

**ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES
DEPARTMENT OF LINGUISTICS**

**CROSS-CULTURAL CONFLICT RESOLUTION
MECHANISIM AMONG THE INHABITATS OF
GWANGWA AND DEBAT'E WEREDAS**

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ABSTRACT

The central focus of this study was to explore and document the traditional peace making process among the inhabitants of Gwangwa and Debat'e Weredas. The study attempted to see the different performances of this process in Agaw, Shinasha, Amhara, Gumuz and Oromo in general and among them in particular. The different communication obstacles are also studied.

In the literature review, various literatures that have connection with tradition and peace making were reviewed. Accordingly, different theories and concepts were used as a theoretical framework to this particular theme.

The research method that was utilized in this study was qualitative. The study, by using focus group interviews and in-depth individual discussions, tried to explore the role that the traditional peace making plays in relation to the study. The respondents were selected purposely to find out the original culture. The members of peace committee in particular were also interviewed to make the study complete.

The findings of the research demonstrated that the traditional peace making process is playing an important role in making peace in the area as well as in the regions. The responses of the respondents reveal that it is one of the heritages of Ethiopia. The significance of words and expressions in mitigating conflict were explored.

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Chapter one

1. Introduction

One of the main causes for the first and second world wars was conflict between states. It caused death for millions of people and mass destruction of properties. Any conflict that occurs between small social groups might be the cause for big wars. The result of this will be losing of life and destruction of basic necessities of human being. In 1945 the United Nations (UN) was founded with the aim of resolving conflicts that might come between nations. The Security Council of the UN has a responsibility of keeping peace and diplomacy between nations. The United Nations Peace Keeping Force was particularly established for encouraging the peace between nations.

Africa is a continent of thousands of cultures and cultural institutions. The people of Africa give a great value for these cultures and cultural institutions. From these cultural institutions, traditional conflict resolution institute are the main ones that solve major and minor problems. The institutions have their own rules and regulations which are formulated by the society. These cultural institutions serve the society in different cases, especially before the colonial period. “The traditional way of conflict resolution in most of African countries are left behind and replaced. Due to internal and external reasons, the community almost stopped using the traditional ones and started following the Western way of conflict resolution method” (Abreham Taddesse 1999: 2).

Ethiopia has people with diverse mix of ethnic and linguistic backgrounds. It is a country with more than eighty different ethnic groups. In each ethnic group, there are various clans. Each has its own language, culture, custom and tradition. All the clans have their own traditional institutions that serve them in solving different problems. There are different rules for different purposes in these institutions. These rules and regulations have a strong bondage with social, political and economic situations. When any kinds of

conflict occur; the society chooses individuals who they believe can sort the problem out. The decision they made is respected.

The Amahra region is the second biggest region of Ethiopia. It covers about 11.3% of the total land of the country which is 168.966 kilometers square. There are ten zones¹ and twelve city administrations. According to the Amhara Region Administrative office, the region shares borders with different regions of the country. Awi (a sub group of Agaw) is one of the ten zones. Gwangwa is a *Wereda*² in the Awi zone. There are about 32 K'ebeles³ or small villages and in those K'ebeles there are five different ethnic groups. Debat'e is one of the 21 *Weredas* or districts of the Benishagul Gumuz Region of Ethiopia, which is part of the Metekel zone. The five largest ethnic groups reported in Debat'e and Gwangwa are the Gumuz, Oromo, Amhara, Shenasha and Agaw. All these ethnic groups use traditional system to solve different problems. If someone complains, then he/she goes to elders first, instead of government officials. The elders approach both parties; look into the case using different techniques that they learnt from their ancestors and give fair judgment. Both parties respect the decision and lives peacefully.

The five ethnic groups have different perception of self-identification and categorization of one another. This is reflected in cultural values and different physical and ethnical categories. Desalegn (2010) indicated that description and analysis of morphological characteristics of the ethnic groups shows primordial and lucid variations. They categorized themselves in to two different color groups. In Amharic language K'ay (literal meaning red) and *t'iqur* (literal meaning black)

“The Gumuz also identifies essentially two levels of both horizontal and vertical differentiation. The first one is Biga and the other one Shuwa. The former refers to their category, the category of Gumuz. On the other and Shuwa refer to all non-Gumuz ethnic groups. All the other ethnic groups such as the Awi, Amhara, Shinasha, Oromo

¹ A unit of political administrative division higher than Wereda.

² A unit of political administrative division higher than K'ebele.

³ Currently the lowest unit of political administration.

and the like, who share the same phenotype are categorized under Shuwa” (Desalegn Amsalu, 2010:85).

The researcher is using these categories in this paper to show some of the consequences of it. It should be considered that the researcher doesn't have any intention to take side or offend any of the parties.

Guangua and Dibat'e have the widest area of land, complex landscape and different ethnic groups. In addition to these, the insufficient attention given to the *Weredas*, limited the society to get access to education and related development. Most conflicts are caused by one of the reasons. Conflicts that could be solved easily in an individual level can be driven to conflict between ethnic, family and social group. The death of individuals among the ethnic groups are causing family distractions, made children lose their parents and most importantly, it made the society to have physiological trait of revenge that might come at anytime.

The main causes of the problem are related to land ownership and ethnic issues. On my first site visitation some government officials⁴ told me in an informal interview that there is a peace of land between Gwangua and Debat'e *Weredas*, which is left without decision during the 1885's the federal demarcation of Ethiopia. The people from Debat'e are saying the land belongs to them, because the ancestors of Gumuz society were berried on that land. The people from Gwangwa are also claiming that it belongs to them. So, if someone from one of the parties tries to plough, cut trees or hunt on that peace of land, it causes a big conflict.

Communication also fails with different reasons. It can be caused mainly by two reasons. The first reason is related to superiority thinking that was created through hundreds of years. Superstitious thinking is also the other reason that barrier the good communication.

⁴ Interview with Ato Derese Ahmed (a cabinet member in Addis Alem K'ebele) April 3,2011
Interview with Ato Abraraw Lijalem Belew (a judge in Gwanga wereda) April 7, 2011
Interview with Constable Demesaw Aregaa (community policing officer in Addis Alem K'ebele) April 3, 2011

The prejudgment, which was created in the society, made the communication and relationship very difficult.

Superstition is one of the main causes of conflict that couldn't get solution for long time. There is a big celebration in September in Gumuz people. During this time, the Gumuz a man wants to be appreciated and being called a hero. As *Ato Mezgebu Mekonnen*⁵, an expert on conflict resolution in Gwangwa *Wereda* stated that to get an honor they have to kill someone, who is out of their group and cut part of the body (It's usually the male sex organ). The killer hangs it around his neck and dance on the ceremony. Sometimes they cut a hand and use it for hitting a drum on the celebration. He further explains that the killer is honored on that day. The wife will also get respect wherever she goes. In most cases the wife is the one who encourages the husband to kill. If he doesn't kill she insults him every now and then. "The wife always refuses to have sex with her husband. She says you are a woman and how come two women sleep together. So, to fulfill his wife's need he will kill an Awi." Desalegn Amsalu (2010:34). In addition to the celebration in September, heroes are honored during funeral. As Desalegn mentioned if there is a funeral in Gumuz, everyone from other ethnic groups gets home early.

The other cause is the legal and illegal armed people using their weapons as they wish (most of the killing are committed with guns). If some one gets drunk and quarrels with some one, then he uses the weapon as a defensive mechanism or to show brevity. The governed body didn't give attention to these conflict sensitive *K'ebeles*. These increased the rate of death every year. For example, In 2001 Ethiopian calendar 25, in 2002, 27 and in the quarter of 2003, 8 people were killed in a conflict occurred in one of the above reasons (Asmare Asaye, Eyayou Genetu, Mezigebu Mekonnen).

In most of the *K'ebeles*, there is only one police officer. According to Demisaw Arega, the only police officer in Addis Alem k'ebele, the society is asking for more police officers as the Addis Alem *K'ebele* shares a boarder with Benishangul Gumuz. So, most of the problem in this area have been solved and still are in traditional way, which is very

⁵ Interview with Ato Mezgebu Mekonnen, Asmare Asaye, Eyayou Genetu (an expert on conflict resolution in Gwangwa Wereda) December 29, 2010

successful method that got recognition from the society. The elders are selected from each ethnic group. They are working hard every time to make peace in the society. They go to remote places by risking their life. They are dedicated. That's why it needs to be described and documented. (For more information check in the sound file, Code 01)

1.1. Statement of the Problem

Human being lives together by sharing different experience and moments. From the moments conflict and breaking up from the society takes part. To avoid this breaking up, every society has its own way of making peace. Each has its own rules and regulations. These rules and regulations were serving the society and still are serving it in different matters. In solving any kind of conflicts the society chooses local judges to look at problems. The decision these judges give has acceptability in the society. Nobody will do anything against the decision.

Starting from the application modern Constitution in Ethiopia until now there were different conflicts solved by courts. The courts work based on the Constitution. Even if the courts worked together with other security services to solve different conflicts, there are still problems. The main reason for these is that the traditional peace making processes is left behind (Abreham Taddesse, 1999).

The Amhara region as mentioned above shares borders with other regions of Ethiopia. The people, who live near these borders, get into conflicts due to different social, cultural and economic factors. Ato Adugna Mesfin, an officer in Gwangwa *Wereda* has informed me in an informal interview that the piece of land between Gwangwa and Debat'e is the main of the causes for conflict. He said that sometimes when conflicts occur between these two *Weredas*, it would be hard for police and other concerned sections of the government to stop it. So, the society takes the case to traditional judges and other respected members of both *Weredas* to resolve the conflicts.

In many traditional society, people prefer to resolve conflict traditionally rather than inviting outside authorities and government officials Tsega Endeshaw (2006:5). There is

a very respectful tradition that solves problem occurred between family members, clans, villages as well as *Weredas*. One of the most obvious traditional conflict resolution mechanisms is the gathering of village elders to settle the conflict. The judges carry out different traditional performance that reflects the society's values, beliefs and customs. The choice of words they use to speak in mitigating the conflict is vital to the effectiveness of their work. This cultural event has acceptability in the society. The judges successfully solve the problems. And the society accepts the decision. The five ethnic groups solves this kind of social, cultural and economic problems traditionally with the aim of avoiding break ups, lies and making the society live in peace. This research is therefore, first inspired with a desire of describing this traditional conflict resolution mechanism and then documenting it. It is also to gather different appalling words that create miscommunication among individuals as well as ethnics. I believe that it is an important issue; it should be studied and documented. The study mainly focuses on studying:

- the folkloric ceremony negotiators performs when they are looking at different cases.
- the society's attitudes towards the traditional institution that solves conflicts.
- the cultural meaning that is symbolic and metaphorical customs and events.

1.2. Research questions

To fulfill the above points the study will try to answer the following main questions.

1. Why do conflicts occur and what triggers them?
2. What are the main features of the conflicts occurring in the study area?
3. How do elders resolve emerging conflicts in traditional way?
4. Who participate in the process of resolving conflicts?

5. What are the main communication obstacles among the ethnic groups and the use of words in working out these obstacles?
6. What are the procedures of conflict resolution in this particular area?
7. What are the environmental and social settings in which conflict resolution effort takes place?
8. Which mechanisms are preferable for what kind of conflict? Why?
9. What are the attitudes of the people towards indigenous mechanisms and the state law?
10. What is the relation between the state law and the indigenous mechanisms?

1.3. General Objectives

The general objective of this thesis is to study and make a multipurpose digital, audio and textual documentation that shows the traditional method of solving conflict among the inhabitants of the study area.

1.3.1. Specific Objectives

The specific objectives of this thesis are:

- To explore the ceremony that was used and still is the most important fact in history of the ethnic groups and its cultural and folkloric values for the coming generation.
- To document a comprehensive ethnographic cross-cultural knowledge about the ethnic groups, which otherwise be lost in the course of time.
- To identify the causes that has been contributing factor for conflict incidences.
- To show the role of language in conflict escalation and mitigation.

- To demonstrate how the custom serves the society and its progress over time.
- To suggest possible mechanisms for maintaining the peace and stability in those areas.
- To understand the importance of this traditional conflict resolution method to the modern system.

1.4. Methodology

The research method applied in this study is qualitative and quantitative. But more focus is given to the qualitative one. This is because as clearly indicated by Mytton this method helps understand about human attributes. Mytton states:

“In quantitative research we have been dealing mostly with numbers, in qualitative research we are trying to discover or understand human attributes, attitudes or behaviors in a more exploratory or interpretive way. According to him, numbers can not describe or explain everything. Human behavior and everything else that can be said about people can not be fully encapsulated in or understood from numbers and percentage”
(Mytton, 1999:126).

Moreover, quantitative method tends to focus on individual behavior within a household or family, where as qualitative research in focus groups puts the respondents into a social setting in which the personal influences that operate in social settings are reproduced and can be observed.

Qualitative methodology is much more fluid than quantitative research methodology. The earlier represents a divergent paradigm of research tradition which is fundamentally different from the later. In addition, qualitative methods are typically more flexible, allowing greater spontaneity and adaptation of the interaction between the researcher and

the study participant whereas quantitative methods are fairly inflexible (Natasha et al. 2005:4). Respondents or participants in qualitative research have the opportunity to respond more elaborately and in greater detail.

The other difference between the two paradigms is understanding and appliance of setting. According to Babbie and Mouton (2001:270), the appropriateness of qualitative research in studying attitudes and behaviors is best understood within their natural setting. In quantitative research, however, the emphasis on the ‘natural’ is related to the ‘normal course of events.’ In addition to this, the focus of qualitative researchers is in the description and understanding of actions and events. This is contrary to the quantitative one. Statistical descriptions make up the foundations of quantitative research. Fade states such variance further as “Qualitative research does not seek to show statistical associations or cause and effect relationships. Instead, the emphasis is on describing or illuminating social phenomena and human experience” (2003:140).

Another aspect that illustrates the plain disparity between the two paradigms is on the generalizability of the research findings. The center of attention in qualitative research paradigm is primarily on understanding particular events, actions and processes in their context rather than generalizing universals (Ang, 1996 and Maxwell, 1992).

“Generalizations in qualitative research usually take place through the development of theory that not only makes sense of particular persons or situations studied, but also shows how the same process in different situations can lead to different results.” (Maxwell, 1992:293).

Qualitative research methods do not rest their evidence on the logic of mathematics, the principles of numbers or methods of statistical analysis. Rather actual talk, gesture and other social actions are the raw materials of analysis which lead to an in depth understanding of the question. According to Popay et al. (1998), on the subject of generalizability, “the aim is to make logical generalizations to a theoretical understanding

of a similar class of phenomena rather than probabilistic generalizations to a population.”(Cited in Tseganesh 2008:36).

In qualitative research methods, researchers are expected to employ different procedures of data collection. As far as this study is concerned, focus group discussions and in-depth individual interviews were used as methods of data collection to fulfill the study.

1.4.1. Data Collection

Regarding data, this thesis largely depended on four different kinds of sources-interviews, documents, questioners and academic literature. Interviews and focus-group discussions constituted major sources of primary information.

Focus-group discussions and semi-structured and open-ended interviews were used commonly. My informants were elders and villagers, local and regional officials and others. On this basis, I conducted two rounds of fieldwork. The first round of fieldwork was in order to familiarize myself with the two study area and to collect information on the case studies that examined the type of conflict in the area and the traditional conflicts resolution mechanism. Accordingly, August to September 2011, I stayed in the Wereda capital of the Chagni. The fieldwork for these sections required extensive travel to some like localities Mentawiha, Addis Alem and Dibat’e. I observed the problems associated with ethnicity. Moreover, one focus-group discussions and six interviews were organized. The materials collected during this fieldwork contributed to the case study.

The second round of fieldwork, conducted in December 2011 for two weeks to write the cases regarding inter-regional conflicts involving of the study area. It is also to gather different appalling words that create miscommunication among individuals as well as ethnics. The main purpose of this visit is to carry out digital record of the area in general and the traditional method of conflict resolution in particular. I organized an induced artificial setting in order to show the traditional way of resolving conflict among the five ethnic groups. All the participants in the record are the ones who always resolve conflict in their localities. About three interviews were also conducted.

This thesis also employed a wide array of documentary sources. These include governmental statistical reports, regional, federal and documents. The study also used newspapers, magazines and other secondary sources of information.

1.5. Significance of the Study

The main purpose of the study is description and documentation. By using photograph and video camera and other important recording methods, the folkloric event of this cultural resolving conflict method is reserved for further studies. Reserving cultural events for the next generation as well as researchers is important for different purposes. Because of globalization and other related situations most cultures are endangered. Within one nation with multicultural and multilingual society, it is obvious that one culture of a given society dominates the other with different reasons.

It will help for those folk institutions to get recognition from governed bodies which will help them standardize some of their traditional systems without losing its traditional values. It will also suggest for the regional administrator of the study area as well as the regional government to give more attention to the traditional judges who have been playing the main role in resolving different kind of conflict in those conflict sensitive areas.

In addition to that it might aware individuals to use appropriate words while communicating in different settings. It can be a good example for other regions with similar problem. It will also help to understand the nature of probable and actual or obvious conflicts in the area, so that preventive measures can be taken against the obvious conflicts.

1.6. Limitations of the Study

In addition to the obvious challenges of logistics and arranging meetings with many of the informants, there were a number of other challenges regarding the method of using interviews and focus-group discussions as key instruments for generating data. First, in many areas subjected to prolonged conflicts (e.g Debat'e) both the elders and other informants were skeptical about the contribution of research to the peaceful resolution of conflicts. Second, informants from communities affected by conflicts tend to exaggerate their side of the story.

The other setback is related to data collection. Although this study has to have all kinds of communicative activities to find out how whether a given word creates misunderstanding or not in the speech community, it was impossible to record all the negative expressions. There were also no documents to refer back concerning the different communication obstacles in the area. It is may be because most of the expressions are said to insult an individual in his/her social status, or may be to show the superiority of one ethnic group over the other. And this creates social and ethical problems. So, the researcher is limited to sample harmful expressions Or words which commonly occurred.

A good documentation needs a modern recording equipments and well organized studios. The annotation, transcription and translation of the data also require most internationally agreed compressed formats. The scarcity of available equipments, technology and the financial obstacles limited the documentation to be carried out with the available devices and formats. The limited knowledge of the researcher on the different languages also was a problem, because translators sometime adds their on opinion while tranlating.

In order to reduce the biases of those involved in the conflict and keep them from influencing the output of the research, this thesis crosschecked some important points with individuals who are not related to the protagonists of local conflicts. To do this, the researcher was supposed to conduct different focus-group discussions traveling about thirty kilometers everyday. This thesis used multiple sources of information, interviewing and organizing focus-group discussions with individuals not related to the protagonists of

local conflicts. Because of the sensitivity of the subject that the study dealt, I am obliged to withhold the names of most informants.

1.7. Scope of the Study

Most borders of the Amhara Regional State are insightful to major and minor boarder issues. But this study is limited to the boarder of Gwangwa *Wereda* and the Awi zone of the Amhara region and Debat'e *Wereda* of the Benishangul Gumuz Regional State of Ethiopia. It is also focused only on the different culture and social related problems among the residents of Gwangwa and Debat'e *Weredas* and their traditional methods of solving the problems. The main reason for choosing this area is the diverse relationship of the five ethnic groups that lives in the Amhara and Benishangul Gumuz regions near the border and their social, economic and cultural interaction.

It also focused on showing the tradition by giving much attention on the communication obstacles which causes misunderstanding and the importance of words and expressions on conflict mitigation process, not to involve in political issues. So, the scope is limited to this specific area.

1.8. Case study

There are different problems that were created with cultural, social or economic reasons. The geographical features of the *Weredas*, the integration of the different ethnic groups, lack of education and the little attention given from the previous rulers contributed to the problems. It's obvious to see problems that could be solved easily leading to big conflicts. This study presents one case which had occurred during my field work.

On October 2011, in a place called *Aberach Zabil*, a police officer found a Gumuz man with a weapon. The police asked the man to give in his weapon because it is illegal. They

argued, but man refused to hand over the weapon. He also started shooting which ends with the death of the Gumuz man and injury of the policeman. This caused a great conflict between the family of the Gumuz and the people of Aberach Zabel Kebele.

The officers of the *Wereda* together with the peace committee of the two *Weredas* tried to solve the problem. I myself was present at the second appointment day of looking at the case. The family of the dead man refused to accept the proposal the judges gave. They asserted that unless they are given the weapon, which is taken from their family member back, they wouldn't accept anything from the judges. The case couldn't be solved on that day. The peace committee came to a decision to look at the case again fixing another appointment. This kind of problems and other related ones are prominent in the study area. Although most cases got easily solved by the peace committee, there are some that are taking longer time to be solved.

1.9 Organization of the Study

This study is organized in five chapters. The first chapter deals with the general feature of the paper. It presents background of the research, the problems that the thesis aims to examine. It in particular provides the problem statement, the research questions and objectives and significance of the study. It also outlines the methodologies used to collect data. Details of research methodology, data collection methods, sampling techniques and research procedures is be presented.

The concern of the second chapter is the examination of theoretical and conceptual frame work and review of literature that are related to the study. Different literatures written by different scholar will be discussed. Types, different levels and issues of conflict will be examined.

After providing the general features of the thesis methodological and theoretical contexts of the study in the first two chapters, the thesis presents the historical and ideological framework and the detail description of the study area and community in the third

chapter. It also examines the historical, social and cultural background of the five ethnic groups and the geographical features of the study area.

Chapter four aims at examining the main causes of conflict in the area. It discusses the different communication barriers in detail. The importance of words in different situations is discussed. It also presents the traditional ways of resolving conflict in each ethnic group and how they solve problems created among them.

Finally, chapter five synthesizes the several points discussed in the thesis and gives a general conclusion. Finally, it considers some ideas that need reforming and give some recommendations.

Chapter Two

Review of Related Literature, Conceptual and Theoretical framework

Almost all academic disciplines have theoretical approaches of understanding conflicts. Psychologists explore interpersonal conflicts, sociologists take status and class conflict as a focal point, while political science is centered on intra-national and international conflicts. Therefore, to review the conflict literature as a whole is almost impossible. However, this conflict review, though mainly concentrated on cultural ways of solving conflict (Heinz-Jürgen 2006:2).

The United Nations Charter gives the United Nations Security Council the power and responsibility to take collective action to maintain international peace and security. For this reason, the international community usually looks to the Security Council to authorize peacemaking operations. Most of these operations are established and implemented by the United Nations itself, with troops serving under UN operational control. Since 1948 close to 130 nations have contributed military and civilian police personnel to peace operations. (Online, accessed on November 2011)

Peace making is moving towards settlement of any kind of conflict where conflicting parties are induced to reach agreement voluntarily (Anne Pitsch 2000:13). Techniques of conflict management can often be applied to conflicts at many levels from personal relationships to international wars. Actors involved in solving conflict use a number of ways to solve conflict by using multiple channels of communication. Cultural

consideration plays an important role in the negotiation process as the actors bring with them their own specific cultural behaviors: that is their pattern of thinking, feeling, acting and most importantly, their own set of culturally shared values (Hudson, Grisham, Moussa 2005:1).

Conflict in relationships is inevitable, but poor communication can increase the chances for conflicts to happen. Communication is one of the foundations for building a relationship with anyone. Poor communication is a source of relationship breakdowns. There are more ways in which communication can be misunderstood. Even body language has its own challenges to create and avoid misunderstanding. Communication includes verbal and non verbal messages. Determining the appropriate means of communication and avoiding ambiguity creates a clear understanding (Schaffer, McCutcheon, R. Wycoff, 1994:37).

Words mostly are used in different ways. People should be aware of that when communicating. Thoughtfulness in word choice and trying to avoid using words with double meaning is also advisable (Schaffer, McCutcheon, R. Wycoff, (1994). In different cultures, words and body language can mean very different things. Speaker needs to be sensitive to such differences. Scholars claim that in most cases conflict in relationships is usually not the underlying problem. It is the way people handle the conflict, and also have poor communication skills can increase conflict. Using the appropriate communication skills that respect each culture helps in solving conflicts.

Africa is rich in tradition. From these traditions resolving conflict is the major one. It has its own customs in different countries of the continent. The institutions give more attention for group interests rather than individuals. There is a strong point of traditional principles. The mechanisms are based on the principle that parties must be reconciled to maintain social cohesion and prevent a culture of feuding. There is a strong need to facilitate the ceremony so that the feuding parties be forgiven and re-integrated into the community (Tesga Endalew 2006:153).

Ethiopia has several traditional courts since antiquity through which the communities have resolved conflicts and maintained peace and order. According to Tsega (2006) every community has its own indigenous institution through which conflicts within themselves or with their neighbors solved. Literatures indicate that Ethiopia is rich with many types of traditional conflict resolution mechanisms. It is practiced in the society's day to day activities. There are different literatures written about the different nations and nationalities of Ethiopia and their traditional method of resolving differences. Since the time unknown, it's been practiced with different traditions and customs. It is still in use in most part of the country.

The above brief excursion through the history of conflict and its resolution shows that the basic attitudes of human culture existed from the dawn of human history. As scholars say that man is a social being preferred peaceful life to solitary one in almost all spheres of life. Nonetheless, forms and functions of resolving conflict changed through time depending on the objectives they intend to meet.

Existing literature about traditional conflict resolution are many in number and cover absolute areas both locally and internationally. Due to lack of time, in this thesis the researcher would like to limit herself to a review of literature related to the particular region of community for the current study. Most of literatures related to the cross-cultural relations and conflicts that written by students of Addis Ababa University, which the researcher tries to present sequentially below.

Ethnic interaction in areas where people from different ethnic group come to contact, intercultural communication problem occurs with one another. When it experienced by individuals it usually invokes highly aware perceptions of difference and distinction. It sometimes is a reason for conflict of different kind.

Asnake Kefale (2009), federalism and ethnic conflict in Ethiopia are briefly discussed. The thesis considers several cases from the Somali and the Benishangul-Gumuz regions. He reviewed contending approaches to federalism, ethnicity and ethnic conflict.

He stated that many of the conflicts that emerged at local and regional levels and related to the federal restructuring of the country could be referred as autonomy conflicts. Autonomy conflicts in the context of the study refer to those conflicts that emerge on a range of issues such as self determination/secession, the politics of resource sharing, political power, representation, identity, citizenship, ethnic and regional boundary and others.

The study also seeks to identify and discuss those contextual factors such as democracy, rule of law and others that contribute to the success of federalism in managing multiethnic countries. He claims that the adoption of federalism in Ethiopia appears to have been motivated by the problem of finding an appropriate state structure that could be used as an instrument of managing the complex ethno-linguistic diversity of the country and reduce conflicts. In spite of this, ethnic conflicts are still critical challenges in the country. In fact, the record of federalism regarding ethnic conflict is a mixed one. On the one hand, it led to the recognition of the cultural and linguistic rights of ethnic groups in the country. On the other hand, it appears to have transformed and generated localized ethnic conflicts

The Somali and the Benishangul-Gumuz regions, considered in his study, have several similarities and differences. Their main similarities lie in their peripherally to the Ethiopian State in terms of geography, history, social, economic and political factors. According to Asnake such conflicts could be considered from the following five trends federal restructuring and identity conflicts Second, intra-federal boundary conflicts: Third, intra-regional conflicts over federal resources: Fourth, conflict between titular and the non-titular groups: Fifth, conflict between the government and secessionist movements.

Amhara dominance over the Gumuz and other ethnic minorities characterized the relationship between the two groups. The formation of the Benishangul Gumuz region has changed inter-ethnic relationship between the two groups in several ways. He further

explains that in the pre-federal era, ethnic regionalization has several paradoxical implications on the migration of highland peasants into Gumuz country. For instance, the normalization of relationships between the Gumuz and the Amhara opened the door for the migration of the latter into the former's territory in large numbers. The history of Amhara and Gumuz interaction in and around Mentawuha from 1960-1991 was characterised by frontier conflict in which the Amhara neighbors of the Gumuz wanted to assert their power over the latter. In almost all of the violent conflicts between the two groups, the central government stood with the Amhara.

Before ethnic regionalization, relationships between the Amhara and the Gumuz were mainly a frontier type. This was changed remarkably after the introduction of ethnic federalism. The observations from Mentawuha demonstrated these changes. He also added highlights some of the ideological and institutional aspects of Ethiopian federalism that need reform.

Tsega Endalew (2006), also highlights on the issue of ethnicity on his research in titled "Interethnic Relations on a Frontier Metekel (Ethiopia) 1998 – 1991"

His study reveals the history and cultures of the frontier communities, their assimilation, forms of rule and incorporation. The study mainly focused on the Metekel zone of the Benishangul Gumuz Regional State in general. Matakal may be as a special platform for social relation and cultural integration where the Gumuz, Shinasha, Amhara, Agaw and Oromo live. He identified each of these ethnic groups by describing the geographical, social, cultural and economic features, which will help as I am working on the area that has the same ethnic group.

The relationships among the five ethnic groups are discussed in the study. The Agaw and Amhara relationship with Gumuz are characterized by being both antagonistic and friendly. According to Tsega there exist expanded Agaw pressure on Gumuz and at time there were bad relationships. In spite of that reinforcement over the Gumuz their relationship developed into a strong friendly. He also stated that there is a strong

economic relation. The Gumuz relationship with the Oromo and Shinasha is also discussed. The shared historical similarity of the Gumuz and Shinasha is characterized in two ways. They live in close contact in the valley bottoms and also faced raids from the highlanders. Their relationship was also hostile due partly to the Shenasha threatening of the Gumuz by using traditional medicine. The relationship of the Oromo with Gumuz is shown in his study as cordial to the movement of the two groups on both sides of the Abay River.

He gave emphases on the major cause of interethnic conflict in Matakka by focusing on the most potential causes of conflict within Gumuz. He stated that for a conflict to be successfully managed traditional conflict resolution mechanisms should be used. He also identified the hierarchy of the different administrative structure; the election of the elders and their role in solving conflict. He briefly showed the ritual that would be performed during they deal with the cases. He referred to Ethiopian as well as African community courts.

The study provides major recommendations for protecting the rights of the minority groups in Ethiopia by avoiding discrimination based on biological makeup like (color, hair, facial structure), occupation, social status and other related issues. It also attempts to contribute to the understanding of territorial computation and border problems between Ethiopia and the Sudan as well as Northwestern frontier.

Desalegn Amsalu (2010), also touched some points about ethnic interaction and conflict on his research work "The Nature of Awi-Gumuz Relations: The Dynamics of Ethnicity in Ethiopia". His research studies two ethnic groups in comparison. The comparison involves general thematic ideas that identify them as two distinct ethnic groups in isolation and then at best in interaction. Moreover, in their area of interaction at both spatial and socio-cultural, it has attempted to survey the nature of their relationship in border range. Although some places have received relative emphasis. The research surveyed many parts of neighboring settlements between the two ethnic groups.

He mentioned the folk attitudes of one ethnic group towards the other that can naturalize relationship into amicable form. The influence of one ethnic group on the older ethnic group has a potential to facilitate unhealthy relationship. He focused on the scenario existing between the two ethnic groups leading to conflict. He showed how different cultural behaviors impacts on the nature of interethnic relation.

He also shows the interconnection created between the Awi and Gumuz in different communicational events like festivals and feasts. He study examines factors affecting the insecurity between the two ethnic groups in their course of interaction by showing the nature of connection existing between the two groups. He emphasized that the real solution for different levels of conflict should come from solving the real cause.

Assefa Tolesa (1995), his thesis focused on ethnic interactions and conflict about the inhabitants in Aaroo Addis Alem of Wellega. The Amhara-Oromo interactions in his study area present a diver pictures. He states that the most conspicuous form of interactions is competition and conflict, although cooperation and exchange of resources also exist.

The migration of Amhara peasants into Oromiya has led to the emergence of new modes of interactions. Accordingly, those who live in their designated ethnic homelands became titular, whereas those who for different reasons find themselves out of their designated ethnic homelands became non-titular. The narrowing of regional and local citizenship to the level of primordial ethnicity as has been pursued in Ethiopia reduces not only new migrants but also people who lived out of their officially proclaimed ethnic homelands for many generations into new minorities. Not surprisingly, this led to a conflict between the titular and the non-titular groups

Ayalew Gebre (1995), elaborates the manifestation of interethnic interactions on social organizations and production practices. He claims that it most often manifested in from of different settings at different occasions. He also suggests that it is the best way to keep the interethnic interaction healthy.

In addition to Ayalew's study the importance of organization and production practices Desalegn Amsalu (2007) also discussed it in detail. He showed how associations help in social interaction.

Primitive society unites themselves in different groups to help them protect from different danger. Since then the importance of association became important for human being in the day-today interaction. There are different traditional associations in Ethiopia that are established for different purpose with their own objectives. The Awi community bond itself in different associations based on their functions. One of these associations is studied by Desalegn Amsalu in his thesis in titled "Traditional Association in Rural Ethiopia: The case of Awi community in Faggeta Lekoma Wereda" (2007).

He also showed the geographical, historical and socio-cultural background of the Awi. Their history is shown in his work on the traditional association.

Traditional conflict resolution mechanisms worked well in most traditions. They have a strong point that they help to preserve unity even in the face of diversity (Tsega Endalew 2006:152). The traditional principles pay attention to group unity, reconciling the conflicted individuals or groups. Tsega further stated that those who are reconciled totally abandon their old dispute and live in friendly atmosphere of tolerance. The actors in the negotiation process play a significant role. As Anne Pitsch (2000) stated they have their own specific cultural behaviors. Their pattern of thinking, feeling, acting and most importantly their culture influences the process.

The importance of traditional conflict resolution methods and other issue related to it are touched by different scholars and students of Addis Ababa University.

Dejene Gemechu (2007), has studied conflict and the traditional mechanisms of conflict resolution among the Oromo of Eastern Macha focusing on the case of Guma. He emphasizes on the role of women in Guma practice both activators and beneficiary. Women do actively participate in deliberation and decision making. An equal number of

men and women encourage the conflicting individuals in reconciliation process. Women's comments are important in the reconciliation process and the conflicting groups are required to accept their criticism. Colleague

When the case is looked by elders before the conflicting parties come together. On the final day there is a very interesting tradition and custom will be performed. The ritual, that takes place at the time of dealing with conflict in traditional way.

Mulugeta Negasa (1997), has studied the tradition of Sreguma and how it serves the community on his thesis under the title of "The Oromo's 'Sreguma' in the way of resolving conflict in Ada Liben Wereda" On his paper he showed the importance the cultural way of conflict resolution in the society.

It is a mutual bond of friendship invoked for important problems related peace and conflict. It also looks at the cases related to life and property. It is like a security institution, which establishes free movement of people and a traditional basis for solving conflicts. It was organized as a mechanism of conflict resolution and reconciliation according to their traditional practices.

He clearly put the performance of Sreguma in detailed with the important sequences based on the local tradition. The role of elders and other participants was introduced in his research.

Abreham Taddesse (1999), "The traditional way of Conflict Resolution in Sidama" The main focus of Abreham's study is the trends of the traditional ways of conflict resolution process in Sidama people. He focused on the main causes of conflicts in that society. He divided conflicts into political, social and economic. He also looked at how conflicts with other tribes and killing could be solved. He gave emphasis on the participants of the selected peoples who looked at different cases. The participation of females on the process of the resolving conflict is also mentioned.

Yilima Teferi (1998), “The ‘Simgilina’ Ceremony in Welayta” This study was conducted in Welayta zone of the Southern People Nations and nationalities region. The aim of the research is to show the structure of the traditional institutions that are established for the purpose of resolving conflicts, the rules and regulations that the institutions uses, how the society uses the institutions. In addition to that the study suggests the for this kinds of practices which are found in different tribes of different regions of Ethiopia to be studied and put into practice together with the modern judiciary system.

A short study conducted by the Office of Culture and Tourism of Guangua *Wereda*, is also shows how disputes are settled in Awi community. The study, which is entitled “The Awi’s Traditional Conflict Resolution Methods” (2010) gives a clear definition of what the traditional method is and its importance. It defines it as “working on stabling peace between two K’ebeles, ethnic groups and even individuals”. In Awi community if one family kills someone from another family, the elders make peace between the two families and make the family live together happily. It states every step that takes place during the process when the elders look at cases. It also shows the different criteria for choosing the elders.

Accordingly Kevin Avruch (1998), “Culture and Conflict Resolution” He described conflict as a competition by groups or individuals over incompatible goals. It states culture as the determinant of perception. It gives definitions of culture, conflict, ethnicity, identity and what a cross-cultural conflict resolution is. The paper recognizes the impact of cultural difference as important for analysis of conflict resolution that works in intercultural context. A research report submitted to the faculty by “Cross Cultural Negotiations” this paper discusses the general overview of negotiations, definitions of negotiation and describes range of negotiation styles. The impact of culture and the four elements of negotiation are shown. It also suggests some strategies to develop some cross-cultural negotiation strategies.

Ethiopia is a country with different nations and nationalities that are rich in history. Each nationality has its own historical background with different diverse traditions and

customs. The historical, geographical and social backgrounds of the society, around the study area are studied by different researchers. For the purpose of getting information about the society, I reviewed the some of the following thesis and a journal.

Taddesse Tamrat (1982), He briefly described the history of Gumuz in Western Gojjam. Starting from the time of Aksume until the time of Minilik the most important historical phenomena are shown in sequence. The study indicates that the Gumuz are the early inhabitants of this region and that they originally occupied a much more extensive territory to the east in the direction of Lake Tana basin and the source of the Abay.

The area they inhabited has always been renowned for its wealth in a variety of natural resources. It was particularly this wealth of gold that made the region a point of attraction from as far back as Aksumite times.

All the influences, that the kings that ruled Ethiopia and other warriors during the time of Zagwe are stated. From then onwards, a highly formalized system of tutelage seems to have been established over the Gumuz. A relation, which despite the greater linguistic and ethnic distance between Gumuz & Agaw, closely resembles.

A study conducted by the Office of Amhara Region Cultural and Tourism in Bahirdar 2000. “The historical background of the Seventh Agaw people and the establishment of Alem Feresegna association with its cultural heritages” The people of Agaw moved from the Northern part to Southwestern, which was called Agaw Midir with its new name Awi Zone. They are found in Guangua, Ankesha, Banja, Fagita, Lekoma and Dangila *Weredas*. The paper presents the historical background of this people of Agaw in detail. It also shows the important tangible and intangible cultures.

Tewodros Endalew (2003), “the History of Agaw People” published by the Guangua Wereda Culture and Tourism Office. He gives a clear description about the Agaw people by giving different meaning and definitions. He also gave a very brief overview of what Awi mean by relating it with historical background of the Agaw and Axsum people. He

introduces different historical places, areas that were not known that much before, and the different cultural, social, spiritual heritages which are inhabited in Awi zone. He gave more emphasis on kinship terms, funeral and wedding ceremonies different children games with their local meanings.

Apart from undergraduate senior essays and postgraduate theses, there are some articles as well found in various volumes. They discuss on different issues about conflict and its resolutions by different scholars. There are also some papers from the local authorities that have brief and specific.

A study conducted by the Guangua *Wereda* Administration and Security office, Section of Conflict Resolving 2011. The main objective of this study is to study conflicts and solving it permanently. It categorizes different causes of conflicts by conflicts related to land ownership, conflicts related to traditional and superstitious thinking, conflicts related to the increasing of illegal weapons, and conflicts caused by the less attention given by officials. The study gave more attention on 14 conflict sensitive *Kebeles* of the *Wereda* by choosing from 20 to 30 members of each *Kebele* including elders, religious leaders and different concerned bodies.

Jean Monnet Group (2008), "Conflict a literature review" It has an introduction of the disputed nations and different definitions of conflict. It concentrates on interstate and international conflicts. It gives a short introduction of disputed notion and different definitions of conflict. In the same token the categorization and conflict typology is examined in order to describe the possible development and levels of conflict intensity. The review also depicts the objectives of conflict in boarder, territory, power, resources, etc... that predominantly constitute the bone of interstate and intra-state disputes. The paper concludes by giving different forms of managing conflict in conflict settlement, conflict resolution, conflict transformation and conflict prevention.

Anne Pitch (26 October 2000), "Overview of Conflict Management Methods"

On her review she dealt with different theories that deals with conflict resolution and other related matters. But for the aim of this research paper, the researcher chooses only

four of her theories which are relevant to the research area. The theories are analyzed as theories of International and National Conflicts. The theories are systematic theory which focuses on inter-state conflicts. It suggests that conflicts result from the anarchic nature of inter-nation system and the power relations between major actors within it.

Structural theory emphasizes institutions and organizations, and argues that these vary across states and groups. It contends that some types of institutional and organizational structures are more vulnerable to violence and conflict than others. Strategic theory suggests that individuals, states or groups enter into conflicts when it is in their interest to do so (i.e. individuals rationally choose when and how to engage in confliction behaviors) Psycho-social theory focus of this theory is on individual and group perceptions of themselves and others. It also discusses how groups and individuals relate to one another.

Thus, most of the sources available are on ethnicity and conflict surveys, and we lack detailed historical investigation about the traditional mechanisms of conflict resolution. Accordingly works on the study area are about different issues, on the way mentioned something about it. None of the reviews focused on the traditional mechanism of conflict resolution in particular. In order to make a start to bridge the gap, I under took the study of traditional mechanisms of conflict resolution.

2.1. Conflict: Conceptualizations

2.1.1. Definition of Terms and Concepts

Conflict occurs between people in all kinds of human relationships and in all social settings. Because of the wide range of potential differences among people, the absence of conflict usually signals the absence of meaningful interaction. Conflict by itself is neither good nor bad. However, the manner in which conflict is handled determines whether it is constructive or destructive (Ron Fisher, 2000).

Gregg Walker (2005), compiled definition of conflict given by different scholars. The definitions are arranged with their relation with different perceptions and theories. Some of the definitions are demonstrated below.

According to Coser (1956) “Social conflict is a struggle between opponents over values and claims to scarce status, power and resources.”

The main concern of Coser’s definition is a struggle which takes place between opposition parties over resource. Natural resources (as fertile land, natural water, gold etc.) could become a conflict issues. Inequalities in the distribution, use, needs and desire of resources have been source of tension for international and instate disputes.

Schelling (1960) indicates that “Conflicts that are strategic are essentially bargaining situations in which the ability of one participant to gain his ends is dependent on the choices or decisions that the other participant will make.”

He focused on the good deal of one party to decide on the other’s futurity. These kinds of conflicts are the dominant one. It can have domestic dimension like majority – minority conflicts.

Deutsch (1973) defines conflict as “A conflict exists whenever incompatible activities occur. One party is interfering, disrupting, obstructing, or in some other way making another party's actions less effective.”

The above definition shows interference or influence of the one on the other. It can be seen through national government and other parties or regions. By blocking or limiting different opportunities, the powerful party makes other parties incomplete. If one interfere on the other, then conflicts is sure to happen. These conflicts arise because the majority or dominant national government wants to establish the same conditions in regions where the majority population belongs to a minority as in other regions of that state.

Walls (1985) verify conflict as “Conflict is processes in which two or more parties attempt to frustrate the other's goal attainment. The factors underlying conflict are threefold: interdependence, differences in goals, and differences in perceptions.”

It is obvious that the term conflict has no positive intonation. When two or more parties have different idea or perception on an issue, then it leads them to a conflict. It designates the negative attitude one party has on the other. For instance, if one region wants to have self governing and the national government not to, then it can create antagonism and led to a dispute. The conflicting parties attempts to control each other and antagonistic feelings toward each other.

For Pruitt and Rubin (1986) “Conflict means perceived divergence of interest, or a belief that the parties' current aspirations cannot be achieved simultaneously.”

They give more attention on interests the competing parties. This statement is more on the mediation process of solving disputes. When both parties have got common interests or need, it will be hard for the negotiator to fulfill each party's interest. So they take the most significant one first. It is true that in a mediation process it will be difficult to fulfill the interest of the competing parties.

Conrad (1990) “Conflicts are communicative interactions among people who are interdependent and who perceive that their interests are incompatible, inconsistent, or in tension.”

People have different points of view. Communication allows for people to share their opinions and establish a common ground of understanding. But some people expect everyone to change their opinions to agree with them. The idea of accepting that people can disagree and that disagreement does not necessarily need to lead to conflict makes the communication between people healthy. Such acceptance will keep the relationship less stressful and to create a mutual, collaborative and understanding. Relationships is usually

not the underlying problem, it is the way people handle the conflict using poor communication skill that increase the conflict.

Tjosvol and van de Vliert (1994), “Conflict incompatible activities occur within cooperative as well as competitive contexts. Conflict parties' can hold cooperative or competitive goals.”

These two scholars showed the incompatibility of activities which can be seen during cooperation and competition. In an interethnic situation, these two goals are commonly observed. One of the most important examples of emerging peaceful interactions between two or more conflicting groups is the engagement of people from different background in sharing different social and economical activities. They also compete over different issues. For instance they might compete on a resource, tradition, power etc. They cooperate in different social and economical activities.

In general from the above definitions it is possible to conclude that conflict is competition by groups or individuals over incompatible goals and scare resources, the sources of power needed to acquire them. It could be at inter-personal level, within organizations, or between states. It can also occur within our workplaces, schools, local communities, families, etc. Besides competition perceptions may also differ significantly among individuals. One determinant of perception is culture, the socially inherited, shared and learned ways of living possessed by individuals by virtue of their membership in social groups. Conflict that occurs across cultural boundaries thus is also occurring across cognitive and perceptual boundaries. This is, especially susceptible to problems of intercultural miscommunication and misunderstanding. These problems exacerbate the conflict, no matter what the root causes of it-including strictly material interests may be. In this sense, culture is an important factor in many sorts of conflicts that at first may appear to be exclusively about material resources or negotiable interests.

Therefore, it is essential to understand the basic processes of conflict so that we can work to maximize productive outcomes and minimize destructive ones. The following section

will briefly describe some common sources of conflict, the levels of social interaction at which conflict occurs, and the general strategies of approaching conflict that are available.

2.1.2. Sources of Conflict

The review of different scholars, in the field of conflict resolution, identified a large number of schemes for describing sources of conflict (See Fink, 1968; Mack & Snyder, 1958 cited on Ron Fisher 2000). One of the early theorists on conflict, Ron, created a typology that distinguishes three main sources of conflict: economic, value, and power.

2.1.2.1. Economic Conflict

According to Ron (2000), economic conflict involves competing motives to attain scarce resources. Each party wants to get the most that it can, and the behavior and emotions of each party are directed towards maximizing its gain. As Coulomb and Dunne, (2008) states the history of economic thought reveal three main economic explanations of international conflicts: firstly, that they are the result of state failure, and secondly, that they are the result of the quest for power and wealth; and, thirdly, that they are a result of the nature of capitalism. The supply of raw materials, internal inequalities generating new demands, changes in the world economic hierarchy, development of unbalanced conflicts union and management of conflict often has as one of its sources the incompatible goals of how to slice up the economic tart.

2.1.2.2. Value conflict

This involves incompatibility in ways of life, ideologies the preferences, principles and practices that people believe in. International conflict often has a strong value component, wherein each side asserts the rightness and superiority of its way of life and its political-economic system. Due to ethnic diversity and globalization, conflicts between individuals are increasingly characterized by differences in core values between parties with different

socio-cultural identities. Value conflicts can create interpersonal and intergroup tension at different levels of society (Fiecke Harinck 2001:1).

Harinck (2001), in his part, states that value conflicts when people disagree about fundamental beliefs, norms or values are very hard to solve because these conflicts involve people's identities, and people do not want to yield on these issues. These personal issues affect conflict management and conflict resolutions. Cultural difference has an impact of in value conflict.

2.1.2.3. Power conflict

It occurs when each party wishes to maintain or maximize the amount of influence that it exerts in the relationship and the social setting. It is impossible for one party to be stronger without the other being weaker at least, in terms of direct influence over each other (Fiecke Harinck 2001:3). Thus, a power struggle ensures a conflict which usually ends in a victory and defeat or in a continuing state of tension. Harinck claims that power conflicts can occur between individuals, between groups or between nations, whenever one or both parties choose to take a power approach to the relationship.

Ron (2000:3), mentions that power also enters into all conflict since the parties are attempting to control each other. It must be noted that most conflicts are not of a pure type, but involve a mixture of sources. For example, union-management conflict typically involves economic competition, but may also take the form of a power struggle and often involves different ideologies or political values. The more sources that are involved, the more intense and intractable the conflict usually is.

2.1.2.4. Discourse Conflict

Communication is sharing or exchanging information or emotion verbally or non-verbally (Schaffer, McCutcheon, R. Wycoff, 1994:79). Understanding a non-verbal communication is vital in many ways. It helps us to understand how others react to us and

to our ideas. It is a key component in communication. It includes facial expression, gesture or body language. There are different body languages around the world.

“People from different culture often attach different meaning to familiar gestures. For instance, ‘Hook’ ‘em Horn’ sign which is made by holding the index and pinky figures up, signifies support for a team in Texas, but beware. In Italy, this sign is an insult; in Brazil it means good luck; and among Hindus, it means a cow” (Schaffer, McCutcheon, R. Wycoff, 1994:79).

Being sensitive to the way different people interpret non-verbal messages can help to communicate more effectively. Aavid R.Smoch (2002), emphasizes that people use facial expression and tone of voice to reinforce or, sometimes to contradict the meaning of the words they speak.

Ineffective communication is an important source of conflict. Miscommunication and misunderstanding can create conflict even where there are no basic incompatibilities. “We live in a world of extremes. Some cultures enjoy lots of body contact and others avoid it completely. Touching customs that vary from culture to culture can have unfortunate consequences” (Schaffer, McCutcheon, R. Wycoff, 1994:37). According to Ron Fisher (2000), parties may have different perceptions as to what are the facts in a situation, and until they share information and clarify their perceptions, resolution is impossible. He claims that self-centeredness, selective perception, emotional bias, prejudices, etc., are all forces that lead us to perceive situations very differently from the other party. Fisher states that what we really mean in a clear and respectful fashion, often results in confusion, hurt and anger. All of which simply feed the conflict process. Perceptual or communication problems are experienced as very real by the parties involved.

Stereotyping is the most difficult cause to cause miscommunication. David R. Smch (2002), claims that people form very broad stereotypes not only about individuals but also a community and even institutions. It leads individuals to use unnecessary words or even dialogue in an intercultural communication. He describes it as “Dialogue, or conversation that doesn’t begin with each person respecting the other often ends in hurt feelings and fractural communication” (2002:45).

Communication mechanisms are essentials when managing conflict. Hudson, Grisham, Srinivasan, Moussa states that it is important to for the mediator to be critical, to be clear in communicating the message, and to insure that information flow is secure, received and understood by all the parties involved within the conflict (2005:6). The use of words as a principal means of peace making differs in different cultures. As David R. Smch (2002) stated dialogue is considered as often to be the main or only means of conflict resolution.

In addition to the sources of conflict, (Kevin Avruch, 2006), pointed out some issues as origins of conflict that are in most cases resulted in conflict. So the origins could be one of the following.

- Different perception.
- Different behavior or attitude.
- Poor distribution of natural resource.
- Luck of fulfillment basic human needs or their frustration.
- Different interest.
- Ideological differences based on religion or political parties.

2.1.3. Types of conflict

Kevin (2006), discussed about three types of conflicts with their consequences, that often seen or practiced at different parts of the world.

2.1.3.1. Disputes

This kind of conflict normally encountered on a daily basis. It is usually easy to resolve this type of conflict. It can be having an argument with someone, not respecting time or appointments or ignoring ones superior. This type of conflict, if not responded it can lead to social discard (Jean Monnet Chair 2006:9).

Disputes, as Heidi Burgess and Brad Spangler (2003), are short-term disagreements that are relatively easy to resolve. Disputes involving interests are negotiable. That means it is possible to find a solution that at least partially meets the interests and needs of both sides. For example, it generally is possible to find an agreeable price for a piece of goods. The seller may want more, the buyer may want to pay less, but eventually they can agree on a price that is acceptable to both. After negotiating, each may have to do something they did not want to do, but in exchange they will get enough of what they did want to settle the dispute.

Costantino and Merchant (1996, pp 4-5), describes conflict as the fundamental disagreement between two parties, of which a dispute is one possible outcome. This is similar to Douglas Yarn's (1999:115.) observation that conflict is a state, rather than a process. People who have opposing interests, values, or needs are in a state of conflict, which may be buried or manifest, in which case it is brought forward in the form of a dispute or disputing process.

2.1.3.2. Underlying Conflict

This sort of conflict occurs when one continues to push the problem behind. Avoiding it to the extent is it only requires an enabling event or explodes the conflict into a war. This is the most dangerous one (Jean Monnet Chair 2006:9).

According to Charles Hauss (2003), the underlying causes of a conflict are what make it intractable. Since each conflict is unique, there is no one underlying cause of intractability. There is one common thing to all intractable conflicts that they are all

based on long-lasting and deep divisions. Hauss claims that the underlying causes of a conflict are important because they make the conflict intense and keep it so. The causes are rooted in history that occurred decades or even centuries ago. For instance in Rwanda, almost a million Rwandans were killed by their fellow citizens. Almost all the Tutsi and many moderate Hutu were massacred by militant Hutus. No one knows for sure where the two groups came from and why the Tutsi have been richer and more powerful over the last several centuries. Their origins may not even be remembered (Charles Hauss 2003:1).

According to Charles Hauss (2003), those historical roots are often kept alive by people who want to keep the conflict itself alive. Politicians, for example, frequently magnify the importance of this historical hostility for their own gain. By playing to long-standing fears and resentments among their constituent, they can increase their own power and legitimacy.

2.1.3.3. Deep-rooted Conflict

In recent years a new type of conflict has come increasingly to the fore: conflict that takes place within and across states, or intra-state conflict, in the form of civil wars, armed insurrections, violent secessionist movements and other domestic warfare. According to David Bloomfield and Ben Reilly (1998), the change has been dramatic: in the last three years, for example, every major armed conflict originated at the domestic level within a state, rather than between states. Two powerful elements often combine in such conflicts. One is identity: the mobilization of people in communal identity groups based on race, religion, culture, language, and so on. The other is distribution: the means of sharing the economic, social and political resources within a society. Where perceived imbalance in distribution coincides with identity differences (where, for example, one religious group is deprived of certain resources available to others) we have the potential for conflict.

It is a conflict, originating largely within states, which combines two powerful elements: potent identity-based factors, based on differences in race, religion, culture, language and so on, with perceived imbalance in the distribution of economic, political and social

resources. This type of conflict is indeed fundamental. It is based on the perception and religious or ethnic beliefs. It is hard to handle or manage. Some people are even prepared to sacrifice their lives for what they consider so dear to themselves.

2.1.4. Levels of Conflict

Conflict can occur at a number of levels of human functioning. Conflict in your head between opposing motives or ideas is shown by your “internal dialogue” and is at the intrapersonal level. Beyond that, the primary concern here is with social conflict, i.e., conflict between people whether they are acting as individuals, as members of groups, or as representatives of organizations or nations (Ron Fisher, 2000:5).

There are different levels of conflict that exist at different situations. Intrapersonal conflict can be taken as one of its levels. This type of conflict occurs within a person. It can happen in choice of partner, immoral questions or a decision to abandon a bad practice, use of time, or taking a decision.

The other level of conflict is interpersonal conflict. It occurs when two people have incompatible needs, goals, or approaches in their relationship. As (Deutsch & Coleman, 2000 cited in Ron Fisher 2000), communication breakdown is often an important source of interpersonal conflict and learning communication skills is valuable in preventing and resolving such difficulties. At the same time, very real differences occur between people that cannot be resolved by any amount of improved communication. “Personality conflict” refers to very strong differences in motives, values or styles in dealing with people that are not resolvable. “If both parties in a relationship have a high need for power and both want to be dominant in the relationship, there is no way for both to be satisfied, and a power struggle ensues.” (Ron Fisher) Common tactics used in interpersonal power struggles include the exaggerated use of rewards and punishments, deception and evasion, threats and emotional blackmail, and flattery or ingratiation. Unresolved power conflict usually recycles and escalates to the point of relationship breakdown and termination.

Intergroup conflict can be a conflict between people within the same group. Where as interpersonal conflict occurs between collections of people such as ethnic or racial groups, departments or levels of decision making in the same organization, and union and management (Jean Monnet Chair 2006:10). Competition for scarce resources is a common source of intergroup conflict, and societies have developed numerous regulatory mechanisms, such as collective bargaining and mediation, for dealing with intergroup conflict in less disruptive ways. Social-psychological processes are very important in intergroup conflict (Fisher, 1990). According to Fisher group members tend to develop stereotypes (oversimplified negative beliefs) of the opposing group, tend to blame them for their own problems (scapegoat), and practice discrimination against them. These classic symptoms of intergroup conflict can be just as evident in organizations as in race relations in community settings. Intergroup conflict is especially tense and prone to escalation and intractability when group identities are threatened. The costs of destructive intergroup conflict can be extremely high for a society in both economic and social terms (Kevin Avruch, 2006).

Multi-Party Conflict can also be mentioned as another level of conflict. According to Ron Fisher (2000), it occurs in societies when different interest groups and organizations have varying priorities over resource management and policy development. These complex conflicts typically involve a combination of economic, value and power sources. This complexity is often beyond the reach of traditional authoritative or adversarial procedures, and more collaborative approaches to building consensus are required for resolution (Cormick et al, 1996; Gray, 1989).

The last point about the different levels of conflict is International conflict. It occurs between states at the global level. According to Fisher (2000), competition for resources certainly plays a part, but value and power conflict are often intertwined and sometimes predominate. He states that the differences are articulated through the channels of diplomacy in a constant game of give and take, or threat and counter threat, sometimes for the highest of stakes. Mechanisms of propaganda can lead to many of the same social-psychological distortions that characterize interpersonal and intergroup conflict.

2.2. Theories of Conflict

2.2.1. Conflict Management

There are differing approaches to deal with the incompatibilities that exist. Conflict management is the limitation and mitigation with conflicts and containment of conflict behavior (Pitsch 2000: 17). The conflict management indicates the involvement of the third party, which is called to help, or engage it to assist to both parties. The forms of approaching and dealing with conflicts could be of very different nature.

Fisher also discusses that it is the long-term management of intractable conflicts. It is the label for the variety of ways by which people handle grievances standing up for what they consider to be right and against what they consider to be wrong. Those ways include such diverse phenomena as gossip, ridicule, lynching, terrorism, warfare, feuding, genocide, law, mediation, and avoidance (Ron Fisher, 2000:20). He claims that which forms of conflict management will be used in any given situation it can be somewhat predicted and explained by the social structure or social geometry of the case. There are different techniques of conflict management. (Reimann 2005:7 cited in Pitsch) there are consequently four forms of dealing with conflict that is to be outlined: conflict settlement, conflict resolution, conflict transformation and conflict prevention.

2.2.1.1. Conflict Settlement

The concept of conflict settlement covers all the strategies that aim a definite end of the direct violence, without necessarily coping with the basic causes of the conflict (Jean Monnet Group 2006: 15). It is the third party's action in conflict situation finding out the

strategies that facilitate the transformation and consequently the end of the conflict and achievement of an agreement. Jean Monnet (2006) as well as Fisher (2006) discussed on their research that most strategies incorporate a range of peaceful measures like negotiation, meditation as well as coercive measures as military, political, economic sanctions including the treat with them. These peaceful measures are the basis for long-term perspective of the conflict settlement.

2.2.1.2. Conflict Resolution

A more comprehensive term that implies that the deep-rooted sources of conflict are addressed and resolved (Pitsch 2000:12). It implies that the behavior is no longer violent, that attitudes are no longer hostile, and that the structure of the conflict has been changed so that positive interaction between the conflicting parties can take place. According to Monnet, the conflict resolution strategies also point out strategies that could be employed to find an exit from the conflict destroying dynamic and that aim toward achieving satisfying solution for all parties involved. It includes improving communication between the conflict parties and to develop a mutual understanding for the interests of each side.

Conflict resolution as both professional practice and academic field is highly sensitive to culture Krieserg (1998). Conflict solvers often talk about finding the best solution, or mutually satisfying scenario, for everyone involved (Fisher and Ury (1981) cited in Monnet). In many non-Western cultural contexts, direct communication between disputants that explicitly addresses the issues at stake in the conflict can be perceived as very rude, making the conflict worse and delaying resolution. Rather, it can make sense to involve religious, tribal or community leaders, communicate difficult truths indirectly through a third party, and make suggestions through stories (Vinod Swami (1992). Intercultural conflicts are often the most difficult to resolve because the expectations of the disputants can be very different, and there is much occasion for misunderstanding.

There are different mechanisms of conflict resolution but the common once are the following.

A. Use of Force

This requires the use of different aspects of force as necessary. It includes force of internal rules and regulations, power of courts and military force (Judy Kent and Anne Touween 2006:16). The term use of force describes a right of an individual or authority to settle conflicts or prevent certain actions by applying measures to either in dissuade another party from a particular course of action, or physically intervene to stop them.

According to O'Connell, Mary Ellen (2007), the general rule for application of force is that only necessary force may be used. When force is applied by an individual (for example, to protect life, or property), the amount of force permissible is, similarly only that which is reasonable and necessary under the circumstances.

When a level of force beyond verbal commands is used, the individual or authority authorizing the force is accountable for the degree of force applied. When the use of military force is employed by the state towards another political entity for defensive purposes, international law requires that the principle of proportionality be applied (Judy Kent and Anne Touween 2006:18).

B. Negotiation

It is one of the peaceful techniques used in conflict management through compromising. When two or more parties reach a position where their interest or values come in conflict with one another, there are various ways to resolve the conflict. One of the ways is negotiation. Anjan Dasgupta (2005:14), defines negotiation as “the process of communicating back and forth for purpose of reaching a joint agreement about differing needs or ideas”. It has more to do with the use of persuasion rather than power to resolve an issue. Anjan also describes it as “a joint decision-making process through which negotiating parties accommodate their conflicting interest into mutually acceptable settlement”. This definition adds perspective that it is not just the agreement that is

mutually acceptable, but the characteristics of negotiation process itself are a joint endeavor.

The key actors in a negotiation are the negotiators themselves. The actors in negotiation bring common interest or frame of reference. As the parties are working toward mutual resolution, these interests must be considered in order to minimize conflict in the negotiation. (See Zartman William, 1982 cited in Anne Pitsch 2000), he pointed out three phases that a negotiator needs to follow. There are various skills that a negotiator utilizes throughout the phases of a negotiation.

In the preparation phase the negotiator become familiar with the facts of the problem, identify and prioritize the goals, attempt to clarify what the other party can and cannot accomplish and investigate the behavioral style of the opposite party. The interaction phase is the second one. It includes activities of trust building, exchanging points of view and perceptions in order to clarify differing perceptions of the issues and identifying areas of agreement and common ground. During the closing phase the point where agreements are codified to include an action plan with timelines and an agreed upon review process to continuously monitor and adjust as necessary the terms of settlement (Zartman William 1982:18-9).

C. Meditation

It is a method of preventing and resolving interpersonal conflicts with the help of a neutral person agreed upon by both parties. The person should be a person of integrity and acceptable by both parties involved in a dispute. This method is used when parties, institutes or families are not able to resolve conflicts on their own. The mediator can be a person, institute, country, or joint countries. Mediator can be between more than two parties (Judy Kent and Anne Touween 2006:25).

D. Arbitration

According to Judy Kent and Anne Touween (2006), parties in conflict choose a mediator to reconcile them leaving him/her however with the power to take decision on their behalf. The decision cannot be changed and should be followed as such. There are generally two types of arbitration: binding and non-binding. In both cases the arbitrator hears the position of both parties and then renders a decision. In binding arbitration, both parties are bound to the decision. Under the non-binding case, either party is free to disregard the arbitrator's decision (Anne Pitsch 2000:13).

E. Reconciliation

It is a method of bringing closer once again people or families who were split apart or destroyed by massacres, wars, etc so as to rebuild community again. The process of reconciliation has many components namely telling the truth about what happened, repentance, asking for pardon and being forgiven, being charged off and paying reparation. There may later be pursuits in justice, moral rehabilitation and counseling, compensation for damages, etc; all these steps lead the society living again together in harmony. (Judy Kent and Anne Touween. 2006:32)

2.2.1.3. Conflict Transformation

It takes conflict beyond conflict resolution; particularly in asymmetric conflicts, the aim is to transform unfair social relationship and implies a deep transformation in the parties and their relations and in the situation that created the conflict in the first place (Pitsch 2000: 12). It recognizes a mutual respect and reciprocal understanding in respect of the interests in conflict that will lead both parties toward sustainable and acceptable solution. According to Ron Fisher (2000) its actions and processes seek to alter the various characteristics and manifestations of violent conflict by addressing the root causes of a particular conflict over the long term.

“It aims to transform negative destructive conflict into positive constructive conflict and deals with structural,

behavioral and attitudinal aspects of conflict. The term refers to both the process and the completion of the process” (Ron Fisher, 2000:7).

As such, it incorporates the activities of processes such as conflict prevention and conflict resolution and goes farther than conflict settlement or conflict management.

According to Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia (2011), conflict transformation is the process by which conflicts, such as ethnic conflict, are transformed into peaceful outcomes. It differs from conflict resolution and conflict management approaches in that it recognizes that contemporary conflicts require more than the reframing of positions and the identification of win-win outcomes. Wikipedia also states that the very structure of parties and relationships may be embedded in a pattern of confliction relationships that extend beyond the particular site of conflict. Conflict transformation is therefore a process of engaging with and transforming the relationships, interests, discourses and, if necessary, the very constitution of society that supports the continuation of violent conflict.

2.2.1.4. Conflict Prevention

As it is stated on Heinz-Jurgen, (2006:16), conflict prevention means to anticipate problems ahead of their happening, and the capacity to prevent it from escalation so that it may not lead to mutual distrust, chaos or even war. It requires taking early proposals, instituting commissions of inquiry, investigations, power, and roper distribution of resources, respect for the rules of law and human rights respect.

2.2.2. Culture

Culture is a product that reveals itself in social behaviors like belief, ideas, language, customs and rules (Guy Olivier Faure, 2002). Cohen further expands the understanding of

culture by addressing three key aspects: it is a societal not individualistic quality, it is acquired not genetic, and that its attributes cover the entire array of social life. From the first aspect, it is the society to which the individual associates that will dictate the norms; not the individual. Kevin says within a clan-based society, regardless of the individual's feelings toward retribution, even in the extreme form, his or her bonds to the actions of the clan so long as the individual decides to remain part of the clan. The second feature attributes culture to the methods that develop the cultural norms within the individual members. This method is both formal and informal. The formal method includes education, role models, propaganda and the culture's system for rewards and punishments. The informal methods are compressed of how members assimilate influences framed by their environment. His third feature conveys that culture is not just about the artifacts that members surround themselves with, but that there are intellectual and organizational dimension as well (Kevin Avruch, 1998:3).

“In contrast, local culture refers to those complex systems of meanings (encoded in symbols. Schemas and other sorts of cognitive representations) created. Shared and transmitted (socially reproduced and inherited) by individuals in particular social groups at particular points in time. Local culture directs attention to diversity and difference. Most contemporary discussions of culture stress the local sense, focusing on difference” (Kevin Avruch, 1998: 4).

Certainly, this is the sense in which people usually connect culture to conflict. But it is important to remember that culture also represents generic or universalistic capabilities.

2.2.3. Cross-Cultural Conflict

By definition, conflict occurring between individuals or social groups that are separated by cultural boundaries can be considered cross-cultural conflict (Kevin Avruch 1998:1).

But individuals, even in the same society, are potentially members of many different groups, organized in different ways by different criteria. Kevin clarifies his ideas by giving example.

“For example, by kinship into families or clans; by language, religion, ethnicity, or nationality; by socioeconomic characteristics into social classes; by geographical region into political interest groups; and by education, occupation or institutional memberships into professions, trade unions, organizations, industries, bureaucracies, political parties, or militaries” (Kevin Avruch, 1998:5).

The more complex and differentiated the society the more numerous are potential groupings. According to Kevin each of these groups is a potential container that is of individuals who, by virtue of overlapping and multiple group memberships, are themselves multicultural. This means that conflict across cultural boundaries may occur simultaneously at many different levels, not just at the higher levels of social grouping.

In addition to underlining the overlapping and cross-cutting character of multicultural social relationship, what these of cross-cultural conflict have in commons is that they highlight the effects of cultural difference on communicational competence, on mutual understanding or shared metrics and perceptions. The mere existence of cultural difference is not necessarily the primary cause of conflict between groups. Kiven explains this because culture is the contexts in which conflict occurs. “It does so by indicating, among other things, what sorts of resources are subjects for competition or objects of dispute, often by postulating their high value or relative scarcity: honor here, purity there, capital and profits somewhere else.” (Kevin Avruch 1998:5) It does so also by stipulating rules for how contests should be pursued, including when and how to begin, and when and how to end, them. It does so, finally, by providing individuals with cognitive, symbolic, and affective frameworks for interpreting the behavior and motives of others and themselves.

2.2.4. Culture, Identity and Conflict

According to Branch Davidian (1985) quoted by Kevin Avruch (1998), culture is connected to identity in two main ways. First, culture makes available a reservoir of shared symbols able to constitute collective or group identity. Secondly, because many of these symbols are invested with great affect or emotion, and since membership in certain group is emotionally binding for individuals, such collective identity anchors individual identity. Culture, in short, links individual and collective identities, at the same time defining potential boundaries between social groups.

One set of powerful symbols descriptive of this linking process and especially relevant for understanding the relationship of culture to conflict, involves as the scholar (Vamik Volkan,) has called “chosen traumas” These refer to experiences of great hurt or victimization by others that are part of a group’s historical memory. These experiences come to symbolize for group members tremendous threat, fear, pain, and feelings of hopelessness.

“First, they symbolize individual and group distinctiveness in emotionally compelling ways, in the course of which they provide a potential site for political mobilization. Secondly, they provide individual members of the group, a cognitive and emotional map of the nature of the world that surrounds them. Given common effects of shock, that world is usually perceived as hostile, or evil and dangerous”
(Vamik Volkan, Avruch Kevin 1998:8).

The attitude constituted by identities based upon chosen disturbance is maturity for conflict, since one possible response to psychological trauma is agonistic, reactive aggression towards self or others.

Culture is most often manifests itself in the appearance of ethnicity, and the social groups so constituted out of it are ethnic group. Ethnicity as a culture of ethnic groups is a resource usually mobilized by individuals and groups for political purpose. Avruch identifies that ethnic groups are typically constituted out of linkage among members based upon putative ties of kinship, history language and religion. He added that the actual content of the cultural bits matters less than their ability to differentiate one group from the other. This is where culture comes. Cultural differences between groups are enlisted to constitute these boundaries. But take very little cultural content to make cultural difference a social boundary marker between groups. Some scholars argued that the relationship between ethnicity and culture, that ethnic groups in conflict are fighting not about culture but with culture (Avruch Kevin 1998:9).

2.2.5. Culture and Negotiation

Culture has impact on negotiation process. Hofstede (1997), discussed the impacts of culture on negotiation by describing four elements. The elements are actors, structure, strategy and process. He also explains the nature of culture and the salient characteristic of negotiation.

The actors in negotiation are members of some form of culture weather it is national or ethnic. Their cultural background, which includes the values associated with and shared by that culture. Culture itself may determine who the negotiator will be. Some culture may not allow women to play a role in certain negotiation setting. The structure of a particular negotiation also holds examples of how culture can influence the negotiation process. The structural dimension includes such as the size of the negotiation team, the number and type issues, power distribution between the parties, and the organizational setting. The different strategies the negotiator uses is another area of where culture holds

an influence on negotiation. Faure further states that strategic choices are led by interests and values that in turn relate to culture. The process itself impacts negotiation (Hofstede 1997:20-22).

So cultural consideration plays an important role in the negotiation process as all of the actors bring with them their own specific cultural behaviors; that is their pattern of thinking, feeling, acting and most importantly, their own set of culturally shared values.

2.2.6. Ethnicity and Ethnic Conflicts

Ethnicity and ethnic conflicts dominate contemporary discourses on the politics of multi-ethnic countries. According to Encyclopedia however, these concepts mean different things to different people; therefore, competing and contradictory approaches typify their study (Boal 2001: 4806). 'Ethnicity is a recent analytical construction; some of its elements like culture, language and kinship are old concepts,' however, (Hutchison and Smith 1996: 3) 'Ethnicity may mean 'the essence of an ethnic group' or 'the quality of belonging to an ethnic community or group'. Therefore, in defining an ethnic group, scholars emphasize those factors that differentiate a given group from others and strengthen its internal cohesion. A.D. Smith, for instance, defined an ethnic community as 'a named human population with myths of common ancestry, shared historical memories, one or more elements of a common culture, a link with a homeland and a sense of solidarity among at least some of its members' (1995a: 56-7).

2.2.7. Conflict Issues in Ethiopia

The adoption of federalism in Ethiopia appears to have been motivated by the problem of finding an appropriate state structure that could be used as an instrument of managing the complex ethno-linguistic diversity of the country and reduce conflicts. In spite of this, ethnic conflicts are still critical challenges in the country (Asnake Kefale, 2009:9).

“In fact, the record of federalism regarding ethnic conflict is a mixed one. On the one hand, it led to the recognition of the cultural and linguistic rights of ethnic groups in the country. On the other hand, it appears to have transformed and generated localized ethnic conflicts. Many of the conflicts that emerged at local and regional levels and related to the federal restructuring of the country could be referred as autonomy conflicts” (Asnake Kefale, 2009: 9).

Autonomy conflicts in the context of this study refer to those conflicts that emerge on a range of issues such as self determination/secession, the politics of resource sharing, political power, representation, identity, citizenship, ethnic and regional boundary and others.

Intra-federal boundary conflicts are becoming sensitive. According Asnake Kefale, (2009), the institutionalization of ethnic federalism led to the process of drawing inter-regional boundaries with the premise of making ethnic, regional and in some cases sub regional boundaries (e.g. Southern Nations Nationality and Peoples Region) congruent.

“However, this process has not been smooth. On the one hand, boundary making led to the generation of violent conflicts among various ethnic groups, which did not have a history of protracted conflict, for instance Guji and Gedeo. On the other hand, long running disputes between neighboring clans of the Somali, Afar and Oromia regions have now become nation-state type boundary conflicts” (Asnake Kefale, 2009:10).

Interestingly, all of the three regions established permanent bureaus dealing with border affairs. Asnake further states that boundary making between the Benishangul-Gumuz and the Oromo regions also led to violent conflicts. In a contradistinction to the

overwhelming trend the entanglement of inter-regional boundary making with conflicts the same process appeared to have contributed to the normalization of inter-ethnic relationships between the Gumuz and their Amhara neighbors.

Painful relationships with more powerful neighbors explain the ethnic history and identity of the Gumuz. Slave raids and eviction from their land characterize the history of interaction between the Gumuz and their dominant neighbors. The Gumuz faced continued raids until the first few decades of the 20th century from both highland Ethiopia and the Sudan (James 1986: 124 cited on Tammrat). Moreover, the settlement of the Oromo from the south crossing the Blue Nile in the Metekel area during the early 20th century displaced "... the Gumuz to the hot and inhospitable lowland areas ...” (Abdussamad 1995: 54 5).

The continued pressure placed on the Gumuz from several sides as subjects of slaving raids not only shaped their settlement pattern but also left an indelible mark on their identity and the way they relate to each other and their ethnic neighbors. According to (Frederick Simmons 1960: 53) cited on Taddasa Tamrat. (1982),

“The survival of the Gumuz against the pressures of Islam from the Sudan and against Amharisation from Ethiopia was ensured by their flight and acculturation to their country, which is marked by its inhospitality because of its arid climate and malaria infestation”

The relationships that the Gumuz had with their powerful neighbors and their collective experience led to the development of a common ethnic identity. In fact, the Gumuz of the Dedessa Valley accepted the derogatory term Shankilla as their own self name in order to forge unity among various Gumuz clans (James 1986: 121). ‘They even attempted to extricate the derogatory connotation of the term Shankilla by claiming that it was derived from two Oromo non-derogatory words’ (Abey 2001: 24).

The Shinasha, one of the titular ethnic groups of the Benishangul Gumuz region, also had a painful relationship with its more powerful neighbors. Like the Gumuz, they faced slave raiding by the highlanders of the Ethiopian empire. (Richard Pankhurst, citing the Jesuit Patriarch André de Oviedo) discussed in Abdulsemed, wrote that the forces of Emperor Sarsa Dengel raided the Shinasha in the 16th century (1997: 267-8). Because of raiding and displacement, encountered by both the Gumuz and Shinasha, they retreated to the hot inhospitable lowlands of the Metekel region. This shared dilemma led to tension and conflict between the two groups, as they had to compete for land resources (Tsega 2002: 15; Crosby 1901: 54). Moreover, because of the repeated threats the Shinasha faced from the highlanders (Agaw and Amhara), they assimilated into the Oromo who crossed the Blue Nile and settled in the Metekel during the 18th century (Tsega 2002: 10). A traveler who visited the Metekel region in the late 19th century reported that due to the insecurity the Shinasha encountered, they fortified their villages in an inaccessible cliff to prevent unwanted intruders (James, Baumann and Johnson 1996: 180-1).

More recently, the relationship between the Shinasha and their ethnic neighbors kept on changing depending on the conditions on the ground. For instance, ‘during the 1980s when the military regime settled several thousand people in the fertile lowlands of Metekel, the Shinasha, the Gumuz and the Agaw who saw this move as a threat to their livelihood strengthened their relationships’ (Gebre 2004: 61).

Chapter Three

3. Description of the Study Area and Community

3.1. Geographical Location and Demographic Situation of the Study Area

The State of Amhara consists of ten administrative zones, one special zone⁶, 105 *Weredas*, and 78 urban centers. Amharic is the working language of the state. The capital city of the State of Amhara is Bahir-Dar. The region is located in the North western and north central part of Ethiopia. It shares common borders with the state of Tigray in the North, Afar in the East, Oromiya in the South, Benishangul/Gumuz in the South west, and the Republic of Sudan in the west. It covers an estimated area of 170,752 square kilometers.

According to the 1994 census, the region's population was 13,834,297 of which 6,947,546 were males and 6,886,751 females. The urban residents of the State number 1,265,315 while its rural residents are 12,568,982 (90% of the total population). Based on the 1994 census result, out of the total population of the State, 81.5% were Orthodox Christians, 18.1% Muslims, and 0.1% Protestants. Regarding ethnic composition, the majority of the population is Amhara, which is estimated to be 91.2%. In addition, the ethnic composition includes Oromo (3%), Agew/Awi (2.7%), Kimant (1.2%), and Agew/Kamyr (1%).

⁶ Special zone have been established largely in the region for minority ethnic groups, which cannot constitute either a zone or a regular *woreda* because of their small population size.

North of the Abay River), and the Northwestern portion of the Welega Province, the part South of the Abay (Zelalem Leyew 2011:18).

Based on the 2007 Census conducted by the Central Statistical Agency of Ethiopia (CSA), the Benishangul-Gumuz Region has a total population of 670,847, consisting of 340,378 men and 330,469 women; urban inhabitants number 97,965 or 14.6% of the population. With an estimated area of 49,289.46 square kilometers, this Region has an estimated density of 13.6 people per square kilometer.

The ethnic groups include the Berta (25.9%), Gumuz (21.11%), Amhara (21.25%), Oromo (13.32%), Shinasha (7.59%) and Mao (1.9%). Concerning religion, 45.4% of the population is Muslim. 33% is Orthodox Christians, 13.5% is Protestant, and 7.1% practiced traditional beliefs. The Central Statistical Agency (CSA) of Ethiopia estimated in 2005 that Over 60% of this Region is covered with forest, including bamboo, eucalyptus and rubber trees, incense and gum forests as well as the indigenous species.



Map of Benishangul Gumuz regional state

Source: UN OCHA

Metekel zone is one of the three zones of Benishangu Gumuz Regional State. Kamashi zone borders it on the South, Asosa on the South-West, the Sudan on the West, and the Amhara region on North-East. The river Abay (Blue Nile) defines the boundary with Kamashi and Asosa, while river Dinder defines part of its boundary with Amhara. The zone is divided into six *Weredas*. They are Bulen, Dangur, Debat'e, Guba, Mandura and Wonbera (Zelalem Leyew 2011:18).

The word Gwangwa comes from Shenasha. Elders from the study area have told me in an informal interview that before the people of Agaw settled there, the Shinasha people lived. Gwangwa's son Zewin was settled with the 'Arc of Covenant' of Gwangwa Mariyam. In addition to this there are some evidences that show the people of Shinasha lived there. If we look at some of the place names in Gwangwa *Wereda*, it has Shinasha names. The places are Weleta, Gwangwa Mariyam, Degera Abo, Giram Michael, Shashina, Azena, Askuna and Areja. Informants said that some people from Agew say that they have Shinasha ancestors. There is also a place called Azena. It is named after the Shenasha communities who used to live there called Azenawo, Sikunawo and Ashinawo. 'Newo' means in Shenasha 'child' or 'family'. So, Azenawo shows the family of Azena. After the expansion of the Agew, the people of Shinasha were pushed away or assimilate with Agaw. Even most of the Shenasha people accepted the tradition, customs and language of the Agew and shifted. In addition to these, there are also some evidences that show the Gumuz people lived there once. In Gwangwa, For example, there is a place called Didawila in Guangwa. Didawila is a Gumuz word (Tewodros Endalew 2011:7).

Gwangwa is a one of the five *Weredas* of the Awi zone. The *Wereda* shares borders with different *Weredas* and regions. From the North Dangla and Fageta Lcoma, on East Ankesha and Banja, on the West Debat'e and Mandura *Weredas* of the Benishangul Gumuz region and on South Ankesha and Lemu of West Welega Zone of the Oromya region, and *Wereda* Yaso of the Kemash Zone of the Benishangul Gumuz region. The

area of Gwangwa *Wereda* is 223,983. 2 Km² and has an altitude of 1600-1710m above sea level.

Concerning the weather 35% is Kola (low) and 65% Weynadga and Dega (mid high and high). It has 1300m annual rain and 29.5°C temperature. From the landscape of the *Wereda* (431348) hector 6.76% is covered in wood, 60% fiat land, 28% highland and 12% caves and valleys.

Gwangwa is one of the reachest *Weredas* in natural resources. Ambo, Awash and At'ser are the well known forests. Dondor, Ardi, Dura. Tnbil, Buchksi, Demo and Ch'iwhancha are the main rivers that flows though the *Wereda*. In addition to the rivers there are Garto, Dondor, Ashwi, Gimbir falls. There are also different caves like Kambo, Girn, Bembola, Gudala, and Tikisi which had different purposes at past times.

The population size of Gwangwa is about 230,579. Out of this 115,024 are male and 115,555 are female. The settlement of the people shows that 94.5% are rural. There are different ethnic groups in the *Wereda*. Which are Agew takes 79.5%, Amhara 9.98%, Gumuz 8.42%, Oromo 0.77%, and Shinasha 1.33%.

Debat'e is one of the six *Weredas* of the Metekel zone part of Benishangul Gumuz Regional State. Debat'e is the largest town of the Zone. It is bordered by Mandura on the North, the Dura River on the East, which separates it from the Amhara region, the Abay River on the South which separates it from the Kamashi Zone of the Benishangul Gumuz region, and Bulen on the West. Originally Dibate and Mandura were subunits of Gwangwa *Wereda*, which was part of the Metekel *Awraja* (a previous namr for a *Wereda*); in the 1960s these two subunits were split off to form separate *Weredas* in order to strengthen government control over the local Gumuz people. The remaining part of Gwangwa was transferred to Amhara when that region was organized in the 1992.

High points including the Danjiga Mountain in the Southern part of the *Wereda*, which runs along the Abay River as it turns to the South, is found in Debat'e. The weather

condition is mostly Kola (low), but around a place called K'orica its Weyina Dega (mid high).

Based on the figures from the Central Statistic Agency in 2005, Debat'e has an estimated total population of 56,290, of whom 28,078 are men and 28,212 women. Out of this 5, 0010 or 8.90% of the population are urban residents. With an estimated area of 2,425.32 square kilometers, Dibat'e has a population density of 23.2 people per square kilometer. The five largest ethnic groups reported in Gwangwa are also reported in Dibat'e. They are Gumuz 30.6%, Amahara 26.3%, Oromo 24%, Shinasha 16.5% and the Awi 2%.

Most of the inhabitants practiced Ethiopian Orthodox Christianity, with 46% of the population reporting that they held that belief, while 25% observed traditional religions, 17.6% were Muslim, and 8.9% were Protestant. Concerning education, 15.49% of the population were considered literate, which is less than the Zone average of 18.61%; 11.22% of children aged 7-12 were in primary school; 4.62% of the children aged 13-14 were in junior secondary school; and 0.71% of the inhabitants aged 15-18 were in senior secondary school. Concerning sanitary conditions, 14.3% of the urban houses and 5.9% of all houses had access to safe drinking water at the time of the census; 57.6% of the urban and 7.1% of the total had toilet facilities.

Both Gwangwa and Debat'e *Weredas* were under Metekel zone before Gwangwa transferred to the Amhara region. In both *Weredas* the five ethnic groups are found. They are Gumuz, Agaw, Amhara, Shinasha and Oromo.

3.2. Language

The five ethnic groups speak different languages, and belong to two different language families. The Gumuz is under the Nilo-Saharan language family. It is a dialect cluster spoken along the border of Ethiopia and Sudan. Most Ethiopian speakers live in the Metekel Zone of the Benishangul-Gumuz Region, although a group of 1,000 live outside

the town of Welkite. The Sudanese speakers live in the area east of Er Roseires, around Famaka and Fazoglo on the Blue Nile, extending North along the border. There are about two or three dialects. Grammatical forms are distinct between Northern and Southern Gumuz. Phonologically Gumuz has both ejective consonants and implosives. There is a series of palatal consonants, including both ejective and implosive.

The Awi are one of the Cushitic speaking sub ethnic groups of a larger group known as the Agaw. The Agaw are classified as follows in the area they live and in number of speakers.

- South Agaw: Awngi spoken group found around Southwest of Lake Tana, the largest with over 350,000 speakers.
- Dialect Kunfal: spoken west of Lake Tana; poorly recorded, most likely a dialect of Awngi.
- Northern Agaw: Blin–Xamtanga: Blin (North) spoken in Eritrea around the town of Keren with about 70,000 speakers.
- Central Agaw: Xamtanga (also called Khamir, Khamta) 143,000 speakers in the North Amhara Region. Western Agaw: Qimant nearly extinct, spoken by the Qemant in Semien Gondar Zone.
- The dialects Qwara is nearly extinct, spoken by Beta Israel formerly living in Qwara, now in Israel.

As far as phonology is concerned, the language has the absence of ejectives and the phonemic status of labialized consonants. It can be taken as the typical features of the Agaw language (Zelalem Leyew 2011:27).

Oromo, also known as Afaan Oromo, is an Afro-Asiatic language, and the most widely spoken of the Cushitic family. Forms of Oromo are spoken as a first language by more than 25 million Oromo and neighboring peoples in Ethiopia and Kenya. It is a sociolinguistic language, consisting of four varieties: Borana–Arsi–Guji Oromo, Eastern Oromo (also called Qottu), Orma, and West Central Oromo. Like most other Ethiopian languages, Oromo has a set of ejective consonants, that is, voiceless stops or affricates that are accompanied by glottalization and an explosive burst of air. Oromo has another glottalized phone which is more unusual, an implosive retroflex stop.

Amharic (*amarəñña*) is a Semitic language spoken in Ethiopia. Studies show that it is the second most-spoken Semitic language in the world, after Arabic, and the official working language of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia. Thus, it has official status and is used nationwide. History shows that it has been the working language of government, the military, and of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church throughout medieval and modern times. It is written using Amharic Fidel (Amharic Alphabet). In Amharic Fidel each character represents a consonant+vowel combination, and the characters are organized in groups of similar symbols on the basis of both the consonant and the vowel.

The Shinasha is Omotic language spoken in western Ethiopia by the Shinasha people. It is also known as North Gonga. The Shinasha language is spoken as a first language by 24% of the inhabitants of the Metekel Zone (Taddesse 1982:341 cited on Desalegn Amsalu).

3.3. Socio-cultural and Economic Background

The five ethnic groups have two traditional ways of making subsistence; having organic social organization and other ways of life. However, a close examination within the frame of traditional mode of life of these groups, results in a great deal of variation.

Family is the primary social unit of cooperation and kinship alliance in the ethnic groups. Village is next to it, which is the nearest social unit. Awi and the Amhara comprise a

mixed relation. That means villages do not always hold homogenous unit of kinship related people. Paternal settlement is common and hence we may find close relatives concentrated together in a village but not solely composed of kin relation. Next to village hamlet is the nearest social unit in Awi and a unit of social and economic organization. Hamlets are combined together to form another bigger unit of attachment known as Parish. A parish is a formal place of communication and a unit of religious veneration. The center of Gumuz settlement is clan. Wolde Selassie (2002:1039) cited at Desalegn Amsalu, traditionally, the entire Gumuz territory has a sub regional division such as the Gumuz of Mandura and the Gumuz of Metekel. These sub regional sub groups are subdivided into local clans.

About 90% of the people are engaged in agriculture. The State is one of the major oil seeds producing areas. Barely, wheat, sorghum, maize, wheat, oats, beans and peas are major crops produced in large quantities. Cash crops such as coffee, sesame and sugarcane grow in the vast and virgin area of the region's lowlands. About 40% of the livestock population of the regions is found in this region. The huge livestock potential of this area gives plenty of milk and meat mostly for home use. Honey is also one of the main products of the society. The crop production is mostly practiced by the Amhara and Awi society. The Oromo, Gumuz and Shinasha societies are well known in rearing of cattle and production of honey in addition to cultivation (Tsega Endalew 2006).

There are varieties of food items. The varieties of food are from domestic sources such as plants and animals as well as wild animals and fruit. Keya and Porridge are the chief domestic food and drink items of the Gumuz. The Gumuz have mythical explanation to demonstration of some food items in whose the role of the Awi in taming the items is also once in a while acknowledged. They have oral story of explaining the rise of Keya and porridge made of Sorghum and maze. They also drink Bordey. The Shinasha eat Ch'ibo (it's made of different cereals) their favorite drink is Bordey which is made of Sorghum. The Awi, Amhara and the Oromo have almost the same type of food items. They mainly eat Injera with different kinds of sauces (Werku Gayehu, Addis Alem K'ebele. August 2011).

Marriage is one of the most important traditional events of the five ethnic groups. The Oromo, Agaw and Amhara people have almost the same marriage practices. Starting from proposal to the end of the wedding ceremony, it has a performing folk art. At the age of eight for a girl and twelve for a boy they will be ready to get married. Starting from January, depending on the production of the crops the boy's family sent elders to the girl's parent to ask for their daughter's hand for marriage. The girl's family would give their decision at different times.

In Awi after discussing with families and relatives they send a message to the boy's family to come and discuss. When the boy's family comes and sits with close family of the girl at the backyard. They pray and made promises. After that they go in the house to decide on the day of the wedding and 'Mach'a', (the day that the boys family gives money to the girls family). The money given depends on the richness of the girl's family. The day will be celebrated. But in Oromo and Amhara if the girl's family agrees they tell to the messengers at the next appointment. So, both families start preparation for the wedding (Weldegiyoris Asfaw, August 2011 Dibat'e)⁷. (For more information check in the sound file, Code 09)

The Shenahsa and the Gumuz practices an exchange marriage. If the man wants to marry, his family should prepare his sister to be exchanged to the family of the proposed girl. If he doesn't have a sister, his nephew or niece will be given. The Shinasha exchange the girls with cows also. They exchange ten to fifteen cows with one girl. The Gumuz changes a girl with a weapon, ten cows, another girl etc. In Gumuz if the wife dies after some times, they take another for replacement. If a man doesn't have a sister to be exchanged, then kidnaps a girl which mostly ends with conflict between the two families. In Shenasha inheriting brother's wife is common. If the husband dies, then his brother would marry the wife. It is still reflected in these two ethnic groups. In Shenasha the cost of the wedding will be from the girl's family, the collected money on the day of

⁷ Interview conducted with Weldegiyoris Asfaw, Dibat'e, August 2011.

‘Mach’a’, relatives and neighbors who already got a gift from this family. The jewelry of the bride is most important. (Weldegiyori Asfaw, August 2011 Dibat’e).

I would like to give suggestion on the influence of cultural assimilation. Traditionally the Oromos didn’t allow early marriage. They used to have their own Geda⁸ system of marriage. They practiced it for generation. But through time, their tradition assimilated with the Amhara and Agaw traditions. So, they follow the same process for marriage as of the Amhara and Agaw including the dressing custom and early marriage.

3.4. Historical Background

3.4.1. Agaw

The Agaw people have a very important contribution on the civilization of Ethiopia. They are one of the ancient and powerful people of Ethiopia. They claim that they are the tenth family of Noah. We can take some of the ancient names of places, rivers, cities and lakes.

It is believed that they have a relation with the Solomonic dynasty of Israel. According to Tewodos Endalew (2010), the first king of Agaw Kusa, the grand son of king Solomon of Israel, came with Minilik the first with the ‘Arc of Conveyance’ to Ethiopia. When they reached to Ethiopia, Minilik I headed to Shewa and became the king of Ethiopia. Kusa settled at Bagamidir (Gonder) and name the place in an old Agaw language ‘Quwara’ which means ‘sun or flower’. The king didn’t bring his wife with him. So, he got married from a family of Waghimra Sek’ot’an in Lasta and got a child named Adil. When Adil grew up he got seven children. They are Ankesha, Banja, Azena, Zigem, Metekkel and Ch’ra. Other documents argue with the names. They argue that it’s not their original name but, it’s a name that they got when they divide the place to rule. I think this needs further studies. The name of the children is now a name for *Weredas* and places.

⁸ It is a uniquely democratic political and social institution of the Oromo people in Ethiopia.

“The seven brothers went from Sek’ot’a to Agaw Midir which is now named Awi zone for hunting an elephant. When they arrive they found out that nobody lives there. But on the highlands there were people from Gumuz. The brothers stayed there for six months. While their stay they found out that the area has fertile soil and good climate which is comfortable to live. They went back to Sek’ot’a, they to told their family about the place. Not long after the return of the children, their family decided to go to the place. So, they start their journey again with their father and mother and other family members. The first place they arrived was Hamusit and Wanzaye Michaound in Begemidir (Gonder). They spent the night there. When they were about to start their next journey the king Ald’s Wik’abi (sprit) started to run around and dig the ground with his finger’s nail. When their father sees that miracle, he said ‘my fortune is fulfilled so build me a house; I am not going to leave this place but you have to continue your journey.’ The children respected their father order and built him a house. After a year they left the place to establish their state” (Mintsinot Agedede 2010: 3-4).

The place believed to be where the brothers depart to have their own settlement is called ‘Fudi’. They occupy the place in circular trend by bordering from East Abay River, Shinasha on the West, from Dengel Ber on the North and K’ola Dega Damot, Wenberma in the South (Tewodros Endalew 2010:3).

Tewodros (2010) also describes that two cousins of the seven children also asked for a place to rule. The brothers discussed and gave them a low land and decertified place to rule. But the place was not comfortable to live. So, the two brothers and other family

members moved to the Northern part of Ethiopia and settled in a place called ‘Bogos’ which was found between Tigray and Eritrea. Now the place is known as Keren.

There are some evidences that strengthen this fact. For instance, there is a place called ‘Bizrakani’ in Gonder. Bizrakani in Agaw language is a combination of two words which are ‘Bizri’ meaning ‘Dok’ima’ and ‘Kani’ meaning stick. So Bizrakani mean a stick of Dok’ima. Dambec’a is a place in Gojjam. It’s got its name from Agaw meaning ‘he arrived and spent the night’. The original word is pronounced as ‘Tambacha’, but Amharic speakers of the area change the pronunciation to ‘Dembec’a’. Dannigila’a is also a place in Gojjam. It’s got its name from Agaw meaning ‘a perfect place’. The original word is pronounced as ‘Dangu-Ila’, but Amharic speakers of the area merge the two words and pronounce it as ‘Dangila’

The Agaw people ruled during the Zagwe dynasty of Ethiopia from about 1137 to 1270. Agaw is now sub grouped into four groups. The Northern Agaw is known as Bilen, capital Keren. The Western Agaw is known as Qemant, capital Gondar. The Eastern Agaw is known as Xamta, capital Soqota. The Southern Agaw known as Awi, capital Injibara

3.4.2. The Gumuz

History explains that the ancestors of the Kunama, the Barya (Nara) and the Gumuz have represented the Nilo- Saharans of the Ethiopian region while Beja, the Bilen, the various other Agaw-speaking groups of both sides of the Takkaze river as well as the K’imant and the Awiga of lake Tana and the upper waters of the Abay constitute the modern descendants of Kushtes (Taddasa Tamrat 1982). Studies indicate that the Gumuz are the early inhabitants of this region and that they originally occupied a much more extensive territory to the east in the direction of Lake Tana basin and the source of the Abay.

“The Fudi Mountains to the immediate south-west of Enjibarra are cited by Gumuz as having once been the

eastern limit of their inhabitant. The area they inhabited has always been renowned for its wealth in a variety of natural resources. It was particularly this wealth of gold that made the region a point of attraction from as far back as Aksumite times” (Taddasa Tamrat 1982:1).

Specifically designates the area from where gold was obtained as Sassou. In Gwangwa *Wereda* of the Metekal Zone there still is district called Sass.

“Interest in the region continued after Aksumite decline and during Agaw state. The famous warrior king Yishag (1413-30) was the first to led energetic campaigns in Gojam & in the Gumuz then Imam Ahmed Gagn, Sars’a Dingle, Susenyou (1607-32), Fasiledes (1632-67) and his successor Yohannes (1667-1706) who were made repeated campaigns in various directions on the Gumuz” (Taddesse Tamrat 1982: PP 4-14).

Iyasu made the final break down among the Gumuz and attached to the ancient system of indirect rule. He made the famous king of the Agaw Chuhway, Fitawirari, (commander of the force) and apparently entrusting him with the affairs of the Gumuz. The very intimate cultural and economic interactions are still evident today between Gumuz the Agaw. The successful assimilation of Iyasu made formalized the communication between the feudal government and the Gumuz more than ever before. From then onwards, a highly formalized system of tutelage seems to have been established over the Gumuz, a relation which despite the grater linguistic & ethnic distance between Gumuz & Agaw closely resembles.

“In 1662 G.C (in the 17th century) in the month of April, Emperor Yohannes the first sent the leader of Matakka Chikuway to fight the Gumuz society. Documents show that, on other times when Emperor Iyasu went to make the Gumuz pay

tribute to him, he made Chikuway to lead the Emperors army. In 1702 G.C when Emperor Iyasu went to Gudiru for fighting, he took a rest Sigadi Michael which is found in the region of Chikuway. And when the Emperor went to the war front he gave Chikuway responsibility on his family and properties. Even after the war he again took a rest at Sigadi.”
(Tewodros Endalew 2011:13-14).

According to Taddasa Tamrat (1982), the Gumuz also occupied an extensive territory along the Sudanese border extending from Matamma in the North to Dhedheessa valley in Wellaggaa. Since the time immemorial until they were apparently pushed Westwards by the Agaw confining them to the hot lowlands of Matakkaal. Based on the available data that discusses on different article about Gumuz, it can be assumed that the Gumuz might have originally lived on large areas in Gojjam and Agaw Midir including Dangla, Koso Bar (Now Enjibara) and Fud Mountain until they were pushed to the less favorable lowlands and across the Abay into Wallagga to form the present day Kamashi Zone. According to Tamrat (1982) the Gumuz also live in the Sudan in the territories adjacent to Ethiopia particularly on the hills around Fainaka and Roseires so far the Gumuz have been referred by various pejorative and clan names such as Shanqella, Gunza, Gumis, Gumz, Bagga, Hamej etc... Shanqella is derogative and pejorative term meaning dark skinned lowlanders.

The Gumuz inhabited territories of the present Benishangul-Gumuz region can be divided into two geographic regions, Metekel and Dedessa in the former Gojam and Wollega provinces respectively. This division has been reflected in the present administrative divisions of the Gumuz. The former Metekel Awraja has been maintained as the Gumuz zone of Metekel, while the Gumuz of the Dedessa valley and its environs were organized into the newly established Khamashi zone (Asnake Kefale, 2009: 277).

3.4.3. Shinasha

Every society has its own tradition of origin, similarly the Shinasha claim that their ancestors came originally from biblical Canaan. The Shinasha people lived in Shewa ruled by Shaa for about two decades before they were dispersed on both sides of the Abay river and formed the kingdom of Gongga that include other Omotic speaking group in the South-western territories. Population growth and search of pasture land made them move to Gojam and adjacent territories on both sides of the Abay (Tsega Endalew, 2006). According to legend when they reached Gojam in multitudes, the Amharic speaking inhabitants of the region claimed “Shina Shi yemihon tor wararen” i.e. thousands and thousands of troops invaded us! Since then the name said to have applied to them. They were given land in Wallagga where the majority of them adopting Oromo group lived. Thus the Shinasha of Gojam & the Shinasa of Wallagga belong to the Northern Gongga. Most of them lost their identities and gradually assimilated into Agawana, Amharic and Oromiffa Speaking groups.

3.4.4. Oromo

The Oromo expansion started during Emperor Tsirse Dingil (1563-1597) in the second half of the 16th century. Since then the Oromo repeatedly overran the Eastern part of Gojam, Damot, Agaw midir and the low lands of Matakkaal occupied by Gumuz and Gongga. Some informants said the present Agawigna speakers of Balaya seem to have been originally Arsi Oromo who came and settled there led by a certain leader called Gurash. In the Wanbara and Debat'e districts the Oromo expansion and settlement was spearheaded by a group called Tlindobbo. In most parts of Gojam the Oromo lost their identities largely to the Amharic speaking Christian society. Those of Balaya, Zigam and Gwangua districts of Matakkaal were assimilated into the Agawna speaking society. Those of Wanbara and Dibat'i have kept their identity & culture still intact.

3.4.5. Amhara

It seems that part of the highland Gojam was first inhabited by the Gafat. According to the tradition of the people, both the Agaw and the Amhara seem to have come to the area

of Gojam long after the Gafat and eventually completely assimilated them. Under the Christian Empire the Amhara imposed their influence on the other populations making Gojam largely Amharic speaking Christian society. In the continuous expansion conducted against the inhabitants of Matakka the Amhara gradually moved into the North-western borderlands. In the first half of the twentieth century their number increased as people from Wollo, South Gonder and Gojam flocked there due to various reasons. Amhara families moved to Debat'i and Gwangua districts in search of better and more fertile lands.

3.5. Relationship among the Five Ethnic Groups

The five ethnic groups have a strong social, cultural and religious and economic relationship. The Michuu institution, which is originally from the Oromo community, is practiced among the Agaw, Gumuz, Oromo and Shinasha. It is instituted since the early years of the Oromo settlement in Matakka. It is a reciprocal bond of friendship and property security institution, which establishes free movement of people and a traditional basis for solving conflicts (Tsega Endalew 2006:102). It is more than a friendship and establishes a very strong affection. According to Tsega, traditions indicate that the Oromo and Gumuz are the first to start it. Some economic need required the formation of strong relationship between them. Michuu also ties the Gumuz with the Shinasha. It has another name between these two ethnic groups called 'Dhibantaa'. It particularly facilitates trade relationship. The Agaw also have a Michuu relationship with the Gumuz. It is a kind of supportive or protective relationship which involves strong economic ties.

There is also a strong cultural relationship among the five groups. The adoption which is practiced between the Oromo and the Gumuz, and the Oromo and Shinasha demonstrates it. In some parts of Deba'te there are some Shinasha and Gumuz people who call themselves after the Oromo clan that adopted them (Tsega Endalew 2006). The Awi relationship to Gumuz were (and still are) characterized by being both antagonistic and friendly. According to Taddase Tamrat (1982), there exist expanded Awi pressure on

Gumuz and at time there were bad relationships. In spite of Agaw reinforcement over the Gumuz their relationship developed into a strong and friendly. One of the most important Gumuz relationships with Agaw is Mesq'al celebration. They celebrate Mesq'al with Awi and themselves. It is named "Drusa" in Gumuz. The Gumuz also practice Tezkar (memorial of the loss), which they obtain from the Awi. They added their own elements like performing it with different dances known as "Kamisa".

The overall relationship among them is more often good; especially the strong economic relationship tied the ethnic groups and helped them to integrate. It was also the base for the establishment of the Mechu among them. The unstructured settlement which in most places incorporate in religion and marriage, also contributed to the shared and well-built social existence. These and other related activities facilitated favorable affiliation among them.

Chapter Four

4. The Main Causes of Conflict and the Traditional Peace Making and Order of Enforcement Institutions in the Study Area

4.1. The Main Causes of Conflict

Different conflicts frequently happen in Gwangwa and Dibat'e *Weredas*. The attitude created between the "K'ey" and the "T'k'ur", the unsolved demarcation, looking for fertile land, communication obstacles, superstitious and religious and other differences can be taken as one of the basic causes of the conflicts.

4.1.1. Conflict Related to Boundary

The boundary demarcation of the Benishangul-Gumuz regional State with its Amhara and Oromo neighbors impelled inter-ethnic and inter-regional conflicts. The Benishangul Gumuz Regional State shares boundaries in the North and in the Northeast with the Amhara region, in the South and Southeast with the Oromia region and in the West with the Republic of the Sudan. The boundaries, the Benishangul Gumuz Reginal State shares with both the Amhara and the Oromia regions remain poorly defined (Asnake 2009).

Asnake (2009), describes that intra-federal boundary conflicts are the main cause for conflict in the area. The institutionalization of ethnic federalism led to the process of drawing inter-regional boundaries with the premise of making ethnic, regional and in

some cases sub regional boundaries similar. However, this process has not been smooth. Asnake has noted that:

“On the one hand, boundary making led to the generation of violent conflicts among various ethnic groups, which did not have a history of protracted conflict, for instance Guji and Gedeo. On the other hand, long running disputes between neighboring clans of the Somali, Afar and Oromia regions have now become nation-state type boundary conflict” (Asnake Kefale 2009:5).

The same process appeared to have contributed to the normalization of inter-ethnic relationships between the Gumuz and their Amhara neighbors. According to the office of Debat'e *Wereda* administration, Benishangul Gumuz shares a common boundary stretching hundreds of kilometers with the Amhara region. As Taddesse Tamrat (1982), explains that history shows in the pre-federal era, Amhara dominance over the Gumuz and other ethnic minorities characterized the relationship between the two groups. The formation of the Benishangul Gumuz region has changed inter-ethnic relationship between the two groups in several ways. Although the boundaries between the two regions have not been so far clearly marked, there were no major outstanding boundary issues in the relationships between the Benishangul Gumuz and the Amhara until the formation of regional administrations (Asnake Kefale 2009:214)

The formation of the Benishangul Gumuz Regional State, which led to the reconsideration of inter-ethnic relationship between the Gumuz and their ethnic neighbors, could be considered as a vague. One important aspect of this change has been the forming of a regional boundary. The prevalence of a wide gap in the boundary imaginations of the Gumuz and their Amhara and Oromo neighbors affected this process. For the Gumuz, their boundary with the latter is starkly clear, though not clearly defined. They believe that all the hot bamboo growing lowlands, which were their ancestral

homelands, should be recognized as theirs and assigned to the newly established Benishangul Gumuz Region (Asnake Kefale 2009:215).

According to informants who live around the border, land demarcation is the biggest issue which is not still given much attention from any from concerned government officials. There is no land demarcation between Debat'e and Gwangwa *Weredas*. A judge from Gwangwa Wereda also stresses on this point.

“There is a conflict at the boarder of Gwangwa and Debat'e Wereda at a Kebele called Addis Alem. The people from Debat'e say the land belongs to them and the people from Gwangwa also claim that it's theirs. When land was demarcated for different regions of Ethiopia in 1989 Ethiopian calendar, there is a piece of land that was not decided for any of the regions. Because of that there is always a land related problem there” (Abraraw Lijalem, 2011)⁹. (For more information check in the text file, Code 008)

4.1.1.1. Gumuz-Amhara Relations: Mentawuha and Addis Alem

Before ethnic regionalization, relationships between the Amhara and the Gumuz were mainly a frontier type as it has been discussed in previous pages of this thesis. This was changed remarkably after the introduction of ethnic federalism. The observations I accomplished from Mentawuha and Addis Alem demonstrated these changes.

Mentawuha is a small town that is found on the border of the Amhara and the Benishangul Gumuz regions. Established in 1960, it is located some 25 kilometres out West of Chagni town which shares border with the Mandura *Wereda* of the Benishangul

⁹ Interview with Ato Abraraw Lijalem, Chagni, 2011

Gumuz region. It has an estimated population of 3000. Addis Alem is a small village in Gwangwa Wereda which shares boundary with Dibat'i Wereda of the Benishangul Gumuz region. It is the second town from Chagni, which is about 35 kilometers from it. The history of the two marks the development of a typical frontier town between the Gumuz and the Amhara. Mentawuha was indeed established to facilitate the pacification of the Gumuz and to provide security to Chagni town (Asnake Kefale, 2009:219).

Residence of Mentawuha started to settle when agricultural settlements were established on a land earlier inhabited by the Gumuz. Before the settlers moved in, there was a military operation aimed at disarming the Gumuz.

“The history of Amhara and Gumuz interaction in and around Mentawuha from 1960-1991 was characterized by frontier conflict in which the Amhara neighbors of the Gumuz wanted to assert their power over the latter. In almost all of the violent conflicts between the two groups, the central government stood with the Amhara. In addition to outright intervention in support of the Amhara, the government armed the settlers and disarmed the Gumuz. Nonetheless, the Gumuz fiercely resisted. For instance, in 1960 because of Gumuz attacks on the settlements, the settlers fled from Mentawuha. The response of the central government was harsh. It deployed the paramilitary police to take punitive measures against the Gumuz. Later, when Gumuz resistance was beyond the capacity of the paramilitary police, the government deployed the army” (Asnake Kefal, 2009:220).

According to the office of the Amhara regional Administration, following the 1992 reorganization of regional administration in the country, Mentawuha town became part of Gwangwa *Wereda* of the Amhara region, whereas the adjacent Gumuz villages were assigned to the Mandura *Wereda* of the Benishagul Gumuz region. As Ato Darasa Ahmed, the officer of Addis Alem Kebele stated that during the initial transition period, there were conflicts between the two groups around Mentawuha. However, these conflicts stopped after elders of both groups conducted reconciliation. As I observed around Mentawuha, there are different peaceful relationships. Evidence for this is in the peaceful interactions in markets and in the increasingly important sharecropping arrangement between Gumuz land owners and Amhara as well as Agaw farmers. (For more information check in the text file, Code 007)

Despite improving relations between the two communities, the Amhara and some Agaw residents of Mentawuha express their anxiety about security. In a focus group discussion conducted in Addis Alem, Amhara elders generally underlined that they feel threatened by the armed Gumuz, while the government systematically disarmed them. The Amhara in Mentawuha remain confused by the complete change in the State's role in mediating the relationship between them and the Gumuz. Even if they seem to accept the present arrangement, they complain that while they are disarmed, the Gumuz with whom they had a long antagonistic relationship are armed. They furthermore complain that because of the availability of weapons in the Gumuz community, if there are disputes between individuals coming from the two groups, the former will indiscriminately attack and kill their Amhara neighbors as a way of collective revenge.

The Mentawuha Amhara and Agaw residents, moreover, complain that both the Amhara and the Benishangul-Gumuz authorities have so far failed to maintain their security by enforcing law and order. Regarding arms authorities concede that despite their best efforts to bring the problem under control, the Gumuz would buy weapons at a very expensive cost and arm themselves for cultural reasons. As one of the officials of Gwangwa *Wereda* noted:

“All the people that you observed with weapon have a license from the government to have it. Those who don’t have a license keep it at home. If we find them we take it away from them. We encourage them to bring out their weapon and register. Because of this there is no purchase of weapon. But people still buy it illegally. It is out of our control to stop it. Almost all of the men in this area are armed with a spare, arrow, knife etc. Their reason is that incase if someone tries to attack them wherever they go, it would help them to defend themselves. This is because they are not sure when and where an attack takes place” (Ato Aychew Bogale, 2011)¹⁰. (For more information check in the text file, Code 006)

4.1.2. Conflict Related to Resource Use

The problem of land ownership is one of the other main causes of conflict in the area. Different Kebeles of Gwangwa *Wereda* are involved in this type of conflict. Among the Kebeles Ahity, Kuli, Sasidubakicha, T’wili, Degera, Ludegera, Waykala, Angwaye, Bizrakani, Angfec’a, Abeba, Jemera and Addis Alem are the main areas. People going from one Kebele to the other to deforest and harvest without getting permission from anybody is the other cause of conflict. For example in Akako Kebele, more than 38 hectors of forest is destroyed. According to *Constable Demisew Araga*, a community policing officer, the main problem they face in the area is related to land ownership between different Kebeles. And Addis Alem is a Kebele which is found at the border of Amhara Regional State and Benishangul Guumuz Regional State, the problem often happens there. This is because there is no land demarcation between the two regions. (For more information check in the sound file, Code 005)

¹⁰ Interview with Ato Aychew Bogale (member of the Wereda administrator) Addis Alem, 2011

The other most important and major cause of conflict is land ownership among the different ethnic groups of the area. Conflict which is started between individuals is followed by the ethnic groups of each of the conflicting individuals. 'In 1984 Ethiopian calendar, there was a big mass destruction even if it was solved by the help of traditional judges with a continuous negotiation. The conflict on land ownership which started in the 1990's still continuous.' (*Derese Ahmed, Addis Alem Kebele Administrator*). It is prevalent between Agaw and Gumuz. It also occurs between the Muslims residences of Mentawuha and the Gumuz. Individuals send their cattle's to destroy somebody's farm, grass land and a grass which is meant to be used for the covering the roof of a house. This conflict always end up in lose of life and destruction of properties. (For more information check in the text file, Code 007)

The separation of land among individuals put some people out of land especially the young members of the community. As a traditional practice, if someone as a man doesn't have a land it will be hard for him to get married or involve in different events. This made them to use different method to be land owner. Even in most of the Kebele's there are lands that are intended to be given for young people when they get married to build their house and harvest. But these lands are taken by individuals. And the leaders of the Kebeles are not taking any actions to solve the problem.

4.1.3. Conflict Related to Superstitions

Deliberate killing is practiced in the study area. People get killed without a reason or with some silly reasons. In Amhara, Agaw and Gumuz, it is appreciated and prized because of different reasons. In most cases, individuals kill someone who is out of their ethnic group. Killing for fame among the Gumuz was given a special place and people are encouraged to kill. It is infact one of the main reasons that leads to conflict. As Tsega (2006), stated in Gumuz, killing for fame and respect that it brings them is very common.

Revenge is taken as heroism in all of the ethnic groups. If someone kills he will be awarded as a superman by his family. Especially this is habitually shown by the Agaw, Gumuz and Amhara. The females in the family are the main peddler of the man to go and revenge. In Gumuz culture, if a man kills, his wife gets the first turn in fetching water than the other ladies. As the cabinet of the Gwangwa *Wereda* Ato Aychew Bogale describes, ladies always push their husband, brother or even son to commit revenge. (For more information check in the text file, Code 006)

“If a lady, whose husband has been killed, has a son who is ready to revenge, she encourages him to go and revenge even if the time of her husband death is far. If her son agrees she gives him her blessing and sends him with a great proud. When he comes back from his revenge, there will be a great festivity. The mother makes her son to pass between her legs to symbolize that he is born again”

(Ato Aychew Bogale, 2011).¹¹

According to an informant from Dibat’e *Wereda* elders also tell their children and grand children about the family who killed their family member long time ago and they push them to revenge. Sometimes they revenge a murder which was committed fifty or sixty years ago. If any man from a family goes and revenges he will be the most respected and famous person. He will also have a special trophy for drinking. When he eats he will be given a food only for himself. On funeral ceremonies killers chant by calling out the name of the people they killed. They also put a corn stick around their neck exemplifying the male sex organ. The number of corn sticks depends on how many persons they killed. If the person who died also killed a lot, on his funeral people chant, sing and dance by calling out the number of people he killed. The singers also put the corn ticks on their neck to show the number of people he had killed. The person who did not revenge will be neglected from the society and wherever he goes anybody could insult him. If he speaks in public nobody accepts him.

¹¹ Interview with Ato Aychew Bogale (member of the *Wereda* administrator), Addis Alem 2011

Abducting a girl for marriage is the most reviled practice. The main reason that makes the young men to kidnap a girl is that the payment which is expected by the girl's family. In Gumuz, for instance, if someone wants to marry, he has to pay the girl's family some cattle and weapon or a girl from his family as an exchange. In Shenasha, the jewelry of the bride is most important and it needs a lot of money. This and other related problem limits a man from marring. So, he takes the necessary action to get married. The main action is kidnapping. The families of the kidnapped girl go to the family of he kidnapper and kill the family or destroy their property. In most cases when kidnapping occurs elders gather to solve the problem as soon as possible. Even if the case is with the elders, some families ignore it and go for revenge (Ato WeldeGiorgis Asfaw 2011).¹² (For more information check in the text file, Code 004)

Claiming a person as an evil eyed is the other cause of conflict. If a person is claimed as an evil eyed he/she will be killed without any evidence. It happens in all of the residents of the two *Weredas*. It is traditionally believed that the people of Shinasha are known by their knowledge of traditional medicine (Tsega Endalew, 2006). So, this made them to be considered as the one with a special power to do anything against the one they hate. People also believe that they are gifted with a high power of destruction by their God. Although this thinking is reflected on the Shenasha, the others also have it within their own clans. If a person who is believed to be attacked by an evil eyed person consciously or unconsciously talks about a person or calls somebody's name the society believes that the person is an evil eyed. They get the person from wherever he/she is and make him/her swear and spit. If the person is does not agree, then he or she will be bitten, harassed and will be avoided from the society. And also if the sick person dies then the suspected person will be killed (Inspector Yirega Tsegra 2011).¹³ (For more information check in the sound file, Code 003)

4.1.4. Conflict Related to Ethnicity

¹² Interview conducted with Weldegiyoris Asfaw. Dibat'e, August 2011.

¹³ Interview with Inspector Yirega Tsegra. Debat'e, 2011

Human have been diversified in terms of phenotypical characteristics that lay grounds of distinctions (See Scupn and Dcourse 2004:132 cited in Desalegn 2010). Such characteristics include color, physical make up, body organs such as hair, nose and the like. Though those differences constitute natural attributes, they cause different interaction between ethnic groups holding different characteristics in such respect. As the result of these factors inter-group self-identifications and negative attitudes can be developed. The differences may become grounds for conflict.

The ethnic groups of the study area preserve distinct physical characters. According to Desalegn Amsalu (2010), as a result of biological differences they maintain clear perception mainly mutual identification in terms of color. There is different perception of self-identification and categorization among the inhabitants of Gwangwa and Debat'e. This is reflected in cultural values and different physical categorizations. They categorize themselves into two different color groups. In Amharic language K'ay (literal meaning red) and T'q'ur (literal meaning black)

“The Gumuz also identifies essentially two levels of both horizontal and vertical differentiation. The first one is Biga and the other one Shuwa. The former refers to their category, the category of Gumuz. On the other and Shuwa refer to all non-Gumuz ethnic groups. All the other ethnic groups such as the Awi, Amhara, Shinasha, Oromo and the like, who share the same phenotype are categorized under Shuwa” (Desalegn Amsalu, 2010: 85).

Preconceived notion and prejudices are slightly seen among the ethnic groups. As Tsega described, the Nilotic Gumuz in Matakal were socially despised, discriminated and subsequently enslaved by the non-Nilotic neighboring communities. Asnake (2009) noted that ‘the relationship between the Gumuz and their Amhara neighbors was historically a typical frontier relationship in which the latter campaigned for several centuries to bring the former under their control’. The people indicated that description and analysis of morphological characteristics of the two color groups shows ancient and clear variations.

The color difference is reflected in the society's cultural, religion and social interaction in different situations.

Even if the difference is prehistoric, that accepted wisdom is still reflected in the focused area. The different data collected formally and informally showed that there is a very big psychological limitation between the two color groups. The people who consider themselves as 'key' are the Oromo, Agaw, Amhara and Shenasha. And 'Tiqur' are the Gumuz. "I think the Shenasha came from the South. Even if they came from there they are 'key' like us. Mostly they get married to any ethnic group. But the Gumuz don't give their girls for the 'key' though the Gumuz men sometimes marry 'key' girls" (Ato Aychew Bogale, 2011).¹⁴ (For more information check in the text file, Code 006)

Unfortunately the difference is not just to show the color difference, but in different social interactions that the society values. This difference created various problems which are causes of different problems. It also makes the conflict solving method more complicated.

Prejudices are still reflected in the society who lives in the two *Weredas*. Most of the data collected from individuals from the Amhara, Agaw, Oromo and Shenasha blames the Gumuz for causes of most of the conflicts. "Because the border is not decided the Gumuz comes to the 'Key' land and plough without fear. They are really shameless." (*Constable Demisaw Araga*) A residence from Chagni town also warned me in an informal interview that I should be careful with the Gumuz when I go to Debat'e *Wereda*. But at Debat'e I faced the opposite. They treated me well and help me to get what I wanted. It is obvious that the five ethnic groups are living in both *Weredas* but most people thinks that Debat'e is for Gumuz. "The people from Debat'e have a problem of understanding. They don't respect the law. They think they own the land. They say that it's their ancestor land. So, conflicts come from them" (*Darasa Ahmed* 2011). (For more information check in the text file, Code 05) This judgment had been and still is creating different conflicts which can make the conflicts among the ethnic groups unsolvable. "...

¹⁴ Interview with Ato Aychew Bogale (member of the Wereda administrator), Addis Alem 2011

Because the Gumuz never stops creating problems...” (*Ato Gemechu Godano* 2011). He also adds that “Since the reign of Emperor Hileselase up to now there is a conflict between the Gumuz and the ‘key’. (For more information check in the sound file, Code 002)

Some kind of discrimination is also reflected in different belief systems which is a cause for conflict. Most people from Awi and Amhara thinks their religion is the right and the true one but the others has no god and they believe in devil or some kind of creature. Especially they believe that the Gumuz has no god. “The people from this area follow Christianity or Islam, but the Gumuz has no god. They just live” (*Ato Aychew Bogale*, 2011). So they always underestimate whatever the Gumuz are doing. (For more information check in the text file, Code 006)

4.1.5. Negative Aspects of Communication

As it is mentioned in chapter two ineffective communications are a main source of conflict. Misunderstanding different non-verbal means of communications is also the other cause of disputes. Non-verbal messages play an enormous and often unappreciated role in all our communication. People give their own meaning on individual’s conscious or unconscious action in the study area. And that creates misunderstanding. For instance, when priests order their congregation to bring food and drink to the church during the fasting time that comes in October, they compare who has the most. The priest who has the most feels that he is the superior and the one who received less food and drink is not a favored. The society thinks that this is a non-verbal method of showing respect of the priests. This creates antagonistic at different times.

Knowing something about non-verbal communication can also be helpful when a speech is given. The physical actions the speaker executes can either reinforce or contradict what the speaker is saying (Schaffer, McCutcheon, R. Wycoff, 1994:79).

Dialogue can be crucial at the right time and insulting at the wrong time. It can be the mercy of levels of rage at certain times (David R.Smch 2002:45). It is obvious to see the

strong interrelationship between the five ethnic groups. Especially during market days, some celebrations and other social events. During market days most people go to get local drinks into different nearby huts. People chat there about different issues peacefully. But sometimes when some individuals get drunk, the conversation changes to insulting. They start perceiving things in different way and say things which might offend others. For instance they might say in a presence of some one who is Shinasha “You Shinasha guys you are here to destroy me with your magic, maybe if a Gumuz person is sitting in front of them they might say “why are you looking at me like that?, Are you thinking of killing me when I go out?, thank to this government for making you sit with us!” This creates misunderstanding and creates different problem most often. As it is stated by Anteneh Tsegaye (2008), that effective communication depends of understanding: that is, effective communication does not take place until the receiver understands the message. Understanding must result for communication to be effective (Anteneh Tsegaye 2008:5).

There are two barriers obstructing the understanding of verbal communication. The same words may mean different things to different people (Anteneh Tsegaye 2008:5). This barrier is the common one, and it may be experienced whenever two people attempt to communicate. It is more reflected with young members of the community of the two *Weredas*. The nature of Amharic language has the same words which can be used for passing different message just by changing the tone. Some people perceive the words in their own understanding. For example, if someone uses the word ‘nägjireholähu’ which mean “I told you”, the listener may perceive as “I will show you how strong I am”.

The other barrier is that different words sometimes mean the same thing. Many things are called by more than one name. This is also creating big problems. The words “t’ik’ur, barja, šank’ila,” have one meaning to say a ‘black person’. This word hurts the feeling of the Gumuz society, because people mostly use it to refer to them. The words like:

buda - Evil eyed

Sälabi – Someone that take others people’s thing.

t’änk’waj – witch

däbtära – Someone with the knowledge of telling fortune with the help of a special book.

mätätänja - Someone that does magic with the help of a special book to destroy others.

t’ät’ärt’aj - Someone that does magic by using pieces of rocks.

All the above words have almost the same meaning or are said to mean that ‘You have an evil spirit’.

These words are mostly said to the Amhara and the Shinasha community. This is because it is believed that these two communities are using these spirits for different purposes. The other words are said to the Awi community are:

kifu – cruel

šärränja - awful

isisst - Nobody knows your movement.

libbu zät’än - A person with nine hearts.

kotte-bis – a person who always walks tip-toed.

These words are used to say ‘A person who always does things behind your back.

The words like barija, šank’killa, aju, t’inb-bäj, are said to refer to the Gumuz because of their physical makeup and color. People use these words to insult people in public or

in private. This is also one of the biggest problems in the study area that is leading to conflict. All the expressions are more than words. The society understands them and knows for what they are said. The words or expression creates anger in the society and the main reasons for communication breakdowns.

Here are some lists selected expressions that have been used by the community. The expressions are said by one ethnic group referring the other and some are even within one group. The researcher has no intention to show a negative side of one ethnic group, or compare among the ethnic groups. These expressions are randomly collected from individuals from each ethnic group in the study area.

Table1. Negative expressions

The downbeat expressions in Amharic	Transcription	English translation
የሰው ልጅና ባሪያ እኩል አይደለም	jä-säw lidzanna barja ikkul ajdälläm	A humanbeing and a slave are not equal.
ከሰው እኩል ለመሆን መጀመሪያ ልብስ ልበስ።	käsäw ikkul lämähon mädzämmärija libs libäs	To be equal with a human being, put clothes on.
ከሽናሻ ጎረቤት ባዶ ቤት	Käšinaša goräbet bado bet	Its better to be alone than having a Shinasha neighbor.
አባቱ ደብተራ እናቱ ሽናሻ	abbatu däbtära innatu šinaša	The father is magician and the mother is Shinasha.
ጥንብ አንሳ	t'nib ansa	Junk eater.

አባቴ አባትህን እንደ ጠ አትርሳ	abbate abbathin indäšat'ä atirsa	Don't forget that my father sold your father.
ጸንቅላ ቢታጠብ አይጠራም	šank'lla bittat't'äb ajt'ram	Even if it's washed, a Shankila will never be clean.
ያባትህን ተስካር በልተህ ቀረህ	jabbathin täskar bälteh k'ärräh	You ignored your father's commemoration.
ያባትህን ተስካር ሳታወጣ ከሰው እኩል ታውራለህ	jabbatihin täskar sattawät'a käsäw ikkul tawäralläh	Shame on you, that you are trying to speak in public, while ignoring your father's memorial.
ወንድምህን አሞራ በላው	wänddimihin amora bällaw	Your brother was fed to the bird.
ፍየልና በግ አንድ ኤደሉም	fijälinna bäg and ajdällum	A goat and a sheep are not the same.

Expressions collected from different members of the community during field work

Miscommunication caused by emotion within a family leads to conflict. It is common to see in the study area that it results in emotional response. Youngsters got into dispute with their family with different reasons. Young man in the family asks for different things like owning something of their own. One of these questions is getting married. As it is stated in chapter three, if someone wants to get married in Gumuz, he needs some cattle, a weapon, money and a sister to be replaced. The family may not fulfill these because of economic or other reasons. If the boy misunderstands his family's response, he takes different actions.

He emotionally might hurt his family. Sometimes if he gets to fight with his friends or someone out of the family, he takes it seriously and response emotionally. Sometimes his actions may involve even killing caused by a very easy reason.

His action may also be is kidnapping the girl he wanted to marry. This will be misunderstood by the girl's family and makes them think that his family is also involved in the kidnapping process. So, they go to the boy's family to get their girl back in any ways they can. If it is not solved easily, then it might be a cause of a big conflict between the two families.

In conclusion, the choice of words is vital to the effectiveness of any communication. Many words have different meanings. Our background knowledge and experience affects our understanding.

4.2. The Traditional Peace Making

Judgment is always important in a multi ethnic society. It plays the main role in the society's day to day activates. The traditional judgment is also grantees the society at any level. Even if trouble occurs, they would help them to sort it out. It makes the society to be honest, friendly and stop separation and to live in peace. It also saves them from unnecessary expense and west of time by going to the different government offices for every single issue. The five ethnic groups that live in Gwangwa and Debat'e *Weredas* have their own traditional peace making methods between individuals in their group as well as among the ethnic groups.

4.2.1. Traditional Peace Making in Gumuz

Majority of the Gumuz believe in a super natural being called Mussa and the Gaheyal Gafiya is believed to be the mediator. The Gaheyal Gafiya is responsible for leading the prayers and act as mediator between men and the Almighty. Even within some Muslim

Gumuz near the Sudan and Christians, the role of Gaheyal Gafiya is profound. Mussa is considered to be benevolent, kind and redeemer. The Gaheyal Gafiya suggests the appropriate offerings to be made for the Mussa and ceremonies and rituals to be performed. In every village there are more than two houses of prayer for the Mussa where prayers and sacrifices are offered at times of disease, crop failure, natural catastrophe, conflict between clans or within a clan and the like. Gaheyal Gafiya can be a female or a male and he/she is often consulted and his or her words are strictly adhered to. Each Gumuz village has its own Gaheyal Gafiya who performs multiple practices. He/she will be consulted.

Gaheyal Gafiya also elects Tis Muhin, the chief of the local peacekeeping force. He should be brave, physically fit; kind delicate and popular to be elected. His main responsibilities are to follow-up and capture robbers and keeping the peace of the clan. Also he works as an early warning system, that is, he attempts to settle issues before they could erupt into violence or inter-clan conflicts.

4.2.2. Traditional Peace Making in Oromo

Gadaa system is one of the main traditional institutions in the Ethiopia. It is a uniquely democratic political and social institution of the Oromo people in Ethiopia. They have their own customary methods to settle conflicts. In this regard, the Gadaa system of conflict resolution is the one that deserves attention. This institution is well respected by the Oromo society at large in the country. Conflicts are usually settled by the local elders using the principles of the Gadaa System. According to the Gadaa age-grade system, individuals in the age range of 40- 48 are called *Luba* and are considered to be elders with a social responsibility of keeping peace and stability within the local community.

The Gedaa system is also applied in the Oromo society living there. Michuu is an Oromo word which literally means friendship. It is a reciprocal bond of friendship invoked for important problems of peace and conflict. It is a life and property security institution, which establishes free movement of people and a traditional basis for solving conflicts. It is more than a friendship and establishes a very strong affection. Though originally it is

an Oromo institution, it is used among the five ethnic groups. It has a mechanism of the conflict resolution and reconciliation according to their traditional practices.

4.2.3. Traditional Peace Making in Awi and Amhara

The Awi and the Amhara community share almost the same traditional method to solve problems. In Awi the traditional practice of resolving conflict is called Shomagalti. Shomagalti means making peace. In an interview conducted in different Kebeles of Gwangwa Wereda elders gave their opinion of what Shomagalti mean and its purpose. They said it is making peace between individuals as well as different groups and the society live in peace. The first person that I interviewed was Ato Fantahun Yismaw. He lives in the Dihi special village of Gisayta Kebele of Gwangwa Wereda. He is one of the traditional peace committee of the Awi society. He said that in Awi society when people clash or if someone kills, they gather to discuss on the issue. Then they call both parties to discuss on the issue and give their judgment. A person who committed a crime joins the community through the elders and takes his punishment. When he finishes his penalty, the elders gather again with the destroyer and the victim's family to make peace. This will make both parties not to get into conflict again.

The other member of the traditional peace making committee who gave me his opinion about the traditional peace making process is Ato Bantihun Gebre Mesekel who lives in the special village called Berk in Gisayta Kebele of Gwangwa wereda. He conforms that the traditional peace making in Awi community has a big value. He said that there is no judgment without the involvement of the elders. It makes the society to live together, share what they have, eat together and love each other by avoiding revenge.

He further explained that when there is conflict between two individuals or two group one of the two parties go to the elders and ask for their judgment. But if none of them come to the elders to ask for their judgment, then they elders will take their own action. When the community gathers for church service one of the elders stands and says "This

person and this person are conflicting, so let us make peace between them”. Then some of the elders go to the one party and some to the other. They talk to each party and convince them to make peace between them. When they finish talking to each group, they will make an appointment to gather together to make the two parties come to peace. On the appointment day they make them swear and walk on the different weapons. Then both parties will live peacefully. But if one of the parties’ doesn’t want to make the peace, he will be told to go to his personal priest and confess. Then the priest makes him to go back to peace.

He also added that following the peace process the people who participated in the process goes to one of the conflicting party’s house and will be served with different food and drink. The same thing will also take place in the other party’s house. From that day on there will be peace between the two parties, because they eat in each other’s house. Eating together means a lot in the society, so after that nobody goes to revenge.

After the case had been solved, if one of the parties ignored the judgment of the elders and go back to make trouble again, then he will be forbidden from different social involvements. For example, if he dies nobody goes to his funeral, if he got sick nobody visits him, if he got into trouble; nobody helps him, etc... if he wants a peace again he should beg the elders and accept their punishment. After that the elders will look at the case and make the peace.

4.2.4. Traditional Peace Making in Shenasha

Shenasha is one of the five groups of the two Weredas. They also have their own method of traditional peace making process. In Shinasha if someone kills somebody the elected peace makers made the killer pay the price of blood. The community elects peace makers (its always old men in Shinasha) called Nihinaya. The first step the Nihinaya’s do is forcing the killer to stay away from his family and the society to exile. As it is discussed in chapter three the use of force is one of the main mechanisms of conflict resolution. While his stay in the jungle he is not allowed to keep his hygiene. He is forbidden to cut his finger nails and hair, change his cloth, wash himself and even sleep on a bed. The

time the killer stays away depends on the heaviness of the crime. If the killer purposely or without enough reasons kills, he will be told to stay in the jungle from one to two years. But if the fault is the person who died, then the killers stay in the jungle could be from three to six months.

When the killer finishes his exile, the Nihinayas will gather to look at the case again. The killer's family will pay "The blood value". The payment depends on the crime. If it is a big crime they might pay about 10,000 birr. After that the Nihinayas discuss on the issue with both parties, they decide on the appropriate day to gather again and make the peace. Before that day the Nihinayas send a messenger to the exiled person to come on the appointment day.

On the day of peace making, Nihinayas and other observant will be gathered. A chicken, sheep, dog's poo, spike, bullet, leaf and different types of weapons will also be ready. The Nihinayas first make the two parties hold hands and forgive each other and then two parties swear. The first step in the swearing process is taking out an eye of the chicken. It is to say 'if I ignore what the Nihinayas decided and revenge or kill again, let me lose my sight'. Next they hold the leaf and swear by saying 'if I ignore what the Nihinayas decided and revenge or kill again, let me be taken away from my mother'. Then the dog's poo, to say 'let me smell like this if I do anything against the decision'. After that they bite a bullet to say 'let this hit me if I involve in a crime again'. Finally all the weapons will be lay down and every member of both parties will walk over. This is to say 'if we look back and revenge, let the weapons hit us first'. After this everyone goes back home in peace. (For more information check in the sound file, Code 002)

4.3. Traditional Peace Making Among the Five Ethnic Groups

4.3.1. The Peace Committee

There is a peace committee which is established between Gwangwa and Debat'e Weredas to settle conflicts which is caused by different reasons. It includes all the five ethnic

groups of the two Weredas. This peace committee has elected elders that have been solving different problems in traditional way in their ethnic groups. So, these elected men are elected by the society from each village to be part of the peace committee. It is established by the authorities of the Amhara region and the Benishangul-Gumuz region because of the unclear boundaries of the two regions. The peace committee includes four Kebeles. It was established six years ago. It has full power to look into on any kind of cases and give its decision.

They look at different conflicts like land ownership, theft, family matters killing etc. When a problem occurs, people give their application letter to the elder person of their locality who is member of the committee. Then he will inform to other members from different areas. They gather and looked at the problem and decide on what to do about it. The committee works in traditional way. Problems are looked at traditionally and solved in traditional way. One of the main methods they use is making the conflicting parties come clean on the issue and making them swear. They give their judgment depending on the intensity of the matter.

The people of the five ethnic groups as mentioned in the previous chapter got into conflict with different reasons. They have tried to avoid conflict by teaching the society in their clan. If a conflict occurs the first thing these groups do is making the two parties come down and keeps them apart to stop the conflict from spreading. Conflict settlement method is widely used by the traditional peace settlers or the peace committee of the two Weredas. When conflict occurs the first thing they do is settling it. As it is stated in chapter three of this study by Jean Monnet Group (2006: 15) 'it is the third party action in conflict situation finding out the strategies that facilitate the transformation and consequently the end of the conflict and achievement of an agreement.' If it is killing they go to the victim's family as son as they can and makes the family swore not to think of revenge until they look at the case and solve it. (For more information check in the sound file, Code 001)

4.3.2. Solving Conflict Caused by Murder

A conflict caused by killing is one of the major cases that the elders look at. The first thing that the committee does is settling the conflict by keeping away the two families. After the family who lost member heals from their grave, the peace committee approaches them to look at the case. The elders give an appointment for the day to look at the case at the presence of the two families. In most cases the day depends on the willingness of the victim. They might take longer time to decide on facing their enemies. Sometimes it might take six months or even more.

On the very day, member of the peace committee gather earlier to get the necessary materials ready for the peace making ceremony. Different kinds of weapons will be ready. The family of the killer brings a goat, which will be slaughtered on the ceremony. A piece of dry leaf, stone and different crops will also be needed. After both families and other observers from the society gathers, the elders start by blessing. After one man from each ethnic group gives his blessing, they give chances for each party to speak. The family of the victim will also get chance to suggest on the decision that they wish to be made on the killer. Depending on their ethnic group they ask for different things. After listening to both sides the committee makes the killer admit that they are guilty.

The decision always includes money. The family of the killer will may be asked to pay up to 15, 000 birr as blood cleaner. After they decide on the money the next process is making both parties swear on not to commit themselves in conflict again. After that the goat will be slaughtered. The different weapons, the stone, dry leaf the crops and the slaughtered goat that are gathered by the elders will be lain down on the ground for the two families to walk over. The family of the victim will walk over first then the killer's family follows. When the family of the victim walks over, it is to mean that 'if we commit ourselves in revenge, let the weapons hit us first'. For the killer's family is also to mean that 'if we involve in a crime again, let the weapon hit us first'. Walking on the dry leaf is to swear that 'let us dry like the leaf if we involve in the crime again'. Walking over the slaughtered goat is to swear that 'if we try anything again let our blood spread like this'. Walking on the crops is to swear that 'let the crops be spike on us not a food'

After that there will be a feast. Food will be prepared from the slaughtered goat and different drinks will be served. All the costs will be cover by the killer's family. Everyone will get each part of the goat. The person who serves will cut every part of the meat in pieces and give for each person presented. From that day on, both families live in peace.

4.3.3. Making of Peace Other Matters

Different disputes occur often that makes individuals get into trouble with minor or silly reasons. The collected data by the concerned bodies of the region shows that these minor conflicts sometime makes big destructions. If it happens between two persons from the same ethnic group, individuals from that ethnic group would solve their problem. The Shinasha society can be taken as a good example in solving problems that happened in their clan.

Negotiation is used when conflict get solved by the police, the peace committee, and the traditional peacemakers of the two Weredas. When two parties are in need of making peace they negotiate on things with the presence of a meddle man. That person can act as a negotiator. The traditional peacemakers makes the two parties face each other and discussing over the problem. If the discussing needs their involvement they do. This makes the two parties from wasting unnecessary cost by going further like to the K'ebele, Wereda or even the region.

The three phase of negotiation by William (1982), mentioned in chapter three of this paper, also have the almost same practice by the traditional peacemakers of the two ethnic groups. The first thing they do when a complain comes from one party, or if two parties come to the elders looking for peace, is to listen to what they have to say and give them an appointment to look at the case in detail. On the next appointment they make the two parties discuss by sitting in opposite directions facing the elders. The elders take their point of view from both parties. Finally the elders brings the two parties to an agreement based on their points and made them swore to have a peaceful relation in future.

The swearing process here also has its own custom. The two disputants bring a goat to be slaughtered. When the two parties agree on the decision, one of the elders ties the tombs of the two individuals and holds their hands by covering it with scurf. This is because if they see their hand shaking they might change their mind. After that the goat will be slaughtered. The two individuals touch the blood and shake hand again. It symbolizes that their blood is mixed now so that they will not fight again. One of the elders breaks a bone out of the goat's leg body and give to them to hold it on both ends of it. Then he breaks the bone to symbolize that their problem is broken. After all the swearing process is finished there will be a feast. Everybody eats and drinks.

4.4. Expressions used in Conflict Mitigation

The choice of words is vital to effectiveness of any communication. Many words have different meanings. Our background knowledge and experience affects our understanding. Even if there the society use negative word or expressions to insult people, to show power and the superiority of the ethnic group they belong to, words and expressions are also used in creating positive attitudes.

All traditional peace making process always incorporates positive words to settle and solve problems. The words or expressions are carried out through cursing, swearing and blessing.

Blessings always come before they started looking at the any kind of cases and after they finish. At the beginning they beg and bless God to help them though the process. They bless the two parties for listening and respecting them. Here are some lists of blessing which are collected from elders during field work.

Table 2. Blessing by elders before they start looking at cases

Blessings in Amharic	Transcription	English translation
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እርቅን የሰጠን ፈጣሪ ይመስገን	irk'in jäsät't'än fät'ari jimmäsgän	Thanks to God, for giving us peace.
ፈጣሪ ከመሀችን አይጥፋ	fät'ari kämähalačč'in ajt'fa	Let God be with us.
ታላላቆቻችሁን አክብሩ	talallak'oččaččihun akbiru	Respect your elders.
ውሸትን ፈጣሪ አይወድም ከአፋችን እውነት ብቻ ይውጣ	wišät'in fät'ari ajwäddim kafačč'in iwnät bičča j'wt'a	God doesn't like lies. Let only the truth come out of our mouth.
ፍቅር ይስጠን	fik'ir jist'än	Let God give us love.
በረከት ይሁን	bäräkät jihun	Let there be blessing.

The above expressions are said before the elders start looking the case. Each member of the peace committee gives his part of blessing. The elders also pray on the way that it they think the problem is above the human ability to be solved, and then they call on their ancestors through prophesy to help them solve the problem. Everytime people gather to discuss on issues or to solve conflicts, they pray to their almighty, to bless the land, to bring peace and friendly affection among the society.

Table 3. Blessing after the conflict resolved.

Blessings in Amharic	Transcription	English translation
ይቅርታን የሰጠን ፈጣሪ ይመስገን	jik'irtan jäsät't'än fät'ari jimmäsgän	Thanks to God, for giving us forgiveness.

መሃላ ማለት እሳት ነው አክብሩት	mähalla malät isat näw akbirut	Taking an oath is like a fire, respect it.
ፈጣሪ ከስህተት ይጠበቀን	fät'ari käsihtät jit'äbbik'än	Let God save us from mistake.
ጠባቾን ይቀበር	t'äbaččin jik'k'äbär	Let our conflict get buried.
ጠብ ዘመድ አይሆነንም	t'äb zämäd ajhonännim	Hostility can not be our relative.
በደም ተዛምዳቹ ኑሩ	bädäm täzamdaču nuru	Related in blood and live.

The blessing that elders give after the conflict gets solved is to thank God for peace and helping them finish the process peacefully. For instance:

“jik'irtan jäsät'än fät'ari jimäsgän” Thanks to God, for giving us forgiveness.

“fät'ari käshittät jit'äbik'än” Let God keep us from mistake.

They also send out the message through their blessing. They tell there is no good out of a conflict and suggest the conflicting parties to forget about their problem and relate themselves in peace. The expressions below reflect that.

“t'äbaččin jik'k'äbär” Let our conflict get buried.

“t'äb zämäd ajhonännim” Hostility can not be our relative.

“bädäm täzamdaču nuru” Related in blood and live together.

It is also to warn the two conflicting parties that if they don't respect it, something dreadful will happen on them and their family.

“mähala malät isat näw akbrut” Taking an oath is like a fire, respect it.

The other event that words and expressions are used by the peace makers are cursing. To make the conflicting parties respect the decision they gave, they curse.

Table 4 Cursing after a conflict resolved

Cursing in Amharic	Transcription	English translation
ዳግመኛ ደም ያፈሰሰ :-	dagmäjገጋ däm jafässäsä	who kills again:-
የራሱ ደም ይፍሰስ	järasu däm jifissäs	Let his bloodshade.
በሄደበት ግራ እንጂ ቀኝ አይሁንለት	bähedäbbät gira indzi k’äjገገ ajhunllät	Where ever he goes let everything be left not right.
እንደእንጨት ያድርቀው	indä inc’ät jadrik’äw	Let him dry like a stick.
ፈጣሪ ወደ ፀሀይ መጥለቂያ ይጣለው	fät’ari wädät’ähaj mät’läk’ja jit’äläw	Let God throws him to the sunset.
በሄደበት አይቅናው	bähedäbbät ajk’inaw	Let him be unlucky wherever he goes.
የረገጠው ድንጋይ ይከመርበት	Järäggät’äw dingaj jikkämärbät	Let the stone he is standing on be on him.
የራሱ ካራ ይውጋው	järasu karra jiwgaw	Let his own sword pock him.
የራሱ ጦር ከመሬት አጣብቆ ይውጋው	järasu t’or kämäret	Let his own spear stick him to the ground.

	at't'abk'o jiwgaw	
ከዘመዶቹ ይንቀሰው	kāzāmādočču jink'älāw	Let him be taken away from his family.
የተራመደው እህል እርህ ሆኖ ይውጋው እንጂ እህል አይሁነው	jätārammādāw ihil išoh hono jiwgaw indzi ihil ajhunāw	Let the crops he walked over be spike on him, not a food.

Swearing also has the main role in the event. Both conflicting parties swear not to involve in a conflict again and other related situations. Most of the words used for swearing are almost the same as cursing. Cursing is said for third person “Let ... on him” but swearing will be said as first person “let.... on me’.

Table 5. Swearing after a conflict solved.

Swearing in Amharic	Transcription	English translation
ዳግመኛ ደም ባፈስ :-	dagmäjገገa dām bafäss	If I kill again:-
የተራመድኩት እህል እርህ ሆኖ ይውጋኝ እንጂ እህል አይሁነኝ	jätāramädkut ihil išoh hono jiwgajገገ indzi ihil ajhunäjገ	Let the crops be sharp on me, not a food.
በሄድኩበት ግራ እንጂ ቀኝ አይሁንልኝ	bähedäkubbät gira indzi k'äjገገ ajhunäjገ	Where ever I go let everything be left not right on me.
እንደእንጨት ያድርቀኝ	indä inc'ät jadrik'äjገ	Let me dry like this stick.

ከዘመዶቼ ይንቀላኝ	käzämädočče jink'älän	Let me be taken away from my family.
ፈጣሪ ወደ ፀሀይ መጥለቂያ ይጣለኝ	fät'ari wädäs'ähäj mät'läk'ija jit'alän	Let God throw me to the sunset.
በሄድኩበት አይቅናኝ	bähedkubät ajk'naj	Let me be unlucky wherever I go.
የረገጥኩት ድንጋይ ይከመርብኝ	järägg'tikut dingaj jikkämärbijn	Let the stone I stand on be on me.
የራሴ ካራ ይውጋኝ	järase karra jiwgaj	Let my own knife pock me.
የራሴ ጦር ከመሬት አጣብቆ ይውጋኝ	järase t'or kä märet at't'abik'o jiwgaj	Let my own spear stick me to the ground.

The above table shows words of the two conflicting parties. They swear to God that if they go out of his willing, let what they say happen on them. The expressions like:

“bähedkubbät gira indzi k'äjñ ajhunän”

Where I go let everything be left not right on me.

“fät'ari wädäs'ähäj mät'läk'ija jit'alän”

Let God throw me to the sunset.

“bähedkubbät ajk'naj”

Let me be unlucky wherever I go.

It is believed that the almighty God will punish them if they go out of their words. He can cause drought, send locusts and rats to destroy their crops, stop rain etc. this will affect not only the person who breaks the oath; it will also come to the whole village.

The other expressions like:

“Jätärammädkut ihil išoh hono jiwgajj indzi ihil ajhunäj”

Let the crops be sharp on me, not a food.

“järaggät'ikut dingaj jikkämärbij”

Let the stone I stand on be on me.

“järase karra jiwgaj”

Let my own knife pock me

“järase t'or kä märet at't'abik'o jiwgaj”

Let my own spear nail me to the ground.

These expressions show that everything they swore on has a power. So, even their own materials can stand against them. In the society it is known that the spirit of God is not only on them, it is also in their materials. That's why they swear with it, because God can order their own materials to attack them. They also swear to God to change them into an object if they betray their own words and attack their opponent. It is shown in the expression like:

“bähedäkubbät gira indzi k'äjajj ajhunäj”

Where ever I go let everything be left not right on me.

“indä inc'ät jadrik'äj”

Let me dry like this stick.

Taking an oath means a lot in the society. It is the final ceraction of the ceremony. After the peaceful discussion is finished the guilty will be asked to pay for his fault as a symbol of confession. After that they swear in by performing different actions. They swear while they tie their hands with the grass by covering it under a cloth to show unity. They swear while mix blood to show compete friendship. They also swear while breaking a bone

4.5. The Role of Language in Conflict Resolution

The people are with diverse languages and non-verbal communication skills which help them to eliminate communication barriers among themselves for common good. In addition to sharing ideas and experiences, using language as communication media will give considerable advantages in idea transfer.

Effective communication depends of understanding: that is, effective communication does not take place until the receiver understands the message. Understanding must result for communication to be effective.

The role of language in the study area for resolving conflict is undeniable. The words the elders use, their tone, body languages and gesture mean a lot to the community. The non-verbal symbols are used to transmit information as the verbal symbols carry. In the five of the ethnic groups all the blessing cursing and swearing are figurehead of the whole of area, and is often described as the saver or destroyer. For instance the blessings like:

‘mähala malä tısät näw akibrut’

meaning (Swearing is like fire, respect it.)

The above sentence comes in blessing but it is also warning. It shows that if they don’t respect it, it will destroy them. They believe that if they go out it, they are sure that

something bad will happen on them as well as on their family. They also fear that it will pass to their grand and great grand children.

The blessing that comes before they started is to resolve conflict and make the two conflicting parties to listen to the word of the elders without using different argument with their opponents. They also believe that because the ceremony is blessed once, they can not say or do something unkind. If they do that, they will be cursed. Even during the ceremony the action like the eye contact, gestures, and facial expression have factors. It affects the meaning they attach to a message the elders passes. Every blessing is truthful, free of bias and successful.

The swearing expressed through different words as well as actions like shaking hand with blood and breaking bone has a great value in resolving conflict. It is to mean that ‘we do not reject each other’. It means a lot especially for conflicts that occurred between two ethnic groups. Cursing has a great respect in the society. For example the swearing like:

jätärammädkut ihil išoh indzi ihil ajhunäñ

(Let the crops I walk over be spike on me, not a food)

jätärammädkut ihil išoh hono jiwgəŋ indzi ihil ajhunäñ

Let the crops be sharp on me, not a food.

If someone goes against this swearing, it is believed that his/ her crops will be destroyed or even if they have already collected their crops something will destroy it. So, nobody goes against it. If one of the parties does something against the cursing and swearing, it is believed that it will attack them until their seventh generation.

All the dialogues used between the elders and the conflicting parties affect the listeners understanding. It's obvious to see overall impression the voice makes on one another. The listeners often infer from the voice whether the speaker is happy, sad, fearful or confident, excited or bored. Variety of languages used in the ceremony does not affect,

because almost all of the ethnic groups know each others language. Variation in rate, volume, force, pitch, and emphasis are some of the factors that influence the understanding of the speaker.

The choice of words is vital to the effectiveness of conflict resolution the study. Many words have used to give different meanings. So, with the word and expressions they hear from the elders through blessing and cursing as well as their own word of swearing, they keep the peace for generations. The role of words in keeping peace in the community is identified in reconciling conflicting groups according to the norms and forms in their respective area.

Chapter Five

Conclusion and Recommendation

5.1. Conclusion

From the points discussed in chapter four, I can constrain some ideas as a conclusion. The social, cultural and economical integration of the society helped to keep peace and stability within the local community. They are interrelated especially through marriage and religion. When someone from one ethnic group had a conflict with another person from other group, there will be different reasons to keep them from taking their problem to the worse point. They are may be from different ethnic groups, but they are attached at least in religion, marriage or other social situations which guide or forbid them from doing so. This is one of the main representations of Ethiopian, where people from different ethnic group and religion live together sharing common ground. It makes the society to have a great respect to each other. That's why the customary institutions are always the best institution to deal with different cases in the society.

Both inter- and intra-ethnic conflicts over the use of natural resources, superstitions, and border conflict and communication aspects are common in the people who inhabited the border of Gwangwa and Debat'e. Such conflicts are usually settled by the local elders using the different principles. The relevance and application of this indigenous institution in dealing with conflicts that may arise over one of the reason is undeniable. In culture

based conflict resolution methods negotiators play a very important role. The direct communication between disputants, which is practiced in different state courts, can be perceived traditionally as very rude. It is actually making the conflict worse and delaying resolution. Rather, it can make sense to involve religious, tribal or community leaders, communicate difficult truths indirectly through a third party, and make suggestions through stories. Intercultural conflicts are often the most difficult to resolve because the expectations of the disputants can be very different, and there is much occasion for misunderstanding.

There is a slack teamwork between this customary institution and the government in dealing with conflict resolution between individuals and communities. The government fails to appreciate, collaborate and complement the traditional methods of resolving conflicts. Limited understanding of the role elders played by the state has diminished the efficacy and relevance of this customary institution in conflict management in the country in general and in the two *Weredas* in particular.

The other problem on the traditional conflict resolution mechanisms is poor documentation. First there is no good record of traditional methods. What is today considered traditional is the in fact a mixture of ideas, both traditional and modern. The concerned offices are not that much working on recording, rather talking about it for some kind of political reasons. In that sense, I can say they that they have abused the traditional structures. This is resulting in disturbance on the traditional structure and frustration on the traditional negotiators. But the official should take in to consideration that the traditional method are relational which mean that the conflicting parties has an existing relationship and shared sets of values. So, if they really want to demolish today's conflicts from the root, and then they should bear in mind that the method used in previous period could potentially work today.

Though, the role of the local customary institutions are unquestionable, there are also other important matters that need attention from the government. It is necessary to practice civilized ways of thinking to create an increasing contact between individuals of

different cultural orientations in the form of higher level of transnational interaction. For this reason it is more important than ever to understand the dynamics of cross cultural communication so that conflicts, when they occur, can be resolved in the most effective and gentle ways possible.

I propose that there should be an increased collaboration and networking between the legislative and customary institutions of governance. In particular, the state should recognize and support the customary courts provides and enforce their rulings. In the study area, the customary laws are often more important than legislative laws and are relied upon in deciding access rights to natural resources and in resolving conflicts. A combination of customary and legislative institutions in resolving different conflicts facilitates cross-cultural understanding. However, enforcing the legislative rules on the local community without due consideration for their indigenous norms and values should be avoided from the side of the state. Access to the local communities should be established through customary institutions. Neglect of these norms and laws may have negative consequences for the nation in general and the local community who rely on them in particular.

Therefore, the government should give more attention to the area where there is a border issue and solve it once and for all. Educating the community, providing the necessary infrastructures, distributing resources fairly, and integrating power among the five ethnic groups, will also help to promote better understanding of intercultural communication.

5.2. Recommendations

- Intractable conflicts cannot be resolved unless the underlying causes are addressed. It is important to address the substantive issues that give rise to conflict in the first place, such as unbalanced distributions of wealth and power.

- Diffusing the fear, hatred, and other negative emotions that make a conflict intractable and all too often deadly.

- The government officials need to give more attention to the cultural ways of conflict resolution method that is exercised in the area. This is because some traditions are believed by group members to be ancient and venerable, and partaking in them is subjectively experienced by group members as profoundly meaningful. This means that contestants typically experience ethnic conflict as cultural conflict, which is an important fact to that the elders always remember when attempting conflict resolution than officials.
- Giving common effects of trauma, that one ethnic group is usually perceived as hostile, uncaring, or evil and dangerous should be changed through different educational and social interaction. The mindset constituted by identities based upon chosen trauma is ripe for conflict, since one possible response to psychological trauma is agonistic, reactive aggression towards self or others.
- Attention should be given on understanding the effect of cultural difference on conflict processes, and to sensitize practitioners of conflict resolution to pay attention to some of the broader ways in which cultural differences is manifested, as well as to become aware of their own cultural categories, assumptions and presupposition about the world, and the basics these may impose.
- Linguists also need to work on changing most of the negative expressions said to a one ethnic group by the other. Making word lists and expressions that could create positive attitudes. It can be done through imposing positive expressions in different educational texts. This will help to make communication healthy for the coming generation as language is a fundamental feature of cultural identity and empowerment.

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List of Main Informants

<p>Code: 001</p> <p>Data type – Sound</p> <p>Date - 11/08/2011</p> <p>Time – 7:50am</p> <p>Place – Addis Alem Kebele</p> <p>Name Ato Brihanu Godano</p> <p>Age - 47</p> <p>Status – Married</p> <p>Ethnic - Oromo</p> <p>Occupation – Farmer</p> <p>Responsibility – member of the peace committee</p>	<p>Code: 002</p> <p>Data type – Sound</p> <p>Date - 11/08/2011</p> <p>Time – 9:20am</p> <p>Place – Addis Alem K’ebele</p> <p>Name Ato Gemechu Godano</p> <p>Age - 59</p> <p>Status – Married</p> <p>Ethnic - Shinasha</p> <p>Occupation – Farmer</p> <p>Responsibility – member of the peace committee</p>
<p>Code: 003</p> <p>Data type – sound</p> <p>Date – 18/08/2011</p> <p>Time – 4:30pm</p> <p>Place – Debat’e Wereda</p> <p>Name – Inspector Yirega Tsegra</p> <p>Age - 32</p> <p>Status – Married</p>	<p>Code: 004</p> <p>Data type – sound</p> <p>Date – 18/08/2011</p> <p>Time – 1:40pm</p> <p>Place – Debat’e Wereda</p> <p>Name Ato W/Giyorgis Asfaw</p> <p>Age - 45</p> <p>Status – Married</p>

<p>Ethnic - Shinasha</p> <p>Occupation – Police officer</p> <p>Rank – Inspector</p> <p>Responsibility – Head of Debat’e Wereda’s police Station.</p>	<p>Ethnic - Shinasha</p> <p>Occupation – Public Officer</p>
<p>Code: 005</p> <p>Data type – Sound</p> <p>Date - 4 -8-2011</p> <p>Time -10:15am</p> <p>Place – Addis Alem K’abale</p> <p>Name Damisaw Arega</p> <p>Age - 26</p> <p>Status – Single</p> <p>Ethnic - Amhara</p> <p>Occupation - police Officer</p> <p>Rank – Constable</p> <p>Responsibility - Community policing officer</p>	<p>Code: 006</p> <p>Data type – text</p> <p>Date - 7/08/11</p> <p>Time – 3:50pm</p> <p>Place – Addis Alem Kabale</p> <p>Name Ato Aychew Bogale</p> <p>Age - 40</p> <p>Status – Married</p> <p>Ethnic - Agaw</p> <p>Occupation – Member of Gwangwa Wereda Cabine</p> <p>Responsibility – Supervisor of Addis Alem K’abale Administrator</p>
<p>Code: 007</p> <p>Data type – text</p> <p>Date - 7/08/2011</p> <p>Time – 10:15am</p> <p>Place – Addis Alem Kabale</p> <p>Name Ato Darasa Ahmed</p> <p>Age - 55</p> <p>Status – Married</p> <p>Ethnic - Amhara</p> <p>Occupation – Cabine member of Addis</p>	<p>Code: 008</p> <p>Data type – Sound</p> <p>Date - 13-08-03</p> <p>Time – 1:00pm</p> <p>Place – Chagni town</p> <p>Name Ato Abraraw Lijalem</p> <p>Age - 37</p> <p>Status – Married</p> <p>Ethnic - Agaw</p> <p>Occupation - Judge</p>

<p>alem K'abale Responsibility – Addis Alem K'abale Administrator</p>	<p>Responsibility – Organizer of Gwangwa Wereda Judges</p>
<p>Code: 009 Data type – Sound Date - 18/08/2011 Time – 8:40am Place – Debat'e Wereda Name Ato Away Baky Age - 65 Status – Married Ethnic – Gumuz Occupation – Farmer Responsibility – member of the peace committee</p>	<p>Code: 10 Data type – text Date - 4 -8-2011 Time – 3:30 Place – Mentha-Wiha Name – Ato Yargal Bayou Age - 31 Status – Single Ethnic - Agaw Occupation - Teacher Responsibility – School headmaster</p>
<p>Code 11 Data type – text Date - 29/12/2010 Time – 3:00pm Place – Chagni twon Name Ato Mezgebu Mekonnen Age - 41 Status – Married Ethnic - Agaw Occupation – member of Gwangwa <i>Wereda</i> Adiministration Responsibility – an expert on conflict resolution in Gwangwa Wereda</p>	<p>Code 12 Data type – text Date - 29/12/2010 Time – 3:00pm Place – Chagni twon Name Ato Asmare Asaye Age - 29 Status – Married Ethnic - Agaw Occupation – member of Gwangwa <i>Wereda</i> Adiministration Responsibility – an expert on conflict resolution in Gwangwa Wereda</p>

