. Then, the methodological part will address how data were collected and analyzed.

Chapter two is devoted mainly to the definition, conceptualization, and operationalization of the most important terms in the study, such as conflict, conflict management, conflict resolution, and traditional conflict management and resolutions. In order to highlight the contribution of this case study to the study of traditional conflict management and resolution mechanisms in Ethiopia, in chapter three, relevant literature on traditional conflict management and resolution mechanisms in Ethiopia are reviewed.

Chapter four delves into an in-depth description of the conflict management and resolution institutions and rituals of the Sheko people. In the first part of the chapter, the socio-cultural setting of the people is described. This sets the contextual foundation of the traditional conflict management and resolution institutions of the Sheko people. Then, an in-depth description of the traditional conflict management and resolution institutions and their place in the Sheko peoples and the mechanisms of the traditional institution such as *Koynab*, *Kalich*, *Burjab* and *Bertussa* and the ritual applied are presented.

In order to enrich the study with case, chapter five thickly describes the conflict between the Bechi and Michi clans and the conflict resolution process organized in order to resolve it.

Chapter six presents' decisions reached in conflict resolutions and their enforcement mechanisms. The compensation mechanisms for the victims of the conflict and social sanction mechanisms for the implementation of the decisions are discussed.

Chapter seven investigates the working relations between the traditional conflict resolutions institution and governmental institutions by highlighting the opportunities and challenges they face.

In chapter eight, the role of gender in the whole traditional conflict management and resolution mechanisms of the Sheko people is assessed. Moreover, the strength and weakness of the traditional conflict management and resolution mechanisms is assessed. Issues of fairness, equal treatment of all members of the society in the conflict resolution process, efficiency of its decision making, as well as enforcement and sanction mechanisms are assessed.

Finally, the last chapter gives a conclusion by summarizing the major findings of the research.

## **Chapter Two**

### **2. Definition, Conceptualization and Operationalization of terms**

#### **2.1. Introduction**

This chapter provides an overview of the concepts of conflict, conflict management and conflict resolution in general and traditional conflict management and resolution, in particular. The aim is to clarify and operationalize these concepts so that the discussion on the traditional conflict management and resolutions mechanisms of the Sheko people's proceeds with clearly defined and operationalized concepts. To this end, first, conflict is defined and some theoretical issues related to conflict presented. Then, conflict management and resolution are defined and their difference and similarity discussed. Finally, the main issue of the dissertation – traditional conflict management and resolution mechanisms as a concept—is clarified.

#### **2.2. Conflict**

In social science research, it is desirable to start a scientific undertaking in a social phenomenon like conflict, conflict prevention, conflict management and conflict resolution with a clear and precise conceptualization of the terms. The conceptualization of scientific terms begins with appropriate definition of the meaning of the term in the context of the intended research.

Different scholars have forwarded their ideas related to the prevalence of conflict in any society. For some, conflict has a positive dividend in making human beings able to design a new way to solve their social, economic and political problems and to progress into a better way of life (Coser, 1967). There is no society living without conflict and there is a dialectical relation with conflict and progress in a society (Coser, 1967). The most important issue in conflict is its prevention and management so that it could not become violent and destructive.

The term conflict has been conceptualized in different ways by the scholars. It is defined as something that results from opposing interests involving scarce resources, goal divergence and frustrations (Niklas and Mikael, 2005). The frustration-aggression dynamics is one issue that has got emphasis in the social-psychological conceptualization of conflict. On other hand, the word conflict can be defined as “clash”, competition or collisions of mutual interference of opposing incompatible forces or qualities, ideas, interests and wills (Gove, 1976:476).

For political scientists, the term conflict is defined as “antagonistic encounters or collisions of interests, principles, ideas, policies or programs that characterize many interactions carried on within or between political systems” (Plano, 1973:77). Political conflict has many manifestations, ranging from verbal expressions of disagreement to outright physical combat. Some scholars

define “conflict” as a struggle over values and status, power and resource in which the aims of the combatants are to neutralize, injure, or eliminate their rivals” (Kolbo, 1964:123).

Conflict has also its own features and manifestations It is not a static situation, but a dynamic one. The intensity level of a conflict changes over a conflict’s life cycle and understanding of these dynamics helps how, where, and when to apply different strategies and measures of conflict prevention and management (Niklas and Mikael, 2005). As conflict is a dynamic phenomenon, its resolution and management requires series of necessary transformations (Ahmed, 2005).

Conflict is associated with the nature of human beings. The history of conflict is as old as human history. Communities have been competing for the control of resource and for dominance. Individuals, groups and societies have disputed and competed against one another over scarce commodities and resources, land, money, political power, and ideology. They have even fought against one another and bitterly sought the elimination and /or resolving conflicts. These competitions inevitably lead individuals as well as social, political, economic and religious groups to conflicts. It is true that conflict has devastating effects if it is not properly managed and resolved (Assefa, 2005).

Conflict is often understood to be related to a wide range of situations. It could be a debate or a contest, a mistreatment, an argument, a dispute or a quarrel.

It could also relate to struggle, a battle or confrontation and a situation of unrest or turmoil.

A conflict could characterize the inner emotional and psychological state of the individual and relationships within or between different social groups such as the family, town, state, cultures or even civilizations. It could be understood as the opposite of cooperation, harmony, accord or even peace (Sewanyana, 1997). Some scholars differentiate two ways of conceptualizing conflict. For example Niklas and Mikael (2005) differentiated between a traditional and more recent perception of the concept of conflict:

*According to the traditional definitions, conflict is the result of opposing interests involving scarce resources, goal divergence and frustration. In more recent perceptions of the conflict concept, we suggest that conflicts should not be defined simply in terms of violence (behaviour) or hostility (attitudes), but also include incompatibility or differences in issue position (Mikael 2005:7).*

Thus, in this dissertation, conflict is conceptualized incorporating both ideas: i.e., conflict as an outcome of opposing interests involving scarce resources, goal divergence and frustration and as incompatibility or difference in issue position. After conceptualising conflict in the aforementioned way, it is desirable to raise some issues related to theories of conflict that explain how

and why conflict would emerge in its latent or manifest form. Because, explaining the cause, as the saying goes, is a half way to its solution.

Theories in social science are a parsimonious explanation of the complex social world or phenomenon in order to develop some ways of explanation for the social phenomenon as they occur in some form of causal relation depending on variables. Different scholars in search of some explanation for its occurrence and the possible ways of preventing, managing, resolving, transforming and transcending it are theorizing conflict and issues related to conflict. In this part of the discourse, it is desirable to assess some of the pertinent theories of conflict.

Of the different conflict theories, human need theory is one. The most important contribution of basic human needs theory is taking the individual as the most appropriate unit of analysis. Humans have physiological needs that they strive to fulfill under all circumstances. All humans have basic psychological and physical needs (William, 2001).

Human beings try to satisfy their needs settling themselves in a defined territory. Humans are territorial by nature and the territory is intertwined with our sense of self and group identities. The link between territory and ethno-national identity is particularly salient. Thus, because territory has such importance to one of our fundamental basic human needs (identity), having

this need frustrated makes us very annoyed and more prone to respond to territorial threats with aggression (William, 2001).

Human need theories are more of social-psychological theories and there are certain psychological theories trying to explain ethnic conflict. As cited by Befekadu and Dirbssa (2005), Yagcioglu (1996) identified three psychological theories relevant to ethnic conflicts: the realistic group conflict theory, the social identity theory, and the psychological or psychodynamic theory.

According to the realistic group conflict theory, in order for conflicts to arise, there should first be real or perceived incompatible goals leading to inter-group competition that, in turn, leads to psychological misperceptions and hostilities. In other words, this theory suggests that hostility between two groups is easily formed from real or perceived conflicting goals that initiate intergroup competition. That is, when groups engage in reciprocally competitive and frustrating activities of zero sum nature, each group develops negative stereotypes about the other, and enmity develops (Befekadu and Dirbssa, 2005:80).

The social identity theory assumes that group members have basic needs for a positive social identity and that inter-group conflicts emerge because each group inevitably compares itself with the other group. According to this theory, individuals belong to distinct classes or social categories and within this

system of social categorization, individuals locate themselves and the others the sum total of where they are located with respect to each category and classification constitutes. One's social identity consists of how one defines oneself in each social category (geographic location, gender, class, profession, etc.). (Befekadu and Dirbssa, 2005:80).

According to psychological or psychodynamic theories, explanation of inter group conflict is made by applying theories of personality development to group dynamics and assume that groups need enemy groups, which serve as targets to project their negative feelings. The approach is based on group dynamics and object relations theory. As indicated by this theory, ego, whole separating it from id, acquires certain functions that have something to do with the external world. That of relation of oneself with objects (persons and things) this is an act of constructing images and representing self-images of other personas and objects. Volkan[1988].

Moreover, greed and grievance, frustration and aggression, relative deprivation are some of the theoretical framework used to analyze conflict in different parts of the world (Porto, 2002). In analyzing the protracted conflicts in Africa after the Cold War, the access to and control of valuable natural resources, including minerals, oil, timber, productive pasture and farming land, have been used as factors in the occurrence of violent conflicts across the continent. In their widest sense, the use and control of ecological resources as causes of

conflicts has been motivated by both grievance and greed. Grievance related to the unjust and inequitable distribution of land and natural resources in many regions of Africa, and greed for valuable ecological resources have in many instances been the underlying causes of armed conflicts (see Porto, 2002: 2).

The development of the relative deprivation approach is described by Porto (2002) in the following way:

*“The relative deprivation approach was developed by James Davies (1962), the Feierabends (1966), and Ted Robert Gurr (1970) to explain individual and group violence. This approach places the relative sense of deprivation as the most important factor in creating grievances and mobilising people for conflict behaviour. At the heart of individual and groups’ grievances is the idea of unrealised expectations. In Davies’ view, political violence results from an intolerable gap between what people want and what they get: the difference between expectations and gratifications. This discrepancy is a frustrating experience sufficiently intense and focused to result in either rebellion or revolution. Additional causal variables are introduced by Gurr because aggression must be politicised if it is to appear as collective political violence”. These causal variables are the belief in the utilitarian justifiability of violence and protest (attitudes and beliefs that justify aggressive action, because it is expected to help people achieve their political goals, provide*

*utilitarian motivational incentives), and the belief in their normative justifiability (attitudes and beliefs that justify aggressive political actions, because it is intrinsically right or proper, provide motivational incentive for such behaviour).”*

This approach places the relative sense of deprivation as the most important factor in creating grievances and mobilising people for conflict behaviour. At the heart of individual and groups' grievances is the idea of unrealised expectations (Porto, 2002: 13). By citing Michael Brown's approach to underlying conditions' and 'proximate causes' of 'internal conflict', Porto (2002:24) presented the following framework as underlying causes and proximate causes of conflicts.

<b>Underlying causes</b>	<b>Proximate causes</b>
<p><b>Structural</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Weak states</li> <li>• Intra-state security concerns <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ethnic geography</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collapsing states</li> <li>• Changing intra-state military balances</li> <li>• Changing demographic patterns</li> </ul>
<p><b>Political factors</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discriminatory political institutions</li> <li>• Exclusionary national ideologies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inter-group politics</li> <li>• Elite politics</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Political transitions</li> <li>• Increasingly exclusionary ideologies</li> <li>• Growing inter-group competition</li> <li>• Intensifying leadership struggles</li> </ul>
<p><b>Economic/social factors</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Economic problems</li> <li>• Discriminatory economic systems</li> <li>• Modernisation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mounting economic problems</li> <li>• Growing economic inequities</li> <li>• Fast-paced development and modernisation</li> </ul>
<p><b>Cultural/perceptual factors</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Patterns of cultural discrimination</li> <li>• Problematic group histories</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intensifying patterns of cultural discrimination <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ethnic bashing and propagandising</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

Thus, the study of conflict can be based on theoretical and conceptual frameworks that touch the underlying nature of human beings and their political, social and economic organizations. The underlying and proximate causes of conflicts are also related to structural, political and cultural factors.

The conflicts in areas inhabited by the Sheko people that are addressed by the traditional conflict management and resolution mechanisms are also related to economic, cultural and structural factors. Most of the conflicts are related to homicide, marital conflicts, intergroup conflicts related to scarce resources like grazing areas and water points. Theft and abduction are also other causes of conflict in the area (Shasha woshikara).

### **2.3. Conflict Management**

According to conflict theorists, conflict management means constructive handling of differences. It is an art of designing appropriate institutions to guide inevitable conflict into peaceful channels. Thus, it is a theoretical concept focusing on the limitation, mitigation, and/or containment of a conflict without necessarily solving it (Niklas and Mikael, 2005; Fred, 2000; Zimmerman, 2000).

Based on the conflict cycle, conflict management and resolution would be the appropriate instruments of intervention at the different stages of the conflict. Thus, management measures are applied in later phases when a conflict is

manifest, but before violence has occurred. Conflict resolution could, on the other hand, be applied in the de-escalation phase after a violent conflict mechanism of the Sheko people; it is also possible to discuss the different stages of the conflicts and the measures taken by the traditional conflict management and resolution institutions.

In light of the traditional conflict management and resolution conflict management and conflict resolution are different concepts, but at the same time they are closely interrelated. They are two mechanisms at deterrence stages of these conflicts. Conflict management and conflict prevention has, in a similar way, been argued to be different sides of the same coin. It has also been argued that conflict management is required in order to enable the initiation of preventive measures aiming at resolving the dispute (Nikals, 2005). Conflict management as a concept, has been conventionally associated with conflict containment. Conflict management theorists see violent conflicts as an ineradicable consequence of differences of values and interests within and between communities. These theorists regard “resolving such conflicts as unrealistic, the best that can be done is to manage and contain them and occasionally to reach a historic compromise in which violence may be laid aside and normal politics resumed”. This definition assumes that conflicts are irresolvable and that handling is limited to containing and ending the violence (Hamad, 2005).

The process of conflict management is the foundation for more effective conflict resolution. A distinction between conflict management and conflict resolution is, however, needed as a starting point as the concepts of the two are confused or integrated. As will be shown in the next section, conflict resolution refers to the resolution of the underlying incompatibilities in a conflict and mutual acceptance of each party's existence. But, conflict management refers to measure that limit, mitigate and /or contain a conflict without necessarily solving it. Conflict management minimizes the negative outcomes of conflict and promotes the positive outcomes of conflict with the goal of improving learning in an organization (Rahim, 2002, p.208).

In this dissertation, traditional conflict management is conceptualized as containing looming, both inter and intra ethnic, conflicts by the Sheko people through the local knowledge and culturally embedded institutions.

## **2.4. Conflict Resolution**

Conflict resolution has traditionally referred to measures attempting to resolve the underlying incompatibilities of a conflict, including attempts to get the parties to mutually accept each other's existence (Niklas and Mikael, 2005). Conflict management and resolution are often related and sometimes interchangeably used concepts. But they are different and are applied also at different stages of the conflict. Regarding their difference, Niklas and Mikael (2005: 25) noted that "conflict resolution refers to the resolution of the

underlying incompatibilities in a conflict and mutual acceptance of each party's existence, while conflict management refers to measures that limit, mitigate and/or contain a conflict without necessarily solving it.”

## **2.5. Traditional Conflict Management Resolution Mechanisms**

In the above sections, important concepts have been conceptualized except what is called tradition. The adjective traditional may be connoted in a negative way as “backward looking” “primitive” or “not modern.” But, for the conceptualization of tradition in the spirit of this dissertation, it is highly important to cite Calhoun (2004: 241):

*“Tradition is better grasped as a mode of reproduction of culture and social practices that depends on understandings produced and reproduced in practical experience and interpersonal relations, rather than rendered entirely abstract, as a set of rules or more formal textual communication. So tradition is not simply a set of contents, but a mode of reproduction of such contents. It works for people when it successfully organizes projects in their lives”.*

The actual place of tradition in traditional conflict management and resolution activities are then the reproduction of the rituals and social practices of conflict management and resolution proceedings and the interpersonal and practical experience, which transferred from generation to generation.

Moreover, the existing body of literature confirms that the nature and causes of conflicts and the mechanisms for resolving them are deeply rooted in the culture and history of every society (Ben-Mensah, 2004). Thus, it is desirable to assess conflicts in terms of the culture, history and tradition of a given society. Especially the prevention, management and resolution of conflicts need to be understood in context in the culture and tradition of a given society so that it would be effective and long lasting. That is why the study of traditional mechanisms of conflict management and resolution becomes an area of interest for the scholars of conflict studies (Tarekegn, 2008; Mamo, 2008; Ambaye, 2008).

In traditional conflict management and resolution activities, the concepts of conflict management and resolutions are seen as being closely related and in many ways even inseparable. Conflict resolution involves the reduction, elimination, or termination of all forms and types of conflict (Wikipedia, the free encyclopaedia, 2012). Prevention, management, and resolution measures are applied in a coordinated and integrated fashion. The ritual applied and the institution used in traditional conflict management and resolution activities address holistically the structural and triggering causes of the conflicts and they also try to limit and contain the conflict and finally to solve it .

Traditional conflict resolution is conceptualized in this dissertation as those traditional mechanisms embedded in the cultural institutions of the Sheko people and used for solving both inter and intra ethnic conflicts.

## **2.6. Conclusion**

The important concepts in the study are defined and conceptualized in this chapter. Concepts, like conflict, conflict management, conflict resolution and traditional conflict management and resolution mechanisms are defined and conceptualized as they relate to the study of conflict in general. Moreover, some theoretical frameworks for the study of conflict are discussed and the underlying and proximate cause of conflicts are identified. After the important concepts are identified, discussed and operationalized, the next chapter proceeds to a review of relevant literature on the study of traditional conflict management and resolution mechanisms in Ethiopia. All these steps operationalized the concepts, how they are used in this study. Thus, the continuing part of the discussion delves into the review of pertinent literature on the study of traditional conflict management and resolution mechanisms in Ethiopia.

## **Chapter Three**

### **3. Traditional Conflict Management and Resolution**

#### **Mechanisms in Ethiopia**

##### **3.1. Introduction**

Traditional conflict management and resolution mechanism is a well-established area of research in conflict studies. There is a proliferation of such studies in Ethiopia (see Desalagn et al., 2005; Assefa, 2005; Tsega, 2006; Mellese, 2008; Yacob, 2001). The studies address the traditional conflict management and resolution mechanisms in different ethnic groups within the Ethiopian society. The conflicts resolved through these mechanisms are ranged from inter-ethnic group conflicts to homicide and simple family quarrels. The studies try also to highlight strengths, shortcomings and the nexuses between the traditional and “modern” mechanisms in different socio-cultural contexts. In order to extrapolate the findings, some of the studies are reviewed in this part of the discussion.

##### **3.2. Traditional conflict Management and Resolution Institutions and Rituals in Ethiopia.**

In this review, I assessed some researches about the various conflict resolution mechanisms that were carried out in different parts of Ethiopia by different researchers. To my review, those researches on conflict resolution mechanisms have ethnic based internal workings. One of the results that I can note from

the review of the existing literature is that the application of traditional mechanisms of conflict resolution can the reviewed materials can be categorized into two based on the contexts where the conflict resolution mechanisms serve people within and across different ethnic groups. Hence, some of these institutions serve the concerned ethnic members within an ethnic group and can be termed as inter-clan conflict resolution mechanisms. Whereas, some other conflict resolution mechanisms allow people to resolve conflicts created between different ethnic groups and such institutions can generally be termed as inter-ethnic conflict resolution mechanisms.

Those which allow people to solve inter-ethnic conflicts are studied by researchers such as Desalagn, Mukand et al., (2005), Assefa (2005), Tsega (2006), Yacob (2001) and Kelemework (2005). Let me discuss each of them one by one and show the similarities and differences between these studies and that of mine among institutions studied by the mentioned researchers and my research attempt on conflict resolution mechanism of the Sheko community.

Desalagn, Mukand et al., (2005) examine indigenous systems of conflict resolution in Oromiya, Ethiopia. They are concerned with the Gada system, the institution developed for guiding the social, political, economic and religious life of the Oromo people. They analyze also Gada's contribution in managing resources such as water and conflict resolution among individuals and communities. They contend to show ways to overcome the disagreements between customary and statutory approaches in conflict resolution.

Assefa's (2005) focuses on indigenous mechanisms for the prevention of conflict. In his study, he demonstrated that the people in the Horn of Africa have time-tested and effective indigenous mechanisms to prevent, mitigate, manage and resolve conflicts and to draw the attention of government of the Horn countries to streamline and use these mechanisms to make the region more stable and peaceful. He indicates that the Oromo people use different indigenous mechanisms which are:

1. Ilafi Ilamee-negotiation of parties in the conflict without the involvement of third-party.
2. Jarsumma - traditional reconciliation system administered by community elders.
3. Gada - a traditional Oromo political system.
4. Waqefanna - traditional Oromo religious system.

Tsega (2006) examines *Cuba basa and harma hodha* traditional mechanisms for conflict resolution in Metekel. According to him *luba basa* is more of a preventive mechanisms and gradually Gojam establishes ethnic integration through adoption. The *harma hodha* establishes a kind of parent child relationship between ethnic groups. These institutional principles are widely applied in many parts of Ethiopia.

Yacob (2001) studies the traditional conflict resolution mechanisms in relation to a conflict over the *Chaleb* grazing area between the Borena and Guji Borena and Somali, Borena and Hamerand the Brenna and Arbores groups. The

violent conflict which occurred in this area was solved by using traditional conflict resolution mechanisms through the clan leaders of the area. He indicates the age old-system of conflict resolution in the area by using the clan leaders and the clan system as an institution, which mediates the conflicting parties and brings an acceptable solution for both conflicting parties.

Kelemework (2005 :) on “inter and intra-ethnic conflict and indigenous institutions of conflict resolution among the *Abala Afars* of North East Ethiopia” describes the conflict resolution mechanism used by the *Gerba* system. When a conflict erupted between *Abala Afar* and the Tigrians living in the surrounding areas, *Gabra* was used to resolve conflicts the result of which was highly accepted by both of the conflicting parties, hence, enhance the possibility of lasting peace.

According to my review, almost all of the above researches focus on inter-ethnic conflict and related conflict resolution mechanisms. Causes of conflict identified by the above studies are conflicts on boundaries, resources and ethnic issues. In my study, I found out that inter-clan conflicts caused by abduction, homicide, theft, boundary and social issues are major causes of conflict.

The other category of reviewed materials is those which refer to inter-clan conflicts and the associated conflict resolution mechanisms. Those who wrote

on inter-clan conflicts are Mamo (2006), Mellese (2008 ), Tsega (2006), Netsanet (2006), Mulugeta (1988), Alemayehu (2009), Yilma (1988), and Greenidge and Demessie (2012). Let me explore these works in relation to my study among the Sheko.

Mamo (2008) has dealt with *jaarsaa Biyyaa* institution among the Arsii Oromo in relation to its role to resolve conflicts. In his study, he researched on the types of conflicts (observed and reported), procedures of traditional mechanisms in conflict resolution and weaknesses and strengths of the *Jaarsummaa* institution.

Mellese (2008 ), in his research on the role of elders in resolving conflicts, the case of Walayta people of southern Ethiopia, says the traditional institution of handling conflicts in Walayta is called “*awassiya*” literary meaning reconciliation. The process conflict resolution is conducted by the council of elders called *deriacimma*. Members of *deriacimma* are selected with the common consent of the disputing parties. The members of the elders group are selected on the basis of accepted norms and widely known criteria.

Tsega (2006:533) describes “*Micu*”, an institution for resolution of conflicts between the Gumuz and Oromo. The main actors in this conflict management and resolution mechanism are elders of the communities of the conflicting

parties. “*Micu*”, handles also every type of conflict ranging from individual to inter-group.

Netsanet (2006), in her MA thesis titled, “The *Abagar* traditional conflict resolution in Tehuledere woreda” describes the structure and system of conflict resolution through the *Abagar* in Tehuledere. According to her findings, there are two types of *Abagars*: the hereditary *Abagars*, who are responsible for resolving violent and more complex conflicts and the neighborhood *Abagars* that are more responsible for resolving daily conflicts. But, in case the hereditary *Abgars* are not available in an area, the neighborhood *Abagars* may also take the responsibility of the hereditary *Abagars*.

Mulugeta (1988) in his MA thesis, “the Oromo *Sere Chefe* in view of conflict in *Ada Leben* woreda” has described the Oromo *Sere Guma*. The *Sere Guma* conflict resolution mechanism handles effectively conflicts related to homicide. Oath taking and blessings by elders of the community for both conflicting parties after they express their willingness to settle their conflict are some of the procedures used during the resolution process.

Alemayehu (2009) in his MA thesis on “Conflict Management in the Ethiopian multi-national Federation” raised the cases of traditional conflict resolution mechanisms among Oromos- *luba Basa* and peoples of Wejerat and Raya-Azebo - *Abbo Gereb*. Alemayehu compares that both communities have the

same intention and goal of conflict resolution albeit a different mechanisms of addressing them depending on their contexts.

Under “Shimegelena and reconciliation among the Wolayita”, Yilema (1988) describes also the traditional conflict resolution mechanisms among the Wolayita through the institutions known as “*Chameta, Chako and Chachu Chata*”. The *Chameta* is applied for the resolution of those conflicts which are considered limited in their extent. Family conflict, conflict between neighbors and conflict related to abduction of once fiancée are conflicts considered under the *Chameta*. The, *Chako* is used to resolve inter-clan conflicts and *Chachu Chata* is used to settle conflicts related to homicide. Moreover, the elderly uses different proverbs and tales in order to influence the conflicting parties and bring them to the negotiation.

The Afar People have also their own conflict management and resolution institutions based on the clan and sub-clan system. To present these institutions in full length, it is desirable to cite at length Greenidge and Demessie (2012) :

*Mediators (Isi) are afar elders (Mekabon) who play a critical and indispensable role in resolving conflicts between clans and sub-clans. They are often from neutral clans and are called upon to mediate and reconcile antagonistic clans. Har Abba The literal meaning of the term Har Abba is ‘father of the tree’. The lowest level*

*in the Afar system of political authority is the Har Abba, A position which exists at both clan and sub-clan levels. The Har Abba initiates the formal process of traditional conflict resolution by making the opening or first speech during the actual proceedings. Dar Abba literally means 'father of the dar '; dar means abode. Although a traditional Afar position, the Dar Abba now acts as the administrator of a woreda. Keddo Abba, perhaps the most important functionary in the Afar traditional system of governance is the position of Keddo Abba or 'father of the clan' (Savard, 1970:226-239). Afar use the term to refer to the chiefs of clans and sub-clans, since unlike the Somali, the Afar do not distinguish between the two. The Keddo Abba is the official representative of a clan/sub-clan in interactions with other clans/sub-clans and also in formal or informal interactions with state structures. Additionally, the Keddo Abba also plays a critical role in conflict management, resolution and reconciliation. In terms of the traditional system of conflict resolution, the word of the Keddo Abba is final and binding.*

Moreover, according to their customary law, the Afar traditional conflict management and resolution institutions handle different conflict cases.

Greenidge and Demessie (2012:91) noted the following conflict causes:

- *Eido (killings)*
- *Aymissiya (injury)*

- *Rado (theft, destruction of property)*
- *Samo (adultery)*
- *Dafu (insults, affronts)*

From the reviewed materials above, most of them are local institutions that resolve conflicts that occurred between parties coming from different clan groups, but from the same ethnic group. In most cases, clan leaders play active role in resolving the conflicts. Besides, these institutions are recognized to bring about relative sustainable peace among the different clans in a single ethnic group. These issues indicate the similarities between my research work and the aforementioned ones.

There are some differences between my work and works reviewed above. One is that the Sheko community has its own context specific conflict management and resolution mechanism, which exhibit unique structure, process, and actors. The other is the fact that the material culture, symbols, and rituals involved in resolving conflicts among this community are so different from the above mentioned researches. Thus, the specific features of conflict management and resolution mechanisms of the Sheko people need also a detailed study.

Certainly, there were third category of materials which had been compiled by Alula and Getachew (2008 ) as well as Gebre, Assefa and Fekade (2012). The book edited by Alula and Getachew (2008) consists of the various customary

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dispute resolutions throughout Ethiopia. The contributors to this edited volume have brought both inter-ethnic and intra-ethnic dispute resolution mechanisms together in to one document. In the material, the authors argued that the role of customary dispute resolution mechanisms needs revisiting and suggest that the recognition of the mandate of credible customary institutions and their relationships and interactions with the formal judicial structure should be reconsidered to enhance local level justice delivery, while ensuring the protection of human rights. Of course, I hold similar argument to theirs while I began to conduct research on the customary dispute resolution of the Sheko community. The book did not incorporate the customary dispute resolution of the Sheko community.

Gebre, Assefa and Fekade (2012) in their material “Introduction-Customary/Alternative Laws-Values, Practices and Legality” had three points which they discuss with special attention. The first is to show how social values and wisdom can help customary dispute resolution mechanisms and get recognition. The second is to demonstrate how the different structures and procedures in the customary dispute mechanisms work. The third is to assess the relationship between the rule of law and customary dispute resolution mechanisms. To address these aims, they depended on the literature review. However, my work highly depends on the primary data.

In both the above materials produced by Alula and Getachew (2008 ) as well as Gebre, Assefa and Fekade [2012], the Sheko customary dispute resolution was not mentioned let alone to be studied in detail.

### **3.3. Conclusion**

The review of the literature on the study of traditional conflict management and resolution mechanisms in Ethiopia shows that the studies addressed the different management and resolution mechanisms across different cultural groups. Traditional conflict resolution mechanisms in Ethiopia enjoy a vitality and relevance that makes them indispensable in some regions (Greenidge and Demessie, 2012:76). , The next part of the study addresses the Sheko people's traditional conflict management and resolution mechanisms in their socio-cultural setting and the rituals applied and the institutions used.

## **Chapter Four**

### **4. Conflict Management and Resolution Institutions and Rituals of the Sheko People**

#### **4.1. Introduction**

Traditional approaches to conflict management and resolution existed among the Sheko people from time immemorial. They have been transferred orally from generation to generation. This chapter first proceeds by contextualizing the socio-cultural setting of the Sheko people followed by an in-depth description of the institutions, rituals and practice of conflict management and resolution of the Sheko people.

#### **4.2. The socio-cultural setting of the Sheko People**

The Sheko people are currently found in two zonal administrations of the South Nation, Nationalities and Peoples Regional State (hereafter SNNPR), namely, *Bench Maji Zone* and *Sheka Zone*. In Bench Maji, they inhabit the localities around Gura Ferda, Sheko, Bebeke, Kite, and Tebenja Yaze. In the Yeki wereda of Sheka Zone, they inhabit thirteen kebeles and live with a number of other communities. The inhabitants of the wereda include Sheko, Majang, Shekacho, Kafecho, Amhara, Oromo, Dawero, Gurage and Bench. The language of the Sheko people is Sheko. The name of the wereda and a number of kebeles is also derived after the name of the

different clan leaders of the Sheko people<sup>2</sup> The name of the kebeles is Korcha, Tseano, Enderese, Shosha, Michi, Bechi, Zineki, Darimu, Yeki, Kuki and Shuma. During my field work, I had the clan leaders of Korcha, Shosha, Bechi and Miche as participants of the study.

The main livelihood strategy of Sheko is agriculture. There is no written document available regarding the origin and history of the Sheko people. But, based on an account of the elders, educated members of the people, political appointees and civil servants of the woreda, the history of the Sheko people is narrated as follows:

*The Sheko people were living in areas called Jeba four hundred years ago. The founder of the Sheko people were two brothers known as Koynab and Shekikeyazu /Erunbabu/ and their father was known as Jaba Burzu. One of the Sons of the Burzu, Koynab with his children had moved and inhabited the current areas around Gura Ferda, Bebeka, Kite, Sheka and Yeki woreda<sup>3</sup>.*

The reason for the continuous move of the Sheko people is a belief transferred from generation to generation. The participant of the study narrated:

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<sup>2</sup> Interview with Habtamu Setegn, May, 2013, Sheka

<sup>3</sup> Interview with Ato Kershin , May 2013, Sheko

*According to the tradition and beliefs of the Sheko people, after a son has reached his adult age, he has to live separately from his father by crossing river. If he did not observe this belief, his father's ghost known in Sheko language minyangi will cause the death of his father or himself<sup>4</sup>.*

That is the reason, why the Sheko people are always on the move. The wide dispersion of the population, which is related the continuous move of the Sheko people, is also indicated in the following way by Akliliu (1988:5) in his study of the phonology of the Sheko:

*The territory in which the Sheko language speakers inhabit extends from the north-west across the boundary of the Kefa administrative region to Illubabor around the vicinity of the Teppi town in the Yeki district of the Mocha awraja.*

The socio-political structure of the Sheko people is based on kingship. *Wugbab* is the name given to the king in Sheko language. The kingship is also hereditary. Members of the Koynab clans are eligible to become a king and the coronation ritual takes a long established process. The participants

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<sup>4</sup> Interview with Ato Ourma Ziti, May 2013, Yeki

of the study narrated the long established rituals of the coronation process in the following way:

*In the tradition of the Sheko people, for a coronation to take place, a fruit from neyam tree, a feather from white small bird locally known as Zerpapue, honey, black bull locally named Kamdu and an old black cow are needed. After the preparation of the aforementioned materials, the feather of the Zerpapue will be washed with honey and blood to make it clean from any evil spirit and then the feather will be placed on the hair of the Koynab. The fruit of the neyam tree will decorate the neck of the Koynab and finally the cow and the bull will be slaughtered by the Bourjab and the meat will be served to the crowd. After all these rituals take place, the person will be coroneted as Zitu/Koynab/<sup>5</sup>.*

This coronation ritual is passed from generation to generation to members of the *Koynab* clan and the dynasty is not transferable outside the *Koynab* clan.

Although the Sheko people are composed of different clans, all clans believe and accept that the *Koynab* has a divine power and he is over and above all. They believe also that *Koynab* is the only power available on earth below

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<sup>5</sup>Interview with Ato Tessema Zima, May 2013, Sheko

the divine power and they believe that they will get everything necessary for life through *Koynab*. *Koynab* is the one that makes rain, brings blessing, and makes the seasons productive and fulfilling. When he is angry, for example due to improper observation of the rituals, he penalizes and brings sorrow.

Currently, the *Koynab* resides in Sheko wereda in Fejeka kebele. He makes an annual visit and checks whether the members respect the traditions of the Sheko peoples. The *Koynab* also collects tributes from each clan leaders according to the tradition. The people believe that if anyone does not pay the annual tribute, there may be a breakout of diseases, occurrence of drought, conflict and turbulence in the community. Thus, this traditional structure continues till these days without much change.

The other feature of the socio-political and economic structure of *Konyab* and *Jaba Burzu* is the form of tribute payment handled between the two. According to the participants of the study:

*Koynab* pays tribute for the *Jaba Burzu* once in 5 to 10 years. The tributes include a virgin girl, ivory, black young cow, and a cow, which does not give birth anymore. When he bringing the tribute to the *Jaba Burzu*, the *Koynab* should check the norms, values, and beliefs are in order. He has to check whether there is a women in the society that gave birth without first having

*started menstruation, whether there is anyone in the society who committed incest, whether there is a girl who give birth while she is living with her parents, and whether there is a child in the locality who grew his milk teeth in his upper jaw before he has in his lower jaw. He has to assess and make sure that the aforementioned events did not happen before he delivers his tribute<sup>6</sup>.*

It is believed that if the Koynab delivers the tribute before making sure that those events did not happen, he will die on the spot. In the belief system of the Sheko people, all events described above are considered socially undesirable and when they happen, they will bring misfortune for the whole community. The man who commits incest will be isolated from the community to live in the forest for up to seven years. He would not be allowed to meet people. He would not be allowed to have his meals with the same utensils used by the other member of the community. He is condemned to eat and drink the leftover. In short, he is not considered as equal member of the society.

The genealogy of the Sheko people has four main parts. The first is the highly respected line of the king the *Koynab*. The second is the one found next to the kings' line of decent the *Key azu* (the clan leaders). The third

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<sup>6</sup> Interview with Ato Tessema Zima, May 2013, Sheko

is the *Burjab* (reconcilers). In the fourth line, we find the lowest stratum of the clan line, which is known as *Bandu*. Aklilu (1988:6) pointed out that, “among the Sheko, the blacksmiths, tanners and potters are despised and confined to separate classes. These groups referred to as bandu by the rest of the society.” Figure one below presents genealogy of the Sheko People .

Figure 1: The Genealogy of the Sheko People

<b>Koynab</b> /the family of the king	<b>Kiyazu</b> / the family of clan leaders	<b>Burjab</b> / the family of the reconcilers/	The family of the common people	<b>Bandu</b> family outcaste
Fenjus	Gotiyab	Burjab	Abetiyab	
Gotabe	Didiyab	Abuyab	Atkuyab	
Fenekoms	Kanyab	Tukiab	Sheguyab	
Church	Abuyab	Kertiyab	Tudiyab	
Zezestate	Zedeyab	Shurtiyab	Arayab	
Gemdes	Beruyab	Shutiyab	Bentiyab	
Teru	Fegeyab	Bersuyab	Buriyab	
Bechi				
Zeyni				

Source- FGD with Shasha Woshkara, Kasa Kershin, Habtamu Setegn, Ourma Ziti, Shecho Feji and Duka Gondere at Teppi, 2013

The language of the Sheko people, Sheko is grouped under the Omotic language family (Bender 1976:47). It is classified under the Maji language, which is classified as one of the western Omotic language. It is currently spoken by the people living in Bench Maji Zone: Gura Fereda wereda and in Sheko wereda around Kite and Bebek area and in Sheka Zone in Yeki wereda. All the Sheko people living in those areas communicate easily with the Sheko language (Aklilu 1988:2).

Most of the Sheko people currently follower Christianity. But, *Kalichas* play a crucial role in the day-to-day life of the Sheko people. The *Kalichas* are believed to be able to save the community from diseases, drought, flooding, and other man-made and natural calamities. They are believed to be sources of luck and fortune. Thus, the community pays tribute to the *Kalicha* to request them pray on behalf of those who pay the tribute. . They have also strong role in conflict resolution by professing bad luck against a disputant unwilling to resolution [Aklilu 1988, 3].

According to the above description of the socio-cultural context of the Sheko people, the *Konyab*, *Burjab* and *Kalicha* are the most important socio-political institutions that base their foundations on different

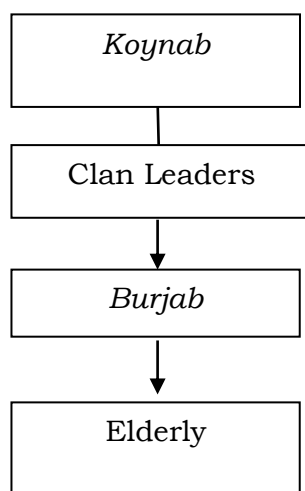
genealogical, ritual and traditional beliefs. These institutions are pervasive in private and communal life of the Sheko people. Their role in managing and resolving conflicts is enormous. Thus, the next part of the discussion is devoted to this aspect.

### **4.3. The Sheko people's administrative and justice system**

The Sheko people have their own traditional regulations used for preventing and managing conflicts so that conflicts do not turn out to be violent and to be contained in limited area and extent. The community had a traditional administrative and justices system, which enables them to establish a time proven social relation based on solidarity, understanding and psychological unity and strength. The base for this system is the dynasty based *Koynab*. *Koynab* is responsible to administer the community and the implementation of the traditional regulations. Thus, there are a number of institutions under the *Koynab* responsible to assist the regulation of the economic, social and religious life.

Clan leaders responsible for the implementation of those regulations under the *Koynab*. They are also responsible for settlement of conflicts in their clan areas. They have an institution called *Burjab* under their command to facilitate the conflict resolution activities. Every clan leader has its own *Burjab* and under each *Burjab*, respected elderly people are responsible for settling conflicts and handling other social issues. According to

informants<sup>7</sup>, the traditional administrative structure of the Sheko people has the following structure.



**Figure 2** the traditional administrative structure of the Sheko people

If an individual or a group has any complaints to be addressed, and if the issue is considered complex and needs to be addressed by the *Koynab*, they have to address first their compliance to the *Koynab*. Then, the *Koynab* may issue an order to the clan leaders to investigate and settle the issue. The clan leaders in turn may order the *Burjab* to investigate the issue and settle it with the help of the local elders. In this way, the *Burjab* with the help of the local elders will settle conflicts and report to the clan leader the settlement of conflicts and the clan leader to the *Koynab*. If an issue is complicated so that the clan leader and the *Burjab* are unable to resolve, it will be transferred to remedy by the *Koynab*

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<sup>7</sup> FGD conducted with Shasha, Kassa, Habtamu, Ourma, Shecho, Duka, Feyissa and Berki at Teppi, 2013

The above institutions use the *Bertussa* system to resolve conflicts. Burtussa is a conflict resolution system transferred orally from generation to generation. It has a number of rituals enhancing its function and legitimacy. .

#### **4.4. The Traditional Conflict Management and Resolution Institutions**

The Sheko people comprise more than thirty-five clans. These clans contiguous each other and often they get into individual and group such as inter-clan or intra-clan conflicts. The Sheko people have conflict management mechanisms that they use in order to settle conflicts before conflicts turnout to be violent. As introduced above, they have a conflict resolution mechanism known as *Bertussa*. Literally the word *Bertussa* means reconciliation. Moreover, the institutions include *Koynab* (the King), *Keyazu* (the clan leaders), *Burjab and Kalicha*. In the continuing part of the discussion, each institution is described in-depth.

##### **4.4.1. Koynab**

The *Koynab* is a highly respected institution. It is at the top of the society and belongs to the hereditary of line the *Wugbab* (the king's dynasty). The *Koynab* is seen as the defender and protector of the community and is responsible to make sure that the tradition and culture of the community is

strictly observed by the members. He is also responsible for resolving conflicts that are not resolved by the *Burjab*.

In the tradition of the Sheko people, every decision of the *Koynab* is accepted and there is no one who dares to say no for every ideas and proposals of the *Koynab* . It is believed that the *Koynab* is endowed by God with the power to make the right decision and anyone who does not accept his decision is doomed to isolation from the society. He is the final decision maker in case of conflict management and resolution in the society.

The symbolic activities and proceedings of the *Koynab* in bringing the conflicting parties together and solve the issue of conflict, having the aforementioned position in society is the point to be addressed in the part of the discussion on the rituals of conflict management and resolution of the Sheko people.

#### **4.4.2. Burjab**

*Burjab* is the main reconciliator in the Sheko people. The king and clan leaders gave also the responsibility of reconciliation to the *Burjab*.

Moreover, the *Burjab* is responsible for a number of issues in the society. He is responsible to lead the coronation ceremony and is the fine tester in every feast and ceremony of the Sheko people. He is also responsible for

leading the funereal ceremony of the clan leaders. These and other responsibilities gave the *Bujabs* a respected social position in the Sheko society. This has also a great ramification on their role on conflict management and resolution.

In conflict management and resolution activities of the Sheko people, the role of *Burjabs* is crucial. The *Burjabs* have gained their authoritative influence through wisdom and experience. They also use rituals, symbols and interpretation of myths to bring conflicts to an end led by the Burjab. These include the identification of a particular type of cattle and/or goat that must be sacrificed to cleanse away the evils of conflict from society. The ritual activities are discussed in detailed in the other part of the study.

#### **4.4. 3. Keyazu / Clan leaders/**

The clan leaders or *Keyazus* are currently living in different woredas and kebeles. In those areas they live, they are responsible for the protection of their clan. They organize and lead the clan towards maintaining and transferring their tradition for the coming generation. They work also on the prevention, management and resolution of conflicts.

According to informants<sup>8</sup>, in Sheko community, people who commit homicide, fornication, rape, get married with the wife of other man, commit

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<sup>8</sup> Interview conducted with Bekele, Belete, Turba and Ribka in 2013 at Darimo

abduction and incest are not able to live in the area where they committed the crime. Members of the community will cut their tie with people who commit these offenses. The offenders will be no longer accepted by members of the community. When they are isolated, they will be exposed to a number of dangers, even to the extent of losing their life through vendetta.

Thus, the offenders are forced to live in a different place, more likely in an adjacent area. The clan leader of that community will go to their new place of settlement and ask them the reason of isolation. The clan leader will investigate the issue. If the offense is confirmed, he sends the *Burjab* from his area to the clan leader of the area in which the crime was committed. The clan leader, who received the message of the other clan through the clan leader, calls also the *Burjab* in his clan and assigns him to start the reconciliation process with the families of the victim<sup>9</sup>.

According to this procedure, the two clan leader's work together to alleviate the problem and follow up the conflict resolution activities. Therefore, in Sheko, each clan leader oversees the arrival of new comers in their community and does not allow them simply to settle in their area. There is no possibility for offenders to hide in any area under the jurisdiction of a clan. In this way, the clan leaders are working not only in facilitating

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<sup>9</sup> In-depth interview with Ketema Feyanta in 2013, Bechi

conflict resolution, but also in preventing criminals who seek to live in their areas. They contribute for the maintenance of peace and order in their community and the management and resolution of conflicts.

#### **4.4.4. Kalicha**

The other conflict management and resolution institution of the Sheko people is the *Kalicha*. In Sheko tradition, as explained by one of my informants<sup>10</sup> persons from the *Koynab/ King/* family can be *Kalicha*. Thus, they participate as *Koynab* or *Kalicha* in conflict management and resolution activities. According to the belief and tradition of the Sheko people, nothing is hidden from the *Kalicha* and hence conflicting parties do not hide something from the *Kalicha* during the *Bertussa /* the reconciliation / process. They are committed to accomplish every task they are required to perform by the *Kalicha*. The community believes that the *Kalicha* is endowed with supernatural power, which enables him to solve any problem they face and to show the future direction of their life. Having this belief in mind, in case of conflict, the conflicting parties are forced to settle their conflict amicably under the direction of a *kalicha*. The *kalich* is considered by the community as someone endowed with mythical power and thus to be respected and honored including in his role during conflict management and resolution.

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<sup>10</sup> Interview conducted with Komi Arega and Melese Mulat at Bechi, 2013

The above description of the traditional conflict management and resolution institutions of the Sheko people shows the organization and structure of the Sheko people and their place in the Sheko community. But, the main thing is how these institutions conduct the practical conflict management and resolution activities regarding different conflicts. Thus, the continuing part of the discussion is devoted to this issue.

#### **4.5. Rituals applied in resolution of different conflicts**

Based on focus group discussions<sup>11</sup>, a wide range of conflicts are addressed through the traditional conflict management and resolution mechanisms of the Sheko such as homicide, theft, inter-clan conflicts, abduction and marital conflicts. Different institutions are employed depending on the type of conflict. In the continuing part of the discussion, different conflict cases, the conflict resolution process, and corresponding rituals are discussed in detail.

##### **4.5.1. Homicide**

Factors that lead any person to commit homicide in the Sheko community are related to abduction, unsettled marriage related issues, occasions of annual traditional fest ceremonies, misunderstanding between members of different clans, theft, border transgression, and conflict over grazing areas.

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<sup>11</sup> Focus group discussion with Ketema, Dishkom, Gehu, Komi, Melese and Shucha at Bechi, 2013

Mostly, homicide is committed by the youth and adult section of the community. Homicide is considered as a very violent conflict by the Sheko community and named as *Shobudebm*, which means violent conflict.

When homicide is committed, the news reaches first the clan leaders of the area where the killer is residing. When the case is presented to the clan leader by the killer and his family members, the clan leader seating under a big tree around his house will attend their case seriously and patiently. The killer family narrates the crime committed by expressing their deep sorrow and by condemning their deed as the deed of the devil and confirming that their family member took the life of a person. They express their feeling in the following way as narrated by an informant:

*Rather than complying the clan leader and elders of our community according to our tradition, our family member committed a homicide and the situation has forced us to migrate to other areas. So, we beg for your support to reconciliation with the family of the deceased<sup>12</sup>.*

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<sup>12</sup>Interview with Ato Feyisa Goda, July 2013, Teppi

After an in-depth and lengthy deliberation on the cause, place and time of the homicide, the clan leader concludes his first conversation with the killer's family with a pray. In his pray, he begs God to be on his side for solution to the problem. He also prays for the support of God so that the families of the deceased may have light heart to accept the reconciliation proposal and that God may protect his clan from participation in similar offenses in the future.

Finally, he stresses the cruelty of the crime committed, but since they come to him by respecting the tradition, he promises to communicate the issue with the clan leader of the area where the deceased lived and till then he tells family of the victim to wait patiently. He also warns the killer's family not to be seen around the area where the crime was committed. At the end, he concludes the whole preliminary process of investigation by asking for the address of the killer family and informing them to return back to him, when he sends a message to them.

The clan leader continues to work on the issue with much attention. To start the actual reconciliation process, he will send a message to the *Burjab* in his clan and for two known and respected elders in the clan. Then after, the *Burjab* and the two elders, who received the message, will come to the clan leader's house and will gather with the clan leader under a nearby big

tree a. Then, the clan leader shares all the information about the case with Burjab and the elders.

Finally, he will give order to them to contact the clan leader of the family of the deceased under the leadership of the *Burjab*. He prays so that their mission will be successful and by wishing peaceful return, he will send them to his counterpart.

The *Bur jab* and the elders will accept the mission and start preparation for their journey. According to the tradition of the Shako people early morning hours are preferred to journey. If the clan leader's house is found far so that they will not be able to arrive in the early morning, they will start their journey one day earlier and they may spend one night in the house of their relatives in a short distance from the clan leaders house and early in the morning they will arrive to the house of the clan leader. Once they arrive there, they explain the reason for their coming

As the case is homicide and it is a serious crime, it is not preferable to deliberate in openly in a public place. So they convene under the big tree, which is often used by the clan leader. Then, the conversation will be started and the messengers will explain that the killer has deeply regretted for his deeds and has also expressed his regret to the clan leader according to the tradition. They indicate also on the need to give swift solution to the problem. They raise also the suffering of children, elders and women from

the family of the killer, because of their migration from their area and their continuous retreat. Then, they discuss on all issues and they come to the conclusion that till the *Bertussa* is conducted other activities, which are part of the tradition, should be accomplished. The clan leader will also accept the responsibility and will pray with the messengers, so that the problem will be solved. Finally, the clan leader promises to send a message to the disputants and the family after completing all activities required to be done according to the tradition and then they depart.

After that, the clan leader of the deceased family has a responsibility of managing, de-escalating and resolving the conflict. After he received the messengers and got the information, he will work relentlessly to find a solution to the problem. When homicide is committed, the *Bertussa* will be conducted in that area by *Burjab* and elders. The clan leader is responsible to give the order for conducting *Bertussa*.

The first activity to be conducted by the *Bur jab* in the case of homicide is to demarcate symbolic boundary for the conflicting families by putting green leaves on the ground. The putting of green leaves along the border areas of the conflicting parties has its own meaning in the Sheko tradition of conflict management and resolution. First, it is intended to remind the family of the deceased not to take revenge and to inform them that the killer's family has already left the area and they informed the case to the

clan leader according to the tradition. It reminds also the deceased family to be patient until the case is entertained by the Burjab and elders. Second, it also cautions the deceased family not to be seen in market places, around grazing areas, water points and other socio-cultural contact points where the killer family had already left the area. By considering the suffering of the killer family due to their migration, it is time to stop this suffering and they may return back to their area. Until, Bertussa is conducted, the two families do not pass the leaves put by the Burjab. They also should not use water points and grazing areas left behind by the killer.

This symbolic activity has a great contribution for the conflicts not aggravate. According to the belief of the community, those who trespass the border demarcated by the Burjab by putting green leaves will have much curse and suffer. So, they do not pass the border area symbolically demarcated by green leaves.

According to the tradition of the community, till the *Bertussa* is conducted, the family of the deceased and the killer do not fetch water on the same water point, do not visit the same market, do not graze in the same field, their children do not play on the same ground and do not also meet during marriage and mourning ceremonies. It is an accepted practice in the community that anyone who committed homicide should leave the area where he lived in order to prevent revenge by the family of the deceased and

to reduce escalation of the conflict. If the family of the killer and the deceased are close neighbors, the family of the killer should leave the area and they must hide themselves especially in continuing days and weeks after the assault has taken place. Unless this happens, the family of the deceased may take revenge and the conflict may also escalate further.

After receiving the order from the clan leader, the Burjab living in the area of the deceased family continues his reconciliation activities, which is started symbolically by putting green leaf around the bordering areas of the two communities. Through this symbolic act, he gives notice that revenge is not the order of the day and the traditional conflict resolution mechanism is now in the command of the situation.

The Burjab is a formidable reconciler, so for the next step he remains in touch with the families of the deceased and he tries also to make sure that the families are in mentally stable condition and are to some extent free from having an emotional attachment with the crime situation. He takes also socially respected and accepted elders of the community in his team so that the reconciliation activities do not end in frustration.

After the reconciliation team under the leadership of the Burjab is organized, the team will make the first trip to the house of the close relatives of the deceased in the early morning. On the arrival, the team knocks on the door of

the close relative. When the door is opened, the Burjab enters the house first and the others follow him. Then, they express their condolences and highlight the wrong doer was under evil spirit to commit such crime and now he and his families are suffering a lot. They stress also the possibility that such thing could happen in any community and the need to resolve such issue is what is important next is. Since, the Burjab and the member of his team are socially respected and accepted members of the community, the family of the deceased listens attentively to their ideas.

Finally, the team will express the purpose of their coming to their house and meeting with the close relatives of the deceased is intended to initiate reconciliation.

As expected from the tradition of the community, it is not common to express their willingness to reconciliation upon their first encounter with the reconciliation team. Even though the Burjab and the elders stress the need for reconciliation and push them to accept the reconciliation proposal, they will not be immediately willing to enter reconciliation with the killer family. Thus, the Burjab and his team will return without any success in their first endeavor.

The Burjab and his team members are well versed in the tradition of the community and hence they know that they will be successful in the future. Having this in mind, they will return back to the house of the close relatives of the deceased one for the second time. At this time, they strongly express their

case by saying it is the time to reconciliation. They express also that their idea is also the idea of the clan leader of the area and it's the interest of all the community members of the area. They present in convincing way the action taken by the family of the killer after the incidence had occurred. They narrate all the action taken in order to build a convincing case for reconciliation in the following way<sup>13</sup>.

*The killer has left the community by respecting the values and tradition of the community and members of his family went to other areas since a long time. The killer deeply regrets the crime he committed. So, it is desirable to accept the reconciliation proposal on your side and it would not be good for your family to reject the idea. If you would continue rejecting the reconciliation idea, then we are forced to inform the clan leader and through him to the Koynab. This is not also good for you and you will be isolated.*

The Burjab and his team members continue to push the family member to accept the reconciliation idea and not to be alienated from the community and condemned by the leaders of the community for being not in line with the tradition of the community.

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<sup>13</sup> Interview with Shecho Feji at Teppi, 2013

Feeling the strong push from the Burjab and his team members, the close relatives of the deceased will give consent to reconciliation. They signal this by saying that they wish to discuss among the family members.

Bringing the family members to this level of agreement to consult the issue in the extended family is considered a crucial step in the reconciliation process. The members of the reconciliation team will express their determination to come for the third time and their hope to hear good news when they come next. Indeed, the extent of revisiting the victims will depend on the seriousness of the case. That means, the reconcilers will visit them more than three or less than three times depending on the seriousness of the case. Finally, they depart by stressing the responsibility of the family to live in tandem with the tradition of the community and to respect the idea of the Koynab, the Clan Leader, and elderly of the community.

The Bur jab, by taking his responsibility for the reconciliation process and conclusion of the Bertussa, devises different ways to push the members of the family of the deceased to be ready for reconciliation, before they set out for their third journey. To help their endeavor for reconciliation, the Burjab will search for persons who could persuade the family of the deceased. He looks after neighbors and close relatives of the deceased family to help in the persuasion. Thus, he will select strong and respected neighbors and close

relatives and send them to the family of the deceased one. The selected persons will work on the persuasion activities using every available occasions.

It has to be noted again that delaying the consent for reconciliation on the part of the deceased family members is expected. Though the Burjab and his team members are well-respected by the community, the family of the deceased will not accept the reconciliation idea immediately and it is also expected from the families of the deceased one. They accepting the reconciliation idea before the Burjab and his team members insist much may be considered by the community as having no sign of love and respect by his family for the deceased. So, the rejection of the reconciliation idea by the member of the deceased family is an expected step in the process of the reconciliation process.

After they are continuously pushed for reconciliation by the Burjab, his team members, their neighbors, and their relatives, and by taking into consideration of the responsibilities and powers of the Burjab and the elders, the members of the deceased family will finally show willingness for the reconciliation. The turning point for the reconciliation process is the third trip of the Burjab and his team members to the house of the family of the deceased one. For the third time, the Burjab and the elders will travel to the house of the family of the deceased early in the morning and the persons who were assigned to pursue the family will be also the part of the delegation. Though, the issue is already concluded informally, for the sake of conformity to the

tradition, the elders will ask the family members of the deceased one about their response for the issue. After a long silence, they express their willingness to proceed with the reconciliation. Pleased by the decision, the Burjab expresses his thanks and blessing to the family of the deceased. After that, a common local drink known as “*Chemo*” will be served to celebrate the consent for reconciliation by the family of the deceased. Finally, the Burjab and the elderly are able to harvest the fruit of their committed endeavor. The clan leader will be informed on the success of the endeavor and he give due recognition to their effort and thanks them. The clan leader expresses his gratefulness in due consideration to the maintaining of peace in his clan area and the continuation of the traditional conflict resolution mechanisms and its ability to solve even serious crimes like “homicide”. Moreover, he is also proud of his ability and the quality of the traditional conflict resolution mechanism. He gives a positive response for the message of the clan leader from the community of the killer. He also informs his counterpart of the status of the situation. In his message, he will remind the clan leader to conclude everything, what the tradition required on the side of the killer and to select elders, and who would be member of the reconciliation team on their side.

A day of Bertussa will be set and on this day the elders coming on both sides and the Burjabs of the two clans will come together. The composition of the elders will be four from each clan and they would not be relatives to the family of the deceased one and the killer. The total number of the reconciliation team

will be ten – two Burjabs and eight elders. Before starting the Bertussa process, the Clan leader will advise the elders not to favor any family and to consider the issue based on the tradition of the community. He warns them, if they favor one family against the other, they will be cursed with an occurrence of a continuous homicide in their family; their children will not grow; the seeds they saw will not be harvested; and all sins will surround them. These all are directed to make the reconciliation activity a just one. Finally, the elders with the leadership of the clan leader will pray together for the successful accomplishment of the reconciliation process.

Among the Sheko, the reconciliation activities/ *Bertussa*/ have to be made on Thursdays and Sundays. Thursday is a rest day for the Sheko people. In this day, there is no work and the day is devoted to pray.

The *Kalichas* in the area preach to respect Thursdays and Sundays are holidays devoted to their spiritual life. Since these days are reserved for spiritual activities, it is believed in the society that these days are the appropriate days for reconciliation. Reconciliation made on these days is believed to bring the desired result. Starting from the reporting of the incidence and application for reconciliation to the clan leader, the killer and his family try to collect all materials to be used in the reconciliation process and for compensation.

According to the customary law of the Sheko , anyone who committed any homicide is required to compensate the family of the victim with a girl or a boy. It is believed that the persons given to the deceased family will give birth to a child that will help the family of the victim to overcome their mourning.

Other materials required from the killer family to be presented for the reconciliation process includes- sheep, chicken, ox and drinks such as “*T eji*”, “*Areki*” and “*Borde*”. The materials include also foods such as “*Enjera*”, “*Baca*”, and “*Kechi*” and if it is a harvesting season, “*Kejo*” (traditional food prepared from newly harvested corn). If the killer cannot afford, his father, mother and close relatives will make contributions.

If the killer has no daughter or a boy of his own and his family members to be given as compensation, he has to inform the reconcilers beforehand. Then the reconcilers start their investigation to make sure that he has indeed no daughter or a son to be offered as compensation. If the reconcilers finding conforms to the claim of the killer, , they order the latter to present animals for compensation and they also inform the family of the deceased that the killer is not in a position to present a girl or a boy as a compensation. The family of the deceased also tries to collect information to know whether the killer indeed does not have a boy or a girl for compensation. They make sure so, they will accept compensation with animals. According to the tradition, 10-12 animals will be made ready for compensation.

In the tradition of the Sheko people, the place in which reconciliation activity for homicide has to take place is well known and there is a traditional belief that underscores the importance of the places for the symbolic act. Thus, the *Bertussa*/reconciliation activities have to be taken around the bank of big rivers and it is prohibited according to the Sheko people's tradition to conduct reconciliation activities around their home and in arable lands where plants and fruits could grow. The belief related to the selection of the area is stated in the following way by an informant.<sup>14</sup>

*The reason the reconciliation activities should not take place around the home is that the handling of the homicide case around the home area may bring more homicide incidents. So, it is believed that the reconciliation of homicide acts should be made far from the home area in order to deter the occurrence of further homicide in the community. The conducting of reconciliation activities in and around the areas used for agricultural activities are also prohibited because this may make the land barren. The reason a bank of a big river is selected to conduct reconciliation for homicide is on the belief that the river will wash away the devil spirit so that peace prevails between conflicting parties and homicide happens never again in the area., which causes the homicide act to be happened and the*

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<sup>14</sup> Interview with Kassa Kershin at Teppi, 2013

*washing away and the transportation of the devil spirit from the area may serve as a condition to develop peaceful relations between the conflicting parties and to start a harmonious life as it was before the homicide act was occurred .*

Thus, this symbolic act of the selection of the area in which the reconciliation activities have to be conducted has a profound influence in the psychic condition of the conflicting parties and the whole community. Since, the continuously flowing of the water of the river is considered as an agent that completely washes away the evil spirit from the area in the process of the reconciliation activities the animosity between the conflicting parties will get an end and peace would prevail. This belief has a great influence on the whole process of the reconciliation.

Thus, an appointment will be made by the *Burjab* for all concerned bodies and the conflicting parties to meet at the bank of a known river on a Thursday or Sunday, as has been explained in the previous part of the discussion the choice of the day has also traditionally symbolic meaning. Upon the arrival of the named river bank, the conflicting parties are not going to mix and sit together. They will stay at each side of the river bank. Since the reconciliation has not yet been done, staying on the opposite bank of the river will deter a possible violence when the two parties come face to face for the first time since the occurrence of the conflict.

In the Shako tradition, it is common to be armed with spear everywhere and every time. This may also create a possibility for the attacking of the family of the killer by the family of the deceased and cause further violence. In order to deter or manage the situation the elders will warn the family of the deceased not to engage in any form of activities that provoke conflict and they advise also the family of the killer to remain on the other side of the river bank in a way not easily identified by the member of the deceased family.

The elders will gather under a big tree to start an actual reconciliation process. They also make frequent consultation with members of the killer family to make sure that everything is ready and available according to the *Bertussa* custom to go ahead with the reconciliation. They, what's more, make sure that every material required for the reconciliation activities is already available. They check on the readiness of “*Kerdt*” (a type of leaf grown in the area), “sheep”, “*Otsu*” “cereals”, and “chicken” for the ceremony. They double check also on the arrival of the compensation. If, it is in person: a boy or a girl or if, it is animal the arrival of the animals with the right physical wellbeing and numbers of animals, according to the tradition.

The double checking of the ritual materials and compensation is intended not to give any ground for the family of the deceased to retreat from the reconciliation process by pointing out on missing items that should have been provided the killer’s family. After making sure everything is ready as required

by the tradition of the Sheko people during the reconciliation process of a homicide act, the elders will kick off the actual procession of the reconciliation act.

The reconciliation process starts with a symbolical act of cutting the throat of a sheep at the bank of the river. This act has two symbolic meanings as narrated by a participant of the study.<sup>15</sup>

*The first symbolic meaning is that the cutting of the sheep throat at the bank of the river results in the washing away of the blood from the sheep through floods and the devil spirit that causes the conflict and the evil spirit of sense of revenge, cruelty, and disharmony between the conflicting families will also washed away with the blood.*

*The second symbolic meaning is related to the usefulness of the Yenu (intestine of the sheep) in Sheko people tradition in taking oath. For the purpose of reconciliation, after the intestine of the sheep is properly separated from the rest of the sheep's body, two long sticks will be set upright at two areas at the river bank at a distance and the intestine of the sheep will be attached at the upper and lower part of the two sticks by letting an open space in-between. In this open space, four persons from each family-the family of the killer*

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<sup>15</sup> Interview with Ato Shecho Feji at Teppi, 2013

*and the deceased- will hold hands each other together with the Burjab. They walk four times between the stretched intestines on the stick. They will remain holding each other while walking between the intestines of the sheep; the act symbolizes the swearing of the conflicting parties no more to see each other as enemies and to strengthen their fraternity. After they finish the ceremonial act of walking between the intestines stretched on the upright sated sticks at the river bank, the Burjab let the two sticks to incline to the ground and at this time the stretched intestine will approach the ground. This act symbolized that the conflict is now settled and it comes to stabilization by approaching to the ground as symbolized by the intestine.*

*The next symbolic act is the throwing the intestines into the river. This symbolizes the disappearance of the conflict from the conflicting parties. Finally, the family of the killer and the deceased one are not going to have a meal prepared from the meat of the sheep; rather the Burjab will take home the mea*

The following picture indicates the symbolic ritual that is performed for the purpose of confirming the agreement made between the two parties.



Figure.-3- Picture showing an oath being taken between the family of the killer and of the deceased

The symbolic ritual of the reconciliation process also includes not only the cutting of sheep throat and related rituals with the blood and intestine of the sheep, but also the use using different leaves, which grow in the areas as a symbol to make the reconciliation process having a long lasting effect on the behavior of the conflicting parties.



Fig 4. Kerdi plant, commonly used in the reconciliation process

One of the plants used is known as “*Kerdi*”. *Kerdi* is a common plant which grows in the area being dependent on the forest of the area. The plant uses the shade of big trees in the forest as a conducive environment conducive for its growth. Since the plant is protected from direct sun light through the shades of big trees, its leaves are fatty, broad in their circumference and are cold all the time.

According to the beliefs of the Sheko people, “*Kerdi*” symbolize forgiveness. It is also believed that a reconciliation done through the use of “*Kerdi*” will have an effect on the overall condition of health of the conflicting parties in their future

life. Thus, the use of the plant in the reconciliation of conflicts has not only a direct symbolic meaning on the conclusion of the reconciliation, but also on the state of their life after reconciliation.

The symbolic meaning of reconciliation by using the leaf of *Kerdi* proceeds in the following way as narrated by one of the participants of the study.<sup>16</sup>

*During the reconciliation process, enough leaves will be trimmed from the “Kerdi” plant and in order to moisturize the leaves, the Burjab will rub them against small stone and soil. Then after rubbing the “Kerdi” leaf and producing some moisture, the Burjab first creams his jaw and part of his belly and then by bringing closer together the families of the killer and the deceased one, he creams the jaw and part of their belly with the moisture of the “Kerdi” leaf one by one.*

The choice of the “*Kerdi*” leaf and the belly part of the body of the conflicting parties is related to the cold nature of the “*Kerdi*” leaf and the symbolic ability of the coldness of the “*Kerdi*” leaf to cool the stomach of families members of each disputant, which is remained hot due to the situation they encountered by the homicide act and their annoyance with that. The conflict is also expected to be cooled as that of the “*Kerdi*” leaf.

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<sup>16</sup> Interview with Ato Kassa Kershin, June 2013, Sheko

After the moisture from the “*Kerdi*” leaf has been creamed to the people, those people who think on vengeance are expected to be out of the community’s norm. They should be sincere in their reconciliation. They should never engage in violent conflict with each other.

The other symbolic ritual is related to throwing spears into the bark of a tree and stitching it with spears. The tree used for this purpose is known as “*Otsu*”. It is similar to palm tree. According to the local tradition, the Burjab should plant this tree around the bank of a river. When the family of the deceased one, who are living on the other bank of the river, came to the river, the families of the killer will stitch the “*Ostu*” tree and make the tree fall. On this occasion, the family of the deceased will return back and would say “you are still mongering for conflict. It is enough. We have also in our family courageous fighters, and we will show you if you like”. At this moment, the Burjab will interfere and say to them “they do this according to our tradition only to remember the person was killed by spear. They have no intention to hit you with spear



Figure 5. Picture showing while the killer commits the crime and Otsu is planted

For the second time, they set the “*Otsu*” in an upright position and members of the family of the deceased and the killer together will stitch the tree with a spear. Especially, the killer and the brother of the deceased will stitch the tree with their spears together standing face to face and finally the “*Otsu*” will be thrown into the river.

The symbolic meaning of spearing the tree shows the man is killed with a spear and the spearing of the tree together and especially by the two members of the community-the killer and the brother of the deceased one, who is expected to play the upper hand in planning a revenge act, is to symbolically show that

after this ritual the killing by using spear come to an end. Finally, they will promise not to use their spear against each other and to live peacefully together.

Since, homicide is considered as a serious offense and it will act as a triggering factor for more violence in the form of revenge and counter revenge, to manage the escalation of conflicts, to resolve this conflicts and cement the reconciliation in a way that the society never breaks the settlement, the Sheko people have developed a number of rituals with symbolic meanings are applied. Which have to be carried out while resolving criminal acts related to homicide.

The selection of places for reconciliation and their symbolic meaning, the use of the blood and intestine from sheep and the use of different plants and their symbolic meaning in relation to their way of life and in view of conflict resolution have been discussed in the above part of the narration. But, in order to have a full view of the ritual acts of the community in relation to reconciliation of families affected by the act of homicide, it is desirable to narrate also other rituals of the community.

The other symbolic act is slaughtering of a chicken and the burying of the slaughtered chicken in the area where the deceased was killed. This act symbolizes the burying of the animosity between the two families and the beginning of new relations between the two families.

After the accomplishment of this ritual, the next step is the handing over of the compensation to the family of the deceased. If the compensation is in person, the Burjab will transfer the person from the killer family to the deceased and the person becomes a new member of the deceased family. If the person coming to the deceased family is a girl, she will marry a brother of the deceased; if he is a boy, he will marry a sister of the deceased. If the deceased had no brothers and sisters, the marriage will be conducted between the close relatives of the deceased person and the boy or girl joining the family through compensation. As it has been discussed in the previous part, if the compensation is arranged with handing over of animals, the Burjab will transfer the animals to members of the family of the deceased.

After the rituals related to “Kerdi”, “the intestine of the sheep”, “Otsu” and “slaughtering of chicken” and transfer of the compensation have been completed, the next step will be tasting seeds of varieties of crops. The crops to be tasted include, “*Baka*”, “*Keche*”, “*Ama*” and others.

Member of the family of the deceased and of the killer are required each to make two queues. The Burjab will stand in the middle of the two queues and after he tastes the seeds of the selected crops, he hands them over to the people in the queue and they taste the seeds of the crops by handing them over from one person to the other.

The tasting of the cereals symbolizes the beginning of a new amicable relation between the two families by sharing the seeds. After all have tasted, then elders will stand up and the blessing ceremony will started. First, the Burjab gives his blessing and then elder's follow and give also their blessing according to their age-old tradition.

After finishing the reconciliation process at the bank of a river, the next step is conducted ceremony in the home of the killer's family. All participants of the reconciliation process will go to the family of the killer. The killer slaughters two oxen and offers different kinds of traditional drinks.

The elders and the family of the deceased will take part in this festivity. The Burjab will start the festivity by filling a glass with a traditional drink called "teje". He offers the 'teje' to the killer and the brother of the deceased to drink from the same glass. This symbolizes that the adversaries are reconciled. Then, different foods and drinks will be served and singing and dancing by the participants.

Homicide is considered a serious offense. In addition to the problem in its own right, it will also lead to a cycle of conflicts in revenge and counter revenge. It has to be securely resolved and it seems that is why a number of rituals with symbolic meanings are applied. A reconciliation of homicide takes a long step and needs the continuous effort of the elders and *Burjabs* to bring the

conflicting parties to agreement and conclude every step of the reconciliation process with symbolic acts that binds the conflicting parties to accept the tradition and force them not to go out of the reconciliation process.

The Sheko community has different rituals and procedures to resolve different conflicts so in the continuing part of this discussion, the conflict resolution mechanisms and rituals of inter-clan conflict and their management and resolution mechanisms are addressed.

#### **4.5.2. Inter-Clan Conflict**

As has been described in the socio-cultural description of the Sheko community, clan is one of the principles of social organization. The clans have also settled closer to each other in the area occupied by the community. Thus, the clans came under conflict more often than not triggered by different events. Some of the triggering factors for the eruption of conflict between the clans are lack of giving due respect when they meet in a funeral ceremony, during dancing occasions in celebration of annual holidays and resource issues related to grazing land boarder trespass and water points.

According to an informant<sup>17</sup>

*“Inter-clan conflicts are common during funeral ceremony and during dance ceremony on the occasion of marriage and the celebration of annual holidays. In the tradition of the Sheko during the funeral ceremony, people carry their spear and shield and they decorate themselves with the skin of a tiger, the horn of a deer and other ornaments. During the ceremony, they dance only with members of their clan. But, in some occasions, some undisciplined youngsters may trespass this tradition and start to dance by intermingling with members of other clans and start spearing on the shields of other clan members. The members of the other clan saw this situation as disrespect and insulting to their clan and they may start a quarrel with the interfering members of the other clan and this quarrel may also escalate into outright violent conflict between the two clans .The same may happen during dancing celebration of an annual festivity if someone is observed dancing with a wife of the member of other clan. Affront is another triggering cause for inter-clan conflict. Conflict over grazing lands and use of water points are also the main causes of conflict”*

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<sup>17</sup> Interview with Ato Ourma Ziti, May 2013, Yeki

Inter-clan conflicts are conflicts that can inflict much causality and disturb the day-to-day activities of the community. The clan leaders give more attention to resolve such conflicts using the *Bertussa* system of conflict resolution. The clan leader tries to manage and resolve the conflict before it escalates to outright violent conflict and takes the life of some members of the community and create an impasse to the clan leaders to communicate the issue. Thus, the clan leaders address the issue before it creates a havoc that may break the social relations and communications between the clan leaders.

When a quarrel between members of a clan occurred the clan leaders come together and discuss on the issues surrounding the eruption of the conflict and stress the importance of the continuation of their interactions during marriage ceremony, market days, annual holiday celebrations and other social events and the need to address the conflict so that the conflict do not hinder further interactions. According to the custom, one clan-leader will be selected to lead the conflict resolution process. The clan leader selected is based on the capacity, skill, and the social respects the clan leader have in the community.

After the selection of the clan leader, the process of reconciliation will proceed in an area near the home of the elected clan leader. After taking the responsibility, the elected clan leader will lead other clan leaders as a chairman and they decide together the date of their first meeting. They prepare a plan on how to resolve the conflict. Before the summoning of the members of the clans

who are actually engaged in conflict for the reconciliation, each clan leader will take the responsibility to make the members of his clan ready for reconciliation. He also takes the responsibility to identify those people who are responsible for the eruption of the conflict and he will also identify the primary actors in the conflict and he will remind them to stay calm and patient. This will help manage the conflict not to escalate to disrupt the reconciliation process.

After the identification of groups and individuals primarily involved in the conflict, they will be summoned near the home of the selected clan leader through their respective clan leaders. Although the clan leaders are the main actors in the whole reconciliation process, *Kalichas*, *Burjabs*, and respected elders of the community will also participate in the process to give emphasis the issue.

When the different groups engaged in conflict arrive at the place where the reconciliation is to be conducted, they will not sit together. They take a seat far apart from each other together with members of their clan. After they take their seat, the reconciliation activity will start with investigating the real cause of the conflict.

The reconcilers then will call each person individually turn by turn and interrogate him on the overall cause and on the dynamics of the conflict that

grew from individual quarrel to group conflict. The reconcilers also advise the conflicting parties to give a genuine account of the conflict. If they lie and give a false account, they will be cursed by the spirit of the *Kalichas*, clan leaders and the *Koynabs* who are believed to have spiritual and magical abilities. They have the symbolic power to make people swear and be bound by their words.

Thus, after investigating the cause of the conflict, the one who starts the violent conflict will be also identified. If the conflicting parties do not give the correct account about the cause of the conflict and about those who instigated the conflict and if there is no agreement on their accounts, then there is a possibility to hear witnesses. The witnesses will give their account in the presence of the clan leaders, *Kalichas* and respected elders and they will not dare to lie in front of those respected leaders of the community. My informants narrated the immediate triggering factor for the conflicts in the following way<sup>18</sup>

*“Some conflicts occur when someone aims and shots at the shield of some other person’s father with a spear. At that time, the son of the aimed father will stitch him. Besides, some individuals will dance with the wife of another individual and hence the husband or his relatives will become angry. Some individuals will also get into conflict for competition on grazing lands and water points. In such occasions, different people from different clans will be involved to conflicts.<sup>19</sup>”*

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<sup>18</sup> Focus Group Discussion with Ourma, Shecho, Feyissa, Kassa, Duka, Habtamu and Berki, Teppi, 2013

<sup>19</sup> Interview with Debebe Bonda at Teppi, 2013

After hearing of the accounts of the conflicting parties directly from the disputants or the oral witnesses, and having identified the cause and the instigator of the conflict, the reconcilers will start to push the conflicting parties to agree on the importance of reconciliation. In doing so, they discuss the individual events that caused conflict together with steps the conflicting parties should have taken to deter the violent conflict. A conciliator explained it, if they were well conversed in the tradition of the community in the following way interview with one of the reconciler ( Interview with Ato Kassa Kershin, July 2013, Sheko).

*If you want your father's shield should not be stitched by spear, why do you bring it to the mourning ceremony? The event happened in a dance during a funeral ceremony when people are often emotional. It was not a planned and executed. So there was a need to be patient. Dancing during festivities is also one of our traditions that passed from generation to generation, but dancing with the wife of another person is not a good moral conduct. So, try to distance yourselves from such acts.*

In this way, all the events are explained to create a situation in which all the conflicting parties conduct self-criticism. For economic resource issues, which were also the causes of the conflict, practical solutions and arrangements will be also given. For example, for the conflict over water points, if there are alternative water points for cattle, they will be assigned for each group independently. If, there are not enough water points, conciliators set a program for the use of the available water points turn by turn. If the grazing area is communal, they will be advised to use it in coordination and peacefully. If the grazing land is an individual property, they advise not to trespass one another and they stress the importance of utilizing their own resource and respecting the resource of others as a basic principle to lead a peaceful life.

In order to proceed with this ritual, the clan leader and the elders will collect materials, which are necessary for conducting the ritual, on one basket. The materials are ash, egg, horsehair, spear and a coin made from silver (locally knows as “tegera”). After all materials are collected, they will be placed in front of the elders and every individual who is involved in the conflict will come in front of the elders and is required to jump the basket which all the material are in.

The meaning of this type of swearing in the Sheko community is that the conflicting parties give their promise not to engage into violent conflict, not to renege on their promise and not to see each other as enemies. After this, the

conflicting parties lead a friendly and peaceful life. They also become a model for the other members of the community.

Finally, the reconciliation process will be concluded with drinks and food served. Since the conflict is inter-clan, an ox will be slaughtered and different types of drinks will be prepared by contribution from members of each clan and the clan leaders will coordinate the contribution and all the ceremonial activities.

Moreover, those individuals who are found guilty of instigating the conflict will be fined based on the degree of their involvement in the conflict and the fine collected in such form will be used also for drink and food. During the serving of food and drink, all community members will participate and the members of the conflicting parties will meal and drink together. There will be singing and dancing. The whole festivity will also be accompanied by good wishes by the elders. Everyone will enjoy the festivity and leave for their home in good mood and a promise to have a peaceful life in the future.

#### **4.5.3. Conflicts related to trespassing the boundary of landholdings**

In the tradition of the Sheko community, the reconciliation of boarder conflicts has their own especial features. This is so because in the community, it is not possible to make negotiation on border issues. The conflicting parties will not

be satisfied by any proposal that limits their land holding. They strongly insist on the establishment of an exact demarcation. Unless, the exact border is identified and established, they will not take the reconciliation process genuinely.

Border trespassing is seen in the community as an unethical activity which can be done by peoples having an evil spirit. Such persons will face social sanctions and become isolated from the community. Thus, issues of border conflicts have their own mechanisms and rituals to resolve.

In the Sheko community, a person who experienced trespassing of the border of his land possession will plant a tree locally known as “*gerawa*” on the exact border area and he will present his complaint to the clan leader. The clan leader will then order the accused person to come to his home. The accused person will then comply with the order of the clan leader and will be questioned on the issue.

The fact that the case is entertained by the clan leader shows conflict over border tress pass is serious. The accused person will realize that he will not walk out of the issue easily. If the accused one confesses that he has trespassed the border and done wrong, the reconciliation processes will continue.

The reconciliation process of this type of conflict has also its own ritual. To conduct the ritual, the clan leader will go to the contentious area and will bring the tree seedling previously planted by the plaintiff on the contested border area before he brought the case to the clan leader. Then, the clan leader will order the preparation of “*Keredi*” (a leaf of tree with moisture used for the ointment ceremony). The “*Keredi*” is not used alone to the ointment of the body parts of the conflicting parties, but the ear of a sheep will also be cut and the blood from the ear punched with the blood and be ready to proceed the ointment ceremony. Then, the clan leader will cream the part of the belly and jaw of the two conflicting persons by the prepared ointment.

After this ritual, it is considered that reconciliation is successful and starting from now onwards, there would not be animosity and thinking on vengeance. The border should be also demarcated along the area, where the plaintiff has planted a tree locally known as “*grawa*”.

It is believed that the clan leader goes through the whole ritual process in order to save the life of the accused. His life is worth to be saved from being taken by an evil spirit as he has confessed his wrong deeds. If the accused does not confess and denies what he has done, he is going to be condemned by the elders, *Burjab* and clan leader. In the belief of the community, a person condemned by the elders, clan leader and *Burjab* is deemed to lead a cursed life. The possibility by the accused one to deny what he has done wrong is

almost none. Fear of condemnation by elders, clan leaders and *Burjab* has a great psychological influence in the mind of the accused and so he will confess and be interested to pass through the ritual process in order to clean himself from being further cursed.

Thus, the power of the elders, clan leaders, and *Burjab* is crucial for the management and resolution of such conflicts. A complex ritual also underpins this conflict management and resolution mechanism that cement the reconciliation to be long-lasting.

#### **4.5.4. Abduction / *Geshi* /**

Abduction locally known as *Geshi* is a well-known system of marriage in the Sheko community. Abduction can be consensual as agreed by the abductee and the abductor especially if the bride agrees but their parents opposed the proposed marriage. It can be also forceful when there is no agreement on the side of the bride-to-be. A forceful abduction is condemned by the Sheko people.

A forceful abduction is a cause of violent conflict, because the family of the abductee will try to defend the girl from the abduction and a conflict may arise. The conflict may also be so violent that it may take the life of the conflicting parties. Some of the causes for forceful abduction in the Sheko community include the following as narrated by an informant<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Interview with Shisha Woshikara, July 2013, Guraferda

1. When one member of a clan do not accept the marriage proposal from another member of a clan due to some prejudice
2. If a young man who proposed the marriage is not considered as having socially acceptable behavior and because of that his proposal is rejected by the family of the bride-to-be.
3. The abduction may also be caused by emotional falling in love by the abductor.
4. When the abductor faces shortage of materials to be given as present to the-bride-to-be, he may take abduction as an option.

When abduction occurs due to the above-mentioned cases, the abductor would hide the abductee in a secured place. If the abductor takes the action without consulting with his family, then, he will immediately inform them by sending a person who carries an errand. This notification to his family has to serve two purposes. First, it serves to alert his family against possible vengeance which may be instigated by the family of the abductee. Second, it is a way of announcement to his family about having been married and thus seeking an approval. The family of the abductor apparently surprised by the deeds of their son will disapprove his deeds. They denounce in the following way<sup>21</sup>.

*“We could have arranged the marriage in a proper and orderly manner. He should not have done such a thing. He is provoking conflict with the family of the abductees. He is putting us into an unnecessary conflict which may result in violence and loss of life.”*

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<sup>21</sup> Interview with Ato Habtamu Setegn, July 2013, Endris

After the family of the abductor denounces the act in the aforementioned way, the close relatives of the family will gather and they will try to settle the issue. They will try to persuade all family members of the abductor by pointing out the fact that the act is already accomplished and the only way is to find a reasonable solution to the problem. The family of the abductor will then realize the fact and give recognition to the marriage and will prepare a small ceremony by inviting their neighbors and relatives. With this, they announce the marriage of their son to the immediate members of the family, the neighbors, and their relatives.

The family of the abducted girl will be highly disappointed and see the act as directed against their dignity and respect in their community. They will take revenge by using any means. They will be organized in team and start to look after the abductor and his family and try to solicit information on the whereabouts of the abductor and his family. As soon as they get enough information on the location of the abductor and his family, they will take any measure such as burning of the house of the abductor and assaulting any member of the family. The family of the abductor, who expect this measure likely to be taken by the family of the abducted girl, remains always alert and they will hide the abductee and they cautiously follow any action by the abductees' family in order to deter any act of revenge.

In the meantime, the family of the abductor will start to arrange cattle for present and look for elders, who could be reconcilers. Since sending of elders to the family of the abductees as earlier as necessary is considered as a better starting point for future reconciliation, this will be done so soon. It is considered as giving due respect to the family of the abductee and it also helps to reduce the possibility of revenge and contribute also for the smoothing of the attitude of the conflicting parties towards the reconciliation processes.

The selected elders to be sent to the family of the abductee will gather in the house of the father of the abductor and discuss all issues surrounding the case and develop a plan on how to engage with the reconciliation process. At the end of their consultation, food and drinks will be served in the house of the father of the abductor and they pray God to make their mission successful. The father and mother of the abductor will see off them by wishing a success.

When they reach, the elders do not directly go to the house of the family of the abductees. It is assumed that the family is so annoyed by their daughter's abduction so that they may even start quarreling with elders. The elders will first go to the house of one of the neighbors of the abductees' family that has a close relation and good understanding with the family. The members of the neighboring family will discuss the issue with the elders and then they will go to the family of the abductees together with the elders and try to introduce the issues to the family in slowly and persuasively. Gradually, they will disclose

the issue by saying, “the elders are coming and the abductor family is in search of reconciliation.” Since the neighboring family, through their long-term acquaintance, knows the behavior of the family of the abductees, they approach the issue carefully.

According to the tradition of the community, the family of the abducted girl do not accept the immediately. The family of the abductees would not accept the reconciliation idea, when their neighbor to show their anger and their wish that the abductor and his family stay disturbed and freighted for a week or long first presents it to them. Thus, they will give an appointment to the elders to return after a week. Then, the neighbor who had brought the message will return to the elders and will inform them what is said. The elders will return by accepting the appointment.

During the second trip of the elders to the house of the family of the abductees, they will take with them an ox, a bull, a young cow, and a milk cow when reconciliation is to be started in conflicts caused by abductions. The family of the abductees will in their side prepares variety of local foods such as *baka*, *kechi*, *ama* and drinks such as *bordye*, *areke*, *tela* and *chemo* and wait for the coming of the elders.

As the elders arrive to the house of the family of the abductees, they will leave the cattle near the house and will enter the house. After they enter the house,

they will not take a seat; rather they remain standing in row and forward their greetings by saying “*dasha*” which means peace in Sheko language three times by bending forward their neck. After the end of the exchange of greetings, one of the elder will explain the purpose of their coming in the following way:<sup>22</sup>

*We are coming here to compensate for the wrong doings. We have done wrong; we have trespassed your fence; we have intruded you home; we have pushed out you from your chair; we have exposed you to the burning light of the sun; we have left you without shelter; and we have stolen your goods. So, we accept and recognize our errors and we are here to compensate for those errors. For intruding in your house, we compensate one young cow. For trespassing your fence, we compensate one ox. For pushing you out of your chair, we compensate one bull. And for letting you live without any shade and exposing you to the direct sunlight, we compensate one milk cow. He finishes his listing of compensation items by indicating the presence of the cattle in front of the house.*

After the elder finishes his speech, the family of the abductees will invite the elders to take seat. In a reconciliation of an abduction case, those cattle given to the family of the abductees through compensation are considered as part of the present during the presentation of marriage dowry.

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<sup>22</sup> Interview with Ato Ayne Beje, July 2013, Sheko

After the compensation process is accomplished, the conflict will become deescalated and direct contact between the two conflicting families will start. Then, the elders will travel to the house of the family of the abductees for the third time by taking with them between 3-7 cattle for marriage present. At this time the abductor will accompany the elders and the family of the abductees will prepare a ceremony. After the accomplishment of the ceremony of handing over the present, the marriage between the abductor and abductees will be publicly announced. The abductor will ask the family of the abductees for excuse and the elders will reconcile all persons involved in the inter-clan conflict.

Finally, the festivity will continue and food and drink will be served and the elders will give their blessing for the two families. After this, the abductor will become member of the family of the abductees and he will be seen their son-in-law.

According to the tradition of the Sheko people, it is the responsibility of the bride's mother to support the new couple in starting their new life. Thus, after the completion of the compensation process and the delivery of the present, the mother of the bride starts to collect different varieties of crop seed, plant seeds of vegetables and fruits. By taking in consideration the time of planting, she will send a message to the family of her son -in-law to remind them on

preparing a farming ground for the plantation of different vegetable and fruit seedlings and for the sowing of different crops. The family of the groom, after they take the notice and realize the exact day of the arrival of the guests from the family of the bride, will prepare the farm land, a shelter for the guests and food and drinks. When the mother of the bride makes her trip to the area of the family of the groom, she will take a number of youth and all the crops to be sowed and different vegetable and fruit seedling to be planted with her. She takes the youth with her because she cannot alone plant “*baka*”, “*kechi*”, “coffee”, “orange”, “banana”, and sow all different crops. Though, there is a preparation of food and drink in the family of the groom for the expected guests, the mother of the bride will also prepare foods and drinks and will carry it with her to the other family. After they arrive in the house of the family of the groom, the mother of the bride and all her entourage will have a welcoming reception and they will, for the whole night, be in a mood of festivity by dancing, singing and taking foods and drinks. In the next day, the sowing and plantation activities will start and during the day hours, the planting and sowing activities will continue in tandem with the dancing and singing and the whole festivity in the evening. This continuous festivity symbolizes that the reconciliation is concluded and the family of the bride have accepted the reconciliation genuinely and they approve the binding of the two families together through the marriage. Since members of the two families mix on this occasion, it is considered a step in the strengthening of their family bond.

After this occasion, there is an understanding between the two families and they stand together in times of happiness, sorrow, scarcity and abundance. The groom will lead also a peaceful life with the family of the bride and the couple will also support the family in different agricultural activities.

In the above discussion, the process of conflict management and resolution in relation to conflicts instigated through forceful abduction has been narrated. In the continuing part of the discussion, the handling of abduction cases consented by both the abductor and abductees is narrated.

A consented abduction is identifiable from the behaviors and acts of both the abductor and the abductees. The day to day acts and behavior of the parties in abduction give clue to members of the community and their family on their relation and it may also expose their secret relation. Since both take the action with agreement, they may be seen in public playing and doing different activities together. There is a large possibility to the friends, brothers and sisters of the abductor to know about the love affair between the abductor and the abductees and a rumor on their love affair will be circulated in the community. The rumor will also reach the ears of the family of the abductor and the abductees.

The family of the abductor will then prepare to send elders to the family of the abductees. The family of the abductor will contact respected elders in the

community and ask for support in concluding reconciliation with the family of the abductees.

Though the abduction occurred in consensus between the abductor and the abductees, the family of the abductor and the abductees will be in conflict, because the act is considered as degradation of the dignity and the respect of the family of the abductees by the abductor. The proposed elders will accept the request of the family of the abductor and will take the responsibility to reconcile the parties in dispute. The elders consider their task of reconciliation is a moral obligation. The community owes them respect for this.

The first step in the reconciliation process is a consultation between the father of the abductor and the elders in the home of the father of the abductor on how to proceed with the reconciliation activities. As usual, they conclude this consultation with a pray to be successful in their mission. In the next step, the elders go to the house of the family of the abductees for the first round. Upon their arrival in the area where the house of the family is to be found they, will not directly enter the house. Rather they will first enter the house of one of the neighbor of the family and inform the neighbor the purpose of their coming. The informed neighbor will try to make the issue clearer by asking questions whether the abduction was forceful. This clarification is important to him to have full information and to be able to answer the entire question that may be raised by the family of the abductees in a correct way. In the tradition of the Sheko community, lying is immoral and hence after having the correct

information he will tell the correct story of the abduction to the family of the abductees.

Then, the family will know that their daughter is abducted with her own agreement. This situation creates extraordinary social push on the side of the family of the abductees to accept at any the reconciliation without resistance. In the Shako tradition, it is immoral for a girl to lose her virginity before marriage. . It creates a problem with her social relation and her family is not also interested to bring her back home and to let her be ridiculed by the members of their relatives and communities living around. They know that their daughter will not get married in the future as being considered a women living in her family without husband. Cognizant of all these social issues, the family will accept the reconciliation.

Since the abductor knows all this social problems with a girl having lost her virginity outside of marriage, he does not hesitate to take her virginity in the first day after he abducts her.

In the Sheko tradition, resolution of conflicts instigated by consensual abduction and forced abduction take different courses. In the case of consensual abduction, the elders do not worry much in their mission of reconciliation. . The family of the abductees will loosen their anger on the abductor and they feel angry by their daughter for humiliation of their family.

The consideration of marriage by consensual abduction as low standard of marriage by the community also contributes to their anger on their daughter.

As indicated above, there are some clues the parties' sin abduction may give to determine by others that the abduction is consensual. As narrated by one of my informants, a girl who wishes to be abducted by a boy shows the following conducts<sup>23</sup>

*“She collects firewood and stores it around the rear part of their home and she will decorate the wall of the house of her family using mud, ash and dung. She draws also different pictures on the wall. Unusually, she will start to engage herself in activities outside the household such as collecting firewood, collecting coffee beans, and fetching water now and then She prefers to these activities, because they give her the chance to meet a boy. Finally, after arranging the abduction, she will not return her home after she goes to do something in the field.”*

Since the family of the abductees understands this step, a violent conflict will not occur between the two families. Thus, the reconciliation process in consensual abduction is not as hard as the in forced abduction.

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<sup>23</sup> Interview with Ato Aybera Shifbicha July 2013, Sheko

The elders selected to do the reconciliation will hand over the compensation in their first-round trip. They will come back on the arranged day for reconciliation with the present and the abductor to house of the abductees' family. The reconciliation will proceed with the abductor and the family of the abductees and the marriage of the bride and the groom become public and they will start to lead a normal and peaceful life with their family member.

#### **4.4.5. Family Quarrels**

Family is the base for any society and the continuation of generation is highly dependent on the institution of marriage that serves as the source for the reproduction of the next generation the society. The institution of marriage has also other important function in addition to being as source of reproduction. It also serves as a mechanism for support between the couples and it is also a social institution which serves as a means of social interaction in the larger community.

As any other member of a community, the couples in the family may experience happiness, sorrow, peace and quarrel as they manage their life together within the institution of the family. Thus, management of family conflicts and quarrels is also an important issue in every community. The Shek community has developed certain mechanisms and rituals to solve such conflicts. Before I discuss such mechanism and rituals, let me describe causes of family conflicts.

The following are the major factors for family conflict in the Sheko community as narrated by an informant<sup>24</sup>

1. Adultery committed either by the husband or wife and related circulation of rumor in the community
2. Infertility of a wife and the husband's need to have children from another woman with or without divorce with the infertile wife
3. Misunderstanding between the daughter -in-law and her mother-in-law and a related feeling by the wife that the members of her husband family mistreat her. The evaluation of her husband position in relation to the conflicting issues between her and members of her husband family and if she feels her husband neglects her position and always support the ideas of his family members, then she feel lonely and a quarrel may erupt.
4. When the woman is not properly accomplishing the household activities, which are deemed to be her responsibilities according to the tradition of the Sheko people and spent all her time moving from one house to the other by spreading different rumors in the community. This conduct of a wife may trigger the husband to quarrel.
5. Conflict may arise when the husband is not a hard worker to support his family and even worse, when he is addicted to drinking.

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<sup>24</sup> Interview with Ato Guta Zeni. June 2013, Sheko

6. When the family faces economic problems and lives in abject poverty, then there would be a blame shift on the responsible person for creating this situation in the family. In the process of searching the responsible person, disagreement and quarrel may raise in the family.
7. The unwise management of the family property by one of the couples may also lead to disagreement and then to quarrel.

Depending on the magnitude and seriousness of the conflict, neighbors, elders of the community, the father-in-law and mother-in-law of the husband and wife, *Burjab Kalichas* and the clan leaders will participate in managing and resolving family conflicts in the Sheko community. Conflict resolution based on third person is one of the most effective ways of conflict resolution for a family conflict in the Sheko community. Habetamu (1998:19) indicated that “mediation and arbitration by a third party and accommodating the disagreements and conflicts are some of the main of techniques of conflict resolution in most families.”

The first responsible persons to settle the family conflict in Sheko are neighbors. The neighbors follow seriously the issue and try to solve the outstanding issues that led the couples into disagreement. If the neighbors are unable to settle the disagreement and the disagreement continuous, the families of the husband and wife will intervene.

To undergo a process of management of the family conflict, the father-in-law and mother-in-law of the couples will meet together and investigate the triggering factors to the conflict between the couple. Then, they will criticize the first responsible person for causing or aggravating conflict and counsel the couple to stop disagreement and continue in their marriage peacefully.

Mostly family disagreements and conflict may be resolved at this level by the father-in-law and mother-in-law of the couples, but some conflicts may not be resolved at this level and need the involvement of other members of the community i.e., the elders.

The conflict, which is not solved by the involvement of the neighbor and the father-in-law and mother-in-law of the couples, needs the involvement of the elders of the community at this level. The elders of the community are socially respected and their involvement is seen as an important step in the resolution of the conflict. The elders on their side try to create an agreement between the couples by counseling and criticizing the disputants. But, sometimes the disagreement may be so intense that it becomes hard for the elders to settle it once and for all. In these occasions, the elders may need the help of the *Burjab*, the professional in matter of conflict resolution in the community.

The elders and the *Burjab* together deeply investigate the causes for the conflict and the responsible person to instigate the conflict in the family. Then,

they will focus their attention to the individual who is more responsible in causing or aggravating the conflict.

The conflict is expected to be resolved through criticizing the wrong doer for his/her deeds and finally bringing him /her to self-criticism and promise to avoid such behaviors in the future. Then, the reconciliation will be accomplished and the couples will continue their married life.

If the *Burjab* and the elders are not able to resolve the conflict and save the marriage, through counseling, criticism ad self-criticism, then the next step will be a peaceful divorce. The elders and the *Burjab* will then arrange a peaceful divorce.

There are number of well-established beliefs in the Sheko community in relation to wife and husband extra-marital behavior and the related consequences in their social and spiritual life. An informant narrated:<sup>25</sup>

*“One of the beliefs in our community is that, if the husband or the wife commits adultery, the spirit of either party will discover the secret. If a married woman commits adultery during her stay in the field collecting firewood, fetching water, collecting coffee beans or looking after the cattle, she has to confess to her husband what she has done willingly or unwillingly. It is believed that the husband has*

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<sup>25</sup> Interview with Ato Feyisa Goda, May 2013, Yeki

*a spiritual power to come across such secretes, so it is better to discuss with him openly about her affair. Moreover, if someone commits adultery with the wife of another person, the affair should be made public and the person who committed adultery should be punished. Otherwise he will die soon as a consequence of his behavior. The other belief in the community is that when there is disagreement between a husband and a wife, it is possible to know the real cause of the disagreement by going to the Kalecha. The Kalicha is seen in the community as having a spiritual power to see every secret of the couples.”*

, the husband may go to the *Kalicha* house and ask the *Kalicha* the reason behind their disagreement. *Kalicha* has the possibility to know everything that has happened in his family especially with his wife, if she committed adultery and other things. If the issue is very serious and contravenes the tradition of the community, the *Kalicha* will transfer the issue to the clan leader who will try to make the issue public through excommunication and organizing other socio-cultural events.

According to the tradition of the community, anyone who came across the truth through the involvement of the *Kalicha* cannot punish the wrong doers in his own right. There are customary rules in the community for punishing those

people. Victims need not to apply these rules and take just into their own hand take, but follow the traditional procedures to bring the criminals to justice.

According to the tradition of the community, when adultery is secretly committed and becomes public, the family of the wife which has committed adultery will go to the clan leader and give notice on the issue by naming the man who committed adultery with their daughter. They notify the clan leader on the issue, because the man who commits adultery with their daughter should have to go a reconciliation process with their son-in-law. Otherwise, according to the belief in the community, those persons committed adultery secretly by violating the tradition of the community are deemed to face curses, even death, by the holy spirit of the *Koynab*, the *Kalicha* and clan leaders of the community.

Since these traditional institutions are seen as having spiritual power in maintaining and protecting the tradition of the community, the violation of the tradition by committing secret adultery has a great consequence on the life of those persons involved in adultery. The family of the woman, who committed adultery, worried about the life of her daughter, goes to the clan leader and notifies him of the issue to initiate reconciliation in the presence of the clan leader.

According to the tradition of the community, a man who committed adultery with a married woman has to compensate her for his wrong doing. He will give an ox and a cow to the husband of the wife with whom he committed adultery. The man who committed adultery will hand over the ox and to the clan leader. Then the husband whose wife committed adultery receives the compensation from the clan leader.

Further reconciliation process will follow with the clan leader by bringing the two men together. The two men will give their promise to no longer see each other as enemies. Finally the clan leader will conclude the reconciliation by blessing them to lead a peaceful life in the future. The clan leader will also give advice for the husband and wife not to engage in such activities and to lead an ethical and peaceful life in their community. A warning will be also given to the woman not to commit such unethical activities in the future. She will also confess her misdeed and ask for forgiveness. Then, the couple will continue to live peacefully in their marriage.

In the Sheko tradition, a returning of a women to her husband though reconciliation after she left her house due to adultery is known as *Shekunta* / compensation / in Sheko language, which is refers to returning with respect.

There is also a belief in the Sheko community related to the sexual intercourse between a husband and his wife, who had committed adultery and returned to her home after reconciliation. An informant narrated:<sup>26</sup>

*“Because of an adultery committed secretly, the spirit of the husband has prohibited him from conducting sexual intercourse with his wife before a proper ritual. Once reconciliation is made, a drinking ritual has to be conducted in the presence of the clan leader. For the ceremony, “chemo” (local drink made of coffee leaves) will be boiled and the couples have to drink it together from one big traditionally made cup. After the accomplishment of the drink ritual, the clan leader will be on the spirits of God and the Koynab to forgive the couples. It is believed that after the accomplishment of this ritual the spirit, which had prohibited the husband from conducting sexual intercourse, will leave the husband. The husband will be enabled to do sexual intercourse and the couple starts living a peaceful life.”*

The belief in the spiritual ability of the *Kalicha* in unveiling a secretly committed crime has its influence in shaping the behavior of the people. It contributes also for the continuation of the traditional conflict management and resolution mechanisms by placing the *Kalicha* as a conflict resolution

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<sup>26</sup> Interview with Ato Belete Shamo June 2013, Yeki

institution, which has spiritual power in discerning the cause, nature and actors in the conflict. This serves as deterrence from entering into conflict and facilitation of resolution once entered. Kalicha's role is especially important in offenses committed secretly such as adultery.

As described in the aforementioned way, in order to manage and resolve family quarrels before they become so violent, family issues are handled through the neighbor of the family, father-in-law and mother-in-law of the couples, elder in the community, elders and the *Burjab*, and finally through the clan leader and the *Kalicha*. After all these conflict management and resolution steps are taken and a maximum attention is given to address the issue, if the couples are not able to resolve their difference and agree to live together, then their divorce will be peacefully proceed. The peaceful conclusion of the divorce by itself is considered as a resolution of the conflict.

#### **4.4.6. Conflicts related to theft**

In the Sheko community, theft is a condemned and is considered as an immoral act. A thief will be counseled to abstain himself from such immoral behavior. If he does not change his behavior and continue to engage in theft, then he will face different social sanctions including prohibiting him to marry with anyone in the community and interruption of any social interaction with him. The community believes also that the thief will be cursed by the Kalicha,

*Burjab*, elders and clan leader and this curse will bedevil the life of the thief and members of his family.

Cognizant of this belief, only very few individuals are engaged in theft. Money, cattle, crops, house utensils and different vegetables, fruits and coffee on the field are mostly the target of theft in the Sheko community. A person whose property has been stolen more likely enters into conflict. If he knows a person or persons who stole his property, he will ask them to return it. If one is not willing to return the property, conflict will more likely arise between the thief and owner of the property. Such conflict may even end up in bloodshed and homicide. If the thief is not known and the theft is accomplished so secretly, the victim will bring the case to the clan leader and the *Kalicha* so that the case should be handled through the customary rules and the tradition of the community.

Disputes caused by theft are relatively easy to reconcile. In fear of the consequences, such as curse and excommunication from the community, as discussed in the preceding paragraph, , thieves often respect the *Bertussa*, i.e. the traditional conflict resolution mechanisms and they will not remain in a conflict situation with their victims and they will look for a resolution of the conflict.

A person, who loses his hard earned wealth through theft by individuals and groups do not hesitate to engage in conflict with those persons. If the victim of theft exactly knows the criminals, he asks directly the criminals for the return of his materials. If the thief is not voluntary to return the stolen materials, then a violent conflict will erupt, which may lead to bloodshed and homicide.

If the thief is not known and the theft is accomplished so secretly that the victim does not have any clue, the victim will bring the case to the clan leader and the *Kalicha*, so that the case should be handled through the customary rules and the tradition of the community.

In the Sheko community, theft is a condemned and is considered as immoral act. A thief will be continuously counseled and advised to stop his activities and to make him free from such immoral behavior. If he does not change his behavior and continue to engage in theft, then he will face different social sanctions including prohibiting him to marry with anyone in the community and interruption of any social interaction with him. The community believes also that the thief will be cursed by the *Kalicha*, *Burjab*, elders and clan leader and this curse will bedeviled the life of the thief and members of his family.

Cognizant of this belief, only very few individual are engaged in theft. Even those few individual engaged in theft show also respect to the *Bertussa*, i.e. the traditional conflict resolution mechanisms and they will not remain in a

conflict situation with their victims and they will look for a resolution of the conflict.

The conflict management and resolution proceedings in the community in the case of theft are dependent on the nature of the theft and hence it is desirable to discuss the nature of theft at this juncture.

The nature of theft among the Shako can be seen in three different ways. The first type of theft is one undertaken during night when peoples get asleep or in the forest areas, when there is no movement of people around. The second type of theft is a theft committed in open day light as the result of negligence to the societal norm and finally the third type of theft is a theft committed through children.

As indicated above, a person who has lost his wealth secretly has no alternative other than presenting the case to the *Kalicha* . The the person who is a victim of theft will travel to the house of the *Kalicha* in search of a clue for his lost material. If the person has lost his ox, he will go to the house of the *Kalicha* by taking with him a rope by which the ox was tightened before it has been stolen. As he arrived in the *Kalicha*'s home, he will present his case by calling on the traditional spiritual power of the traditional institutions of the community in the following way.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Interview with Ato Kussa Koyin, June 2013, Sheko

*The spirits of our communal areas, the spirit of the God of our community, the spirit of our king the Koynab, the spirits of our fathers and our community, I had been stolen and left in despair.*

As he goes to the house of the *Kalicha*, three persons will accompany him from his neighborhood as witnesses. As soon as the arrival of victim and his neighbors, the *Kalicha* will have a conversation with these persons and he will give indices on who may have stolen the ox, even if he will not tell them the name of the thief. Though the community belief in the power of the *Kalicha* in identifying the thief is strong, the tradition does not allow the *Kalicha* to name the thief. His power and quality in identifying the thief some indices on some markers which characterized the thief.

After the *Kalicha* gives some indices and directions on the alleged thief, he will send the persons to the clan leader so that they may bring the case to an end with the support of the clan leader. The clan leader, who receives the message from the *Kalicha*, will give an order to the people living in the areas to come to a meeting. The order of the clan leader to a meeting will be respected and no one would miss the meeting. A meetings of the neighboring community for the purpose of clearing issues related to theft are highly respected meetings and all members of the neighborhood will attend the meeting willingly and with excitement. Because, those who do not attend the meeting may be suspected of theft since their absence in the meeting may suggest the act.

The elders of the community and the *Burjabs* are not only participants of the meeting but also coordinators. They coordinate people to come to the meeting and no one to miss it. When the clan leader feels the expected number participants have arrived at the meeting, he will take his usual seat in front of the mass and in the middle position between the *Burjab* and known and respected elders. The people pay their attention to the activities of the clan leader. Then, by showing a firm and serious gesture to the mass, he starts the process of investigating the crime by addressing the mass as follows:<sup>28</sup>

*“We organized this meeting today because we faced an offense against our norm. The offense undermines our clan leaders, Burjabs and Kalichas. We faced theft against the power of the Koynab who is able to bring curse and misery to our people and country. We were expecting that the criminal may regret in his deeds and commit self-criticism and return the stolen material. But this did not happen. We are here today to denounce such a person together based on our tradition, Bora (cursing). We curse him to not have a blessed family, not to have a good harvest, not to have a good health, to all members of his extended family lead unlucky life, and to go to hell. Because he violated all our values and beliefs, he forces us but to curse him.”*

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<sup>28</sup> Interview with Ato Kassa Kershin, June 2013, Sheko

After he delivers the speech, , some members of the community take their turn and support his idea of cursing the wrong doer and the mass also supports the Idea. Since, members of family of the thief are also among the attendants of the meeting and are strong believers in the tradition of the community, especially of the implication of cursing, they will become frustrated. Because, they hand a prior suspicion that one of their family members may have committed the crime.

By reading the actual situation of some of the participants of the meeting, who are frustrated with the proceed of the cursing and to give a chance for the wrong doer to expose himself to the public and to ask for forgiveness, some elders propose that the cursing should be postponed for another meeting. As it is accustomed in the community, the clan leaders will accept the proposal and the meeting will be postponed for another day.

The thief follows every aspect of the meeting. The meeting also becomes the main agenda of the community. This situation frustrates the offender and will start to isolate himself from the community. He will become more worried the rumor that the *Kalchas* has identified the thief and gave the clue to the clan leaders. As a member of a community, the criminal believes also on the superpower of the *Kalicha*, and clan leaders and on the power of their curse. All this disturbs him. The relatives of the thief follow also all issues attentively after they have participated at the mass meeting. They are attentive for all

rumors in the community. They give special attention to any clue given by the witnesses, who accompany the victim to the house of the *Kalicha*.

By observing the unusual behavior of the suspect and by relating his behavior to the rumors circulating in the community, the relatives of the criminal will try to identify the suspect and save him from being cursed. They communicate frequently with each other and if their suspicion becomes strong, they will go to the *Kalicha* who will inform them about the disturbed and sick suspect probably for hiding his crime. The *Kalicha* gives only this general inducement. After this, the relatives of the family start to counsel him so that he confesses his crime. They even insist that if he confesses and has lost the material he has stolen, they will assist him in redeeming the stolen material. After a continuous push and in light of the forthcoming cursing and its consequence, the criminal will finally confess.

All community members will gather for the meeting on the date fixed previously. As per the custom, the Burjabs, clan leaders and respected elders take their seat in front of the mass. In this meeting, two activities are to be undertaken—cursing and taking an oath.

For the purpose of taking an oath, different materials are to be collected, such as egg, ash, stone, feather and axe. An oath-taking procession takes place with all community members jumping over the collected materials one by one to prove

their innocence. This ritual is considered a strong way of expressing ethical character of community members. As the *Burjabs* and clan leaders were ready to proceed with the oath and cursing procession, the relatives of the thief approach the clan leader having with them the criminal.

The criminal, with a sound of a vanquished person, will call the name of the *Burjabs* and the clan leaders and ask for forgiveness. The mass filled with joy and happiness reacts with applaud and emotional sound. The public sees the occasion as the vindication of the power of their custom and tradition. The clan leader turns his face to the mass and makes a speech by focusing on the strength of their tradition. In his speech, he underlines the inability of anyone, who committed a crime and trespass the tradition and custom of the community to remain hidden from the clan leaders and the community. The clan leader would say that even if one commits theft in secret, the thief will be exposed.

Since the criminal has exposed himself and asked for forgiveness in front of the public, there would not be *Bora* (cursing) and there would not be oath. But, for not respecting the tradition, for forcing the clan leader and all the members of the community to lose their time by convening a meeting, the clan leader forward a request for compensation. The compensation would proceed by slaughtering cow and sheep. Finally, by slaughtering cow and sheep and

dinning with the clan leaders and the community at large, the thief will reconcile himself and the properties he stolen would be returned to the owner.

#### **4.5. Conclusion**

This part of the discussion identified the important traditional conflict management and resolution institutions of the Sheka people such as Koynab, Burjab, Kalicha and Bertussa. Their functions in the Sheko society have also been described in detail. The rituals they follow in managing and resolving different conflicts were also narrated in-depth. A complex ritual also underpins these conflict management and resolution mechanisms, which also cement the reconciliation to be long lasting.

In the Sheko community, homicide is considered as a serious offense and it will a cycle of conflicts through revenge and counter revenge. To manage the escalation of conflicts and to resolve this conflicts and cement the reconciliation in a way that the society never break the settlement, the Sheko people has developed a number of rituals, which have to be proceed in resolving criminal acts related to homicide.

Further, in order to manage and resolve family quarrels before they become so violent, family issues are handled through the neighbor of the family, father-in-law and mother-in-law of the couples, elder in the community, elders and the Burjab, and finally through the clan leader and the Kalicha.

After all these conflict management and resolution steps are taken and a maximum attention is given to address the issue, if the couples are not able to resolve their difference and agree to live together, then their divorce will peacefully proceed. The peaceful conclusion of the divorce by itself is considered as a resolution of the conflict.

Inter-clan conflicts, boundary dispute, abduction and thefts were also addressed in this part of the discussion. Resolution of these conflicts also exhibits their own rituals within the same conflict management and resolution institutional setup of the community. The management and resolution of inter-clan conflicts need a neutral third party as mediator, mostly a clan-leader outside the conflicting clans.

In a nutshell, the role of the *Burjab* as a manager and reconciler of all forms of conflicts, the *Bertussa* as a system of reconciliation, the *Kalicha* as a person endowed with supernatural power, and the *Koynab* as the apex of all activities are the whole marks of the Sheko people conflict management and resolution mechanisms.

Another way of social sanction is using cursing as a tool to subdue the wrong doers to accept and obey the decisions of the Koynab, Burjab and Kalicha. The curse of elders is believed to lead to mysterious death. The cursing of elders is

bitter and those who have caused troubles often suffer. The fear of *Kalicha* or divine punishment is also used to show what the breach of the reconciliation would bring upon the community and the conflicting parties.

## **Chapter Five**

### **5. Thick Description of Bechi–Michi Clan Conflict and Its Resolution**

#### **5.1. Introduction**

The main institutions, rituals and procedures used by the Sheko people during conflict management and resolution are described in detail in the previous chapter of the dissertation. This chapter describes the conflict resolution mechanisms of the Sheko people based on a case observed by the researcher. The chapter is devoted to the thick description of the case of the Bechi-Michi clan conflict and its resolution.

#### **5.2. The Description of the Conflicting Parties**

One of the conflicting parties the Bechi a clan of Sheko living in Sheka zone, Yeki woreda in Bechi Keble. The clan relies on mixed agriculture of coffee plantation and animal rearing. The clan is the main social organizing body for the Bechi. For the Bechi their social life is organized around the clan and it is quit impossible for them to lead their life without the involvement of the clan leaders. The clan leaders as leaders of the Bechi are involved in conflict resolution, marriage and family issues of the community, and local land administration and among others.

The members of the clan have developed trust on their clan leaders. Decisions of their clan leaders are taken as binding. Every member of the clan fills

obliged to honor and obey the clan leaders in every aspect of their social life including conflict resolution.

The other conflicting party is the Michi clan. This clan lives also in the same zone and woreda as the Be chi . Their way of life is also based on mixed agriculture. They live together as neighbors and their intra-clan solidarity is the same as that of the Bechi.

Thus, it was a good opportunity for the researcher to observe the mechanisms used by the clans to resolve the conflict erupted as a result of misunderstanding, which leads to frustration and then to aggressive behavior which manifest itself through violent conflict.

### **5.3. Cause of the Conflict**

While I was in the field, I encountered a mourning ceremony among the Shosha clan. The deceased man was a clan leader of that particular community. But, in that occasion, I observed two individuals from two different clans entering into a conflict. The immediate cause of the conflict was a misunderstanding between two members of the clans during the mourning ceremony. As has been described in the previous part, according to the tradition of the Sheko people, in which the Bechi and Michi clans are members, mourning ceremony is a highly respected and ritual based organized along clan line. Trespassing and violating the clan line during a mourning ceremony is considered as an insult to the clan whose territory is trespassed.

On the 25<sup>th</sup> of February 2008 E.C., as indicated above, there was a mourning ceremony conducted by the Shosha clan. The ceremony was conducted to pay tribute to the late Shosha clan leader. The history of the lost and declared dead Shosha clan leader is in itself full of mystery.

The Shosha clan leader was one of the guests to attend the funeral ceremony of the late Ethiopian Prime Minister, Melese Zenawi representing the Sheko people. The ceremony was held in Addis Ababa at Meskel Square. , There was heavy rain while the ceremony was going on. The Shosha leader lost his contact with the person who brought him to the ceremony. Other the participants of the ceremony from his area tried to find him but they were not able to find him. They reported the case to all concerned bodies and the search for the Shosha clan leader continued for the following four years without any hint on the where about of the clan leader.

The Shosha lost hope their clan leader would be found. They rather decided to pay tribute to him by organizing a funeral ceremony though without his body. They invited all clans of the Sheko community to participate in the ceremony and pay tribute to their lost, probably dead, clan leader.

Made their preparation to pay tribute to the Shosha clan leader and they came to the ceremony decorated with traditional costumes and armed with spear and shield as all clans arrived at the place of funeral ceremony at the backyard of the house of the lost clan leader. The clans paid tribute to with a traditional song and dance one by one based on their order of arrival without one clan

getting mixed with another. The singing and dancing of each clan proceeded within the clan members without interference from members of other clans and positioning of their spear and shield during singing and dancing ceremony has also its own meaning. Directing the spear towards the area where other clans stood is seen as a provocation. Mixing with the other clan members during singing and dancing ceremony also triggers conflict.

During the procession, as the ceremony got momentum the young members of the Bechi clan got emotional and got mixed with the Michi clan members. One of the participants from Bechi clan, Ketema Feyenta, tried to snatch the shield of Gutana Bende from Michi clan. Immediately a conflict arose between these two members of the two clans. Other people also got involved depending on their clan membership. .



Fig 6. . Mourning ceremony of a clan leader (Fitisha Shosha) at shosha kebele, May 2008 E.C.

The situation was temporarily deescalated by the interference of the Shohsa clan members, who were the ones who invited both clans for the mourning. For a while, the conflict was managed by the Shosha clan members so that it did not escalate and take another dimension.

After temporarily separating the two conflicting groups and managing the conflict, the conflict has to be resolved so that the two clans live a peaceful life side by side as they had done it for generations. Then the issue became an agenda for the traditional conflict resolution activity of the Burjab.

#### **5.4. The Conflict Resolution**

As it is a tradition among the Sheko people to start the conflict resolution process, a Burjab has to be assigned to lead the proceeding. Thus, for the aforementioned conflict, the clan leaders assigned Ato Tesema Zema, Ato Feyessa Shurmie and Sucha Shurmie as Burjabs responsible to lead the conflict resolution process. The assigned Burjabs started their duty immediately and began their consultation activities with the conflicting parties.



Figure\_7: clan leaders who give order to the Burjab, field observation at Shosha, 2008, E.C.



Figure 8 . Burjabs who facilitated reconciliation, field observation, Shosha, 2008 E.C.

After the Burjabs solicited the willingness of the two clans to resolve their conflict, they set a date for conducting the conflict resolution rituals in consultation with the clan leaders. I was there when they selected Saturday, the 25<sup>th</sup> of February 2008 E.C as a day for the conflict resolution activities. The rationale for choosing Saturday is already described in chapter four. The researcher had the chance to witness and video record the conflict resolution process on this day.

On the bright morning hours of Saturday, the burjabs, clan leaders and all conflicting parties make their way towards the back yard of the late clan leader of the Shosa clan. As it is customary to the Sheko people, the conflicting parties made all arrangements required from them for the fruition of the conflict resolution activities. They prepare and take with them liquors and food items to be used for the festivity to be conducted after the completion of the conflict resolution proceedings.

To begin with the conflict resolution process, the burjab with the support of the clan leaders reassessed the case and they had identified the culprit. They identified Ketema Feyenta as the one who instigated the conflict and lead the two clans into dispute. Ketema Feyenta also acknowledged his wrongdoing and begged for forgiveness and promised to accept what the clan leaders and burjabs would decide.

The compensation mechanism was the next issue handled by the clan leaders and the burjabs. As it is customary by the Sheko people, the decision on the

kind and amount of the compensation takes into consideration the economic condition of the culprit and his clan. The main target of the conflict resolution was to restore amity between disputants and the compensation to be paid should not jeopardize the reconciliation. Towards creating peaceful situation, which prevent the sense of loser and winner, which may create motivation for revenge? So, the kind and amount of compensation taken into consideration the capacity of the culprit and his clan members and the availability of the material, so that it do not create unnecessary burden on the party, who has to pay it.

After a length of deliberation, the clan leaders had decided that Ato Ketema Keyenta had to pay compensation in kind of a heifer or young cow. The cow was also to be slaughtered and the meat from the cow had to be part of the food item for the final festivity of the conflict resolution ceremony.



Figure -9 - A cow as a compensation for the victims, Shosha, May25 2008 E.C.

To cement the conflict resolution on stable bases, drinking, dinning, singing and dancing of the conflicting parties together is taken as a necessary step in the conflict resolution process of the Sheko people, Thus, to the festivity, locally made liquors, *Chemo*, *Teji*, *Areke* and *Borede* were prepared by the conflicting parties. The meat from the slaughtered young cow, different fruits grown in the area such as *Baka*, were also are served.



Figure.—10 -Food and drink party after reconciliation, field observation, Shohsa, 2008 E.C

The drinking and dinning festivity started with prayer and blessing by the clan leaders Next, the burjab tasted all the drinks and let the two conflicting individuals to drink from the same pot so that they wash away their enmity and restore their friendship. Then the clan leaders, the bur jabs, and all participants of the conflict resolution ceremony drink and ate and the whole festivity continued with singing and dancing together. This festivity is a symbolic act to restore peaceful relationship between the individuals that went into the dispute and the clans representing each of them.

Finally, the clan leaders gave their closing remarks on the importance of peace in their community and the place of their tradition in resolving conflicts and its importance to the life of the community. They blessed also the two conflicting parties to lead an amicable and peaceful life as neighboring clans.

## **5.5. Conclusion**

It was a good opportunity for the researcher to have a firsthand observation of the event and to video record it. This opportunity had helped to thickly describe the conflict resolution mechanisms of the Sheko people based on the Bechi-Michi clan conflict. The conflict resolution proceedings of the Bechi -Michi clan conflict have preceded in the same way as that of clan conflict cases of the Sheko people as described in the forgoing chapters of this study. Thus, this case can be taken as a validating account to the way the conflict resolution institutions, procedures and rituals of the Sheko people practiced in real

contexts on top of the narrations of individuals collected through interviews and focus group discussion.

## **Chapter Six**

### **The Enforcement of Decision and Compensation Mechanisms in Sheko Customary Justice Systems**

#### **6.1. Introduction**

The ability to enforce decision is one of the factors that gives legitimacy for management and resolution of conflicts in the traditional conflict management and resolution activities of the *Sheko* people. This chapter addresses the decision enforcement and compensation mechanisms used by the Sheko people for the victims of the conflict and how the decisions are enforced using social sanction mechanisms. Moreover, the chapter describes the decision enforcement and compensation mechanisms for different conflict situations based on the different types of conflict deeply discussed in chapter four and five. The rituals and processions used during the enforcement of the decisions and their meaning in making the enforced decision acceptable for all parties of the conflict as they are based on their tradition are narrated in this chapter. The compensation items used for different conflicts and the way they are transferred from the plaintiff to the victim are also described.

#### **6.2. Compensation Mechanisms for the Victims of the Conflict**

In the tradition of the Sheko community, the compensation mechanisms for the victims vary based on the type and nature of conflict. According to the customary law of the Sheko people, anyone who committed homicide is

required to compensate the family of the victim with a girl or a boy. The reason for this is the belief that the persons given to the deceased family will give birth to a child one day and the birth of the child may help the family of the victim to compensate their loss.

The other material required from the killer's family to be presented for the reconciliation process includes - sheep, chicken, ox and traditional drinks such as "*Teji*", "*Areki*" "*Borde*". The materials include also foods to be eaten such as "*Enjera*", "*Baca*", and "*Kechi*" and if it is a harvesting season "*Kejo*" (traditional food prepared from newly harvested corn). If the killer does not have enough wealth (if he is poor), his father, mother and close relatives would assist him in bringing together the necessary materials for the reconciliation process.

If the Killer has no daughter or a boy of his own and rather one of his family members are to be given as compensation, he has to inform the reconcilers before the reconciliation process starts. Then, the reconcilers start their investigation to be sure that he has indeed no daughter or a son to be offered as compensation. After they finalize their investigation and arrive on a conclusion that there is no possibility to make compensation in person, they order the killer to present animals for compensation and they also inform the family of the deceased that the killer is not in a position to present a girl or a boy. The family of the deceased tries to have enough information on the absence of compensation in person and finally accepts compensation with

animals. According to the tradition, 10-12 animals will be ready for compensation.

In case of inter-clan conflict, the compensation mechanisms are limited to contribution for the closing ceremony of the peaceful conclusion of the conflict resolution. Thus, individuals, who are found guilty of instigating the conflict will be fined based on their degree of involvement in the conflict and the collected fine, will be used also for drink and food preparation.

In the case of abduction, the compensation for the family of the abductees include an ox, a bull, a young cow, and milking cow, which will be made available when reconciliation is to be started.

According to the tradition of the community, a man who committed adultery with a married woman has to compensate for his wrong doing an ox and a cow to the husband of the wife with whom he committed adultery.

As has been narrated in the above examples, the compensation materials required by the tradition of the Sheko people for different conflict situation are different and they are tailored in such a way to reflect the seriousness of the crime committed. The community leaders try to balance the loss by the victims of the crime and the ability of the criminal to avail the compensation. This is very important for the foundation of peaceful co-existence in the community

without any idea from any side to renege on the decision reached during the reconciliation activities.

Moreover, all the materials needed for compensation are to come from resources, which are available within the community and this may not create stress on the part of the payers of the compensation and force them to retreat from their community's age-old traditional conflict resolution mechanisms.

### **6.3. Social Sanction Mechanisms for the Implementation of the Decision**

In any conflict resolution case handled by the traditional conflict resolution mechanisms of the *Sheko* people, when an agreement is eventually reached, the good news is shared with the groups and communities concerned. The agreement is then affirmed as a social contract in a ritual way. The affirmation can range from a handshake in public to an elaborate ceremony as required by tradition. The purpose of this is to spread the news about the successful conclusion of the conflict resolution. This also places an additional obligation on the parties to observe the agreement. The fear of sorcery or divine punishment is also used to show what the breach of peace would bring upon the society and the conflicting parties. This in turn forces the conflicting parties to respect the agreement reached through the traditional conflict resolution mechanisms.

Another way of social sanction is using cursing as a tool to pressurize the wrong doers to accept and obey the decisions of the *Koynab*, *Burjab* and *Kalicha*. The curse of elders is believed to lead to mysterious death. The words of elders are bitter and those who have caused troubles often suffered. Moreover, in *Sheko* community, the clan whose members committed the crime and reneged on the reconciliation activities of the community was saddled with a badge of shame and was stigmatized for generations. So, the clan leader is very much interested to respect the decisions reached during the resolution of the conflict and he strongly observes the activities of the conflicting parties. He is so to say the guarantor of the continuing functioning of the social sanction mechanisms in the community.

The community believes also that the *Kalicha* is endowed with supernatural power, which enables him to solve any problem they face and to show the future direction of their life. Having this belief in mind, in case of conflict, the conflicting parties are forced to settle their conflict amicably, if the *Kalicha* intervene and give a direction for conflicting parties how to settle their difference.

The place given to the *Kalicha* by the community as a man endowed with mythical power facilitates conflict management and resolution of the *Sheko*. The belief in the supernatural power of *Kalicha* and the belief in calamity if one disobeys his decisions facilitated the conflict resolution results to be binding

too. This belief by itself forces the members of the community to enforce the decision and in this way it acts as a social sanction mechanism.

Moreover, curses and taboos have proved to be very effective methods of conflict prevention and management mechanisms within the Sheko community. This institutionalized fear and awe of traditional conflict management process has deterrent effect on potential trouble-makers in society and forced them to embrace peace. The effects of the supernatural powers are beyond individuals and could affect a whole clan if cleansing is not done in time. So, fearing the curse and giving respect to different taboos in the community had a social sanction effect. To enrich it with the community narratives on the events happened after cursing of a person, I quote an informant on cursing;<sup>29</sup>

*The case happened in Daremu area around Tepi. Garkusa Decca was a notorious man engaged in theft and adultery. He was always in conflict with different members of the community and the clan leaders had tried in vain to correct the offender but the man hadn't changed his character and the clan leader and the kalicha of the community are forced to curse him. To that end, they came together and narrated the wrong deeds of the man and the violation of the tradition of the community. Finally, they decided to curse him and he was blamed for not respecting the tradition and being not loyal member of the community and they profess that he will*

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<sup>29</sup> Narrated by Tessema Yere , Daremu, July, 2014.

*face huge challenges in his life starting from the day of the cursing. One day, while he was trying to steal a beehive, the bees stung him and after sometime he lost his life. as he engaged in theft activity the beehive he intends to steel was notorious and as a result of bee biting he*

The above narrated case shows the association between wrong doing and cursing. The clan leaders and the kalicha had associated the case to the curse and they use this example to teach the community that the cursing power works and everyone who violates the tradition and advises of the clan leader and the kalicha will be punished.

A Leader (Turba komtu) has constructed the consequence of curse based on the case in the following way: “He was a famous thief of beehives and he was well conversed in handling of bees but that does not help him to save his life as a cursed person.”

The way of decision-making in the Sheko traditional conflict resolution has also its effect on the enforcement of the decision and acts also as a sanction mechanism. Any decision that is passed by the traditional institution of the Sheko people is obeyed and is highly binding for most of the community members. The traditional approaches of the Sheko peoples are inclusive, with the exception for women. In the tradition of the Sheko people, women have been given little role in the traditional conflict management and resolution activities. Women are preoccupied more on household activities.

The Sheko traditional methods of purification and healing, carried out by the Kalicha, Koynab and Burjab are of utmost importance for the mental and spiritual rehabilitation of victims and perpetrators. The mental healing of those people who were deeply traumatized by the experiences of violent conflict is an aspect of peace building that is at least as important as material reconstruction. These psychosocial activities help the conflicting parties to come out of their mental and psychological problems and this in turn serve as a base for the compliance of the conflicting parties with the decision made to resolve the conflict. Thus, it is possible to contend that the psychosocial activities have also served as a social sanction mechanisms in the community.

Inter- clan conflicts in the Sheko area are preferably handled by indigenous institutions and there is a well-developed procedure used to sanction an inter-clan conflict resolution to be long lasting. Conducting a swearing ritual according to the tradition of the community for not to engage in violent conflict in the future is one of the sanction mechanisms for resolving inter-clan conflicts.

In order to proceed with the swearing ritual, materials which are necessary for conducting the ritual will be collected by the clan leader and the elders on one basket. The materials are ash, egg, horsehair, spear and a coin made from silver (locally known as “tegera”). After the materials are collected they will be placed in front of the elders and every individual who is involved in the conflict

will come in front of the elders and is required to jump the basket in which all the material are in.

Among the Sheko, this is a ritual with a far-reaching meaning. It is assumed in the community that only those peoples who are upright in their character and are considered trustworthy could have the courage to jump the basket and swear that they had accepted the reconciliation honestly.

The meaning of this type of swearing is that the conflicting parties give their promise not to engage into violent conflict, not to renege on their promise and not to see themselves as enemies. After this ritual and the swearing of all conflicting parties, they would lead a friendly and peaceful life. They also become a model for the other members of the community. Thus, passing through swearing process and the ideal associated with the swearing activities are by themselves a social sanction mechanism when it comes to inter-clan conflict.

Persons engaged in theft will face different social sanctions including isolation such as from getting married with someone and from other social interactions, . These sanctions force any member of the community, not to engage in theft and, if engaged, to expose himself and respect the decision of the community leaders regarding his offense.

## **6.4. Conclusion**

The Sheko community has possessed an age-old system of decision making to compensate the victims of different kinds of conflicts in the community. The compensation mechanisms range from payment in kind to compensating the family who lose their son or daughter with a girl or a boy from the family of the criminal.

Moreover, payment with cattle and cereals is another form of compensation common in the community. The main enforcement mechanisms of the decisions of the traditional leaders of the community are social sanction. Social sanctions, which are also part of the community tradition, are feared by the members of the community and hence the decisions are well respected and implemented in the community.

Conflict resolution decisions of all kinds of conflicts are underpinned by some form of social sanction mechanisms ranging from swearing, psychosocial undertakings, out casting by the supernatural power of the *Kalecha*. But, for different kinds of conflicts one or the other form of sanction mechanisms are more pronounced albeit the supernatural power associated with the *Kalecha* remains as a source of traditional power to enforce the decisions in most of the resolution of conflicts. Currently, the only threat to the acceptance of the supernatural power of the *Kalecha* is coming from relative modernization in the community and the slow but steady Christianization of the community. With the growing loss of the supernatural power of the *Kalecha* and the belief in the

power of the elders of the community, the social sanction mechanisms of enforcing the conflict resolution decisions in the community may face more challenge.

## **Chapter Seven**

### **7. The Relation between the Traditional Conflict**

#### **Management and Resolution Institutions and the State Institutions**

##### **7.1. Introduction**

As has been discussed in the literature review part of this study, the notion of legal pluralism underpin the various institutions and mechanisms peoples use to address their claims and grievances in different societies. Form Shopping is also another concept that typically highlights the options available for those seeking justice. Thus, modern conflict management and resolution mechanisms and traditional conflict management and resolution mechanisms parallel in any society and their operation mechanisms, right of existence and complementarities has been area of research in anthropology, legal studies and other social sciences. As has been discussed in the forgoing parts of this dissertation, in developing countries where the state institutions lacks presence in peripheral areas, customary institutions have effective control over conflict management and resolution. the customary institution take the lion share in handling conflict and the vice versa is true for developed countries, so the relation between the two may have different meaning and intensity based on the underlining socio-cultural context.

In this chapter, I explore the relation between the modern or state based conflict management and resolution mechanisms and the traditional conflict management and resolution mechanisms as operated in *Sheko* area. First, I explore the legal basis of customary institutions in Ethiopia since the 1995 constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia. I will explore in-depth the co-existence between *Sheko* institutions and modern justice system.

## **7.2. The Legal Bases for Traditional Conflict Management and Resolution in Ethiopia since 1995**

In order to describe the relations between the ‘modern’, codified and legalized and government based conflict management and resolution mechanisms with the traditional form of conflict management and resolution mechanisms in *Sheko* area, it is desirable to look first on the place of customary laws under the FDRE and SNNPR Constitutions. The 1995 Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE) made a radical break from pre-existing constitutions of the Derg Regime or Haileselassie I in recognizing customary laws. The FDRE Constitution under Article 34/4 and 5 provides:

*...in accordance with provisions to be specified by law, a law giving recognition to marriage concluded under systems of religious or customary laws may be enacted (Art. 34/4).*

*This Constitution shall not preclude the adjudication of disputes relating to personal and family laws in accordance with religious or customary laws,*

*with the consent of the parties to the dispute. Particulars shall be determined by law. (Art.34/5)*

Moreover, Article78/5 stipulates:

*Art.78/5, pursuant to sub-Article 5 of Article 34 the House of peoples' Representatives and State Council can established or give official recognition to religious and customary courts. Religious and customary courts that had state recognition and function prior the adoption of the Constitution shall be organized on the basis of recognition according to them by this Constitution.*

As the Constitution provides, the jurisdiction of customary laws dispute resolution role only over personal and family matters, when there is consent of the parties to dispute. Accordingly, the role of customary laws is limited in the case of personal matters, if their activities do not contravene the Constitution (Art.9/1 FDRE Constitution). Traditional conflict management and resolution mechanisms, which base their very existence on customary laws, have a limited place in the FDRE Constitution and their exercise is possible as long as their activities do not contravene with the Constitution.

The SNNPR Constitution in the same vein recognized customary laws for cases related to personal and family laws as stated in Art. 34/4and5 in the regional constitution in the following way:

*Art. 34/4, in accordance with provisions to be specified by law, a law giving recognition to marriage concluded under systems of religious or customary laws may be enacted.*

*Art.34/5, this Constitution shall not preclude the adjudication of disputes relating to personal and family laws in accordance with religious or customary laws, with the consent of the parties to the dispute. Particulars shall be determined by law.*

As can be discerned from both Constitutions, customary laws have been given a limited role in conflict management and resolution. But, as has been discussed in the other parts of this dissertation, based on the case of the Sheko people, in practice the traditional conflict management and resolution mechanisms addressed a number of issues other than family and personal matters.

In light of the practical operation of the traditional conflict management and resolution mechanisms and their limited role assigned by those Constitutions, it is necessary to assess the practical relations of the government based conflict management and resolution mechanisms and the traditional conflict management and resolution mechanisms among the Sheko, The following part of the discussion is devoted to this purpose.

### **7.3. Opportunity for Forum Shopping**

The Sheko communities as every other community in Ethiopia have come under the influence of modern government led institutions; they have not been left unchanged by the powers of the state structure. In real life, however, there are no clear-cut boundaries between the realm of the governmental “modern” and the indigenous “traditional” institutions.

The age old traditionally entrenched institutions, such as the *Koynab*, *Burjab*, *Kalecha*, Clan leaders and the *Bertussa* as a ritually grounded reconciliation process gave the conflict management and resolution mechanisms of the Sheko people their strength. These structures and the reconciliation process were also trusted by the people and therefore they are able to manage and resolve any form of conflict in the community. The mechanism identifies also all participants of the conflict and tries to make the resolution all-inclusive. The inclusiveness of the conflict resolution mechanisms may help in transforming the conflict into a peace. This can be also being counted as one of the strength of the traditional conflict management and resolution mechanisms of the Sheko people.

In the relation between the court based and traditional conflict resolution mechanisms, if the parties to the conflict once make a decision on their right of forum shopping to bring their case to the court system and if there is a court decision on the issue, it is not possible to overturn the court decision through decision reached through the *Bertussa* system using the traditional

institutions, if the case is presented again to the traditional conflict resolution institutions after the court has entertained the case, Thus, the continuation of the court decision as binding may undermine the legitimacy of the traditional conflict management and resolution mechanism, if people present the case for the two institutions. In this context, it is possible to assert that the modern court case has the upper hand.

But, the choice to bring their case to one of the institution is left for the conflicting parties and hence they have the possibility and option for forum shopping. The possibility of forum shopping is even constitutional, when it comes to family and personal matters with the consent of the conflicting parties. Thus, it is possible to contend that one of the features of the operation of the two institutions side by side is the broadening of the options for the members of the community to have alternative addresses to bring their case, which is referred as forum shopping in the study of legal pluralism.

#### **7.4. Need based alliance**

The introduction of police, courts and prison systems is perceived to have rendered the customary law obsolete. But, the *Sheko* people continued to rely on customary law and mechanisms in resolving their intra and inter ethnic conflicts and both mechanisms operate side by side. Observed in a comparative way, the modern / governmental based conflict management and resolution mechanisms and the traditional conflict management and resolution

mechanisms in *Sheko* exhibit different features that emanate from their institutional and procedural approaches of addressing the issues.

The government approach emphasises establishing guilt and executing retribution and punishment with little reference to the victim or the wider families or future reincorporation of the offender into the community. Physical and material penalties and use of force, including costly prisons, provide the sanctions against offending. The governmental approach is adversarial and evidence must be direct and specific.

*Barbusse* as a method of conflict reconciliation mechanisms of the Sheko people is based on more co-operative approach. Through rituals, the processes effectively encourage an offender to admit responsibility and seek for forgiveness. That in turn makes the reconciliation activities more effective and the re-courence of conflict less probable. Citing Zartmann (2000b) and Faure (2000), Boege (2006, 7) describe the main goal of the traditional conflict management as opposed to the modern way of conflict management in the following way:

*“Traditional conflict management is ---- geared towards the future. Consequently, the issue at stake is not punishment of perpetrators for deeds done in the past, but restitution as a basis for reconciliation. Reconciliation is necessary for the restoration of social harmony of the community in general and of social relationships between conflict parties in particular. The aim is*

*“not to punish, an action which would be viewed as harming the group a second time. Re-establishing harmony implies reintegrating the deviant members ... The ultimate matter is ... restoring good relations” (Faure 2000, 163). This is why traditional approaches in general follow the line of restorative justice instead of (modern, western-style) punitive justice. Restorative justice has to be understood “as a compensation for loss, not as a retribution for offense” (Zartman 2000b, 222).”*

The notions of what are right and wrong, i.e. the norms and customs are better known to the people at the grassroots. Elders are bestowed with life-tested experience and wisdom to handle cases in more transparent manner while the modern legal system bases itself on rules that are not even known to the ordinary people (Kelemework and Mitiku 2005).

Though both institutions follow different procedures and mechanisms to manage and resolve conflicts, there are occasions where the two work together. There is a need-based alliance between the two institutions. The areas of their alliance include wide ranging issues, such as transferring by the courts some civil cases to be handled by customary courts, working together on peace and security of the area, and exchange of ideas through trainings and workshops. Moreover, the reinforcement of modern conflict management and resolution mechanisms by the traditional conflict management and resolution mechanisms and vice versa is one of the features of conflict management For

example, in a recent conflict that erupted around October-November/2014 in Teppi, both institutions had worked together. The conflict was between Sheko and Shekicho ethnic groups. I was in the field during the conflict. The main cause of the conflict was the quest for self-administration by the Sheko people. The Sheko had complained since a long time that they are dominated by the Shekicho ethnic group particularly at the government bureaucracy. Because of this, they were in a position to resist the domination. Even the leaders of this people entered to a jungle to struggle against the domination. Hence, the Federal, Regional and Zonal administrators had to interfere to solve the problem and resolution mechanisms of the Sheko peoples.

For example, in a recent conflict that erupted around October-November/2014 in Teppi, both institutions had worked together in order to settle the conflict and address the issue in comprehensive manner by participation of the community. At the time of the conflict created was between Sheko and Shekicho ethnic groups. I was in the field during the conflict. The main cause of the conflict was the quest for self-administration by the Sheko people. The Sheko had complained since a long time that they are dominated by These people have shown a long held complain on their being dominated by the Shekicho ethnic group particularly at the government bureaucracy. Because of this internal feeling among the Sheko people, they were in a position to resist the domination. Even the leaders of this people entered to a jungle to struggle against the domination. Hence, the Federal, Regional and Zonal administrators had to interfere to solve the problem created as a result of the conflict.

The whole activity was managed by establishing a joint committee incorporating both local government officials, clan leaders, and other prominent persons in the community. The clan leaders and elders were more responsible to advise their community members not to engage in violence and to do reconciliation work in the community. The government officials were responsible for maintaining law and order and bringing serious criminal cases to courts. Thus, it is safe to say that whenever there is a need, the two institutions work together and strengthen their alliance. This need-based alliance is one of the main features of the two institutions operating in the Sheko area.

## **7. 5. Conclusion**

Although the modern, government lead conflict management and resolution mechanisms have tried to penetrate the Sheko community, traditional conflict management and resolution mechanisms still holds sway across the community. As a result, both institutions have been operated side by side. This has created for the community an opportunity for forum shopping. The two institutions work in tandem, whenever and wherever they find it necessary in the area of peace and security and in resolving conflicts related to family issues. Thus, forum shopping for the community and need based alliance between the two institutions, which is supported by the constitutional principles is the main feature of the relation between the traditional conflict management and resolution mechanisms and the modern conflict resolution mechanism in the Sheko area. Is it only ad hoc need based relationship or there are institutionalised long term relations?

## **Chapter Eight**

### **8. Strength and Weakness of the Traditional Conflict**

#### **Management and Resolution Institution of the Sheko people**

##### **8.1. Introduction**

As that of every social phenomenon, traditional conflict management and resolution mechanisms of the Sheko peoples exhibit some strength and weakness of their own as being operated in the community and involves different groups in the community and come in touch with other institutions in the community. In this chapter, the strength and weakness of the mechanisms of conflict management and resolution of the Sheko people are thematized and described. First, I start by discussing the strengths and continue with the major weaknesses.

##### **8.1.1. Strengths of the customary dispute resolution mechanisms of the Sheko people**

The ethnographic data collected indicate that the Sheko peoples' dispute resolution mechanisms have their own strengths. The identified strengths of these institutions include having age-tested wisdom effectively resolving conflicts, accessibility and their advantage in providing real public service to the concerned community.

### **8.1.1.1 Accumulated wisdom serving the community**

As is the case in other traditional conflict management and resolution mechanisms, the Sheko people traditional conflict management and resolution mechanisms shares also some common features, albeit with its contextual specific applications. Thus, it is desirable at this juncture to look on Boege's list of strength. Boege (2006, 11) identifies the following strength of traditional conflict resolution mechanisms:

- Fit situations of state fragility and failure;
- Are not state-centric and hence credited with legitimacy;
- Take the time factor into due account and are process-oriented;
- Provide for comprehensive inclusion and participation;
- Focus on the psycho-social and spiritual dimension of conflict transformation.

The above strengths are also ashred by the Sheko conflict management and resolution institutions. It is possible to look on some of the points and discuss it in detail.

The traditional conflict management and resolution practices of the Sheko people base their foundation on the accumulated wisdoms of the community, which are passed from generation to generation. The indigenous knowledge is the main source and the application of indigenous knowledge the main feature of the mechanisms. The application of indigenous knowledge has produced in turn positive results, which responds to conflict situation as it manifested in

the area. For example, in a situation, where law and order is broken and the state institutions do not reach the peripheral areas of the Sheko people, it is the traditional mechanism of conflict management and resolution which maintain law and order and establish a semblance of order.

The application of indigenous knowledge, which is not alien for most of the community members has also resulted in developing trust and providing legitimacy to the service provided by the traditional conflict management and resolution mechanisms. The trust developed and the legitimacy acquired has helped the traditional conflict management and resolution mechanisms of the Sheko people to serve the community and as the same time create a possibility for the member of the community to participate in the process on a timely manner and in the different stages of the conflict management and resolution process based on the dynamics of the manifestation of the conflict. For example, in the case of theft, for the identification of the criminal, the use of the indigenous knowledge and the participation of the community in locally called meeting demonstrate the use of indigenous wisdom in the service of the community.

The place given to traditional wisdom in the process of conflict management and resolution is enormous. For example, the *Burjabs* have gained their authoritative influence through wisdom and experience. What must also be keenly noted by conventional mechanisms is the salience of traditional practices such as the use of rituals, symbols and interpretation of myths to

bring conflicts to an end led by the Burjab. These include the identification of a particular type of cattle and/or goat that must be sacrificed to cleanse away the evils of conflict from society. Thus, it is possible to contend that in the Sheko community all activities related to conflict management and resolution are served by the accumulated wisdom of the society.

### **8.1.1.2 Accessibility**

The Sheko people traditional conflict management resolution mechanisms are spatially located within the community and they are integral part of the day-to-day activities of the community. There is no need to wait for special expert in the area of justice; the members of the community are the main protagonists of the issue. The rituals performed during conflict management process are well known by the members of the community and are not expensive. The materials used during the process are locally available and are part and parcel of the community household.

The maintenance of peace in the Sheko area, which can be also seen as one part of justice, is accomplished in a systematic way through the clan leaders in the community. In Sheko society, each clan leader follows the arrival of new comers in their communities and do not allow new them simply to settle in their area. There is no possibility for criminals to hide in any area under the clan leadership. In this way, the clan leaders are working not only in facilitating conflict resolution, but also in preventing criminals in living in their

areas and by doing so; they contribute for the maintenance of peace and order in their community and the management and resolution of conflicts.

Moreover, there is no need for costly and highly sophisticated institutions of decision enforcement. The decisions are enforced through social sanction mechanisms, which are reinforced by cultural beliefs, taboos, norms and superstitions that have a binding effect and creates adherence to the decision with limited cost. All these, features of the traditional conflict management and resolution mechanisms of the Sheko people contribute for the easy accessibility of justice for the community.

#### **8.1.1.3. Real Public Service**

In this study, public service refers to a service rendered to the public without any discrimination, with integrity and for the sake of the wellbeing of the community by the members of the community. In light of the above notion of public service, it is possible to contend that the traditional conflict management and resolution institutions of the Sheko peoples are the real public service providers when it comes to conflict management and resolution in the community. The Sheko traditional conflict resolution mechanisms are free from corruption and graft related low incidences. The rule of natural justice is observed and nobody is condemned unheard. The system is regarded as community owned as it is backed and based on customary law, norms and culture.

The conflict management and resolution activities are based on societal norms, taboos and beliefs. The verdict of clan leaders, Koynab and Kalecha are taken as direct reflection of the cultural norms and customary law. The customary law is reinforced by strong beliefs in curses. The elders arbitrating in this system are many. This reduces the possibility of corruption. The verdict arrived at is fully based on the adduced evidence and societal norms. The respect given by the community for the traditional institutions and the integrity of the persons epitomizing the institutions render the institutions the possibility to be a public service provider for their community.

With less intrusion of the modern courts in the peripheral areas of the community, the importance of the traditional conflict management and resolution institutions as public service provider for the community in the areas of security, conflict management and resolution is enormous. Moreover, the whole service provided is organized and managed by the members of the community for their own problems and the participation of the members of the community is very high. Thus, the public service is produced by the community and rendered for the community. This makes the public service real public service.

The advantage of customary institutions in many societies in Ethiopia is

1. Accessibility- spatially and bureaucratically accessible
2. Affordable- They are of low cost
3. Focus on reconciliation- Win-win approach- The modern law gives judgment in favor of one party but customary institutions consider both parties. Dispute resolution becomes reconciliation, not just decision etc.

### **8.1.2. Weaknesses of the customary dispute resolution mechanisms of the Sheko people**

#### **8.1.2.1 Gender bias**

Women have played an important role in traditional conflict resolution activities in Africa. For example, the role of Luo women of Kenya in conflict resolution is described by InebaBob-Manuel (2000) as cited by Brock-Utne (1985) in the following way:

*“The Luo women of Kenya were at the forefront in the various stages of peace processes like preventive diplomacy, peace-making, peacekeeping and post conflict peace building. They used methods like direct or indirect interventions through elders and women’s networks that existed within warring parties. When a conflict was perceived through preparation for war or actual outbreak of war, women got together and discussed the issue among themselves. Then they asked the elders in their clan or community to arrange for a dialogue with those of the opposing clan or community. If the elders refused them, the women from one community*

*arranged to visit their counterparts in the enemy camp and built alliances as a strategy for convincing the elders in both camps to resolve their conflicts in nonviolent ways.”*

In Sheko community, women have relatively more roles in reconciliation of conflicts related to abduction. In the case of abduction, women work on pacification of the family of the abductees' and abductor by facilitating and organization of the household of the two pairs after the reconciliation so that they become a husband and wife.

The reconciliation of the two families is also in the hand of the mother-in-laws. The mother- in-laws meet the households of their son-in-law and daughter-in-law and facilitate different festivities for the two families so that the reconciliation between the families is cemented and there would be no further remembrance and bad feeling on the wrong doing of the past.

The role of women in the traditional conflict management and resolution activities of the Sheko peoples is mainly related to the strengthening and cementing of the peaceful relation between the formerly conflicting families and clans. In the actual negotiating of a peaceful resolution for different conflicts in the community, men take the uperhand as clan leaders, koynab, kalecha and burjab. There is no place for women in these traditional institutions of the community.

So, in the traditional conflict management and resolution mechanisms of the Sheko people women have minimal role. Their role is mainly limited to preparing food and drinks, which are used in the conflict resolution festivities. They are not major actors of conflict resolution, and if they do, they are at best involved in abduction cases. Women do not involve in the main conflict management and resolution activities including diagnosing the whole events and circumstances leading to the conflict, the dynamics of the conflict, the actors in the conflict and finally the culprit and the victims of the conflict. Moreover, leading resolution meetings, conducting rituals, deciding on compensation mechanisms are roles given to men. The traditional institutions conflict management and resolution of the sheko people, such as kulicha, burjab, koynab and clan leaders are institutions occupied only by men. It is possible to conclude that the traditional conflict management and resolution mechanisms of the Sheko peoples are terrain only for men.

### **8.1, 2. 2 Irresponsible for the challenges of modernity**

There is a tendency that the notions of modernity and development are entering into conflict with the the Sheko traditional conflict resolution mechanisms. The system is considered by some advocates of modernity as an archaic, barbaric and outdated mode of arbitration. The decision enforcement instruments and mechanisms of customary institutions have been considered by some advocates of modernity as irrelevant. For example, they contend that the Sheko deterrent methods of conflict prevention are only applicable to

community members and no other communities. It is believed that you cannot curse non Sheko people. This belief limits the impact of the traditional conflict resolution mechanisms on settling inter-ethnic disputes.

In general, modernization has marginalized traditional conflict resolution mechanisms, in some places, rendering them largely irrelevant. More and more people are turning to the modern police and court system. Allegations by some right groups that the customary court is harsh have made people shy away from seeking justice through the indigenous institutions. Traditional approaches may contradict universal standards of human rights and democracy.

The young and the women are excluded from decision-making process. Women often are the victims of customary conflict resolution process that are dominated by males in order to resolve conflict between males. Women are considered emotionally incapable to intervene in escalating tensions that need patience and balanced judgment and women are kept out of eldership.

Elders are said to display maturity and wisdom, there is a bias against the younger persons, though few middle-aged individuals may participate in dispute settlement. In Walayta eldership is an ad-hoc practice; a fact which can expose the institution to bias, corruption and unhealthy influence [Mellese 2005]. Moreover, Boege (2006: 15) identifies also five major weaknesses. Traditional approaches do not terminate violence in the long term; often contradict universal standards of human rights; have a limited sphere of

applicability; are geared towards the preservation of the 'good old' order, and are open to abuse.

From these five weaknesses of traditional conflict resolution narrated by Boege (2006), the contradiction with universal standard of human rights, the preservation of the "good old" order and limited sphere of applicability need further discussion in this study in view of the relation between the state and traditional conflict resolution mechanisms of the Sheko people. The selected three issues are highly debated in social sciences. The concept of modernity, the relativity and universality of human rights and the changing or preserving of traditions are contested issues.

The degree to which traditional conflict resolution mechanisms should become 'modern' is not also well known. The only thing that the study addresses in this context is the relation between the traditional conflict management and resolution mechanisms of the Sheko people and the issues of human rights in relation to conflict.

Human rights viewed as the right of a citizen to be heard, participate, and have a just system of conflict management and resolution, the Sheko traditional conflict management and resolution institutions are not favorable to the right of women. In the twenty-first century, the right of women is taken as one fundamental right. Both the FDRE and the SNNPR Constitution have given recognition equality of men and women. However, the Sheko traditional

conflict management and resolution institutions lack the gender equality and do not address enough human rights issues.

On the other side, modernity by itself is a challenge to the traditional conflict management and resolution mechanism of the Sheko people, which bases its existence on the allegiance of the community to the institutions. With the introduction of curriculum based education, modern agricultural investment, urban life, government based justice and administration system, health service, transportation and communication and migration of peoples from other areas to the region, the overall dominance and continuity of the system is weakening. The future of the system is dependent upon its response to the challenges it faces. As it stands now, it is possible to contend that the system is irresponsive to the challenges of modernity.

## **8.2. Conclusion**

In this chapter, strength and weakness of the traditional conflict management and resolution mechanisms of the Sheko peoples are thematized and discussed. The mechanisms have served as a forum for the community to use the accumulated wisdom for the service of the community and thereby provide real public service with little cost, which is accessible to all community members in need of the service. Access to justice in their locality, with the customs and traditions they are well versed with the leadership of the clan leader, i.e., Konyab, Kalicha, and Burjab for any kind of conflict is the major merit.

On the side of their weakness, customary mechanism of conflict management and resolution of the Sheko is male biased. On the other side of the coin, the place the traditional conflict management and resolution mechanisms of the Sheko people gave for women, which can be characterized the traditional conflict management and resolution mechanisms' as a terrain only for men and The institutions also lack dynamism making them irresponsive to the challenges of modernity. All in all, the pace of change in the community and the adaptability of the system to the unavoidable changing circumstance will determine the future place of the traditional conflict management and resolution mechanisms of the Sheko people in the community.

## Chapter Nine

### 9.1 Conclusion

The objective of the study was to conduct an in-depth description and analyses of traditional conflict management and resolution mechanisms among the Sheko communities in Ethiopia. In order to meet this objective, a qualitative research approach was used and primary data through interview, focus group discussion and non-participatory observation collected.

The findings show the Sheko people have profound traditional conflict management and resolution mechanism for preventing, managing and resolving conflicts. The community has traditional administrative and justices system which enable them to establish a time proven social relation based on solidarity, understanding and psychological unity and strength. The base for this system is the dynasty based *Koynab*. *Koynab* is responsible to administer the community and also for the implementation of the traditional regulations. There are a number of institutions under the *Koynab*, which are responsible to assist the implementation of the traditional conflict management and resolution mechanisms. Those traditional leaders responsible for the implementation of those regulations under the *Koynab* are clan leaders. The clan leaders are also responsible to settle conflicts in the jurisdiction of their clan. They have an institution called *Burjab* under their command to facilitate the conflict resolution activities. Every clan leader has its own *Burjab* and under the *Burjab* the respected elderly are responsible for settling conflicts and

other social issues. *Bertussa* (equivalent to reconciliation) is the main traditional institution used to manage and resolve different kinds of conflicts.

In a nutshell, the conflict management and resolution institutions of the Sheko people are the clan leaders, Koynab, Burjab and Kalecha. The *Bertussa* is facilitated by those institutions and it is an activity to be organized for every kind of conflict. A wide range of conflicts are addressed through the traditional conflict management and resolution mechanisms of the Sheko people including conflicts related to homicide, theft, inter-clan conflicts, abduction and marital conflicts.

Different institutions are responsible for different types of conflicts and different rituals and procedures are used to bring the conflicting parties to the negotiation table and to give the final resolutions on traditionally acceptable base. For example, homicide is considered as a serious offense. It will also trigger more violence in the form of revenge and counter revenge. To manage the escalation of conflicts, to resolve these conflicts and cement an enduring reconciliation, the Sheko people have developed a number of rituals, which have to be carried out while resolving criminal acts related to homicide.

The selection of places for reconciliation and their symbolic meaning, the use of the blood and intestine from sheep and the use of different plants and their symbolic meaning have been discussed in chapter four. Other conflicts like abduction, theft, family quarrel, boundary trespass, and inter-clan conflicts

have their own well developed steps to be taken to identify, manage and resolve. This has been discussed in detail in chapter four.

In order to maintain these age-old mechanisms of conflict management and resolution and to make them acceptable by the community, different social sanction mechanisms are used. The mechanisms include swearing, out casting to supernatural power of the Kalecha, the fear of sorcery or divine punishment. One of the findings of the study is the compensation mechanisms developed in the Sheko community for victims of conflicts. The compensation varies based on conflict. For example, anyone who committed homicide is required to compensate the family of the victim with a girl or a boy.

If the Killer has no daughter or a boy of his own or of his family members, he has to inform to , they order the killer to present animals for compensation and they also inform the family of the the reconcilers beforehand. Then, the reconcilers start their investigation to be sure that he has indeed no daughter or son of his own or of other close relatives to be offered as compensation. After they finalized their investigation and arrive at a conclusion deceased that the killer is not in a position to present a girl or a boy.

The family of the deceased will investigate if the offender lacks of compensation in person, and finally agree to accept compensation in animals. According to the tradition 10-12 animals will be ready for compensation. The reason the

customary law orders compensation in person is on the belief that the persons given to the deceased family will give birth to a child one day to replace the deceased and overcome grief.

Other material required from the killer's family to be presented for the reconciliation process includes: sheep, chicken, ox and drink materials such as "Teji", "Areki" "Borde". The materials include also foods such as "Enjera", "Baca", and "Kechi" and if it is a harvesting season "Kejo" (traditional food prepared from newly harvested corn). If, the killer does not have enough wealth (if he is poor), his father, mother and close relatives would assist him in bringing together the necessary materials for the reconciliation event.

In the case of inter-clan conflict, the compensation mechanisms are limited to contribution for the closing ceremony of the peaceful conclusion of the conflict resolution. Thus, individuals, who are found guilty of instigating the conflict will be fined based on their degree of involvement in the conflict and the fine collected on this occasion will be used also for drink and food preparation of the conflict resolution ceremony itself.

In the case of abduction, the compensation for the family of the abductees include an ox, a bull, a young cow, and milking cow, which will be made available when reconciliation is to be started. As has been narrated in the above examples, the compensation materials required by the tradition of the Sheko people for different conflict situation are different and they are tailored

in such a way to reflect the seriousness of the crime committed. The community leaders try to balance the loss by the victims of the crime and the ability of the criminal to avail the compensation. This is very important for the foundation of reconciliation on the win-win situation. This in turn has a long-term effect on peaceful co-existence of members of the community.

Moreover, all the materials needed for compensation are locally available. This may not create stress on the part of the payers of the compensation and force them to retreat from their age-old traditional conflict resolution mechanisms of the community.

The relation between the traditional and modern institutions of conflict management and resolution is another area assed in this study. The findings show that though the modern, government lead conflict management and resolution mechanisms have tried to penetrate the Sheko community, traditional conflict management and resolution mechanisms still holds sway across the community, the traditional still has a grip over the community. Moreover, both institutions side by side. This has created an opportunity of forum shopping for the community.

The two institutions work in tandem whenever necessary in the area of peace and security and in resolving conflicts related to family issues. Thus, forum shopping for the community and need based alliance between the two institutions, which is supported by the constitutional principles is the main

feature of the relation between the traditional conflict management and resolution mechanisms and the modern conflict resolution mechanism in the Sheko area.

The strength and weakness of the traditional conflict management and resolution mechanisms of the Sheko people are also other issues addressed in this study. The findings show that the mechanisms have served as a forum for the community to use its accumulated wisdom to serve its members.

Access to justice in their locality, with the customs and traditions they are well versed with the leadership of the Clan Leader, Koynab and Kalecha and Burjab for any kind of conflict is the main merit of the institutions. On the other side, the place the traditional conflict management and resolution mechanisms of the Sheko people give women little place. The institutions also lack in the sense that they are less responsive to challenges of modern systems and globalization. All in all, the pace of change in the community and the adoptability of the system to the unavoidable changing circumstance will determine the future place of the traditional conflict management and resolution mechanisms of the Sheko people in the community.

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## **Appendix 1**

### **11.1. Instruments or protocols**

The following points were part of the agreement between the researcher and the participants' of the research.

The right to participate is on voluntarily base and the participant has right to withdraw at any time, so that the individual is not being coerced into participation.

The purpose of the study will be made clear to the participant, so that individuals understand the nature of the research and its likely impact on them.

The procedures of the study will be also made explicit to the participants, so that individuals can reasonably expect what to anticipate in the research.

The participants have the right to ask questions, obtain a copy of the results, and have their privacy respected.

The benefits of the study that will accrue to the participants as individuals, community members and responsible public officials will be made clear.

Both the researcher and the participants will put their signatures as expression of their agreement to the protocol.

## **Appendix 2: Biographies of Informants**

Name	Sex	Occupation	place of residence	Remark
1. Shasha Weshikara	M	Gov't official	Gura Ferda	He is a 53 years old man who is engaged in local administration office and knows his culture very well. He is so much concerned about the Sheko culture and tradition. He gives information about the culture and tradition of that society to all interested. Though his writings are not published, he has some written accounts on the Sheko peoples' culture, history and tradition.
2. Shecho Feji	M	Farmer	Shosha	Shecho is a very knowledgeable elder, with a sharp understanding of questions presented to him. At the time of interview, he was a 60 years old man. He is well articulated and is a bilingual who speaks both Amharic and Sheko language. Shecho is very articulate who can describe any cultural practice in details, while also demonstrating some of the religious rituals and songs. Shecho has good knowledge on folk medicine.
3. Kassa Kershin	M	Government Official	Teppi	Previously Kassa was a farmer, but currently he works at justice and security office in Yeki Woreda. He claims that he has an ancestral relation with a clan leader in Shosha. He knows the local history of Sheko people including the settlement history, cultural practices and boundaries of the people. The local people refer to him while they are asked to narrate the culture and tradition of the community.
4. Ourma Ziti	M	farmer	Yeki	He is a 60 years old man. Ourma is a well-known mediator in conflict resolution situations. He is among the Burjab clan who are engaged in most reconciliation processes among Sheko people. He is considered as a local

				poet who invents different poems about important historical events, biographies and cultural trends. He is able to narrate even the current history of the Sheko.
5. Habtamu Setegn	M	Farmer	Endris	He is a 61 years old man who knows the origin homeland, tradition and recent history of the Sheko people. He also knows about the structure of the traditional administrative situations of the people. He is a good informant on the general situation of the community lives. Despite he is currently engaged in farming activity, he has good work experience at Kebele and Woreda level administrations.
6. Tesemma Zima	M	Farmer	Shosha	This informant is a 42 years old man who has good knowledge about the Sheko traditional conflict resolution practices. Currently, he is Kebele administrator in Shosha. Ancestrally, Tesemma is from the Burjab clan. He has good knowledge on history, local political structure and genealogy of the people. He serves as a good mediator between the government structure and the traditional one.
7. Berki Setegn	F	Farmer	Endris	She is a 55 years old woman. Berki is a knowledgeable woman on the traditional belief systems and associated practices. She narrated very important oral narratives about the Sheko people in general. Currently, she is a leader of a local institution called <i>ediri</i> .
8. Shucha Shurm	M	Farmer	Komi	He is a knowledgeable informant with a sharp understanding of questions presented to him. At the time of interview session, he was 56 years old man. Shucha is well articulated and can use two languages [Sheko and Amharic] at a time. He has good knowledge on the traditional belief systems. Shucha has a good memory of events and oral narratives

				concerning the community under discussion.
9. Keksi Faka	F	Farmer	Yeki	She was 56 years old woman. She is an Idiri leader for the women. She knows very well about important ceremonies related to the traditional conflict resolution systems.
10. Samson Teru	M	Gov.t Official	Teppi	He is a native to Sheko people, but currently, he works at Yeki Woreda Mineral and Energy Office. Because of his interest in Sheko culture and history, he has collected various types of proverbs, poems and cultures. He is a collaborative individual who help researchers and others who are engaged in studying Sheko culture and tradition.
11. Ribka Kerbu	F	Government Official	Yeki	Ribka is 36 years old woman who lives and works at Yeki Woreda [Teppi town]. She is the leader of Yeki Woreda Women Association. She also knows the culture and tradition of the Sheko people.
12. Turba Komtu	M	Farmer	Korcha	He serves both as an Edir and clan leader for the community. Turba is a 67 years old informant who has rich knowledge of Sheko culture, acquired and experienced over long period of time. He speaks both Sheko and Amharic languages. He has rich experience about the neighboring community cultures like the Majeng and Bench so that he can make comparison between different cultures.
13. Duka Gondere	M	Government Official	Teppi town	He is a 58 years old man who is working at Teppi town Administrative Municipality office as vice head. He is a native to Sheko people and influential person regarding the culture, history and tradition of the community. He has keen interest in preserving and introducing Sheko culture, history and identity.
14. Belete	M	Farmer	Tsano	He is a 74 years old man and one of

Shamo				the clan leaders in Sheko community. This informant is a respected individual who used to be a key cultural informant on the local kinship structure and intercommunity interactions.
15. Komi Arega	M	Farmer	Komi	Komi is a 65 years old man who has great interest in narrating about the Sheko people in general. He is one of the referred persons regarding all ways of lives of that community. He is one the gate keepers and clan leaders of the Sheko community.
16. Ketema Feyanta	M	Farmer	Bechi	Ketema is one of the cultural singers in that community. He plays the folk Music of the Sheko during festivals and bazaars which are arranged by the local administrators. He also participates in conflict resolution practices. Ketema has deep knowledge on the Sheko culture, tradition and history.
17. Alemu Tama	M	Government Official	Teppi	As government official, he facilitated the recording of the Sheko traditional conflict resolution systems by being there in the natural settings. He introduced me to different government officials and some key informants inhabiting the rural Kebeles. He also assisted me in providing tape recorders and other materials needed for my fieldwork.
18. Bekele Mura	M	Farmer	Yeki	He is a knowledgeable person about the Sheko culture. He narrates about how the Sheko have been interacting with both the local and central level administrative systems. He has a good memory on the people's local history and tradition. He also has very profound role in the performances of the traditional conflict resolution systems.
19. Bonki Geri	M	Farmer	Yeki	He was a 69 years old man who has been engaged in making witchcraft among the Sheko community. He was

				engaged in the conflict management practices while some people are coming to his compound to get help from his power. He has deep knowledge about the Sheko culture and as I witnessed he was accustomed to solve many social and economic based conflicts.
20. Kerkis Oufa	M	Government Official	Mahsa	He is a native to the Sheko community and serving as speaker of the Zonal Administrative Office at Masha town. He was the first man that I contacted in the government office and hence allowed me to conduct a research among the Sheko. He is a cooperative man who facilitated many interviews with the appropriate informants. He also knew the Sheko culture and gave me important guidance about whom to contact regarding the topic at hand.
21. Feyisa Goda	M	Farmer	Darimu	A 68 years old man
22. Gogi Faka	M	Farmer	Shosha	A 70 years old man
23. Tucha Shosha	M	Farmer	Teppi	A 68 years old man
24. Keyesu Kuki	M	Farmer	Sheko	A 70 years old man
25. Awisa Benti	M	Farmer	Guraferda	A 68 years old man
26. Saya Buksa	M	Farmer	Sheko	A 58 years old man
27. Debebe Bobda	M	Farmer	Yeki	A 56 years old man
28. Kassahun Mitiku	M	Elementary School Teacher	Teppi	A 59 years old man
29. Zima Tebeso	M	Farmer	Sheko	A 60 years old man who was serving as an edir leader.
30. Sangi Geri	M	Farmer	Darimu	A 72 years old man
31.	M	Farmer	Shosha	A 45 years old man

Getahun Tuza				
32. Ayene Beji	M	Farmer	Sheko	A 63 years old man
33. Kusa Koyin	M	farmer	Sheko	A 68 years old man
34. Turba Komtu	M	Farmer	Korcha	A 67 years old man
35. Arega Tubsa	M	Farmer	Tsano	A 72 years old man
36. Gechu Jura	F	Farmer	Fide	A 64 years old woman
37. Aybera Shibicha	M	Farmer	Sheko	A 71 years old man
38. Dishkom Koza	M	Farmer	Michi	A 69 years old man
39. Gutsa Zeni	M	Farmer	Sheko	A 43 years old man
40. Bashin Arziki	M	Farmer	Darimu	A 67 years old man
41. Salsa Kaguza	M	Farmer	Darimu	A 70 years old man
42. Melese Mulatu	M	Govern ment Official	Bechi	A 43 years old man
43. Kaynaku Geri	M	Guard	Komi	A 26 years old man
44. Zara Shanka	M	Small trader	Shosha	A 28 years old man
45. Gata Kongerie	M	Govern ment official	Teppi	A 30 years old man

**NB:** The list of informants from 1-20 are key cultural informants, whereas the rest of them have less contribution than the key informants in providing information.

## **Appendix 3**

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## Appendix 4

### Pictures related to conflict resolution mechanisms



Cultural materials owned by one of the clan leaders in Shosha, picture taken in 2008 E.C



Group of Bechi clan ready for reconciliation, picture taken during field work, 2008, E.C.



Group of Michi clan ready for reconciliation, picture taken during field observation, 2008 E.C.



Compensation for the victim's Picture taken during field work 2008 E.C.



Greetings after reconciliation at Shosha kebele, picture taken during field work, 2008EC



Eating and drinking party taking place after reconciliation, picture taken during field work, 2008 E.C